Exploring Outlooks of First –Generation Latino Parents:

Factors Contributing to the College Preparation Process of Their Children

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved March 2016 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2016

ABSTRACT

Communication between parents and school personnel plays a significant role in student achievement. Spanish-speaking parents are rather hesitant to seek assistance from their child's school as cultural and language barriers have created a mindset that they are not supported, understood, or valued. Key stakeholders in education therefore need to acquire a clearer understanding of the Latino culture in a dire effort to better serve Hispanic students in high school and their families. This study examined the perceptions of first-generation Latino parents of high school students while identifying parental needs to improve their child's college readiness upon completion of high school. It also investigated high school graduation rates and student dropout rates across the United States as well as effective and efficient ways in which the school can enhance the provision of school-related resources to their students. There is wide consensus that parental involvement (including home-based involvement, home-school communication, and school-based involvement) is essential for student success. Despite this understanding, there exists a gap in literature regarding the information, resources, and support available to first-generation Latino parents with children in high school. Using a conceptual framework that draws on theories of cultural and social capital, and a qualitative approach that included field notes, focus groups, and interviews, this study investigated the expectations, lived experiences, perceptions, and practices of 29 Latino immigrant parents of high school students in relation to their child's secondary school. The findings of this study, which suggest varying levels of

parental involvement, were organized around four themes: aspirations, parental support, school-based knowledge, and student preparation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My children Camila and Santiago my adored driving inspirations to push through always looking forward as I strive to be the best mother I can be for them. Lastly, I want to thank God for giving me the strength and perseverance I did not know I had. I love you all and am blessed to have you all in my life. This is not just my dissertation; this is our dissertation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research is about first-generation Latino parents who are currently experiencing the American high school system through their children's education. From 2005 to 2013, I worked primarily with English language learners (ELL) and immigrant families. My interest in this study arose from working with these parents over those years and observing their concerns and the struggles they have gone through. As the only bilingual guidance counselor at a Title I high school that serves a Latino student and parent population, I have dealt directly with most Spanish-speaking parents in the school community. I learned that many parents do not feel comfortable reaching out to the school, because they fear they will not be understood, supported, or valued. They also feel intimidated by school staff due to language and cultural discrepancies. I have always been intrigued that a number of Latino parents habitually began their conversations with an apology for coming in or even for calling, and they leave with such a genuine sense of appreciation for being cared for. I believe that educators need further understanding of first-generation Latino parents to better serve these families and their children before we can accurately assess their involvement at the high school level.

This study explored parental perceptions of high schools and provided an opportunity for parents to share what they need from the schools to increase their child's college readiness by the time they complete high school. My experience shows that Latino youth have more to offer society than most people think, but due to a lack of support and resources not many of them even finish high school. Having these students complete high school is not a choice; it is a necessity if they are to have a better future in society. Currently, most entry-level positions require a high school diploma. If the fastest

growing youth population in the United States (US) is not able to complete those requirements, what will they do? The value of education has increased; therefore, when students drop out it affects their future as well as the nations' development. Knowing firsthand how difficult it can be to navigate school systems without parental involvement, I still believe that much of the success I have encountered as a student has been due to my parents' unreeling support and value in education. A number of the empirical studies that I reviewed spoke out to me, as if my parents were part of these studies (Auerbach, 2007a; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Lopez, 2001; Olivos, 2004; Torrez, 2004). That being said, I also recognize that the language barrier and the unfamiliarity with the high school system played a significant role in parents' distance with schools. My primary interest in researching this group of parents was to learn more about Latino families and their child support practices regarding schooling. I also sought to investigate how Latino families viewed the high school and how effectively the school provided resources to them and their children. Additionally, I hope that this dissertation provides some valuable information to Latino parents as well as to schools interested in improving their partnership with those parents.

Background to the Study

The successful navigation of and academic achievement within the American school system has been a critical component of social and economic mobility in this nation for decades. In 2009, the high school graduation rate for Latino students in the US was 76.8%, in comparison to the 95.9% of Asian/Pacific Islanders, 93.8% of White students, and 89.2% of Black students. The fact that the Hispanic graduation rate is lowest is exacerbated by the statistic that only 11.4% of that group enrolled in college

(National Center for Education Studies [NCES], 2011). According to the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences' National Center for Education Statistics, even though the dropout rate for the Hispanic group has steadily decreased, as of 2013 it was still the highest dropout rate in the nation at 12%.

It is critical to consider the implication of these statistics, because the US is currently home to over 35 million immigrants, and the number of children of immigrants is increasing. The majority of immigrants to the US have come from Mexico, Central and South America, and countries in the Caribbean (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). The Migration Policy Institute found that, in 2013, 17.4 million children under age 18 lived at home with at least one immigrant parent. This number accounts for 25% of the 69.9 million children under age 18 in the US. Representing a quarter of the youth population, it is only natural that classrooms are impacted. A decade ago, Portes and Rumbaut (2006) reported that there were many secondary schools where the minority student group had become the majority, and this trend has likely grown even more predominant since this study and as the immigrant population has continued to grow.

Immigration has been and continues to be a controversial topic. For instance, a survey found that 81% of the U.S. public considers immigration to be either the most important issue or a major concern facing the country (Gándara & Contreras, 2010). A prominent concern regarding immigrant children in the US is their low academic performance within the public education system, which can and will directly impact the nation's future in the global economy. Preparing the nation's youth for a global market and increasing enrollment at the college and university level has been a priority within

the last decades (Elmore, 2009), but some groups continue to lag behind. States are now focusing not just on graduation rates, but also on preparing high school students for postsecondary studies, often referred to as *college readiness*.

In the Southwest, immigration issues are discussed regularly on news channels, screening of prospective hires, and school districts, and this dissertation focuses on the realities of the state of Arizona. Bordering Mexico, Arizona faces challenges with immigrant students and their academic struggles. Arizona's population is made up of 30% of Latinos, and the state has the sixth largest Latino population in the US (United States Bureau Public Information Office, 2015). For the purpose of this study, Latinos are referred to as persons "of Latin-American origin living in the United States" (Webster, 2011), and the terms Latino and Hispanic will be used interchangeably. Over 90% of Arizona's Latino population is of Mexican origin, with 71% speaking a language other than English (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008). It should be noted as well that the Southwest region has the highest dropout rate in public education, with 28% of all high school dropouts for the 2008 to 2009 school year (NCES, 2011). According to the Arizona Department of Education (2015), Latino or Hispanic students had a graduation rate of 70% during the 2013 to 2014 school year.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the magnitude of Latino immigration, as this population is the largest growing minority population in the US. As of 2014, Latinos constitute 17.37% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Despite the size of the Latino population, this group has one of the lowest levels of schooling among all ethnic groups in the nation and is characterized by poor test scores, low high school attendance, and overall low college attendance (Contreras & Gándara,

2010). As the job market continues to require more schooling, the role that Latinos have in society is uncertain. High schools are now focusing on the transition to postsecondary education for their graduates, and a majority of schools' mission statements have some component of college readiness. Thus, it is important to identify ways to improve college readiness among Latino youth.

Over the past century, there has been a significant increase in attempting to involve parents as a means of improving student achievement. *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* was the 1983 report from the Reagan administration to the American people and to the Secretary of Education (Gardner et al.). Amid an examination of student performance in U.S. classrooms, the report emphasized parental involvement as a key focus in public education. A considerable amount of literature has identified parental involvement as a positive predictor of student achievement (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Mapp, 2003; Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008). These studies found that schools with strong parental involvement combined with solid school–home ties had significant gains in student achievement, and that parents who feel supported and valued by their child's school are more likely to reach out to the school and become involved. Along the same lines, Mapp (2003) found that parents are more likely to become involved in the school if they feel welcomed, honored, and connected by and with the school. This study investigating resources, practices, and motivations within immigrant parents in relation to their child's post secondary support, use parental involvement as a term that includes home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school communication.

Statement of the Problem

As noted in the previous section, prior research has shown that parents are an integral part of any child's education. In such parental involvement studies, communication has emerged as a common theme. Those studies have shown how positive communication between parents and school personnel has an impact on student achievement. Epstein places emphasis on school-based involvement, priorities of educators, and cooperation around shared goals. Epstein's model distinguishes five types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, and representing other parents. This model focuses on how schools help families and how students gain what they need to be successful, but does not focus on the needs that parents have. The focus of efforts often center on helping families participate more in their children's learning and are triggered by a sense that these immigrant families are in need of help.

In my experience with parents and schools as a guidance counselor, I have heard more than once the perspective that immigrant families need help connecting with their schools and that they have to take a more active role in their children's education. This perspective comes from inside the schools looking out to the families. However, there are few studies on how immigrant parents perceive schools. Even less has been reported from an external perspective looking into the schools. Although research has shown the benefits that parental involvement has on academic achievement, there are gaps in the literature about the support, information, and resources first-generation Latino parents need and to which they have access to. Not much is known yet about what these parents

need from the school to facilitate the transition from high school to college for their child because only a few studies have focused on this topic.

One of those studies that delved into parental involvement examined Latino families and the schools attended by their children (Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005). In this study, teachers became researchers and participated in household observations. Teachers used a concept the researchers called *funds of knowledge* to gain observations to inform, expand, and examine methods of instruction. Funds of knowledge are used to understand knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning (Gonzalez et al., 2005). This qualitative study encouraged teachers to become researchers of local households as part of their pedagogy. These teachers were able to think about local communities and to understand how their teaching was connected to the families of their students. The study helped teachers discover new resources to improve their instruction with the children. However, the study did not address what the families needed from the schools. Interestingly, in the book that reported this study, *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*, Gonzalez et al. noted that more research should be done on how parents "get the school to accommodate their needs, conditions, and desires" (p. 281). In response to their call, I decided to further explore the extent to which the school-related resources that Arizona Latino parents access match up with the support their children need to be college ready when they graduate high school.

Research on Latino parents has found that a number of them do not view the public education system positively (Auerbach, 2002, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Mapp, 2003; Olivos, 2004; Pererira et al., 2006; Tornatzsky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002; Valencia &

Black, 2002). The right to access high-quality education is universal, but Latino parents have to battle to a great extent to give their children a chance to succeed academically. The Hispanic dropout rate gives some insight into what Latino parents are trying to overcome. In 2008, Hispanic students had the highest dropout rate in the ninth through 12th grades in the US (NCES, 2011). The most recent data from the Arizona Department of Education (2015) show that the overall state average dropout rate is 3.46%. Hispanic students have a higher dropout rate than the state average with 4.08%. Parents of these students find themselves struggling through cultural and economic barriers that prevent them from being more active in their children's education (Auerbach, 2004; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Kozol, 2005; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). One major hurdle for immigrant Latino parents is that they have to go through a new parenting process when they come to the US: they have to adjust their parenting practices in response to their new environments (Perreira et al., 2006). To add to these parents' difficult assimilation, they are often seen as not caring about or valuing their child's education because they are perceived to have low school involvement. The notion that Latino parents are uninterested in their children's education has become embedded in education discussions, and school systems and educators continue to use the Latino family as a scapegoat when questioned about their Latino student accountability. This myth about Latino parental involvement, as Valencia and Black (2002) describe it, is based on a *deficit thinking* where the blame is placed on the victim. Instead of analyzing what schools might be doing to prevent parents from becoming involved, deficit thinking shifts the focus to families and purports that parents' behaviors are aligned with their values toward education.

Several studies have reported that Latino parents place importance on their child's education, but that the parents also struggle with the schools (Lott, 2001; Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004; Olivos, 2004; Torrez, 2004). Likewise, Suarez-Orozco (1995) reported that Latino parents of 189 students had an unreeling desire for their children to succeed academically. Latino and Hispanic families hold high aspirations for their children. However, these families struggle to navigate schools' rigid template of what is accepted, valued, and dealt with in terms of parents and their involvement. These barriers place Latino parents at a disadvantage in supporting their children in their schooling (Auerbach, 2002; Ceballo, 2004; Olivos, 2004, and Valdes, 1996). Based on the results of these previous studies, it is worth investigating more flexible models for parent and school interactions, where parents share with the schools what they need to assist them with helping their child succeed. The success of each student is the responsibility of all stakeholders, especially schools and parents. To develop a truly genuine partnership at the secondary level, both parties need to be willing to listen to each other to establish what needs must be met to facilitate the success of the student.

In this work, I propose that by using a definition of parental involvement as an exchange between home and school—as opposed to something parents do—then a more comprehensive view of parent involvement can be created. I have witnessed many times how educators with the best intentions decide what immigrant Latino parents need based primarily on perceptions of what they do not have. A study by Auerbach (2007) found that many Latino parents became skeptical towards schools because of the way school programs failed to account for the needs and experiences of many Latino parents. Past research supports the idea of offering parent programs and college access programs

where parents can exchange concerns and information (Auerbach, 2004; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Fann, Jarsky, & McDonough, 2009; Torrez, 2004). Despite research that shows what programs can be valuable for immigrant parents, schools have failed for more than three decades to make progress in moving Latino students successfully through college (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Gándara & Contreras, 2010). In fact, some aspects of the system have had detrimental impacts. For example, Guadalupe Valdes (1996) conducted a study of 10 immigrant families of Mexican origin and her findings led her to caution about parent involvement, intervention, and empowerment programs led by schools. Her concern was that these programs are designed to change families. One of the significant examples of this concern was language. Valdes discussed how immigrants were made to feel ashamed of speaking Spanish, and when parents reacted to that by decreasing use of Spanish, this led the following generations to lose their native language and become English-only speakers. Valdes drew attention to the fact that bilingual students were seen as problems in the U.S. school system, because societies like the US fear bilingualism as a threat, whereas societies that value bilingualism view students who speak more than one language as assets. Language is just one aspect of how programs need to take into account and value cultural differences while educators attempt to provide assets to improve Latino student success rates at all levels of education, but especially the high school level. In the hope of contributing to progress for Latino students and families, this study will investigate the potential impact that Latino parents can have on student achievement by exploring high school resources that parents have identified as help they need in order to prepare their children for college.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of first-generation Latino parents at the secondary level in regard to college readiness support. More specifically, this research explored parents' views on school-related resources in relation to their child's preparation for college. Latinos have the lowest rates of secondary education and college completion in the US (Ybarra, 2004). While the majority of public high schools that serve Latino students may offer limited information and support related to the transition from high school to college, it is critical that this information not be merely offered, but that it be accessible and useful to immigrant parents (Gándara & Contreras, 2008; Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2009). Past research has found that Latino parents feel that schools do not listen to them (Auerbach, 2002,2004, Ceballo, 2004, Gandara & Contreras, 2008, Olivos, 2004, & Ramirez, 2003). My study addressed the specific support and resources that Latino parents at the high school level need to effectively support their child in their preparation for graduation and college access. The study did not intend to persuade parents to change their childrearing practices. Instead, the study employed a *con respeto* philosophy to find out parents' views on their child's school and their views on the school's support for helping parents to achieve the postsecondary goals they had for their children. Essentially, I wanted to know what the parents needed from the high school. As such, this study aimed to gain an understanding of the factors contributing to the practices these immigrant Latino parents utilize to support their children in their college preparation.

