LATINO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENTS’ SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT

by

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Acknowledgements

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (October 2001). Two young friends take a break from their classroom assignment. There are 5.8 million Hispanic students enrolled in elementary schools across the country. Photo by Lloyd Wolf for the U.S. Census Bureau.

This research would not have been possible without the clear vision and decisive action of Dr. Edna Mora Szymanski, former Dean of the College of Education. Under her leadership, she created the Latino Research Center and served as its first director. The ideas for the research being reported came forth from the Latino Access and Success Research Center.

A special thanks to Dr. Martin Leroy Johnson for providing valuable guidance and critical feedback, resources, and genuine leadership. Thanks are also given to Dr. Bruce Katz for his help and assistance in designing the survey instrument. Likewise, Dr. Dennis Kivlighan,

Ms. Omayra Muñoz, Dr. Zina B. Sutch, and Dr. James Greenberg helped read and refine the instrument. Translation services were provided by Dr. Manel LaCorte, Ms. Omayra Muñoz, and Dr. Victoria Maria MacDonald. Dr. MacDonald and Ms. Muñoz assisted with conducting and interpreting the data from the focus groups. Furthermore, Ms. Muñoz assisted untiredly in coding and entering data from the survey and focus group research studies.
I would be remiss if I did not thank those Latino parents who participated in this study. Their participation was not only gratifying, but their voices provided me with valuable insight into Latino parental involvement in the students’ school attendance and achievement.

To Region II, Prince George’s County Public Schools faculty and staff, specifically school principals, Latino parental liaisons, Spanish teachers, and Ms. Jennifer Argueta, thank you for your genuine partnership in research.

To all of the above, I am eternally grateful and thank you. Gracious!

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Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to investigate how Latino parents are involved in their children’s education at elementary, middle, and high school levels in the Region II District of Prince George’s County Public Schools, where there are high levels of Latino/Hispanic student populations.

About this Report

This is the final report of the investigation conducted in Region II, Prince George’s County Public Schools on Latino parental involvement research. This report addresses both qualitative and quantitative research studies that investigate Latino perceptions, opinions, and familial issues and that provide essential data on Latino parental involvement in students’ school attendance and achievement. Furthermore, this report is the product of a mutually beneficial partnership with educational research and the schools. This partnership acknowledges our genuine desire to support academic achievement and urban education in Maryland’s public schools and to work with Region II, Prince George’s County Public Schools in their overall mission to achieve academic excellence. A description of the research timeframe and deadlines
provides an in-depth understanding of the research events (Appendix A, “Timetables”).

Region II Research Project Contributors

Dr. Bruce Katz along with Dr. Irene M. Zoppi, Dr. Victoria María MacDonald, Ms. Omayra Muñoz, M.A, Dr. Dennis M. Kivlighan, Dr. Martin L. Johnson, Dr. Zina B. Sutch, Dr. James Greenberg, Dr. Eleonor White, Dr. Manel LaCorte, and Ms. Jennifer Argueta.

“In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future.” Alex Haley

“De cada manera conceivable, la familia es una conexión con nuestro pasado,

un puente hacia nuestro futuro.”

**Introduction of the Study**

This research study was developed in collaboration with Region II, Prince George’s County Public Schools along with the Latino Research Center (LRC) and the K-16 Research Center, both of the Maryland Institute of Minority Achievement and Urban Education (MIMAUE), College of Education, University of Maryland, College Park. The research study is titled: *Latino Parental Involvement in Students’ School Attendance and Achievement in Prince George’s County, Region II, Public Schools (IRB Application #05-0464)*, and consists of two major research strands: survey research and focus group research projects.

**Description of the Research Sample Location**

The research sample is based upon three feeder schools within the Region II District with the highest Latino student populations: Bladensburg Elementary (http://www.pgcps.org/~bladenes/admin.htm), William Wirt Middle School (http://www.pgcps.org/~wwirt/), and Bladensburg High School (http://www.pgcps.org/~blade/). These schools are also of educational research interest for educators and researchers within the Maryland-Washington, D.C. area because of their proximity to the University of Maryland, College Park campus.
Research Problem and Questions

The research team worked with Latino parents during the 2005-06 school year to examine a critical issue of Latino education: the role and impact of parental involvement in students’ school attendance and achievement within Region II, Prince George’s County Public Schools. The following research questions served as a general guide to facilitate the exploration of the research problem and questions: What factors impede or promote Latino parental involvement in the Prince George’s County Public Schools? What factors relate to parental involvement?

The School Partnership, Bladensburg Project, and University Role

The Bladensburg Project, coordinated by the K-16 Partnership Development Center of the Maryland Institute for Minority Achievement and Urban Education, is a pilot program that began in May of 2000. A team of University of Maryland, College of Education and Prince George’s County Public Schools colleagues partnered to address the persistent minority achievement gap that exists in the Prince George’s County Public School system. The goal was to demonstrate that collaborative planning and implementation of school-university interventions can reduce the achievement gap and increase overall student success. The Bladensburg Project Pilot was initiated to develop new ways of linking research-based work at the College of Education to the needs and challenges--identified through the partnership--in the public schools. Together, partners from the individual institutions constructed, designed, and implemented projects to ensure a true collaborative effort. Partners of the Bladensburg Project continue to work jointly to overcome the achievement gap, support efforts to improve teacher quality, and to contribute to a shared goal of enhancing student learning and equity for all students.

Developing a strong collaborative relationship between the partners is a critical component in building professional climates and learning communities that result in high morale, reduced teacher attrition, and capacity building. Creating a partnership between two very large institutions that is truly collaborative requires focusing on the specific elements that create a foundation on which the partners can build.

Developing a collaborative partnership between interested partners “is like building a house. The foundation must be well laid, level, and firmly seated before construction begins above. If materials are shoddy or construction of poor quality, the structure will not be able to withstand storms” (Rakow, Robinson, 1997, p. 4). The joint venture between the University of Maryland,
College of Education and Prince George’s County Public Schools sought to create a collaborative partnership as described by Rakow and Robinson. As with other university and school partnerships, a major focus of the collaboration was to promote quality educational practices at both institutions (Harper & Sadler, 2003).

Seven elements have been identified as key principles for building successful partnerships and collaborations. They are:

1. Identify the stakeholders in the project (Mayers & Schnorr, 2003).
5. Compromise and be flexible (Digby & Gartin, 1993).
6. Communicate (Digby & Gartin, 1993; Reed, 1999; Foss, et al., 2003).
7. Hold regular meetings (Osguthorpe, 2000; Rakow & Robinson, 1997).

The University of Maryland, College of Education and Prince George’s County Public School partnership strove to include these elements and implement them successfully, as outlined below.

Identify Stakeholders. The process of identifying stakeholders allows for the identification of potential resources and contingencies that might impact the process, as well as proactive strategic planning and potential for reaching goals (Mayers, Schnorr, 2003). In the Bladensburg Project, the key stakeholders include the University of Maryland and the Dean of its College of Education, the CEO of the Prince George’s County Public Schools, various community businesses, school administrators, other institutions of higher education, teachers, parents, and students. Identifying these stakeholders at the onset of this partnership was crucial in being able to locate and obtain financial resources and help distinguish the factors that would support the strategic planning process and those that would impede the process.

Diffusion of Power. Diffusion of power is a key element in making sure that the distribution of influence is equitable and that all partners are empowered (Mayers & Schnorr, 2003). According to Foss et al. (2003), power is gained through establishing a balance among partners. In order to alleviate any misperceptions about power in the Bladensburg Project, the university hired a Project Coordinator who was recommended by the public school system. Additionally, the administrators in both the county and the university shared in
the development of the agendas and shared in leading every Governing Board meeting. University faculty and staff would meet with the county school staff to design the professional development courses and workshops that were held at both the University campus and on-site at various public schools.

Commitment. Commitment must be the underlying premise of effective partnerships (Digby & Gartin, 1993; Foss, et al., 2003). All involved parties must be committed to the goals established by the partners at the onset of the partnership. At the beginning of the partnership for the Bladensburg Project, the Dean of the College of Education and the county CEO expressed their commitment to the partnership through various face-to-face meetings and continued dialogue.

Relationship Building. Relationship building is critical to recognize and meet the needs and expectations communicated by the partners (Digby & Gartin, 1993; Rakow & Robinson, 1997). Developing relationships among partners takes time, yet it allows them to make transitions and accept change (Foss, et al. 2003). During the development stages, the Bladensburg Project was partly based on an initial needs assessment. The teachers and administrators in the public school system were given the opportunity to meet and discuss specific school issues with university faculty and staff. Additionally, annual leadership retreats continue to be held off-site to further encourage personal relationship-building activities. The monthly steering and planning committee meetings also provide opportunities to support the relationships that have evolved during the progression of the partnership project.

Compromise and Flexibility. Compromise and flexibility with regard to time and planning schedules are essential in being able to meet the recognized and voiced needs of partners. When scheduling meetings or planning events, taking into account the partners’ time constraints and school schedules is imperative. The Bladensburg Project schedules the planning committee and the steering committee meetings together prior to the school year and during a time when both parties are able to meet. Additionally, the steering committee meetings are scheduled after school hours and provide an opportunity for teachers to participate in the meetings on a monthly basis.

Communication. Effective communication among the partners is essential to the success of a university-school partnership. Each partner must be able to identify their specific needs and be able to communicate these needs in a non-threatening, safe environment (Digby & Gartin, 1993; Reed, 1999). With regard to communication, the Bladensburg Project engaged in several approaches to enhance and support interchange among the participants in the
partnerships. Monthly planning meetings are held with administrative staff from each of the participating schools and the university to ensure that needs, concerns, and issues are being addressed by each of the partners. Monthly steering committee meetings involve teachers and administrators from each participating school and university faculty and staff involved in particular aspects of the project. A quarterly newsletter is also published and distributed to stakeholders and partnership project participants to increase awareness of the project’s activities and to encourage the sharing of accomplishments of those involved.

Meetings. In order to avoid institutional drift, it is important to hold regular meetings (Osguthorpe, 2000). Institutional drift is the natural behavior of participants to move away from focusing on the project and to re-focus on their primary institution. The participants’ primary allegiance is usually to the organization that employs them and only secondarily to the partnership. Therefore, as participants lose their focus, the partnership can lose its sense of direction and fail in its overall purpose to improve student learning. As described earlier, the Bladensburg Project holds meetings on several levels beginning with quarterly meetings of the Dean of the College of Education and the CEO of Prince George’s County Public Schools or their representatives, to annual leadership retreats, monthly planning committee meetings, monthly steering committee meetings, and various independent meetings between personnel of the university and the school system.

From the initial needs assessment conducted with randomly selected teachers and staff from Prince George’s County Public Schools, the primary objectives of the project were identified. To reach the overall goal to improve student achievement and to eliminate the achievement gap, there was an identified need to focus on literacy and mathematics through intense professional development for teachers, leadership development for school personnel, and implementing safety-net programs for students.

In order to address these needs, the partners initiated a process to identify schools to participate in the pilot. The pilot initially focused on three low-performing feeder schools with a high minority population. The initial cluster of schools identified by the partners consisted of Rogers Heights Elementary School, William Wirt Middle School, and Bladensburg High School. An additional elementary school, Templeton Elementary School, was added in 2002 to increase the number of students participating in the feeder schools who move up through the high school level.
In 2000, Rogers Heights Elementary School enrolled seven American Indian/Alaskan Native students, 21 Asian/Pacific Islander students, 546 African American students, 181 White (not Latino/Hispanic) students and 40 Hispanic students. William Wirt Middle School enrolled three American Indian/Alaskan Native students, 20 Asian/Pacific Islander students, 596 African American students, 42 White (not Hispanic) students and 161 Hispanic students. Bladensburg High School enrolled three American Indian/Alaskan Native students, 36 Asian/Pacific Islander students, 1,050 African American students, and 201 Hispanic students. In 2002, Templeton Elementary School enrolled five American Indian/Alaskan Native students, 25 Asian/Pacific Islander students, 532 African American students, 62 White (not Hispanic) students, and 209 Hispanic students. Rogers Heights and Templeton Elementary Schools feed into William Wirt Middle School, which in turn feeds into Bladensburg High School. The Bladensburg Project identified a feeder pattern of schools to address the needs at all school levels. In response to the schools’ needs, the partnership developed and implemented a variety of initiatives such as professional development and leadership development programs, tutoring, administrative internships, and student leadership activities.