Research Questions

This study was guided by two research questions:

1. To what extent are the school-related resources that first-generation Latino parents access today sufficient and appropriate in supporting their child in being college ready when they complete high school?

2. What are the expectations, motivations, and practices that parents go by to support their children in their college preparation during high school?

This study aimed to bridge the gap in communication and understanding between first-generation Latino parents and the schools attended by their children. It adds to the literature that supports prioritizing what parents view as essential resources from schools to better prepare their child for their postsecondary aspirations. It is my hope that the findings of this study will help schools be better informed and pay more attention to what Latino parents need to create successful partnerships, with the aim of increasing high school graduation rates as well as the college enrollment of these students.

Conceptual Framework

This study explores the perspectives of immigrant Latino parents at the high school level. It examines the relationships between their views of their child's secondary school, on the one hand, and the support and resources they receive to increase their college readiness, on the other. The framework to analyze the data was developed from theories of social and cultural capital. In this section, I will briefly discuss these theories and how they have been applied to educational research on Latino youth, immigrant parents, and low academic attainment. Driven by the work of Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, the concept of social capital has developed far beyond the basic notion of

people accruing benefits by being in groups. The acquisition of social capital requires an investment in both economic and cultural capital (Portes, 1998). Differences in students' comprehension of opportunities available to them can be accounted for by differences in social and cultural capital. For Bourdieu (1986):

> Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (p. 248–249)

Bourdieu (1986) identified three types of capital: social, economic and cultural.

Social capital refers to the control of resources that are based on networks of influence and support, relationships, and group membership. This type of capital can be broken down into two components. First, the relationship that allows the person to access resources that his or her social groups has, and second the quality and quantity of those resources.

Economic capital refers to the control over economic resources such as assets and money. **Finally, cultural capital refers to** the forms of knowledge that are not related to finances such as education, and skills, which promote social mobility beyond economic means. There are three types of cultural capital: (a) *institutionalized cultural capital,* which refers to acquired academic credentials, licenses, certifications, etc., earned by various school level completions; (b) *objectified cultural capital,* which consists of material items that people possess that allow them to fit in and increase mobility; and (c) *embodied cultural capital, which is a* concept pertaining to a state of being, a sense of appreciation, comprehension of cultural wealth, sense of time, cultural preferences.

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A legacy of work informs research on the relationships between capital and educational opportunities. Economist Glen Loury (1977) focused on the inherited poverty of black parents that would be forever transmitted to their children, and his work paved the way for James Coleman's work on the same process (Portes, 1998). Coleman (1990) defined social capital as a set of resources rooted in community and family that are functional for the social and cognitive development of children and adolescents. Coleman is also known for his work on the concept of closure, which he defined as "the trustworthiness of social structures that allows the proliferation of obligations and expectations" (Coleman, 1988, p. 107). Coleman's idea of closure is relevant to this study, because he argued that the strength of the relationships between parents and their children significantly influenced the social capital that was available to the children from the parents. Coleman's conceptualization of social capital centers on the willingness of the social network to share its resources, and this extends to resources pertaining to education in secondary schools for Latino families. Many scholars have conducted research on support structures and college pathways for youth, and such work aligns with the framework that orients this study (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Suarez-Orozco, 2008; Torrez, 2004; Valdes, 1996). This framework recognizes the connections between social capital, immigrant assimilation, and academic success. Portes and Zhou (1993), for instance, argued that social capital, understood as the resources that one is connected to through relationships (Bourdieu, 1986), is critical for predicting the segment of society into which immigrants assimilate. In addition, doing well academically is a key component in the adaptation process of young immigrants (Perreira et al., 2006). As immigrants try to achieve academic success (which will lead to cultural capital gains),

schools have the power to exclude parents or to include them so that they become familiar with the system, surroundings, and functions (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002). The issue at hand is that schools tend not to value the minority culture and their needs (Ceballo, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Mapp, 2003; Olivos, 2004). When schools devalue or ignore the needs of second language learners and their non-native speaking parents, Latino students are less likely to succeed academically, and this has broader social implications.

Some studies have found that Latino parents feel intimidated by teachers (Martinez et al., 2004; Olivos, 2004; Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Part of this feeling of intimidation may be the realization that their cultural capital differs from one that mainstream society in the US deems valuable. Compounding the issue, Valdes (1996) described a mutual lack of understanding between immigrant parents and teachers. Indeed, Latino parents are often perceived as not caring about their child's schooling. This is paradoxical, because these parents have made the ultimate sacrifice: they left their home, family, way of life, and everything they know to aspire for something better for their children. Teachers are narrowly focused on the students' education, while parents are deeply concerned, confused, and stressed on their child's education as they also navigate a complicated process of assimilation outside of the education system. The parents' experiences have led them to shun away and avoid contacting teachers. It is then the schools' duty to reach out to bridge and remedy the communication gaps that have created the miscommunications, misinterpretations, and misperceptions.

The social and cultural capital framework is useful for understanding the cultural dynamics between first-generation Latino parents and schools. They also help explain

some of the struggles that these families attempt to overcome. Indeed, as Bassani (2007)

noted:

> Social capital theory (SCT) has become increasingly popular throughout the
> social sciences because of its utility in explaining the wellbeing of individuals and
> groups. Social capital, the product of social relationships (such as trust, loyalty,
> security, self confidence) that youths have within such groups as the family,
> school, and other community organizations, is believed to play a major role in the
> development of wellbeing. (Bassani, 2007, p. 17)

Generally speaking, dominant groups in society do not value the cultures ELL parents

and students come from, and do not acknowledge what they have to offer. Lee (2007)

emphasized that teachers need to recognize the children's cultural capital and begin their

teaching from there. As schools become more culturally diverse, teachers and

administrators need to focus more on understanding the cultural views of their

stakeholders. Immigrant parents are coming into the US and the education system with a

social capital that does not allow them to access the public school system because of the

complexity of such a system. Even with positive attitudes toward school and high

educational aspirations for their children, not all immigrant parents have the

understanding of how they can help their children succeed academically in the U.S.

(Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Valdes, 1996). Ironically, many parents immigrate to the U.S. for

better educational opportunities for their children, yet their social and cultural capital

hinders their comprehension of what is needed in the U.S. to succeed academically

(Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Students who possess cultural capital that aligns with the norm of

what is valued in the school systems profit without having to do much, whereas students

whose cultural capital is not recognized or valued struggle within the academic setting

but in accessing much more in society.

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For the purpose of this study, language and formal education are key elements of cultural capital that research has found to be a significant obstacle for Latino parents in navigating the U.S. school system (Auerbach, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Martinez et al., 2004; Oliva, 2008; Valdés, 1996). Bourdieu (1986) observed that cultural capital is the "best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment" (p. 244). The social attributes that some people have allow for an effortless navigation of systems, while those hindered by low levels of the cultural capital that is recognized by mainstream society do not even know where to start. This *cultural mismatch* (Lopez, 2001) creates a divide between families and schools. The mismatch between immigrant needs and the information their cultural capital gives them access to, further widens when the school acts as a bystander and is not proactive in communicating with parents. In this regard, one study (Auerbach, 2004) suggested that schools are not communicating effectively with their Spanish-speaking immigrant parents. This study examined Latino parents' attitudes towards school, knowledge about higher education, and involvement in planning for their children's postsecondary education. Parents described how the college information they received was difficult for them to understand. They also shared that ways in which school staff was not always forthcoming or clear with information to help them understand how to help their children reach their goal of attending college. This begs the question: How are parents supposed to assist their children in navigating the school system when they themselves might have never experienced that system? The high school system may be just as foreign to them as the language of the new country. Considering this situation, in this dissertation I examine the

resources that schools provide to Latino parents and families in order to assess to what extent they serve the needs of the immigrant student population and aid their success.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter examines prior studies on this topic, and is organized in six sections. The first one deals with pull and push factors that drive Latino migration to the United States, and the particular cultural and language-related challenges that they face in the new country. The second section reviews prior research about the situation of Latinos in US schools, particularly in urban areas. This research raises important issues in terms of inequality of educational opportunities. The third section discusses research on Latino parents and school practices. Overall, these studies suggest that parental involvements in schools are significantly influenced by school practices. The fourth section investigates literature on parental expectations and practices, particularly reflecting on schools' awareness of parental needs. The fifth section reviews the high schools and immigrant parents, discussing strategies and programming that have enhanced Latino parent involvement. The final section of this chapter looks over literature on school resources in relation to college readiness for Latino youth. This section sheds light on common resources that schools have implemented to support their student college readiness preparation.

Latino Immigration

This section discusses relevant background literature on Latino immigration to the US. Latino immigration to this country occurs for a variety of social, political and economic reasons. Latinos migrate to seek refugee status, find more opportunities for their children, improve their safety, and reunite with family, among other cultural and societal motivations (Jiménez, 2007; Perreira et al., 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). It is also worth mentioning that not all immigrants come to the US voluntarily; poor

immigrants often migrate because they have no other viable alternative in their home countries (Ibarraran & Lubostsky, 2007; Perreira et al., 2006). Competition for scarce resources has a significant impact on how people perceive immigration as well (Jiménez, 2007). In 2001, the largest group of immigrants admitted to the US migrated for employment and economic reasons (Martin & Midgley, 2003). Most immigrants who come to the US are guided by the belief that the country is the land of the free and a place where all dreams come true. Parents share this belief with their children and use it as fuel to gain the courage to migrate. This is particularly true for immigrants with low levels of formal schooling. For example, Ibarraran and Lubostsky (2007) found that "low educated Mexicans have a greater incentive to migrate to the United States than higher-educated Mexicans" (p. 159).

One of the first challenges immigrant families encounter when they come to the US is the language barrier (Perreira et al., 2006; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, Tordova, 2009). The 2000 census indicated that 47 million people over the age of 5 reported speaking a language other than English. Many immigrant parents are coming into the US with limited formal education themselves; they might have relied heavily on their social capital to navigate the school matters in their home country, but when they left, that social capital stayed behind. When they enter the US education system, parents are often judged as not caring about their child's wellbeing, but the truth is that they often lack guidance on how the system works (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008; Torrez, 2004). There is also a correlation between lower wages and a lack of English skills (Martin & Midgley, 2003). Many parents try to get as many jobs as possible to keep their families financially afloat as well as to send money to their

relatives back in their homeland. One study found that immigrant men who did not speak English earned only half of immigrant men who learned English (Martin & Midgley, 2003).

Latinos in Schools

Kozleski and Smith (2009) reported that the 100 largest public school systems in the US are predominately urban. Without a good knowledge of the daily lives of students and the details of the educational instruction they are taught, there is little to offer in authentic improvement in the experience of urban schooling (Kozleski & Smith, 2009; Lee, 2007). Kozol (2005) found that 46% of immigrants from non-English speaking countries live in urban areas, and the children of these immigrants become the nation's ELL students. These students are the ones who have the obligation to learn and adapt to the US. Schools in urban areas disproportionately serve minority students with large class sizes and offer fewer resources necessary for college preparation (Gándara, 2009; Martinez et al., 2004; Suarez & Orozco et al. 2008; Ramirez, 2003; Torrez, 2004).

Unfortunately, for the most part, Latinos are not on equal grounds to reach their potential academically when compared to other ethnic groups. Anyon (1997) attributes this to limited school resources. She notes that Latino immigrant families mostly experience "those schools and systems that provide schooling for students in inner corridor, densely populated, communities in which vast disparities in commerce, population density, transportation, socioeconomic status, and socio cultural backgrounds characterize the lives of people who live there" (p. 427). Likewise, Martin and Midgley (2003) found that "most non-English-speaking students come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, which presents other handicaps for excelling in schools" (p.

41). Along the same lines, The National Poverty Center (2010) found that 31% of Latino children live in poverty, which places them at a considerable disadvantage regarding their educational opportunities. Moreover, "dropouts are more likely to be unemployed, to earn less money when they are employed, are more likely to receive public assistance, and are more likely to be incarcerated" (Patterson, Hale, & Stessman, 2008, p. 1).

A number of immigrant students rely on their schools to guide them in their postsecondary endeavors (Auerbach, 2002; Lareau, 1987; Torrez, 2004), because of their mismatched capital. Studies have found that students who live in two-parent households benefit from more attention, greater access to resources, and investments towards their educational aspirations. However, significant amounts of immigrant youth grow up in nontraditional households, for example living with extended family (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Due to social, economic, and cultural restraints, these students often contribute to the household income by having a part-time and sometimes even a full-time job while attending school. Understandably, there are academic consequences for students who must work or who contend with struggles that come with low incomes. Poverty in urban areas has been associated with low academic performances (Anyon, 1997) not to mention the health issues that immigrant children from low-income families face because they are more prone to illness due to the resources they lack. These children cannot afford to be proactive when it comes to an infection or virus (Berliner, 2006). These findings are not intended to support the deficit thinking model that was previously discussed in the context of Valencia and Black's (2002) research. Instead, these experiences are meant to bring awareness to the challenges faced by Latino families in the effort to promote a positive relationship with their schools. Many studies have delved

further into connections among economic challenges of Spanish-speaking families, school resource and attitude, and academic performance. Berliner (2006) found that small reductions in family poverty lead to increased positive school behavior and better academics. Patterson et al. (2008) discussed how schools' values and beliefs become a base for children's structure. De La Cruz (2008) noted that in order to effectively work with ELL students and parents, educational systems must take into account the inequalities they experience. If students know that their schools are supportive, perhaps they will be more vocal about their needs instead of resorting to dropping out. High dropout and low graduation rates unfortunately have become the norm in many urban high schools for immigrant Latino students. Furthermore, high dropout rates among our youth population then lead to more substantial problems for them and for the nation. The impact on economic earnings is clear: in 2005, a high school dropout earned an average of $10,000 less per year compared to a high school graduate (Wise, 2008). Over the course of a lifetime, a student who drops out of school will earn approximately $260,000 less than graduates (Wise, 2008). Dropouts tend to contribute to society as consumers rather than as taxpayers, and they are more likely to become recipients of public health services and welfare (Steinberg & Almeida, 2008; Wise, 2008).

Latino Parents and School Practices

The literature on the topic notes a connection between schools and communities partnerships and student academic success (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Fann et al., 2009). Interestingly, a large body of research supports the importance of family involvement in the elementary and middle schools, but there are research gaps when it comes to parental involvement at the high school level (Epstein, 2001). For the purpose of this study,

parental involvement is focused on how it relates to college preparation at the high school level. This section of the literature review will discuss the struggles that Latino parents endure at the school level, their views of their child's school, and how they provide support to their children.

Even though Latino parents make up the majority of many urban high school communities, they are often the least informed of what is occurring within their children's schools (Auerbach, 2002; Olivos, 2004; Ramirez, 2003; Torrez, 2004; Valdes, 1996). As already discussed, several studies also found that many Latino immigrant parents feel intimidated by schools (Lott, 2001; Perreira et al., 2006; Ramirez, 2003). Parents must contend with a system that does not meet their needs. Access to information is limited due to time restraints, especially because of their demanding jobs, which is a result of their often-precarious economic situations. In addition, the economic pressures associated with their jobs often do not allow them to visit schools during the day when meetings or other activities that invite parental involvement take place (Tornatsky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002).

Olivos (2004) observed that absence and disengagement are the most common forms of resistance that people use, and suggests that Latino parents are not involved with their children's schools because they believe it to be useless. Parents are seldom conscious of "how and why the school system frequently functions to their children's disadvantage" (p. 7). Parents' stories indicate that they are concerned with financial restraints hindering their child's future endeavors. However, Latino parents often lack access to information about the school system and their rights as parents and their children's rights as students, and they lack awareness of how educational injustice occurs

(Auerbach, 2002; Lareau, 1987; Mapp, 2003; Olivos, 2004; Ramirez, 2003; Tornatzky et al., 2002; Torrez, 2004). Schools can be better equipped to communicate with parents if they are aware of parents' perceptions of the schools' responsibilities and expectations. Latino parents do care about their children's education and have the desire and ability to participate.

When educators better understand the expectations and perceptions Latino parents have for their children's high schools, it assists in closing the communication gap between urban high schools and their communities. It is important to focus on the communication gap, because this gap adds to parents' concerns about their children's futures. In the study conducted by Ramirez (2003), parents reported that there were specific behaviors they were educated on that were viewed as the right way to be involved in the school. In that study, parents were given the opportunity to share their experiences, and at the same time gain knowledge from each other. Throughout these discussions, vital information was shared that enlightened parents on some of the discrepancies with the quality of instruction some of their children were receiving. In this study, as in many others, language was identified as a major factor in the communication gap between the parents and the school. Parents desired to be a part of their children's education, but forces within their children's schools prevented them from doing so.

In an important contribution to the literature on the misperceptions of poor Mexican parents and their attitudes toward their child's schooling, Guadalupe Valdes (1996) found that parents yearn for teachers to be available to speak about grades, to find interpreters during open houses and at other times throughout the school day, and to communicate with the parents when their child is in need of assistance. Due to the

apparent walls that have been established within the school's structure, the parents interviewed in this study felt abandoned and helpless while trying to gain information regarding their children's education. Valdes' study found that parents rely on traditional notions of respect and use *consejos* (cultural narratives) to teach children to respect and obey parents, to discourage selfishness, to look after siblings, and to keep attention focused on family goals (p. 131). The parents of this study focused primarily in raising a "good human being" (p. 8).

None of the 10 families in Valdes' study thought in terms of job titles or prestige as they looked toward the future. Furthermore, the study shows that Mexican parents do know how to parent, but their styles do not match up to the US norms, and for this reason their parental engagement in their children's education is disregarded and criticized. Valdes found that families in the study functioned as a collective unit where sharing and mutual aid were necessary and desired for survival purposes. For these families to be able to survive, all household members including extended families and related families must work together. They are familiar with working in teams and in groups for collective success and results. However, in the U.S. school system, students are judged by their individual merit and are evaluated by themselves and their solo production. This is one of the main reasons why students from these families struggle in our school system: the children's role is to contribute to the functioning of the family unit (p. 117) above their individual achievement.

In another study, González et al. (2005) challenged the deficit perspective that "many teachers hold toward parents of poverty, language difference, or low education by showing how to see and build from families' strengths and funds of knowledge" (p. 9). In

this study, teachers were given information on current research to support the positive effects of parental involvement on students' academic achievement. The teachers of this study analyzed articles, discussed practical strategies, and read books focused on parental involvement. This type of ethnographic research has helped teachers better understand the influence families could have on student achievement and has empowered teachers to reach out to families as well.

From the parents' perspective, doing well academically is a key component in the adaptation process of young immigrants (Auerbach, 2002; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perreira et al., 2006; Ramirez, 2003). Schools often ignore the needs of second language learners and their non-native-English speaking parents. A significant number of studies (Auerbach, 2002; Martinez et al., 2004; Olivos, 2004; Ramirez, 2003; Valdes, 1996) have shown schools are the authorities with power in the school-parent relationship, and they determine how much they allow different groups of parents to get involved in their decision making. Schools have devalued the resources of Latino immigrant families, and this devaluation constrains parents' involvement options and relations with the school system (Auerbach, 2001).

Parental Expectations and Practices

For over two decades, the study of parent involvement has been influenced by Epstein's model of family-school-community partnerships (Epstein & Lee, 1995). Joyce Epstein has done extensive research on parent involvement and family school connections, and her model identified five types of parent involvement styles. She claims that engagement with families should not be viewed as optional. Instead, schools should view communication with the parents of the children they serve as an obligation. Her

model is based on the theory of overlapping spheres of home, school and community. A study conducted in 2002 (Epstein & Sheldon) found that parent involvement in combination with specific structures in place improved school attendance. This study focused on the relationship between school attendance policies, school practices in involving parents, and student attendance rates. The most effective factors in increasing student attendance included home visits; rewards for improvement in student attendance; school counselor monitoring; parent workshops; and collaboration among teachers, truant officers, and families. The assumption here is that schools can improve the quality of education they offer to all students if they take a comprehensive approach that involves all stakeholders, especially educators, students, and parents.

Even though research has shown the benefits of parental involvement on student academic achievement, there are gaps in the literature in regard to the needs of the parents in relation to the school. This deficit model places the emphasis on the school-based involvement (Auerbach, 2001). Within the pedagogical model for parent education programs, a significant gap exists regarding the school resources available for Latino parents to prepare their children to be college ready after high school. Schools that have been viewed as effective and comprehensive in student success have common characteristics; ranking at the top of these characteristics is strong family engagement. This supports the idea that schools need parents to help the students achieve the greatest success. A true funds of knowledge approach, which acknowledges the strengths cultivated in individual households, might be what will begin the shift towards improving those test scores, graduation rates, and college acceptance rates.

High Schools and Immigrant Parents

The literature on the topic has identified ways that Latino parents effectively sustain high expectations of their children and support them in their education (Auerbach, 2001; Lopez, 2001; Martinez et al., 2004; Oliva, 2008). However, in reviewing the literature on high school support with immigrant parents regarding college readiness, I found that there are few empirical studies. Among the studies that do exist, research has been more focused on school outreach support for immigrant parents at the elementary and middle school level and few have dealt with high schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, 1992; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Valdes, 1996). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) viewed parent involvement by how parents believe they can positively influence their children's learning. This thought process has broadened the scope of the definition of parental involvement. Some studies (Auerbach, 2001, 2004) have found that Latino parents become advocates and become involved in their child's education in non-traditional ways. Auerbach (2007) called these parents *struggling advocates*, who use family approaches to create social mobility for the children. In my literature search, I found only a handful of empirical studies that focused on first-generation Latino parents at the secondary level. In this context, my study adds to this small body of research by shedding light on the perceptions of schooling through Latino immigrant parents' eyes, and by providing insights into what they are doing to support their children at the secondary level in order to become college ready.

Among the studies that explored parents of high school students, Auerbach (2007) explored family-school relations through a three-year qualitative case study. Using an ethnographic approach, she examined the beliefs, goals, and practices of 16 African

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American and Latino parents who had students in the Futures Project college access program within the high school. Out of the 16 parents, 11 were Mexicans and Central Americans and two were U.S.-born Chicanos. Half of the parents did not have a high school diploma. Four of them had very little English fluency. None of the parents in Auerbach's 2007 study had a college education; however, they aspired for their children to achieve one. The researcher had monthly bilingual meetings with families and discussed support for accessing college information. Topics under discussion included school transcripts, scholarships, technology usage, and contacts. Auerbach used semi-structured interviews to gain insight into parents' goals, beliefs, practices, and knowledge regarding the pathway to college.

This study, also known as The Futures Project, was a partnership between the University of California and a large, socioeconomically mixed high school in Los Angeles, California. The findings of this study suggest that the level of involvement of working-class parents was linked to their social and cultural capital. Auerbach found three categories of parents: the moral supporters, the struggling advocates, and the ambivalent companions. The *moral supporters* were all Latino immigrants who had the lowest educational attainment; they stressed the value of education to their children, stayed mostly at home, and rarely went to or interacted with their children's school. The *struggling advocates'* stories displayed more clearly direct efforts to help their children navigate the school system. This group of parents had strong social networks from which to work. These parents were not afraid to ask the school and their networks questions, and they did so to ensure that their children would be able to attend college. The *ambivalent companions* had the most familiarity with the school system but their college

knowledge was limited. However, they provided support through close communication and were more aware of the social lives of their children. Based on her findings, Auerbach suggested key elements for outreach programs for Latino immigrant parents:

- Start early in the students' high school experience (10th grade).

- Meetings should be bilingual and then provide small group discussions for further clarifications.

- Schedule meetings that are convenient for parents' work schedule.

- Help parents navigate the school system and college planning as a group.

- Help families develop strategies to overcome barriers they face within the school context.

Another study (Chrispeels and Rivero 2001) looked at school support for immigrant parents for successful high school completion and guidance of college pathways. This study explored the effects that a series of eight parent education classes about the American school system had on immigrant parents' role in their children's education. These classes were offered by the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). A retired minister founded the program due to disappointment with the high dropout rate of Latino students and limited school support. The program targets parents who have a low economic status and are recent immigrants to the US. PIQE has three main goals for parents: (a) learn about the educational system, (b) learn ways to interact with school and teachers, and (c) learn how to help their children at home. The researchers used pre- and post-survey responses, videotapes of the sessions, and parent interviews after they graduated from the program. This study included a total of 11 families (19 parents) from local schools. Although a semi-structured interview protocol

was used, Chrispeels and Rivero found that parents volunteered information and were eager to express their opinions about PIQE. According to the results of this study, parents who participated in the PIQE program became more active in their child's schooling, initiated contact with teachers and school personnel more frequently, and attended more school events. It is pertinent to note that this program works with parents from K through 12th grade. It provides a service that is specific to high school, but also provides support for the elementary and middle school levels. It functions by partnering with high schools where funding is coming from postsecondary institutions, and it is free of charge for parents. A modified version of this program is sponsored by Arizona State University through the American Dream Academy. This program has increased in popularity in Arizona, but unfortunately smaller urban school districts struggle to offer the program because of smaller annual budgets; many schools do not have the luxury for expenditures outside of the classroom. In addition to funding shortages, the eight-week program is costly. Over five years ago, the district I work in provided this program for one semester. The school spent over $16,000 for six concurrent eight-week sessions for parents of freshmen (four Spanish classes and two English classes). Due to budget constraints, the school was unable to continue providing the program.

In another study that involved parental knowledge of school systems and college readiness, Torrez (2004) found that Latino parents did not have information about college and university admission requirements. Torrez administered a survey that was answered by 92 parents from three different high schools in Southern California. Parents were under the impression that their children were being prepared for college, but were upset and disappointed in the schools. This study supports other studies that have found that,

due to their limited cultural capital in the US, parents are not aware of the system requirements and navigational procedures (Auerbach, 2002; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Olivos, 2004; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008; Valdes, 1996).

Another study (Sobel & Kugler, 2007) examined a program that operates in Washington, D.C. This program offers services and workshops in Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese. There is also a guided teacher component where teachers are involved to increase understanding of cultures and practices so they can incorporate funds of knowledge in their classrooms. The initiative began with a $25,000 grant that was later permanently added to the budget for Annanadale High School in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC, which has a high immigrant population. Sobel and Kugler (2007) have implemented a parent center to work with the large immigrant population within that district.

A limited number of studies shed light on the practices used by parents to support their children in school. Most studies have researched best practices by looking back and investigating what students found helpful within their family setting in achieving academic success and transitioning to college. Lopez (2001) conducted a study on how immigrant families taught their children the value of education by hard work. Children valued hard work in general, and experienced the strenuous daily labor their parents endured to provide basic necessities to them. These family stories translated the lessons of working hard in the field into lessons for working hard in school. Lopez selected a purposeful sample of five immigrant families that were recommended by school personnel and conducted a series of in-depth interviews and observations with immediate and extended family members. After a six-month period, he had a total of 16 observations

and 12 semi structured interviews. Lopez found three lessons that families were instilling in their children: (a) know your work, (b) recognize that the work is difficult and not profitable, and (c) realize that without an education they end up doing a similar type of job as the parents. Latino parent involvement in their children's education may be motivated by different factors than other parents in U.S. society. The parents in this study were very clear about wanting their children to learn through experiencing how difficult life is without an education. Lopez suggested that schools build on what the parents are already doing as they educate and prepare children for college.