The intense and dedicated involvement of both the school personnel and the university faculty and staff resulted in academic growth and improvement. The growth, however, was minimal and the partners began to examine other factors that affect student achievement. Parental involvement in schools has been shown to greatly improve student achievement (Henderson, Mapp, et al, 2002) yet the partnership did not address this component. To address what may be a significant factor in understanding and closing the Latino achievement gap in Prince George’s County, this study was developed to examine the role and impact of parental involvement in Region II. Latino parents became the focus of this study to determine what barriers present potential obstacles for parents to become involved in their child’s school.

**Overview of the Literature Review**

Research suggests that the role of the family is significant in influencing the school performance of children. A key finding within this research indicates that parents who are involved in school activities are more likely to have children who perform well academically (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Bogenschneider, 1997; Deslandes, Royer, Turcotte, & Bertranel, 1997; Eastman, 1987, September; Epstein, 1995; Hickman, Bartholo, & McKenry, 2000; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). There is also considerable evidence that parental involvement leads to improvements in student achievement, improved school attendance, and reduced dropout rates (Bencher, 1984: Epstein 1987;
Moreover, parents and families have been shown to influence the career development of young people (Marjoribanks, 2002; McGoldrick, 2003; P. Minuchin, 1988; S. Minuchin, 1974). Parental influence has also been shown to be an important factor in the general psychological and social development of youth, and is crucial to personality development (Ginott, 1965; Piaget, 1969; Walsh, 2003). Next, we present an overview of the Latino family.

**Latino Families**

The Latino population is currently the largest ethnic minority group in the United States (U.S. Department of the Census, 2003). It represents 13.3% of the U.S. population, with a population estimate of 37.4 million people (U.S. Department of the Census, 2002). Research has found that Latino students drop out at a rate of 27%, compared to 7.3% and 10.9% for White and Black students, respectively [National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2002]. Researchers who study Latino families have also suggested that the role of the family is significant in influencing the school performance of children (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, Bornstein, 2000; Douglas & Gutman, 2000; Forehand & Nousiainen, 1993; Galambos, Barker & Almeida, 2003; Garber, Robinson & Valentiner, 1997; Ross, 2001; Trice, Hughes, Odom, Woods & McClellan, 1995; Young & Friosen, 1991, 1992; Young, Paselviktio & Valach, 1997). Research shows that Latino families support, encourage, and assist their children through school in many ways (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, Quezada, Diaz & Sanchez, 2003, Chrispeels & Rivero, 2002).

In reviewing the literature, we have found many factors that influence parental involvement. Quezada, Diaz, Sanchez (2003) described some of these barriers, with language as the most challenging one. Parents may feel that no one in the school will listen to them if they cannot communicate effectively in English. Their feelings of self-worth are diminished because they do not understand forms that are sent home and cannot help their children with homework. Holman (1997) calls this the ‘lessen the intimidation factor’ wherein the parent may feel intimidated.

Latino parents need to know what the school means by parental involvement and what the school expects from Latino parents. According to Cotton and Wikelund (2001), parental involvement includes: attending school functions, responding to school obligations, helping children improve their school work, providing encouragement, arranging for appropriate study time and space, modeling desired behavior, monitoring homework, and actively tutoring children at home. Latino parents, however, may interpret involvement as interfering with schoolwork (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). Latino culture is not
necessary familiar with the concept of teaming up with the school system. Latinos have a high level of respect for educators and treat them as professionals who should be left alone to do their job. Parents often feel that interference with school activities would be counterproductive (Delgado-Gaitan). Parents who cannot speak English or who believe that they have no right to interfere with a school’s practices may avoid contact with the school and its teachers (Tett & St. Clair, 1997).

Latino parents seem to maintain strong support for educational goals (Ceballo, 2004), even while feeling poorly equipped, uncomfortable, or lacking confidence in their ability to help their children with school assignments (Stevenson & Colleagues, 1990, Okagak & Frensh, 1998).

The lack of proficiency with the English language, little familiarity with the American educational system, and demanding work schedules are some of the reasons researchers found to support their findings. Chrispeels and Rivero (2002) conducted a study to explore the effect on immigrant parents’ sense of place in their children’s education. The results suggest that immigrant parents hold assumptions and expectations based on their own schooling experience in their country of origin. Parents may feel intimidated by teachers who may give up trying to reach and engage them across the cultural divide. The research suggests that the role of parents may come in conflict with those of teachers who have an image of what constitute a good parent’ (p. 1). Chrispeels and Rivero identified five major types of interactive relationships that served as a framework for the conceptualization of parents’ sense of place in their children’s education before and after attending the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). First, “two-way communication, second, support of the child, family, and the school (including meeting children’s basic needs and parental expressions of support through attendance at school functions and fund-raising events), third, learning about each other and how to work together, sharing teaching responsibilities (including the presence of parent volunteers in the classroom). Finally, collaborating in decision making and advocacy” (p. 2).

Although Latino parents value education, they face multiple challenges that prevent them from participating fully in their children’s schools. For example, unfamiliarity with the school system affects parents’ involvement with it. They may also think that their own lack of education precludes them from participating. Participation and strong parent-teacher relationships are further compromised when parents feel that the only contact they receive from the school is over something negative. Often times Latino parents do not even realize that they have the right to ask about their child’s education. To make matters more complicated, many Latino parents face significant economic
challenges that adversely affect their ability to get involved. Some parents must work two or three jobs, which interfere with school meetings and other activities. Recent immigrants may face special challenges that can affect their children’s ability to succeed in school (e.g., work hourly wage jobs, temporary work, and unemployment). In addition, school personnel’s negative or condescending attitudes, lack of transportation, and lack of childcare also hinder parental involvement.

Some strategies for involving Latino parents in school and in their children’s education are supported by the research literature are listed below:

- Increase the schools’ bilingual counseling staff (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004) and translate school newsletters and other materials into Spanish (Quezada, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2003).
- Have college representatives speak to parents about college admissions and scholarship information in Spanish (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, Quezada, Diaz & Sanchez, 2003, Chrispeels & Rivero, 2002).
- Meet regularly with parents to discuss students’ program of study (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004).
- Place Latino parents on advisory committees (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, Quezada, Diaz & Sanchez, 2003, Chrispeels & Rivero, 2002).
- Provide workshops for Latino parents to help them understand how they can support their children in schools (Ceballo, 2004).
- Develop a Latino parents’ group to identify other parents who can get involved in school events (Chrispeels and Rivero, 2002).
- Strengthen communication between educators and Latino parents to establish a better understanding of each other’s culture (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, Quezada, Diaz & Sanchez, 2003, Chrispeels & Rivero, 2002).