In a research with successful Latino college students, Ceballo (2004) explored the role that parents had in their children's success. He identified four themes: (a) parents' verbal commitment to the importance of education, (b) parent flexibility in their child's autonomy, (c) nonverbal support for education (excused from chores, church, did everything possible for student to not need to work while in school, etc.), and (d) they all had a supportive mentor that helped them guide their children. The parents in Ceballo's study were very interested in their child's education, regardless of whether they understood very much of the curriculum and the purpose of the assignments. Interestingly, Ceballo also found that many students did not appreciate their parents' support until they left home for college.

In another study, Arellano and Padilla (1996) identified three factors related to immigrant parental support that contribute to student academic achievements: (a) source of pride (Latino culture), (b) optimistic outlook regarding their abilities, and (c) persistent drive to succeed. Students in this study identified parental support and encouragement of educational pursuits as critical to their educational success. These three components of

success are aligned directly with the parents' home-based involvement and support while the students were at home prior to college. Even with low familiarity of the educational system, language barriers, and poverty, these parents have been able to provide effective practices in supporting their children continue with their education (Fann et al., 2009; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Mapp, 2003; Perreira et al., 2006).

Community support is also a strong resource that Latino immigrant parents can use to support their child's schooling. For instance, Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) conducted an analysis that examined immigrant Latino parents with a low SES and their views on their role in their child's education through a local live talk show, La Placita Bilingue. Four themes emerged from this study: (a) there is a special place for children in the family, (b) *saber es poder* (knowledge is power), (c) *querer es poder* (where there is a will there is a way), and (d) the importance of being bilingual and keeping culture. The purpose of this study was to learn what is important to Latino parents, or in other words, what they value or prioritize. The study examined 11 hours of archival material containing 11 talk shows. Of the 18 parents who participated in the study, sixteen were immigrants, and most of them were farm workers. After participating in the study, parents reported higher confidence and self-esteem. As a result of the study, Suárez-Orozco recommended educators approach low SES Latino immigrant parents from a strengths-based perspective (2008).

School Resources to Increase College Readiness

Some studies have shown that, for minority students, attending college represents the best and perhaps one of the most realistic options for social mobility and for escaping poverty (Auerbach, 2002; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Perreira et al., 2006; Ramirez,

2003; Torrez, 2004). Unfortunately, these groups are the least likely to have access to these opportunities (Sokatch, 2006). For college cultures to develop in schools, students have to be aware of the school support structures and services that are available. Many of the studies previously discussed in this section (Ceballo, 2004; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Ramirez, 2003; Torrez, 2004; Sokatch, 2006) mention the importance of increasing student motivation by raising their aspirations, offering rigorous curriculum, and providing viable postsecondary options that are accessible to all students and parents.

     Milner (2008) found that successful teachers in urban schools use culturally responsive and relevant curricular opportunities and approaches for their students. In return, teachers who engage in culturally relevant teaching practices learn more about themselves culturally, racially, economically, and socially. To create a realistic college culture, urban schools need to stop watering down the system and treating Latino students as if they are not bright or as if they lack certain skills (Ybarra, 2004). If teachers can bridge the learning gap and make difficult concepts relevant to their students, they are raising the level of expectations for students at the same time that they are providing the tools for them to achieve academically. Warikoo and Carter's (2009) analysis of the relationship among culture, schooling, and achievement also supports the concept that strong teacher-student cultures fostered higher achievement for Hispanics. They argued that high-quality training is needed among teachers for minority students to be successful. This training significantly emphasized that teachers must be culturally sensitive. Lee (2007) emphasized that teachers need to recognize children's cultural capital and begin their teaching from there. Students are often transparent about what they believe about themselves, but most importantly they see and perceive what their teachers think of them.

The capabilities and abilities that teachers believe students possess play a vital role on what minority urban students are able to academically produce. Milner (2008) stated, "teachers may rely on stereotypes that they have learned from media or their parents" (p. 159). It is important for teachers to recognize what informs their perceptions of students.

A milestone study by Rosenthal and Jacobson in 1968, commonly known as the Pgymalion study, showed how higher teacher expectations for students yielded higher student achievement. The study consisted of an elementary school in San Francisco where a nonverbal test of intelligence was administered to a group of sixth graders; teachers were led to believe the test would predict intellectual *blooming* (Rosenthal, 2002). Teachers were given names of the students in the experimental group and were told that those children scored higher on the test. In reality, the only difference between the children in the control group and the experimental group was in the mind of the teacher. Eight months later, all students were retested on the same intelligence test. Overall, the students teachers were told scored higher from the first round of testing showed greater achievement gains in comparison to the children in the control group (Rosenthal, 2002). In this case, the Pygmalion effect was a self-fulfilling prophecy that connected teacher's expectations with students' achievement.
This research paved the way to a few replication studies (Jussim, 1993; Rosenthal, 2002).

The sense of belonging is also an important factor among minority students. Gonzalez and Padilla (1997) studied resilience among Mexican American students and found that when students felt that they belonged in their schools, they had greater levels of classroom engagement and an increase in school pride. This study also found that 74% of the most resilient students in urban schools were in the college preparatory track.

These students, when compared to other schools, reported higher levels of cultural pride and awareness. Rather than being responsive to student's needs, schools often expect students to conform to what the school is able to provide (Auerbach, 2002; Patterson et al., 2008). Research has supported the fact that schools that are highly minority student populated provide limited college preparation resources (Gándara & Conteras, 2009; Martinez et al., 2004; Suarez & Orozco, 2008; Ramirez, 2003; Torrez, 2004).

In one study on college culture in urban schools, Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) argued that teachers should not and could not use a deficit approach. Instead, teachers should reinforce the norms of school attendance, class participation, and appropriate course-taking patterns as well as provide higher education information to all students. Within the six measures for college cultures in high schools identified by this study, teacher advocacy was number three. In a sense, teachers are the gatekeepers for the academic future of ELL and other minority students and must approach their classrooms appropriately.

There are a multitude of factors that impact the academic success of Latino immigrant students. For instance, Sokatch's (2006) study showed that peers in urban school settings have significant influence on college decisions. In another study, ELLs reported that becoming proficient in English and obtaining a college education were two essential components of fitting into the new society they were living in (Reynoso, 2008). In yet another study, De La Cruz (2008) used personal interviews and questionnaires to examine what students who learned English in their secondary grades viewed as crucial supports and forms of mentorship. Eight of the ten participants reported that one of the reasons that motivated them to continue on with their postsecondary education was their

anger over how their parents were treated because they did not further their own education and because they did not speak English (De La Cruz, 2008).

Another significant factor mentioned by students as influential for their postsecondary studies was the support of a peer mentor, or someone who had gone through the same struggles that they had and kept encouraging them and guiding them to stay on track. These peer mentors provided the students with a living example of what could be achieved. Beyond mentorship, holding schools accountable for support can also help to develop a college culture in high schools. Skrla et al. (2004) acknowledged that having equity audits promoted equality and academic achievement. Another way to foster equity is through guidance counselors, who are primarily responsible for placing students in appropriate classes, and can monitor which students are placed or excluded in specific classes. In addition, guidance counselors can vouch for programs that are needed such as bilingual programs, parent literacy, or tutoring programs.. Guidance counselors can also advocate for immunization clinics held on campus, food drives, and clothing drives. This is important because, as stated previously, ELLs and other minority students who are struggling with poverty tend to have few resources to turn to for medical, food, and clothing needs (Anyon, 1997; Berliner, 2006).

Patterson et al. (2008) recognized that dropout prevention and recovery programs have been in existence for many years, yet minority students are among the highest to dropout. Past research has identified that a supportive academic environment and sense of belonging to school are significant predictors of resilience among minority students and their grades (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). Relatedly, Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) noted that school-based social capital is crucial for minority students to succeed. One

manifestation of school-based social capital can be relationships between educations and students, and such personalized relationship between school staff and students promote frequent communication about postsecondary goals and aspirations. Many schools present themselves as having a college culture, but a more accurate measure for assessing this culture is how aware the students are and how students benefit from the culture. In considering college preparation activities as well as hands-on support, a nationwide study demonstrated that awareness of financial aid plays a significant role in how parents and minority students decide to pursue college (De La Rosa, 2006). This study found that one out of every five dependent, low-income students did not submit a free application for financial aid. Even more staggering were the statistics for students who passed the deadline. In surveying students, De La Rosa's study found that 45.8% of students disagreed that applying for financial aid was complicated. However, families did not receive information and access to this information to meet deadlines. If the majority of ELLs and other minority students live in urban areas where their families fall under the poverty line, then it would be logical to take advantage of the available assistance to finance their postsecondary education. Workshops and informational sessions directed to schools' communities and immigrant parents can decrease anxiety and provide relief in postsecondary planning. Many students' parents panic at the idea of college, but it may be because they fear they cannot afford it (Auerbach, 2007; Fann et al., 2009; Torrez, 2004). The dissemination of this information needs to be delegated to people who are able to communicate using the parents' native language so that they are able to comprehend the college application and financial aid process to the greatest extent. It is also important for this information to be part of the school culture, because this will create a sense of

opportunity for the students, and research has shown a sense of opportunity has a positive impact on student achievement.

In summary, the research literature suggests that even though Latino youth make up a significant portion of the growing student population in the nation's urban schools, they do not have the cultural, social, or economic capital to succeed in school. When arriving to the US, Latino parents face a multitude of barriers and limitations that negatively affect their school-based involvement in their child's schooling, regardless of how strongly they feel about the value of education. Even though research has shown the importance of parental involvement and student achievement, a gap exists in the literature because there are limited studies at the high school level. Though limited, the research does indicate that school structures and practices play a significant role in relation to Latino parent involvement. Existing research has found that schools' willingness to share accessible resources in the community they serve can have a positive effect on parental engagement, which can lead to high student achievement. Accordingly, a significant part of this chapter was dedicated to reviewing the literature relating to school resources and practices as well as parental involvement. The following chapter describes the methodology that I employed in exploring school resources and practices in addition to parental supports and needs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The literature review provided in the previous chapter revealed that Latino parents do not have enough knowledge of the U.S. school system. Even though parents value education and want to be part of their child's education, systemic barriers and differences among valued capital limit their support capabilities (Auerbach, 2007; Olivos, 2004; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008; Torrez, 2004; Valdes, 1996). This chapter addresses the research design that was used for this study. It also discusses the sample, data collection methods, and issues regarding the validity of the study.

Design

The goal of this study was to develop an understanding of the lived experienced of Latino immigrant parents in one school district of Arizona. More specifically, it focused on Title 1 high schools in that district which have the highest concentration of Latino students. Title 1 refers to supplemental federal funds schools receive to support academically struggling students and populations of economically disadvantaged students. The study aimed at exploring the perceptions and expectations about the school attended by their children, and their daily practice to enhance the educational success of their children. To this end, I used a qualitative approach. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), qualitative research has two main features: (a) the researcher is the means through which the study is conducted, and (b) the purpose of the research is to learn about some facet of the social world (p. 5). To collect data, I developed a case study design that included interviews, a focus group, and field notes from observations. Case studies focus on understanding a larger phenomenon through the exploration of a single example. They are descriptive, holistic, heuristic, and inductive (Rossman & Rallis,

2003). The naturalistic nature of case study inquiry allows data to be collected through people's individual and collective actions, thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions. This study also provided insight into what practices parents follow to support their children in their secondary schooling as well as their opinions about the resources provided from the schools to support college readiness. In addition, this study explored cultural and social dynamics that facilitate or hinder Latino immigrant parent involvement at the secondary level.

Context

The study took place in an urban high school district established in 1955 in the southwest valley in Arizona. The school district selected for this investigation is composed of four high schools. Two of the high schools are Title I [1]. The study focused on parents from these two schools. One of the schools has an 80% graduation rate with a 95% attendance rate according to the Arizona Department of Education. This school serves a student population of 1,560. The second school that participated in this study serves 1,800 students and has a 77% graduation rate with also a 95% attendance rate. It is worth noting the historical context of the communities where these two schools are located. This Southwest region of the USA has rural roots, and agriculture was its main economic engine for decades. Farm workers were brought from Mexico to this region primarily for the many acres of alfalfa and cotton fields in the mid-1900s. Now this community has become a suburb of Phoenix. Former farmland is now covered with major

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[1] Title I is a federal program that is part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) and provides funds to school districts to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students.

residential subdivisions and shopping centers. According to the US Census (2015) the largest racial/ethnic groups in this region currently are Hispanic (53.3%) followed by white (31.9%) and Black (8.9%).

Procedure and Participants

The guidance counselors for ELL students in the two schools identified participants. As the researcher, the guidance counselors provided me with a list that had names of parents of students. I was able to reach a total of 32 parents from the list, and 29 eligible parents agreed to participate. Participants selected for this study met two criteria: (a) they were Latin American immigrant parents who had not attended college and (b) at the time of the interview, they had at least one child in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade. Individual parents were the units of analysis for the study. If parents chose to have their spouse participate in the interviews, then the data was categorized in two units. There were three couples within the 29 participants in this study. The participants of this study were purposefully chosen based on those subjects who self-reported as having college aspirations for their children in the initial questions of the interview guide. Prior to the in-person interview, a phone interview was completed with participants to gain demographic information (see Appendix A and B) and to discuss the consent to participate in the study. Of the 29 participants, 62% were mothers and 37% were fathers. The average number of years that parents had been in the US was 9 years, ranging from 4 years to 20. The average age of parents in the study was between 36 and 40 years of age. The 29 parent participants migrated to the US from six Latin American countries: 19 (66%) from Mexico, 4 from El Salvador (14%), 2 from Guatemala (7%), 2 from Honduras (7%), 1 from Colombia (3%), and 1 from Peru (3%). The average education level among the

parents was equivalent to a 6th grade education. Two parents started 12th grade in Mexico, but did not complete their *preparatoria* (high school.) The parents in the group either had one or two children: 72% of parents had one child in high school; the remaining 28% had two children at the high school level. The majority of the parents had families with more children than those in high school, and the average family size of the participants was four children per household.

Data Collection

Qualitative data about the 29 parent participants was collected through interviews, field notes, and a focus group. The interviews took place in a private setting within the school where parents were able to express themselves openly and freely. The focus group site was selected based on Creswell (2009), who stated:

> Qualitative research tends to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. This up close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research. (p. 175)

Interviews provided a great deal of data. The interview session with each parent was approximately 75-minutes long. The preliminary semi-structured interview guide was used for the interviews. The interviews were scheduled around the participants' availability. Most of the interviews occurred in the late afternoons when the participant parents were done with work. Five interviews were done on a weekend due to parents' work schedules. Parents had the option of having the interviews carried out in Spanish or English. All of the parents preferred the interviews to be conducted in Spanish. Only five interviews were tape-recorded. The other 24 participants preferred to have the interviews completed conversationally. After the interviews were completed, I gathered and categorized the data to find emerging themes within the responses. All interviews were

completed within a two-month window. Approximately three months after the interview window, the parent participants were invited to participate in a focus group where I shared the findings of the study and had a discussion with them.

Interviews

Three main questions guided the interviews with parents. There was also a set of sub questions for the two last questions. I referred to the sub questions conversationally. Asking sub questions as the dialogue flowed helped to ensure that all participants shared about critical areas of focus within the study. The guided questions I used in the interviews with parents are provided here; a visual chart of the preliminary interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

1. What is your aspiration for your child once they graduate from HS?

(Prompt) Would you like your child to go to college?

2. Do you think that your child is going to go to college?

 - Tell me about your knowledge regarding the college process.

 - Have you attended any events held at your child's school in regards to college?

 - What resources do you feel that the school provides for you?

 - How do you monitor your child's academic progress?

 - How do you support your child in their college preparation?

 - What type of support do you believe is needed for your child to go to college?

 - How often do you talk to other parents about your child's school?

3. Do you think your child is well prepared to go to college?

- Do you believe the school has provided support for your child to be

prepared for college? If so how?

- Do you feel ready for your child to go to college?

- Is there any information that you believe would assist you in preparing

your child for college?

- Do you believe you have a role in your child's preparation for college?

- How can the school further assist you in supporting your child in being

college ready?

These questions provided insight into the parents' experiences and reflections on their

schooling and their child's schooling as well as on what role they have in their child's

preparation for college. The tape-recorded interview responses were transcribed. I also

reviewed the non-tape-recorded interviews responses, which had been documented using

detailed notes about discussions and observations. The interviews also proved beneficial,

as I had the opportunity of having a one-on-one platform to gather information.

Throughout the interviews, the parents were free to express themselves in Spanish, which

was later translated into English. Overall, data was collected through recordings and note

taking and then compartmentalized.

Focus Group

From the initial interviews, it took approximately two and half months to

transcribe, code, and categorize the interview responses into themes. Once that was

completed, I reached out to the parent participants via telephone and invited them to a

focus group to share the study's findings. Of the 29 participants, I was able to contact 24.

Of those 24, 20 agreed to attend the focus group, which was held informally in a

conference room in a local church nearby one of the high schools. Seventeen parents attended the focus group, which took place mid-morning on a Saturday. I began the group by thanking everyone for coming to the focus group as well as for participating in the study. A PowerPoint presentation was provided to the parents in Spanish. The presentation reviewed the purpose of the study, the demographic information of the parents who participated, and the interview question guide to which participants were asked to respond. Afterwards, parents were shown the four themes that emerged from the interviews. After the presentation, the parent group was asked for feedback on the study as well as on the findings.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is significant because it enables a researcher to gather relevant information relevant to the research topic (Saldana, 2013). Oftentimes, other important issues also arise during qualitative research that inspires future work conducted by other researchers. Perhaps most valuably, a qualitative analysis shows the impact of situations on individuals and the surrounding as a whole (Silverman, 2013). As the data was analyzed, several patterns, categories, and themes emerged that related to the social and cultural theoretical framework that forms the foundation for this study. Drawing upon Seidman's (2006) methods for finding thematic connections, I identified the themes present in the responses of the participants. As Creswell (2009) explained: "the researchers review all the data, make sense of it, and organize it into categories or themes that cut across all of the data sources" (p. 175). After identifying themes within the responses of the interviews, I began the categorization process and used Seidman's (2006) research as a guide to avoid labeling any preconceived categories. The researcher

had a field journal in which to document observations, which helped to avoid the possibility of losing any rich information. During documentation, the research was mindful that "qualitative data analysis is conducted concurrently with gathering data and making interpretations" (Creswell, 2009, p. 184). Themes were identified and formulated based on trends in wording and messaging in the interviews. The themes were then later used to guide the focus group and allowed a participant-led discussion to emerge. The fact that parents shared similar struggles, concerns, and economic hardships allowed them to feel more comfortable sharing their feedback and suggestions. The focus group provided an opportunity for rich dialogue and discussion surrounding the themes discovered in the interviews.

My Role as a Researcher

I acknowledge that I may have influenced aspects of the study. I made a special effort to be careful and to avoid being judgmental or biased to the responses received. Because participants knew the purpose of this study, they may have given some responses in order to please me. I had to be very aware of my emotions and behavior when conducting the interviews and focus groups. Body language, facial expressions, and other visible characteristics could have influenced the way participants responded to the interview questions. The intention was to provide a comfortable experience for the parents participating in this study. I tried to be sensitive to participants and their needs, beliefs, and responses, and I was self-reflective throughout the study. I had a clear understanding of the need to be aware of actions and thoughts that I was experiencing and that the participants were experiencing during various aspects of the case study.

Bias can occur at any phase of research, including study design or data collection, as well as in the process of data analysis. Researchers in their review of the literature must consider the degree to which bias was prevented by proper study design and implementation. By recognizing and dealing with research bias one can minimize the impact in can have on the research. By understanding the limitations of the sample group one can avoid design problems from occurring. Ensuring that research participants are independent and treated with respect can support the impartiality of the research. Another bias factor to consider is being aware of procedural bias. This can occur with something as simple as providing enough time for participants to complete questionnaires. Researchers have to be aware of errors in data collection and measuring processes as well as ensuring that the results of the research are accurately recorded in literature to avoid reporting bias. Overall an impartial qualitative research project respects the dignity of the research participants, observes fundamental principles of ethics and takes all of the variables into account.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study that was conducted with 29 immigrant Latino parent participants in order to gain insight into their perceptions of postsecondary education resources for their children's academic success and college readiness. The data analysis was done manually, and both my personal notes and participant responses were thoroughly reviewed. The participant's responses were coded into categories, and I identified topical patterns that emerged from the interviews. The themes that arose through the interviews informed the overall findings of the study and created a platform for a focus group discussion. Parents were invited back for a discussion and to participate in a focus group. In this group, I shared the findings of the study based on the interviews and the focus group.

The data analysis involved the comparison of variables in the coding analysis, which revealed some of the views of parents. Four main themes emerged: aspirations, school-based knowledge, parental support, and student preparation. Later in this chapter, these results will be discussed alongside samples of quotes from the interviews. The interviews revealed that parents believed that education was important, because they felt it would ensure that their children had better lives. Parents used similar wordings such as *esperanza* (hope) and *deseo* (wish) to describe their feelings about their children's educational futures. To ensure confidentiality of the participants of this study, pseudonyms have been used.

Despite the fact that the parent participants did not have much experience with secondary education, they played an active role in ensuring that their children succeed in

education to the best of their ability. Overall, parents felt disconnected from college knowledge and felt that they had limited access to information. Parents identified language as the number one barrier to being more informed about college information. Every participant believed that they were supporting their children in being college ready. For example, the parents provided home-based involvements such as ensuring that their children do homework on time, and they made sure their children have enough time to concentrate in their academic work. As part of their home-based support efforts, some parents were in agreement that their children should not be responsible for house chores so that children had more time for their studies. Parents also supported their children by encouraging them to take part in clubs and sports.

Parent responses about their child's preparedness for college were the most diverse. Some parents made an effort to ensure that they raised children holistically. This was achieved, for example, by giving children an opportunity to visit parents in the workplace. According to parents', having their children see real-world working situations helps children to learn the realities of life and to appreciate the value of education, which parents considered a core component of their preparation. Parents felt that instilling an appreciation of education would make them more effective in assisting their children as they pursue their education.

Data Analysis

This study aimed at exploring first-generation Latino parents' involvement in their children's education. In order to ensure wide collection of data, 29 parents that met the participant criteria were picked as subjects of the study. The goal of the research was to look at the impact of parental involvement on children's education. During the

interviews, it was clear that first-generation Latino parents are not deterred by the challenges that schools and society create for they involvement. Despite many barriers that make it difficult for them to be part of their children's education and other learning processes, the parents are determined. The knowledge gathered from the interviews in this study is a platform to form models in which Latino parents can be fully incorporated into their children's activities by the school. This study attempts to unveil the relationship among Latino parents, their children, and schools in relation to education.

In this chapter, the findings are reported in connection to the main research questions. In this section, I will present and discuss qualitative analyses of interviews with immigrant Latino parents who have children in high school. The interviews with parents in this study qualitative design of the study made it possible for me as a researcher to interpret the data collected about these parents' perspectives in a comprehensive manner (Aguirre, 2013). As previously discussed, the first crucial step was to develop a detailed description of the variables and their relations to each other. As we proceed in this chapter, I will explore the themes that stood out during the data analysis and discuss how they affect the overall aim of the research. Drawing conclusions about the themes that were collected will also facilitate an in-depth discussion of the topic. The qualitative approach to this study allowed access to the voices of first-generation Latino parents, which enable us to better understand how Latino parents perceive school support and resources in relation to their role in their children's education.

Main Findings

The purpose of the participant parent interviews was to gather insights, emotions, perceptions, and knowledge from parents in the Latino community about the education system. As established by prior scholarship, it is important to find out the position of the parents whose children comprise the majority of the school's student population. Because the study incorporated parents, the framework of the study incorporated a consideration of knowledge about the parents' educational background. Even though only three parents had attended high school in their country, many participants had knowledge of secondary school systems in their country through relatives and friends. Despite varying degrees of knowledge about the schooling systems in their home countries, an analysis of the interview data revealed that parents in this study played a role in their children's school progress without the help of the school staff. In fact, most parents agreed that teachers somehow alienate them from school issues with their children. The parents cited cultural barriers, such as language, as one of the factors that make them feel alienated.

The barriers that promote the negative relationship between teachers and parents were also discussed during the interviews. Language barriers are viewed as one of the greatest challenges when it comes to the educational and social concerns addressed in this study. The parents reported the feeling that teachers consider them to be unlearned. By extension, they feel teachers do not take involving them in the education milestones of their children seriously. Parents who have stayed in the US for less time seem to agree more on the issue of the language barrier in comparison to parents who have stayed in the US for more than 10 years (Civil & Andrade, 2012). The main findings of this study are presented in relation to the two main research questions.

Question 1: Resources

Research question 1: To what extent are the school-related resources that first-generation Latino parents access today sufficient and appropriate in supporting their child in being college ready when they complete high school?

Parent responses supported the belief that college is the way to economic freedom and to a better life. However, the response to questions about being aware of what is needed for their children to be college ready varied. Eight-five percent of the 29 parents interviewed said that they wanted their children to continue their education after high school. Some parents provided specific responses about what school their children should attend and what profession they should pursue. When asked about aspirations and schooling, the majority of the responses are characterized by a general response about just attending college in a vague, general statement. For example, Linda, a 45-year-old mother, shared these thoughts:

"*Quiero que siga estudiando mi hijo. La vida es muy dura y entre más escuela tenga más se va poder preparar y tener una vida mejor.*"

"*I want my son to keep studying. Life is very hard and the more schooling he has the more prepared he will be to have a better life.*"

Parents made reference to their children being able to have a better job than the ones the parents had. Parents stated that they wanted their children to have easier jobs, a job that would allow them to spend time with their families, and a job where they were not out working long shifts and long days. A pattern emerged among these responses as parents then took the conversation toward what their own jobs were and how they were not able to spend as much time with their children as they would like.

Antonio, a 40-year-old father commented:

"Salgo de la casa a las 4:30 de la mañana y no regreso hasta las 7:00 de la tarde. Mi trabajo es muy difícil y cansado. Quiero que mi hijo pueda tener un trabajo más ligero y tranquillo. Espero que pueda hacer eso cuando termine la preparatoria. El ya tiene la ventaja del inglés."

"I leave the house at 4:30 am and do not come back until 6:00 pm. My job is hard and tiring. I want my son to have a lighter and quieter job. I hope that when he finishes high school he will be able to do that; he already has the advantage of speaking English."

Participants reported having limited access to appropriate information about their children's progress. There was strong agreement among parents about the frustrations with accessing school programs and information. The majority (80%) of the participant parents said that their children were their main source of information about school resources. The majority of parents also felt that more should be done to involve them than only sending them information through their children. Even though school meetings, parent conferences, and opportunities for students were discussed as school resources, they yielded limitations for parents to access successfully. For instance, parents shared the concern that they were not notified of vital information in a timely enough manner for them to make the adjustments (to their schedules, for example) needed to be able to participate as they would like. Herlinda, who has been in the US for 13 years, noted:

"Cuando me toca que veo el correo, veo que la junta de la escuela para los padres es para ese mismo día, A veces hasta me llega la nota después de que pasó la junta.¿Cómo va a planear uno así?"

"When by chance I see the mail, I see that the meeting with parents is scheduled for that same day. Sometimes I even get a note for an event that already had taken place. How can one plan like this?"

Likewise, Francisco, a father from Mexico, said:

"La escuela no nos dejó saber de un paseo organizado por colegio. Mi hijo no pudo ir, y le hubiera ayudado para ver que quiere hacer con su vida. Nosotros no lo podemos llevar porque el trabajo no nos deja."

"The school did not tell us about a school trip. My son was not able to go and this would have helped him figure out what he wants to do with his life. We can't take him because our work does not allow us."

Parents also shared that it is difficult for them to attend parent-teacher meetings when they are working and do not have much flexibility to miss work. One parent even suggested Saturday meetings so they could attend without having work conflicts. For instance, Joaquín from El Salvador commented:

" Yo trabajo todos los días y no puedo faltar, cuando allí hay trabajo hay que aprovechar. Mi esposa no puede venir porque no sabe manejar. ¿No podemos hablar con los maestros de mi hijo un sábado?"