In sum, Latino access and success is intertwined with parental involvement, student achievement, and school outreach to Latino educational needs.

Survey Research Project

The purpose of this survey study was to investigate how Latino parents are involved in their children’s education at elementary, middle, and high school levels in the Region II District of Prince George’s County Public Schools, where there are high levels of Latino/Hispanic student populations. The survey
aimed at investigating what factors impede or promote Latino parental involvement, and therein explored the following question: **What factors relate to parental involvement?**

**Research Team.** The research team was composed of Dr. Irene M. Zoppi, Ms. Omayra Muñoz, and Dr. Dennis Kivlighan along with Dr. Bruce Katz, Superintendent of Region II, Prince George’s County Public Schools. Other major contributors were Dr. Victoria Maria MacDonal, Dr. Manel LaCorte, Dr. Zina B. Sutch, Dr. James Greenberg, Dr. Eleanor White, Dr. Martin L. Johnson, and Ms. Jennifer Argueta, Prince George’s County Public Schools’ Region II Office.

**Survey.** A demographic questionnaire was developed by Dr. Zoppi and Dr. Katz, with contributions from members of the University of Maryland, MIMAUE, Bladensburg Project, Region II Latino Access and Success Research. The questionnaire contains a total of 30 questions (20 formal questions and 10 follow-up questions), but it was formatted into a 20-question item questionnaire (See Appendix B – Demographic Survey). The questions within this questionnaire relate to parental demographics and parental involvement, along with preferences for information communication and outreach locations. The questionnaire is both in English and Spanish. The Spanish version was translated by Ms. Omayra Muñoz and verified by Dr. Manel LaCorte from the Spanish and Portuguese Department, University of Maryland, College Park.

**Findings.** Data analysis was completed with the assistance of Dr. Kivlighan, and the findings are presented here with details of demographics, descriptive statistics, factor analysis and correlational analysis of the data obtained from the survey.

**Procedures.** Using a random sampling technique, we selected the participants by utilizing a randomized sampling table. A total of 420 participants were selected and surveys were mailed using UMCP Campus mail system, which was paid for by MIMAUE. Because of confidentiality, all envelopes were addressed, stuffed, and prepared for mail at Region II offices, then carried to UMCP Campus Mail.

A total of 420 surveys were mailed (i.e., 140 surveys per school): 35 were received via mail and 128 were completed by volunteers, for a total of 163 completed surveys. Because the initial sample size was less than half of the projected returned rate (35 out of 420 mailed surveys, 8.3% participation rate),
Researchers returned to each school site to obtain survey volunteers. A one-on-one technique was then used to assist parents with survey completion. We utilized volunteer parents who were at school activities, meetings, or coming to drop off/pick up their children at each school. Survey respondents were also provided with translation services, which were conducted by Dr. Zoppi, Dr. MacDonald, and Ms. Muñoz. We acquired an additional 128 completed surveys with this technique (a return rate of 35%).

*Description of the Sample.* The final sample consisted of 163 responses to a survey mailed to 420 parents at Prince George’s County Public Schools. This sample represents a return rate of 39 percent. The sample was heterogeneous in terms of the participants’ school, age, place of birth, marital status, number of children, racial background, cultural sub-ethnic group, education, and generational status. The following is a detailed description of the participants of this study.

The data presented in white is designated for Latino/Hispanic participants. Table 1 shows data on the student population.

Table 1 – Latino student population in Region II District, Prince George’s County: 2006

<table>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riverdale</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogers Heights</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladensburg</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Wirt</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Towns</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenridge</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladensburg</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1781</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1215</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 - Total number of survey responses by Latino and Non-Latino Ethnicity: 2006

*Schools.* The sample of all participants (i.e., Latino [108] and non-Latino [55] parents) represents 163 total completed surveys for: Bladensburg Elementary,
William Wirt Middle, and Bladensburg High Schools. There were 14 (8.8%) Bladensburg Elementary; 52 (32.7%) William Wirt Middle; and 92 (57.9%) Bladensburg High School, for a total of 159 surveys (See Figure 2). However, four parents left the surveys partially completed, totaling 163 responses. Demographical data show that the total Latino student population account for 261 at Bladensburg Elementary School, 310 at William Wirt Middle, and 483 at Bladensburg High School. Based on the data obtained from the participants, the Latino parental contribution to survey completion by the Latino student population was as follows: 5.37% Bladensburg Elementary School (14 out of 261); 17% William Wirt Middle (52 out of 310); and 19% Bladensburg High (92 out of 483). These percentage distributions of the Latino student population by parental survey participation indicate higher parental survey participation at high and middle school levels, and a low participation at the elementary school level.

Figure 2 - Percentage distribution of the survey participants by school: 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Parents</th>
<th>Latino Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generational Status.</td>
<td>The average generational status of all participants was first generation (SD .552). The data show 100 (62.9%) first generation Latino; seven (4.4%) second generation Latino; and one (.6%) fourth generation Latino (See Figure 3). The data show that there was no third generation Latino reported and 27 (17%) were non-Latino/Hispanic (Survey question 3c – What is your generational status?). However, 24 (15.1%) participants left this item blank (See Figure 3). The survey responses suggest that some participants of Latino/Hispanic background selected an ethnic group other than Hispanic/Latino (i.e., White, Black), therein increasing the responses for generational status over the amount of 108 total Latino/Hispanic survey responses. The data seem to indicate that Latinos and non-Latinos are mostly immigrants, which points to acculturation issues that may hinder parental involvement and knowledge of the educational system in the U.S. Specifically, the data suggest that the parents are mostly newcomers, with first and second generational statuses. The data also point to a lack of older generational status of immigrants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 - Percentage distribution of the sample of participants by generational status: 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Parents</th>
<th>Latino Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generational Status.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Racial Background.** The participants’ predominant racial backgrounds were Hispanic/White and African American. Of 163 surveys, 25 (15.7%) were African American; one (0.6%) was Native American or Alaska Native; one (0.6%) was Anglo/White; three (1.9%) were Asian; 85 (53.5%) were Hispanic/White; 19 were (11.9%) Hispanic/Non-White; one (0.6%) was South American Indian; 12 (7.5%) were other racial backgrounds; and 12 (7.5%) were missing a racial background designation (Survey question 6 – *What is your racial background?*), (See Figure 4). The analyses of the data show a diverse population between immigrants and non-immigrants of differentiated racial backgrounds. Specifically, the data suggest that Latinos are white and non-white within their race backgrounds.