"I work every day and I cannot miss. One has to take advantage of work when it presents itself. My wife cannot come because she does not know how to drive. Can't we talk to my son's teachers on a Saturday?"

The responses were not all negative. A handful of parents who were all from the same school shared that the school held meetings in Spanish and that the guidance counselor updated them on information. Adolfo, a father who has been in the US for nine years reported:

"La consejera de mi hijo siempre nos ha ayudado a saber que está pasando en la escuela. Pero la escuela necesita más gente que hable español."

"My son's counselor has always helped us stay updated on what is going on in the school. However, the school needs more staff that speak Spanish."

Resources that are media- or technology-based were viewed by 63% of the participant parents as a limitation for them. Mercedes, a mother of an 11th grader, shared her disbelief after an experience when she went to ask about the process for her son to play soccer. She was told in the front office that everything she needed to know was on the

school website. When she accessed the school website through her phone, she was disappointed because all the information was in English. She knew that in the school her nephew attended, the website had all the information available in Spanish and on top of that there was a hotline where parents could call if they had questions about anything. In this case, the limitation was not access to technology but language, and as established in the very framework of this study, the language gap reinforces differences in cultural capital. In Mercedes' example, technology exacerbated the language barrier, but in other instances, it was the technology that hindered parents' access to school resources, such as checking student academic progress. Julieta, a mother of six, vented:

> *"Yo no tengo ese email. No sé usar las computadoras. Mis hijos me dicen que allí me pueden ensenar como están en las clases. Ellos se meten allí y me dicen, pero a veces no me quieren decir nada."*

> *"I don't have email. I don't know how to use computers. My children told me that in the computer I can see how they are doing in their classes. They get in and tell me, but sometimes they don't want to tell me anything."*

Even though the expectation of high learning was a priority for parents and their desire for their children to continue studying was evident, parents did not know what to do with the schools to help their children to be ready for college. Indeed, 88% of the parents felt that schools could do more to help them stay informed and involved in their children's schooling by providing information in Spanish, and one third of the parents stated that they would like to learn English but do not know how to go about doing so. Oscar, a father who has lived in the US for 14 years mentioned:

> *"Hace unos 5 años la escuela de mi hijo tenia clases de inglés para los padres. Yo fui unas 3 veces nomás por el trabajo, pero fue algo bonito que la escuela tenía para nosotros."*

"Approximately 5 years ago my son's school had English classes for parents. I went only 3 times because of my work. Still it was something nice that the school had for us."

Overall, the responses about the schools and their children being happy in school were positive. They also shared their appreciation for everything the schools have done. However, comments about needing more information, guidance, knowledge on steps to take, and language support from the school resurfaced throughout the interviews.

Question 2: Expectations and practices

Research question 2: What are the expectations, motivations, and practices that parents go by to support their children in their college preparation during high school?

Overall, the majority of parents expected their children to graduate and complete at least some level of postsecondary education. The interviews revealed that parents are motivated by the fact that they want a better life for their children, and a life other than what they themselves have. As stated earlier, most parents believe in education because it will provide peace and lead to good jobs that afford financial freedom. The majority of parents (93%) stated they practiced home-based support with the intent of helping their children succeed in school and be prepared.

In one interview, Julieta—the mother of six—became emotional as she discussed what she had to endure to come to the US 10 years ago. She shared how the future of her children motivated and drove her to take risks and sacrifice parts of her life, and that she hopes one day they appreciate her efforts. She went on to say that everything she had done would be worthwhile if her children complete their schooling and attend college. College was a concept that she only dreamed about when she was a girl. Julieta indicated that the idea of attending college was nonexistent in her world, especially for women. She

was raising her own siblings by the age of 10, and she shared that she had to leave school when she was 14 because she had to work to help support her family and that she did not want the same fate for her children:

"No quiero que mis hijos se queden con las ganas de seguir el estudio. Pero no saben el sacrificio que hemos hecho para que tengan esta oportunidad."

"I don't want my children to live with the regret of not continuing their studies. They don't know the sacrifice we have made for them to have this opportunity."

Instilling the value of education in their children is one of the means of verbal encouragement that parents provide for their children. Parents shared that they would like for their children to be able to enjoy life and not let it pass them by. During the interview with Antonio, he mentioned that he always tells his son:

"Tus acciones te van a llevar a vivir para trabajar, o trabajar para vivir."

"Your actions will lead you to live to work, or work to live."

This quote from Antonio supports the notion that parents not merely hope, but actively expect their children to live better lives by taking their education seriously.

Many parents indicated that while they could not directly assist children with academic work, they offered other forms of assistance. For instance, they ensured that the children participated in sports and clubs, and they encouraged them to do more reading at home. Mercedes, the mother mentioned before who had trouble with accessing information on soccer, mentioned in her interview that she works two jobs just to be able to support her son with his soccer. She went on to explain how she has to pay insurance for him to play, and his soccer shoes are expensive, but that she does this because her son loves soccer. She added that one of her nephews in California received a soccer

scholarship and it helped him attend college. Her hope was that maybe her son might have a similar opportunity as her nephew.

Some parents indicated that they also support their children by teaching them about the challenges of living without education and skills. As previously discussed, one way they do this is by inviting their children to their place of work on weekends and when schools are closed. The parents viewed this practice as serving two purposes: it is a way to instill the value of having an opportunity for education, and it makes their children acknowledge what life could look like for them if they do not pursue the academic opportunities their parents are providing for them. During the interviews, Balfred, a father of four who has been in the US for eight years after living in Sonora Mexico discussed how he had three yards that he had his sons do on the weekends:

"Yo era malo para la escritura en la escuela . . . los muchachos trabajan conmigo los fines de semanas. Eso sí es trabajo. Cuando dan lata de la escuela yo les digo, pues vamos a al trabajo entonces."

"I was bad in writing in school . . . the boys go work with me on the weekends. That's work. When they complain about school I tell them, okay then lets go to work instead."

Parents had consistent responses about wanting their children to be prepared so they can have a stable life with less stress than the lives they currently live. Josefina, a mother who emigrated from Guatemala eight years ago, stated:

"La vida que llevamos es muy agotadora. Mi deseo es que mi hijo pueda tener paz en su vida y tranquilidad. Es algo simple y sencillo- pero muy difícil de lograr. Para mí eso vale más que dinero o escuela."

"The life we live is very tiring. My wish is for my son to find peace and tranquility. It's something simple, but difficult to achieve."

Participants considered their efforts to provide a nurturing and safe environment for their children as a means of enhancing their children's pursuit of further education and

of providing them with a sense of hope and confidence. The responses that parents shared showed a linkage between the three components of motivation, expectations, and practices. The motivation of wanting a better life for their children, instilling the consistent messaging of the importance of education to their children, and the home-based support they provided their children were all interconnected; all are practical means of support parents practiced to support their child's schooling.

All participants also shared the expectation that their child behave well in school. Alicia, a mother of two, remarked:

"Mi hijo se enoja porque siempre estoy preguntándole por la escuela, pero es que quiero que él sepa que para mí su educación es lo más importante. Y siempre le digo que tiene que hacer caso y respetar a sus maestros."

"My son gets angry because I am always asking him about school, but I want him to know that his education is important. I always tell him to listen to his teacher and be respectful."

Throughout the interviews, parents shared similar responses about high expectations for good behavior and expectations of respect for their children's teachers.

Emerging Themes

As a result of the data analysis, four major themes stood out in the parents' stories, comments, and views about how and why they are involved in their children's schooling:

1) aspirations

2) school-based knowledge

3) parental support

4) student preparedness

These themes emerged from stories the parental participants shared during the interviews, and the stories also shed light on their views about being involved with the school staff about their children's progress. Each theme will be discussed in detail while also providing the stories the parents shared that illustrate the themes.

1. **Aspirations: Parents are hopeful about their children's future.**

Most parents who participated in this study, regardless of the length of their stay in the US, want to be part of their children's schooling. All the parents demonstrated deep commitment to schoolwork and satisfaction with seeing their children also interested in performing well. For the parents, the joy of learning is something that they keep reminding the children about so that they can have a better future in terms of employment and other life skills. According to the parent participants, they aspire for their children to further their education for the sake of better jobs and the potential for easier, happier lives. These aspirational priorities indicate the parents' commitment to their children's education and to securing their future's interests. Although parents responded in an

ambiguous manner about what their children were going to study in college, they agreed that they were hopeful that their children would graduate and be the first in the family to attend college. Throughout the interviews, parents reiterated the sacrifices they made in an effort to provide their children the opportunity for a better, safer, quieter life. First generation Latino parents of high school children demonstrated a heightened level of sacrifice as they had to give up a lot and work extremely hard. However, parents were satisfied with just the mere thought that their children will have more opportunities to succeed academically and prepare for college. This will essentially expand their knowledge, competencies, and skills needed for their children to live better lives than their parents. First generation Latino parents of high school aged children were content with the fact that their decision to come to the U.S. will grant their children opportunities that would not be otherwise possible.

2. School-based knowledge: limited access to information

The literature on the topic suggests that many people tend to stereotype Latino parent involvement in the education of their children. The stereotype purports that the parents' low level of education makes them less concerned about their children's education (Darnell & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2011). This perception can also be found among school staff that feels less obliged to involve the parents of their Latino students. In some cases, as showed by the interviews in this study, the parents are not involved at all, and not by fault of their own. According to Francisco, one of the participant parents, neither he nor his son knew about a school fieldtrip to a college, which led to his son missing the trip. It is unfortunate that his son missed that learning opportunity as a result of teachers assuming the parent had access to information that was distributed, and being oblivious to

barriers immigrant parents face, such as language. In the interview, Francisco went on to share how the school trip could have helped his son plan for his future. Not only is Francisco unable to take him to the college, but he also felt that the school staff who are taking students on these college trips would be more helpful and they could better inform his son. For example, staff could answer questions and know what information students need to know to prepare for college. Parent participant Mercedes also keyed in on the language barrier access common for Latino parents to encounter. Parents felt they had limited knowledge about school, college, and even their child's progress because of the language barrier. Some parents shared that that their school had a bilingual counselor and offered meetings in Spanish. They were grateful and appreciative, but reinforced that the language issue needed to be addressed to help them gain access to more of the information they need. Most parents shared that they monitored their child's progress by the quarterly reports as well as asking their children; however, they would like to be able to have more conversations with teachers to see how they can better support their children.

3. Parental support: **Parents' value participation in their children's schooling.**

There was no doubt in the parents' minds that they were taking actions that were directly linked to the purpose of supporting their children in their schooling. During the interviews, participants shared the ways they the provided support to their children. Though the types of the support they were best able to offer perhaps did not align with the schools' expectation, in their views, their support was just as valuable. The participants shared how they involve themselves in their children's activities even after school. For instance, Jose revealed that his wife ensures that the children first attend to

their homework for two hours before engaging in other after-school activities. This is one insight into how engaged the parents are in nurturing a home atmosphere that prioritizes their children doing well in school. Overseeing their children's schoolwork motivates parents to make sure their children are striving to make the best out of their lives (Lopez, 2011). One participant informant, Sophia, believed that there is a stronger gain in allowing more time for the children to their homework instead of assigning them house chores. Such views from the participants reveal that parents are inclined to offer good support for the sake of the education of their children.

Beyond the household, parents with hectic schedules found the opportunity to incorporate their children into their work in order to expose them to lessons that can complement what they learn in school. Specifically, parents reported that they want their children to develop a sense of responsibility. Responsibility is a value that can be best instilled by people close to the children. Parents also want to raise children who are well-rounded. This means that the children must concentrate on classwork as well as on real life situations. The parents' practice of taking their children to their work sends an impactful message that informs their children's development. This type of exercise helps children gain experience of what happens in the real world. For instance, they get to understand the struggles their parents experience every day. In addition, it emphasizes a message for students to stay focused on schooling and strive for more.

The interviewee's responses showed the extent to which parents would go to support their children's schooling. The at-home involvement included encouraging the children to perform well for the sake of attaining higher education. Through verbal communication, parents are in a better position to identify with their children's education.

When communicating, they can find out what a child needs or misses during school time. Most parents in the participant group suggested that verbal communication is vital to being involved in a child's education.

While many of the parents are unable to assist their children directly with their schoolwork, they are able to support them indirectly. For instance, I've already discussed many parents who were interviewed said that they support their children by ensuring that they do not perform many household chores. Instead, children are expected to commit most of their time to academic work. Akin to this, parents support their children by ensuring that they participate in clubs and sports and that they manage their time properly. While they may not assist their children in doing their homework, the parents monitor the students to ensure that they complete the homework prior going to school.

Another key way that parents attempt to participate in their children's schooling is related to the school itself, and not specifically the work and activities of their children. Because language is a key barrier between Latino families and the school system, it is important to reiterate that some of the school activities include concerns about language. Latino parents feel that it is important for the schools to incorporate Spanish in order to bridge the communication gap between the school staff and the parents (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011). One of the main aims of having frequent meetings at the school level is to allow parents to discuss challenges that affect them as they try to ensure their children receive quality education. Through participation in meetings, they will be able to discuss their financial constraints and have the school give them relevant advice on how they can get help; Spanish language resources and bilingual translators will help facilitate this aspect of Latino parent participation.

4. Student preparedness: parents relate student preparedness to their own experiences.

The parents in the study work hard to give their children a better education than what they experienced. Most parents revealed that they wanted a financially independent life for their children when they grew up. With this aim and to foster learning outside classroom, some parents, such as Balfred, indicated that he gave their children an opportunity to visit them in the workplace. Others are doing their best to keep their children out of the rough experiences of the "real world". Although the interviews do not show directly that the parents are driven by their experiences, the participants' actions reflect a lot. The way the parents approach and handle their children's education is an indication that experience is a motivator in the home-support decisions. For instance, by taking the children to the workplace in order for them to be responsible shows how parents are letting their experiences influence their involvement. Work is such a critical aspect of the parents' lives, and this is what they have to share with their children after their children surpass their own educational background.

Many of the participants' views are filtered through their own experiences and upbringing. Perhaps obviously, cultural norms influence how parents involve themselves. None of the parent participants, as indicated in the demographic table (see Table 1- pg 101), were U.S. natives, and so by extension their parental support draws on cultural norms that may vary from the cultural norms of their children's peers. According to the participants, family involvement is a cultural norm for them. The Latino way of life is heavily influenced by the parents' involvement in their children's upbringing.

The participants' three most consistent answers for determining if their child was prepared for college include: high school graduation, responsible and dedicated, and student planning for college. First, parents viewed having their children graduate high school as a necessary step for them to be ready for college. The conversations did not go in-depth on how well they graduated in terms of grades, but just the fact that if they graduated they would be automatically ready for college. The second consistent response for student preparedness was describing personality characteristics of students that reassured parents that they were ready for college. Seventy-four percent of parents used synonyms of responsible, dedicated, dependable, and hard worker when describing why they felt their son or daughter was ready for college. Thirdly, parents felt that their children were ready for college because they knew about action steps their children were doing that were specifically working towards attending college such as searching for scholarships, wanting to join clubs because they were told that would help, and putting effort into their academic studies. Parents also discussed that their children would share about what college they wanted to attend.

Follow-up focus group

The focus group took place approximately 3 months after the interviews, and its purpose was to have a conversation about the main preliminary findings. The session started with a PowerPoint presentation conducted in Spanish in which parent participants learned about the four themes that emerged from the interviews. After the presentation, the parent group was asked for feedback on the study as well as on the findings. The group was responsive to the presentations; a dialogue emerged and participants thanked me for taking the time to put the study together. Then the conversation moved towards the

second theme of school-based knowledge. Parents first used humor to share examples of how they were not able to access information from the school. These humorous comments relaxed the environment as parents nodded in agreement when parents shared examples about how they felt limited in accessing resources. Afterward, the conversations became tense and several parents began to express their dissatisfaction with the lack of school-specific information they had, which might place their children at a disadvantage to be successful in school. Parents shared how they were worried that they might be limiting their children's opportunities because of what they did not know. There was a key question that then turned the rest of the focus group into a parent advocacy group. One parent asked:

"Ya que sabe que nos sentimos con las manos amarradas con muchas cuestiones de la escuela. ¿Puede hacer algo la escuela para apoyar a los padres?"

"Now that you know how we feel with our hands tied with many matters of the school, can the school do something to support the parents?"

In response, I reiterated the purpose of the study and explained that a main component of the project was to provide recommendations for future research and to suggest practices that schools can implement to increase Latino parent support in relation to their child's college preparedness. The same parent went on to say that he or she knew what they needed from the school. I then asked the group if they wanted to discuss what they believed the schools could do to help them feel more knowledgeable about their children being college ready. For the next 30 minutes, parents excitedly shared what they need to support their children, and I jotted notes on a flip chart. After the feedback from the parents ended, the meeting concluded. I thanked the parents again for their participation and ensured them that the study write up would organize their feedback and include their

suggestions. The information from the interviews and focus group was then categorized by the feedback on the types of support for which parents were looking.

Figure 1(see appendix) shows the four categories that parents in the focus group determined to be the resources they need from schools to better support their children in being prepared for college: language support, informing parents on requirements for graduation and college acceptance, accessible ways for parents to stay updated on student academic progress, and school support in helping parents stay connected with their children and be part of the college conversation.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

This study explored the ways first-generation Latino parents are involved in their children's education in Arizona. The participants of this study provided a comprehensive understanding of why first-generation Latino parents feel left out of their own children's education. This study emphasizes that parents participate in their children's education in different ways. Some parents can get involved at home through verbal encouragement. Others are able to help with homework. Others were able to ask their children for information about what was happening in school.

Overall, most parents involved in the study did not participate in their children's schools. They did, however, make efforts at home to ensure the educational progress of their children. While most of the interviewed parents were not directly involved in the academic work of their children, they play a significant role in their success. For instance, parents create a favorable environment for the children to learn. They ensure that children have enough time to learn by assigning them minimal chores. They also encourage their children to participate in games and clubs. In a practical sense, this means that teachers should not assume that all parents are hands-on with their children's education. On the other hand, they should not assume that parents are ignorant of the way their children are faring in school. Different parents have different levels of support. It is up to both the teachers and parents to work together to establish the extent to which each party should get involved.

Different responses from the interviewees indicated that parents have their independent reasons about why they are motivated to be involved in their children's

education. According to the interviews, some parents perceived education as a way of finding peace. Other parents were motivated by the idea of a college education and assume that once their children graduate, they will automatically go to college. Parents' experiences also inform their desire for their children to have financial freedom in their future.

Home-based Involvement

As mentioned before, parents have indirectly contributed to the success of their children in school. Firstly, they have created a favorable environment at home to ensure that their children can concentrate on learning. Children are required to perform only some simple chores that do not take much time. This is done to ensure that they can have more time for their academic work. Parents understand the importance of education, and most of them expect that their children will have better lives as a result of education. Secondly, parents are involved by encouraging their children to take part in different extracurricular activities, which include sports and clubs. Through these activities, some children are able to get scholarships, which are sometimes necessary because many parents are unable to raise tuition funds. Thirdly, while parents do not assist in homework, they ensure that children do their homework. These types of home-based involvement clearly show that parents take an active role in fostering the academic success of their children.

School-based Involvement

Parents want to be fully engaged in their children's education, including participation in school meetings. They believe the meetings help with planning and most importantly keep them aware of various developments. Despite the fact that many parents

were limited in terms of time and other resources, they still felt that school-based involvement should be part of their children's education. Some parents had experience with schools providing linguistically appropriate meetings, and they indicated that they were able to discuss matters affecting their children's education and were very appreciative of the school. Other parents felt that they had been alienated, mostly because of cultural issues. For instance, language was a main barrier, and most parents felt that the school did not meet the needs of the immigrants. They felt that their culture and language should be integrated in the school culture, arguing that this would make communication even more effective. With the support of the school, parents can discuss crucial information about college preparedness such as challenges like financial constraint that affect their children.

Cultural and Social Capital

The integration of theories focused on cultural capital and social capital served as the study's conceptual framework. Findings revealed that an increase in cultural capital achieved from education expands the competencies and skills of first generation parents of high school students and promotes social mobility. However, increased cultural capital is deemed plausible only when Latino immigrant parents are provided quality resources needed to enrich the opportunities afforded to their children. Institutionalized cultural capital is achieved as high school students become better prepared for college so they could live a more fulfilling life than their parents. It is evident that cultural capital is not capable of being achieved without social capital. This demonstrates the inherent interconnectedness between theories of cultural capital and social capital.

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First-generation Latino parents of high school children need to ensure that the high school creates, develops, and maintains a supportive relationship. An increase in social capital achieved through family and community ties aid in the overall development of high school students. In accordance to Coleman (1990), a level of trust must be established and sustained by the high school so that parents are aware of the school's responsibility and innate obligation they have in providing Latino parents and students resources needed to succeed academically. This is indicative of the innate strength that parental relationships have on the cultural and social capital available to high school children born to first generation Latino parents.

Initially, the cultural and social capital of first generation Latino parents of high school children hampers their ability to navigate the U.S. education system and fully understand what is needed for their children to be academically successful in U.S. high schools (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). The degree of cultural capital and social capital are directly associated with the actual level of parental involvement from the 29 Latino immigrant parents of high school children. As parental engagement and parental support increases, the amount of information and school-based knowledge first-generation parents of Latino high school aged children acquire about student preparation for college. Hence, adequate college preparation will lead to the development of new aspirations that continuously promotes cultural and social capital. However, parental engagement and support is dependent on the relationship that emerges between Latino immigrant parents and their child's high school. Social capital influences academic success, which will thereby enhance the provision of cultural capital gains by yielding educational opportunities that will improve the prospect of college preparedness. The high school

must therefore value the needs of the Latino culture by ensuring that cultural capital is afforded to all students including students of first generation Latino parents. Teachers need to develop relationships with first generation Latino parents to minimize and possibly eliminate discrepancies in communication, interpretation, and misperception. High schools must play a significant role in cultural diversity therefore granting administration and teachers the ability to comprehend the cultural views of their student population. This will eliminate some of the dire concern, confusion, and stress that immigrant Latino parents tend to experience regarding their child's education and preparation for college.

Limitations

In a study such as this, limitations are inevitable. The initial limitations observed were the gathered data and the testing models. The use of interviews and one focus group presented a limited approach. The nature of qualitative inquiry itself can pose a limitation because qualitative measures in data collection make the research dependent on the participants' views. The limited approach necessitated a reliance on the participants and created a low response in terms of attendance. Based on the responses from the small group of parents interviewed for this study, the research is based on a generalization that most first-generation Latino parents are actively involved in their children education. Therefore, the results may not fully represent the entire population of the first-generation Latino parents.

Recommendations for Future Research, Policy, and Practice

Based on the results of this study, there is a need for further inquiry into Latino parents' involvement in their children's school progress. Though there are ample opportunities for future studies, the findings here offer a basis for the topic and provide insight to the research questions that were at the heart of the study. Nevertheless, the topic calls for additional investigations about parental participation. Further research should continue work on Latino families, but also extend to other school populations (Civil & Andrade, 2012).

Future research about the topic may find this study as a useful platform from which to develop further questions. Researchers can do more work on the ways parent-teacher relationships can enhance education. For instance, future studies may find the theoretical models discussed in this study and the theoretical models of previous similar studies useful for examining variables in the same vein of research inquiry. The study also paves the way for future researchers to examine various paths of influence among constructs concerning Latino parents. For example, it will be helpful to find out if contextual motivators and personal beliefs are determinants of participating parents and the support method they choose.

Lastly, the research also broadens the literature on home-based parental involvement. Further research could examine how many first-generation parents can help with homework, read and write English, and communicate comprehensively with the teachers. Other relevant stakeholders will spot the importance of having both parents and

teachers fully integrated into a child's learning support regardless of parents' educational background or ethnicity (Wong & Hughes, 2011).

The findings of this study indicate that Latino parents feel that they have limited access to their children's education. During the interview and focus group, all the parents cited limited social and different cultural capital as the reasons for lacking access to information. While first-generation parents have a great deal of respect for teachers, and this respect is a cultural value, they feel that teachers do not return this respect because of the teachers' perception of their low, school-based involvement. As established in earlier chapters, most teachers perceive that Latino parents are ignorant and put little effort in explaining things to them (Civil & Andrade, 2012).

The results of this study also shed light on the way Latino parents become involved in their children's education as they prepare them for college. According to the interviews, most parents focus attention on morale, respect, good behavior, and nurturing their children as part of the child's development to be prepared for college. One parent participant took their children to work in order to let them learn from their work experience. Responses such as this indicate that, according to the Latino culture, the concept of schooling is important. Despite being uninvolved in the school-based activities, parents still find time for home-based support that they value and in which they believe.

The results of this study inform several recommendations. One recommendation is that parents need to engage their children in communication, because this will facilitate an understanding of what is affecting their academic work. Through verbal agreements with the children, the parents can set directives about time and schedules that involve

schoolwork and responsibilities. A good communication system among parents and their children will result in a strong partnership. A second recommendation is predicated on the fact that parental involvement in education is fundamental in preparing children for college and higher education. As such, every parent has the right to know what is going on in their children's schooling by being given all the information they need in an accessible way. Latino parents believe that their children need emotional, social, physical, spiritual, and academic growth for them to be prepared for higher college education. Additional research should be conducted to gain the student perspectives on how their parents influenced their postsecondary undertakings.

This study highlights the way parents are striving to be part of their children's education. Realistically, academic success should not be a struggle if the stakeholders involved are offering support. The involvement of Latino parents helps to solve academic issues facing their children; however, if they are kept in the dark, the issues go unnoticed and unsolved, thus increasing the chances of continued low graduation rates that hinder the student's chances for college. While parents expect to be engaged in regular talks with the school staff, teachers are not enthusiastic about it (Lopez, 2011). The treatment that parents face when trying to talk to teachers is off-putting for parents. When parents pull away because of feelings of alienation, teachers tend to ignore the parents or think that they are less concerned with their children's education. As such, communication seems to be the biggest challenge in trying to bring together the two parties. Having support in the parents' native tongue is the first step to closing the communication gap between both parties. Teachers may find it easy to ignore communication challenges due to the economic and cultural differences they perceive with Latino first-generation

parents (Grolnick, Price, Beiswenger, & Sauck, 2012). The way teachers and school staff approach parents about matters concerning their children is very important. Some teachers are viewed as having too many questions, which may be interpreted as rude to the parents. On the other hand, the parents' attitude and distance may come across as being less concerned than other parents with different cultural backgrounds. Understanding where each of the parties is coming from and being transparent will help bridge the communication gap.

This study also discussed the low SES of most Latino parents, which often means that they have to work a great deal. Their financial background does not allow them the luxury of extra time to keep following up with their children's school activities (Walker et al., 2011). According to the parents, they do not have even enough time to sit and do homework with their children, but do try to provide a welcoming and supportive space for them at home. More emphasis should be put on children whose parents are away for the better part of the day. If parents and teachers collaborate on this sort of detail, a child's education might be improved just because they are aware that people are concerned about them. According to a variety of research, parents' involvement in their children's activities fundamentally impacts the way children perceive schooling. It is important that parents whose jobs tie them down have supportive schools and teachers who are there to complement their efforts. Just because a child has a parent, it should not be solely the responsibility of the parent to communicate concerns before a teacher intervenes further in a child's education. The parent, the teacher, and the school all play major roles in preparing a child to achieve their education and preparation for college (Grolnick et al., 2012).

There are similar results between this study and other research that strongly indicate that the relationship among the parent, the teacher, and the child is important for nurturing the student and preparing him or her for a college education (Walker et al., 2011). Parents can achieve this by empowering and encouraging their children to perform better. Some of the parents also ask about school and become genuinely worried when the information they receive is not enough (Walker et al., 2011). In addition, children's pride in their parents' participation has an effect on their motivation to perform better and on their college preparedness (Arellano & Padilla, 2006; Ceballo, 2004).