Figure 4 - Percentage distribution of the total sample participants by racial background: 2006

<table>
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<th>Racial Background</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>All Parents</td>
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<td>Latino Parents</td>
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**Number of children living at home.** The participant’s number of children ranged between zero and five or more (Survey question 5a - *How many children live with you?*) The data show that 17 (10.7%) have one child; 30 (18.9%) have two children; 50 (31.4%) have three children, 56 (34.6%) have four children or more; and six (3.8%) left this item blank (See Figure 5).

The data show a high number of children living at home, which suggests that more children will be attending Region II schools. Moreover, it suggests that there are three or more children living at home, and the family size is bigger than the national average.

Figure 5 - Percentage distribution of number of children at home: 2006

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<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>All Parents</td>
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<td>Latino Parents</td>
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**Number of children attending Prince George’s County Public Schools.** The participants’ number of children ranged between zero and five or more. The number of children attending Prince George’s County Public Schools was 152 (Survey question 5b – *How many children do you have attending Prince George’s County Public Schools?*). About 48 (30.2%) have one child attending; 51 (32.1%) have two children attending; 35 (22%) have three children attending; 18 (11.3%) have four children or more attending; and seven (4.4%) left this item blank (See Figure 6). The data show that there are one to two
child(ren) attending schools, and the previous question shows that there may be one to two child(ren) still at home.

Figure 6 - Percentage distribution of the sample by number of children attending Prince George’s County Public Schools: 2006

Age and Place of Birth. The participants’ mean date of birth was 1956. The participants’ ages ranged between 23 and 58, with an average age of 32 (SD 8). The top seven locations of birth were: Mexico (35.8%); El Salvador (25.2%); USA (16.4%); Guatemala (5%); Dominican Republic (2.5%); Sierra Leone (2.5%); and Honduras (1.9%) (Survey question 3a – In what city and country were you born? and 3b – If you were born outside of the United States, which year did you move to the United States?). The data show a range of age and place of birth that brings to light the heterogeneity and diversity of the parents, and therein the student population mix.

All Parents
Latino Parents

Marital Status. The participants’ marital status was varied. The composition was 21 (13.2%) single/never married; five (3.1%) single/engaged to be married; 94 (59.1%) married; 16 (10.1%) separated; 11 (6.9%) divorced; and three (1.9%) widowed (Survey question 4 – What is your current marital status?) (Figure 7). However, nine (5.7%) participants left this question blank. For Latino participants, the data are illustrated in white, reflecting an increase of married and separated status for Latino population in this survey. The data suggest a relationship value between marital status and student’s family life.

Figure 7 - Percentage distribution of the sample by marital status: 2006

All Parents
Latino Parents

Latino/Hispanic Cultural Background. The overall participants’ five predominant cultural sub-ethnic groups were Mexican, Salvadorian, Argentinean, Dominican, and Bolivian. The cultural sub-ethnic group composition of all participants were: Argentina, eight (5%); Bolivia, two (1.3%); Costa Rica, one (.6%); Cuba, one (.6%); Dominican Republic, six (3.8%); Ecuador, one (.6%); El Salvador, 41 (25.8%); Honduras, three (1.9%); Mexico 56 (35.2%); Nicaragua, one(.6%); Peru, one (0.6%); and other (i.e., mixed cultures), four (2.5%) participants (Survey question 7 – If you are a Latino/Hispanic, what is your Latino/Hispanic cultural background?) (See
Figure 8). Thirty-four (21.4%) participants left this item blank. The survey data show that no participants indicated Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela as a response to their cultural sub-ethnic group.

Figure 8 - Percentage distribution of the sample of participants by Latino cultural sub-ethnic group: 2006

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<th>All Parents</th>
<th>Latino Parents</th>
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<td>Education. The highest level of education of all participants was: 52 (32.7%) elementary school, followed by 30 (18.9%) middle school; seven (4.4%) trade or vocational school; 22 (13.8%) high school; 16 (10.1%) some college; 11 (6.9%) bachelor’s degree; one (.6%) some graduate school credit/master’s degree or equivalent; and six (3.8%) doctorate or professional degree (e.g., MD, DDS, Ph.D., JD) (Survey question 8 – What is the highest level of education that you have completed?) (See Figure 9). Participants’ average highest education composition was elementary school (32.7%). However, 13 (8.2%) participants left this item blank. For Latino participants, the data suggest that the highest educational level is elementary school.</td>
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<td>Participants’ education in U.S. schools and non-U.S. schools. The data reflected that 112 (70.4%) attended non-U.S. school systems and 33 (20.8%) attended U.S. school systems, but 14 (8.7%) participants left this item blank (Survey question 9a – Did you attend school in the United States?) (See Figure 10). For those participants educated outside of the U.S., the educational levels were: 41 (25.8%) elementary school; 30 (18.9%) middle school; 19 (11.9%) high school; and 14 (8.8%) college or university; and 55 (34%) participants left this item blank (Survey question 9b – What level of education did you obtain outside of the United States?) (See Figure 11). Moreover, 77 (48.4%) attended private school, 39 (24.5) attended public school systems, but 43 (27%) left this item blank (Survey question 9c – What type of school system did you attend?) (See Figure 12).</td>
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For Latino participants, the data suggest that the education received was outside of the United States. Furthermore, the data indicate that most Latino participants were educated in private school systems, which seems to highlight differences in socio-economic status within their countries.

Figure 10 - Percentage distribution of the sample of participants by non-U.S. educational system: 2006

Note: Survey question 9a - Did you attend school in the United States?

All Parents
Latino Parents

Figure 11 - Percentage distribution of the sample of participants by level of education obtained in non-U.S. education system: 2006

Note: Survey question 9b - What level of education did you obtain outside the United States?

Figure 12 - Distribution of the sample participants by non-U.S. education system type: 2006

Note: Survey question - What type of school system did you attend?

Current Occupation. The data show that most parents are blue collar workers and laborers in areas such as food processing and service, landscape, construction, domestic cleaning services, delivering services, farming, home improvement, maintenance, and mechanics. Also, some of the participants stated that they worked at home as homemakers, housewives, and home domestics. Other participants did not specify any type of labor but stated that they worked or were unable to find any type of work. Specifically, Latino participants’ data reflect unemployment and seasonal work. A detailed data summary of the participants’ occupation is shown in Appendix C (Survey question 10 – What is your current occupation?). Figure 13 shows the seven major occupations of all the participants. Other occupations that were listed by the participants were administrator, CPA, educator, information systems management, and maintenance engineer. The data suggest that the parent population is divided into two major work areas: professional and para-professional occupation(s) and career fields.

All Parents
Newspapers that Latinos/Hispanics read the most are: Washington Post (Hispanic Section), El Pregonero, and El Tiempo Latino. Most participants stated that they did not read newspapers (Survey question 11a – *Which newspapers do you read the most?*). The data suggest that Latino participants prefer to read newspapers that target them as a Latino population, specifically through Spanish language.

**Para-professional**

Professional

Radio stations that Latinos/Hispanics listen to the most are: 99.1 FM, El Zol, Radio America, and La Mega Radio stations. Most participants stated that they listen to the AM radio stations, and they could not remember the station identification (Survey question 11b – *Which radio stations do you listen the most?*). The data suggest that Latino participants prefer Spanish language radio stations, specifically AM stations (which are more Latino stations).

Community centers that Latinos/Hispanics go the most: Casa de Maryland, Catholic Center, Casa Mobil (Mobil home), libraries, and Community Clinic. Most of the Latino participants stated the locations throughout the county where they gathered but indicated that there were no community centers. Many written statements accompanied this survey question suggesting a need for a community center within the school area, before and after-school programs, community service programs, and summer/winter programs/activities for the Latino community (Survey question 11c – *Which community center(s) do you go the most?*).

Language preference for information. In survey question 12, we asked: *In what language do you prefer to get the information?* The responses show a preference for the Spanish language. Data posited that the language preference for all participants was 104 (65.4%) Spanish; 31 (19.5%) English; 13 (8.2%) English and Spanish; two (1.3%) other language(s); and nine (5.7%) left this item blank (See Figure 14). The responses from self-identified Latino/Hispanic
respondents are shown in white, reflecting a preference for Spanish as a primary language for parental information from teachers/schools.

Figure 14 - Percentage distribution of parents’ language preference for information: 2006

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*Primary language spoken at home.* In survey question 13, we asked: *What is the primary language spoken at home?* The data show that the primary languages spoken at home were: 103 (64.8%) Spanish; 29 (18.3%) English; 16 (10.1%) both Spanish and English; four (2.5%) other language(s); and seven (4.4%) provided no answer (See Figure 15). The data suggest that Spanish is the primary language spoken at home.

Figure 15 - Percentage distribution of primary language spoken at home: 2006

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*Language spoken at home by children.* In survey question 14, we asked: *What is the primary language spoken at home by your child(ren)?* The data show that the primary language spoken at home by the child(ren) were 45 (28.3%) English; 56 (35.2%) Spanish; 50 (31.4%), both Spanish and English; one (.6%) other language(s); and seven (4.4%) provided no answer (See Figure 16). The data suggest that parents speak Spanish primarily at home and that they use English as a secondary language to communicate with their child(ren). The data seem to suggest that students speak English primarily at school while parents speak Spanish at home. Specifically, it seems to point at bi-lingual skills between parents and their child(ren). Therein, the data suggest the need for parental English classes to enhance their ability to become more involved in English-speaking school systems. Stronger English-speaking skills would improve communication with school personnel and teachers.

Figure 16 - Percentage distribution of primary language spoken at home by children: 2006

| All Parents | Latino Parents |
Attendance in school activities. In survey question 15, we asked: *How often did you and/or your spouse attend school activities?* The data suggest that parental attendance in school activities occurred on a monthly basis. Specifically, the data show the following responses: 23 (14.5%) weekly; 45 (28.3%) monthly; 39 (24.5%) twice a year; 31 (19.5%) once a year; and 21 (13.2%) left this item blank (See Figure 17). The data seem to suggest that parental involvement through school activities may rely on the relationship between student and parent as well as the relationship between teacher and parent and therefore, this relationship between school and parents may be affected by parental involvement in school activities by weekly, monthly, and yearly accounts. Additionally, the data suggest the need for further investigation about the factors related to attending school activities by parents and students, specifically relationship building and community integration between Latino families and the outreach of the school(s) in Region II.

Figure 17 - Percentage distribution of the sample participants by attendance in school activities: 2006

- All Parents
- Latino Parents

Reading an unassigned book. In survey question 16, we asked: *When was the last time your child(ren) read a book that was not assigned for school work?* The data suggest that the last time the student read an unassigned book was within a week. The reported responses show that 61 (38.4%) read weekly, 45 (28.3%) read once a month, 39 (24.5%) read twice a year, 31 (19.5%) read once a year, and 21 (13.2%) left this item blank (See Figure 18). The data seem to indicate that parents know about what the children are reading at school. Specifically, the data suggest that parents engage in their child(ren)’s reading at home when parents understand the reading materials. Further investigation should be conducted to explore reading habits and techniques used in Latino families when the primary language of parents is Spanish, and the primary language of the child(ren) is (or may be) English. The lack of understanding of language processes at home by either child(ren) or parent is essential for teacher education and acknowledgement of homework completion. Additionally, the data may point to the need for reading materials that may enhance parental involvement in reading and reading comprehension.

Figure 18 - Percentage distribution of the sample participants by reading an unassigned book: 2006

- All Parents
Latino Parents

*Communication with teacher.* In survey question 17, we asked: *When was the last time you talked to your child(ren)’s teacher?* The reported responses show that 39 (36.1%) parents communicated with the teacher(s) within the last month; 30 (27.8%) within the last week; 25 (23.1%) within the last year; six (5.6%) communicated more than a year ago; and eight (7.4%) left this item blank (See Figure 19).

The data show a weekly or monthly communication pattern between parents and teachers. However, the data show that other parents communicate with teachers once a year. Additional research must be conducted to understand the relationship process and patterns between teachers and parents. Specifically, there is a need to understand what the teachers know about Latino families and how they communicate with them regarding their child(ren)’s education: progress and lack of progress, problems at school and in the classroom, and their class participation as well as their development. The data show a need for further exploration.