In addition, parents who are involved in their children's schooling create a platform where they can engage with other first-generation Latino parents. Through interactions such as parent meetings, parent workshops, or other meetings, parents are in a better position to share struggles, brainstorm ideas, and build upon their school-based social capital. If a situation comes up, then it becomes easy to present it to school officials with a united front as a parent group. Such an environment slowly cultivates a friendly environment in which both parents and teachers can actively participate in the children's education. If schools can meet parents halfway on this type of support, then parents can work on balancing jobs, children, and family duties.

At the time of this study, the majority of Latino students do not continue their postsecondary education due to various barriers. Many immigrant parents come to the US with limited formal education, economic restraints, and no English language skills. These parents continue to be seen as ignorant of their child's well-being. As such, the cultural mismatch between the teachers and parents should be addressed through proper guidance. Current school district involvement policies have not been enforced to their full potential,

which would help to serve one of its most vulnerable populations. This leads me to the recommendation that future studies further explore the accountability measures of school districts. Investigating districts' parental involvement initiatives would help to gain insight into who is ensuring that school policies not only address the target population it serves, but also has benchmarks in place to ensure that outputs are measureable.

A major benefit of this study was that the responses of the first-generation Latino parents reveal their attitudes toward the school system in matters related to involvement and inclusion. The parents had a certain negative attitude about the school system coupled with little knowledge of higher education. It is crucial to note that parents' responses show that they deeply care for their children's education and are invested in them pursuing a college education. This study showed that the participants saw specific barriers to their participation. Namely, there were barriers to their understanding of how they can help, barriers to what they need to know, and barriers to accessing the appropriate knowledge base. Further research examining parents' negative attitude towards their child's schooling and factors that have impacted these feelings would be beneficial for educators. Such research would inform educators about how to develop a positive attitude toward schooling among the Latino parent population. Despite the limitations of the study, the research has the potential to inform further studies on related topics. It is clear that more emphasis needs to be put on practices and tools for educators and parents that are known to effectively boost the education level of students.

Schools need to continually strive to find ways to suppress some of the barriers parents endure. In addition, schools must keep communication channels open in order for genuine partnerships to develop. Planning and coordinating meetings that are intended for

the Latino parents, that are accessible and supportive, and that fulfill language needs as well as other school activities can have a meaningful impact. And, meetings are just one example of what can be done to make both parties comfortable working together to better the education of the children. Another option for tackling the language barrier could be for schools to take advantage of available resources and to employ interpreters who will help bridge the language barrier. Schools need to establish clear communication channels so that language barriers are not a concern. In addition, educators should also put more effort into being culturally sensitive and responsive (Grolnick et al., 2012). It is critical to understand the cultures their students and parents are part of as well as to value and respect those cultures.

In closing, accessible annual programs at the beginning of each year could help keep parents on par with the happenings around the school. Schools should have structures in place to support parents in navigating the high school system and how it ties into college preparedness. In the focus group that took place during this study, parents identified four categories of resources that they felt they needed to provide appropriate support to their children and be engaged with their schools. Those categories were language support, knowledge about academic requirements for graduation and college admission, accessible means to track student progress, and school support and commitment to provide tools for parents to strengthen parent-child communication about postsecondary education. By incorporating these support structures, false perceptions about Latino parents and miscommunication about educational structures can substantially decrease.

Educators must ensure that all students have the opportunity to graduate high school and attend college so that they develop the skills they need to be successful in the

job market. The findings of this study suggest that more outreach for Latino parents of high school students is needed. The schools have to know the families they are working with, and have to understand the barriers they work against to facilitate genuine partnerships between schools and parents. If educators are interested in making strides in improving the academic outcomes of Latino students, they must keep the factors discussed in this study in mind when working with Latino parents. Latino parents genuinely value and care about their child's education. Though they face barriers that prevent active school-based participation, they show their support and involvement in nontraditional and home-based ways. Schools need to put forth efforts to involve parents, to accommodate their limitations, and to permit them to access the resources necessary to aid their children's academic pursuits. By fulfilling these parental needs, schools can become advocates and allies that parents can partner with to improve Latino student academic outcomes.

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APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTION GUIDE (ENGLISH)

Demographic Information

Sex: M F

Age: 20-25   26-30   31-35   36-40   41-45

Highest level of schooling completed_____

Country of origin: _____

Year in the US: continuous _____   **interrupted** _____

Years in school district: _____

Total number of children: _____

Total number of children in K-12: _____
Other information:

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTION GUIDE (SPANISH)

Información demográfica

Sexo: H   M

Edad: 20-25   26-30   31-35   36-40   41-45

Nivel más alto de escuela completada_____

País de origen_____

Años en los Estados Unidos   continuos_____   interrumpidos_____
Años en este distrito escolar _____

Total de hijos (as): _____

Total cantidad de hijos en el sistema K-12: _____

Otra
información:_____

_____

APPENDIX C

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH)

Preliminary
Interface Guide

Q1

What is your aspiration for your child once they graduate from HS? (Prompt) Would you like your child to go to college?

Sub-Questions for Q2

- Tell me about your knowledge regarding the college process.
- Have you attended any events held at your child's school in regards to college?
- What resources do you expect a school to provide for you?
- How do you monitor your child's academic progress?
- How do you support your child in their college preparation?
- What type of support do you believe is needed for your child to go to college?
- How often to you talk to other parents about your child's school?

Q2

Do you think that you child is going to go to college?

Response Yes: What makes you think he/she is going to go to college?
Response No: Why don't you think he/she will go to college?
Response Don't Know: Please share with me some reasons for this uncertainty?

Q3

Do you think your child is well prepared to go to college?

Response Yes: How have you determined that your child is ready for college?
Response No: What do you think are the reasons they are not ready?
Response Don't Know: Please share with me some reasons for this uncertainty?

Sub-Questions for Q3

- Do you believe the school has provided support for your child to be prepared for college? If so how?
- Do you feel ready for your child to go to college?
- Is there any information that you believe would assist you in preparing your child for college?
- Do you believe you have a role in your child's preparation for college?
- How can the school further assist you in supporting your child in being college ready?

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APPENDIX D

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW GUIDE (SPANISH)

Guía preliminar de entrevista

P1

¿Qué aspiración tiene para su hijo cuando se gradué de la preparatoria (HS)? ¿Le gustaría que su hijo asistiera al colegio o la universidad?

P2

¿Piensa usted que su hijo asistirá el colegio o la universidad?

Respuesta Si: ¿Qué le hace pensar que su hijo asistirá el colegio o la universidad?
Respuesta No: ¿Por qué piensa que su hijo no asistirá el colegio o la universidad?
Respuesta No Se: Por favor, comparta conmigo algunas razones que lo hacen dudar

Preguntas secundarias para P2

- Me gustaría que comparta conmigo su conocimiento acerca del proceso universitario.
- ¿Ha asistido algún evento en la escuela de su hijo con respecto al colegio o la universidad?
- ¿Qué recursos espera que la escuela le provea?
- ¿Cómo se mantiene al tanto del progreso académico de su hijo?
- ¿Cómo usted apoya la preparación universitaria de su hijo?
- ¿Qué tipo de apoyo cree que usted necesita para que su hijo asista el colegio o la universidad?
- ¿Qué tan seguido habla con otros padres acerca de la escuela de su hijo?

P3

¿Piensa que su hijo está bien preparado para ir al colegio o la universidad?

Respuesta Si: ¿Como ha determinado que su hijo está preparado para el colegio o la universidad?
Respuesta No: ¿Cuales piensa que son las razones por lo cual no está preparado?
Respuesta No Se: Por favor, comparta conmigo algunas razones que lo hacen dudar.

Preguntas secundarias para P3

- ¿Cree usted que la escuela le ha proveído apoyo para que su hijo esté preparado para la universidad? ¿Cómo sucede esto?
- ¿Se siente listo para que si hijo asista la universidad?
- ¿Hay alguna información que usted cree le ayudaría a preparar a su hijo para la universidad?
- ¿Cree usted que tiene un rol en la preparación universitaria de su hijo?
- ¿Cómo puede la escuela ayudarle para que apoye a su hijo en la preparación para el colegio o la universidad?

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APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING PARENTS
(ENGLISH)

<center>Consent Form for Participating Parents
1st Generation Latino Parents' Outlooks on Their Child's
Secondary School in Relation to College Readiness</center>

Date_____

Dear_____:

   I am a doctoral candidate working under the leadership and direction of Dr. Daniel Schugurensky, at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to learn about 1st generation Latino parents experience with their child's high school and how it ties to the concept of college readiness. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that may affect your decision as to whether to participate in this research study and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

   I am recruiting Latino immigrant parents who currently have a 10th, 11th or 12th grader at the high school level. You and your spouse have been invited to take part in this study based on your responses to the demographic questionnaire you answered over the phone. Your participation will require you to be part of a 60 minute interview that will be audio recorded and later transcribed if given consent to do so. I will provide you with a copy of the interview you participated in to review the accuracy of the interview. I will then identify themes within the interview responses and ask you to participate in a focus group with other parents to discuss the recurrent themes found within all the responses of the interviewees.

   Your participation in this project is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time. The tape recordings of the interviews and focus group will be erased at the completion of the study. The results of the research will be used in my dissertation. Your identity and information will be kept confidential and will not be used at any point. All data will be kept confidential and safe kept in a password-protected computer.

   Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation includes identifying possible areas of focus for schools to work in partnership with parents to increase college readiness within the Latino youth; and assist in developing a positive high school navigation experience for Latino parents to facilitate support for their children in their post-secondary aspirations.

   If you have any questions concerning the study or your participation in the study, before or after consent, you can contact me at 602-448-1795 or violetta.lopez@asu.edu. You can also contact the professor I am working under at dschugururanzy@asu.edu.
Sincerely,

<center>102</center>

Violetta Lopez

With my signature, I give consent to participate in the above study.

Name (printed)_____

Signature_____
Date_____

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING PARENTS (SPANISH)

Consent form for participating parents - Spanish

Forma de consentimiento para padres participantes Perspectivas de
los padres inmigrantes latinos de la preparatoria (High School) de sus
hijos en relación a la preparación colegial o universitaria

Fecha_____

Estimado_____:

Yo soy un estudiante de doctorado trabajando bajo el liderazgo y la
dirección del Dr. Daniel Schugurensky, en la Universidad Estatal de
Arizona. Estoy llevando a cabo un estudio de investigación para aprender
acerca de la experiencia de los padres inmigrantes latinos con la escuela
preparatoria (high school) y como se conecta al concepto de preparación
colegial universitaria. El propósito de esta forma es proveerle con la
información que puede afectar su decisión para participar en este estudio
de investigación y para documentar el consentimiento de los que acceden
a participar en el estudio

Estoy solicitando la participación de padres inmigrantes latinos que
actualmente tienen un estudiante del 11avo o 12avo grado en la
preparatoria (high school). Usted ha sido invitado a participar en este
estudio basado en sus respuestas al cuestionario demográfico que contestó
por teléfono. Su participación le requerirá ser parte de una entrevista de 60
minutos que será grabada y transcrita si se ha dado el consentimiento. Yo
le proveeré con una copia de la entrevista en la que participó para que
revise su exactitud. Entonces, yo identificaré temas en las repuestas de la
entrevista y le pediré que participe en un grupo de enfoque con otros
padres para hablar de los temas recurrentes encontrados en las respuestas
de los entrevistados

Su participación en este proyecto es voluntaria. Usted puede
retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento. Las grabaciones de las
entrevistas y grupos de enfoque serán borradas cuando se complete el
estudio. Los resultados de la investigación serán utilizados en mi tesis
doctoral. Su identidad e información se mantendrán en forma confidencial
y no serán utilizadas. Todos los datos serán mantenidos seguros y en
confidencia en una computadora protegida por una contraseña.

Aunque no habrá beneficio directo hacia usted, el posible beneficio
de su participación incluye identificar posibles áreas de enfoque para que
las escuelas trabajen en asociación con los padres para mejorar la
preparación colegial o universitaria de los jóvenes latinos; y ayudar a
desarrollar una experiencia positiva de la navegación de la preparatoria
(High School) para que padres inmigrantes latinos puedan apoyar las
aspiraciones de sus hijos al terminar la preparatoria.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta con respecto al estudio o su
participación en el estudio, antes o después de su consentimiento me

puede contactar al 602-448-1795 o también puede contactar al profesor
que me supervisa en dschugururanzy@asu.edu.
Atentamente,

Violetta Lopez

Con mi firma, yo doy consentimiento para participar en el estudio
mencionado en la carta.

Nombre (Letras
Legibles)_____

Firma_____ Fecha_____

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante/sujeto en
esta investigación, o siente que lo han puesto en algún riesgo, usted puede
contactar a la cátedra de la comisión revisora institucional de sujetos
humanos al (480) 965-6788.

Table 1. *Participants' Demographic Characteristics*

Pseudonym	Gender	Highest schooling completed	Country of origin	Total number of children	Number of children in high school	Years in the US
Linda	F	5	Mexico	4	1	15
Tonio	M	8	Mexico	2	1	12
Josephina	F	6	Guatemala	5	1	8
Adolfo	M	8	Mexico	5	2	9
Sophia	F	6	Colombia	3	1	5
Jose	M	8	Mexico	2	1	9
Balfred	M	6	Mexico	4	2	8
Claudia	F	3	Honduras	6	2	5
Francisco y Biby	M, F	6, 6	Mexico	3	1	7 5
Herlinda	F	5	Mexico	4	1	13
Maria y Joaquin	F, M	6, 8	El Salvador	3	1	11 11
Julieta	F	9	Mexico	6	2	10
Esperanza	F	4	Guatemala	5	2	8
Oscar	M	12	Mexico	1	1	14
Vanessa	F	6	Mexico	5	1	10

Irma y Miguel	F	3, 8	El Salvador	4	1	7 10
Alicia	F	12	Mexico	2	1	16
Paty	F	8	Mexico	4	1	4
Francis	F	3	Mexico	5	1	5
Chantel	F	3	Peru	2	1	18
Pablo	M	7	Mexico	4	1	14
Maximiliano	M	8	Mexico	4	2	11
Mercedes	F	10	Mexico	2	1	7
Leilana	F	5	Mexico	6	2	14
Ana	F	4	Honduras	8	2	7
Omar	M	6	Mexico	3	1	11

Figure 1. Parent responses to school support needed.