Figure 19 - Percentage distribution of parental communication with the teacher(s): 2006

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*Visit/meet with the teacher.* In survey question 18, we asked *When was the last time you visited your child(ren)’s teacher?* The responses show that 31 (19.5%) visited their child(ren)’s teacher within a week; 64 (40.3%) within a month; 37 (23.3%) with one year; 14 (8.8%) more than a year; and 13 (8.1%) left this item blank (See Figure 20). The data reveal that parents visited with the teacher within a month. This data correlates with survey question 17 due to the similarity in the participants’ responses. Furthermore, the data seem to suggest that parents prefer to talk to the teachers in person rather than over the telephone.

Additional research must be conducted to understand the needs of students, parents, and teachers as a relationship process for parental involvement:

*Do parents know how to reach the teachers?*

*Do teachers know how to reach the parents?*
What is the purpose of meeting with the teacher(s)?

What are the reasons for parental lack of involvement with teachers?

Figure 20 - Distribution of the sample participants by visiting with the teacher: 2006

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Assisting with homework. In survey question 19, we asked: How frequently do you assist your child(ren) with their school homework? The participants’ responses reflect that 21 (13.2%) do not often assist the child with homework; 50 (31.4%) often assist with homework; 55 (34.6%) sometimes assist with homework; 15 (9.4%) never assist with homework; 11 (6.9%) assist with homework in another way; and seven (4.4%) left this item blank (See Figure 21). The reported data show that the majority of parents assist the child(ren) with homework sometimes (e.g., when possible/sometimes).

Figure 21 - Percentage distribution of the sample participants by assistance with homework: 2006

The data suggest that parents sometimes assist with the child(ren)’s homework but it does not explain the meaning of “when possible/sometimes.” Further research may help understand how parents assist their child(ren) with their homework, specifically if the primary language of the parents is not English. Based on this data, parents assist the child(ren) often and sometimes, but we cannot determine the meaning of these words, which requires additional investigation of their involvement with the child(ren)’s homework. Essentially, how do Latino parents help their child(ren) with their homework? (N.B.: the focus group data show that the parents help their child(ren) by using Latino culture (e.g., as a source of cultural capital) when the primary language of the parent is Spanish. Example: they found someone who can help the child with homework, or they are present as the child is doing the homework, but they serve as motivators).

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<th>Latino Parents</th>
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Attendance of child(ren) in school by parental involvement. In survey question 20a, we asked: How often do you take your child(ren) out of school? The data show the following responses: 18 (11.3%) never; 15 (9.4%) weekly; 29
(18.2%) about once a month; 21 (13.2%) about twice a year; 38 (23.9%) about once a year; 12 (7.5%) during Latino holidays; three (1.9%) during holidays of my country; and 23 (14.5%) left this item blank (See Figure 22). The data point to the familial value of education. “How often do you take your child(ren) out of school?” posits a relational factor with the needs of the family and the needs of the child(ren). The data seem to suggest that most parents do not take their child(ren) out of school often. However, further research must be conducted using school data on Latino students’ school attendance and its relationship with students’ progress for access and success of their academic achievement.

Figure 22 - Percentage distribution of the sample participants by parental involvement with school attendance: 2006

All Parents
Latino Parents

Type of cultural holidays that Latino parents celebrate or observe, which are not on the school calendar. In survey question 20b, we asked What Latino holidays do you celebrate that are not on the Prince George’s County School Holiday Calendar? The responses were: 43 (26%) non applicable; 10 (6.3%) El día de los muertos (the day of the dead); 21 (13.2%) El día de los Reyes (The Three Kings Day); 35 (22%) El día de la independencia de mi país (The Independence Day of my Country); 21 (13.2%) Navidad (Christmas), four (2.5%) other; one (0.6%) both El día de los muertos and el día de los Reyes); and 24 (15.1%) left this item blank (See Figure 23).

The data seem to indicate that Latino families observe Latino holidays, but not to the extent that absence can hinder the child(ren)’s education. Schools must ensure that Latino holidays be included in the school calendar diversity observances.

Figure 23 - Percentage distribution of the sample participants by Latino/Hispanic holidays: 2006

All Parents
Latino Parents

Days off school due to family holiday observance. In survey question 20c, we asked When your family celebrates any holiday, for how long does your child(ren) usually stay out of school? The responses show the following: 22 (13.8%) no days off school (none); 71 (44.7%) one to two days; five (3.1%)
three to five days; six (3.8%) one week; three (1.9%) more than one week; and 52 (32.7%) left this item blank (See Figure 24).

The data suggest that Latino parents do observe Latino holidays and there is a need to review the school calendar to communicate acknowledgement of Latino holiday observances, without hindering the student(s)’ educational progress. Moreover, additional research must be conducted to outline the major Latino holidays that are observed by the Latino community, based on the overall Latino student population.

Figure 24 - Percentage distribution of the sample participants by time out of school due to Latino holiday observance (not on school calendar): 2006

All Parents
Latino Parents

Parental involvement and school attendance reasons. In survey question 20d, we asked Why do you take your child(ren) out of school when classes are in session? The data show that five (3.1%) never; three (1.9%) help me with a sick child(ren) at home; five (3.1%) help me when I get sick; 115 (72.3%) he/she is sick; 19 (11.9%) other reasons; and 12 (7.5%) left this item blank (See Figure 25).

The data point out that the Latino parents do not take the child(ren) out unless the child is sick. However, the data do not provide an understanding of other reasons for the parent(s) to take the child out of school when classes are in session. Further investigation could be conducted to outline additional reasons for the child(ren)’s absence when school is in session. Specifically, there is a need to understand the relationship between attendance, absence, and past-homework completion, with overall academic achievement.

Figure 25 - Percentage distribution of the sample participants by reasons for non-school attendance: 2006

All Parents
Latino Parents

Attendance in school and family travel. In survey question 20e, we asked When you take your child(ren) out of school for a holiday, do you travel out of state? The following data show that 97 (61%) do no travel outside of the state (no), 43 (27%) travel outside of the state (yes), and 19 (12%) left this item blank (See Figure 26). The data suggest that most parents do not leave the state for
holidays. However, additional research must be conducted about parents who take their child(ren) out of state for holidays, how these parents help their child(ren) with their school responsibilities, and how they communicate with their child(ren)’s teacher.

Figure 26 - Percentage distribution of the sample participants by Latino holidays to travel outside the state of Maryland: 2006

All Parents
Latino Parents

Limitations. There are two limitations that are set forward for future research. First, the survey used was not a formal instrument that has been grounded as a reliable instrument. Therein, the survey is a tool for the purpose that it was set forth, which was the need to understand the Latino population in Region II, Prince George’s County Public Schools. Although the survey was well developed, the data obtained is only for the purpose of Region II, to be used by Prince George’s County Public Schools, and therefore cannot be generalized. Second, the major limitation of this study was the mailing of surveys. Therefore, we do not recommend direct mailing due to the lack of responses and consequent lower rates of participation. The lack of participation reveals three major limitations for mailing surveys: (1) parents do not answer mailings as well as one-on-one interviews, (2) parents do not get the mailings due to an erroneous address, and (3) parents do not feel as motivated to complete and return them. Other factors that may have affected the low response are: (1) lack of understanding of the research purpose; (2) limited knowledge of language (reading) in order to complete the survey; and (3) comprehension of confidentiality and fear to participate.

Missing Data. Occasionally, participants did not provide an answer to a specific question from one of the scales. When this occurred, the missing item was replaced by the mean of the items for the particular scale for the individual participant.

Results from Factor and Correlational Analyses

A factor analysis was conducted of the survey items to examine the factors that relate to and may indicate different aspects of Latino parental involvement. We examined survey questions 15 through 20a.

The results of the factor analysis indicated that survey questions 15 (How often did you/and or your spouse attend school activities?), 16 (When was the last
time your child or children read a book that was not assigned for school work?), 17 (When was the last time you talked to your child(ren)’s teacher?), 18 (When was the last time you visited your child(ren)’s teacher?), 19 (How frequently do you assist your child(ren) with their homework?) and 20a (How often do you take your child(ren) out of school?) were related to parental involvement (See Table 1).

Table 1 – Correlations among parents’ involvement in school and at home: 2006

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<th>VARIABLES FACTORS</th>
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<td>Survey Questions</td>
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<td>Q17</td>
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Note: * p < .05 ** p < .01

The results of the factor analysis indicate that there was a higher order of factors that described Latino parental involvement. The data suggest that there are two types of parental involvement: (1) parents’ involvement in the child(ren)’s school, and (2) parents’ involvement with school work at home. Additionally, the data indicate that these factors were different and distinct from each other and therefore, there is little correlation between these two factors

r = 0.13, p > .05. Essentially these two factors are separate and therefore, unique in how Latino parents’ involvement is defined in their participation in the child(ren)’s school or with the school work at home.

Next, we examined the variables that either related or did not relate to these two factors: parents’ involvement in the child(ren)’s school, and parents’ involvement with school work at home.

The analysis used both correlation and analysis of variables that were within the two factors, as described above, and illustrate that Latino parental involvement occurs at school and at home. Furthermore, the correlational
analysis results indicate that there is a significant relationship between survey item 5a (*How many children live with you?*) and parents’ involvement in their child(ren)’s school (r = 0.17, p > 0.05). The data suggest that the number of children in the family impacts parental involvement of the child(ren) at school. Therein, the data seems to indicate that the number of children at home may influence parental involvement at school, and therefore, participation in school activities, visits with teachers, or communication with the school. Additional research must be conducted to understand the causality of the data.

Additional analyses were conducted using correlational methods to examine generational status and marital status, and their relationship with parental involvement. There were no significant results from these analyses, which suggest that there is no significant relationship between parents’ generational and marital statuses.

Further, we examined the relationship between racial background and parental involvement, and the data indicated that there is a significant relationship. The data suggest that parents racially identified as white Latino are more involved with homework than non-white Latino and African American parents (F = 3.78, p

Additional research must be conducted to understand the reasons for race to be a factor in parental involvement, specifically between Latino (white) and Latino (non-white).

*Sample Reliability Analysis.* The reliability for the demographic survey was not conducted because the survey was used as an instrument for demographic data collection, which is sufficient to examine the questions posed in this study. However, the limitation of the survey is the fact that the instrument is not an instrument that has been used in other research studies, and therefore, it is restricted for this study. Therein, the data cannot be generalized.

**Focus Group Research Project**

*Research Team.* Dr. Irene M. Zoppi, Ms. Omayra Muñoz, M.A., and Dr. Victoria-María MacDonald.

*Research Contributors:* Dr. Bruce Katz, Region II school principals and administrators. Translation services by: Dr. Victoria-María MacDonald.

*Focus Groups.* A total of six to 12 parents were asked to participate from each selected school (e.g., one elementary school, one middle school, and one high
school for a total of three focus groups). The three focus group sessions were held at each local school (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). Each focus group lasted approximately 45-60 minutes, and was taped, transcribed, and translated. Refreshments were served at each meeting. Transcriptions were completed by Dr. Zoppi and translations were completed by Dr. MacDonald. The research team approach was used to verify both transcriptions and translations to ensure authenticity and ethical protocol. The set of questions utilized to guide the focus groups were approved by the University of Maryland IRB in November of 2005. The overarching research question for analysis was “What factors impede or promote Latino parental involvement in the Prince George’s County, Maryland public schools?”

Procedures. Parents were selected by using a stratified sampling strategy from each school’s Latino school liaison. Focus groups were held at a designated location that was convenient for parents to attend and we provided both babysitting services and refreshments. The focus group questions consisted of unstructured questions using a rolling interview and outcome methods through considerable latitude of probe of responses and moderation. The unstructured focus group questions allowed parents to refer to virtually any aspect of the general stimulus identified with each question through the participant’s language preference (Spanish or English). Focus group questions followed the same structure of the survey questions, but allowing a focus into Latino culture and ways of involvement that shed light into what the survey questions could not provide through a survey format. The focus groups were lead by both a Latino and Anglo staff with a recorder who kept track of common phrases, words, data, or information that parents state commonly (e.g., using field note - attached). A tape recorder was used during each session. Tapes are safeguarded in the Latino Center files. Data obtained through focus groups was analyzed through content analysis and a computer assisted content analysis using the (Key-word-in-context) technique.

Researchers were introduced to faculty and staff at each school, and met regularly with the schools’ Latino parent liaison or representative. The support of the Latino parent liaison or representative was instrumental in accessing Latino parents. Upon completion of the focus groups, each representative received a gift certificate as a token of appreciation for their assistance. This gift certificate was purchase by the researchers as an expression of their gratitude on behalf of the Latino Research Center.

Methodology and Analysis of Findings. Dynamic communication processes arise in focus groups. As Berg (1998, p.101) states, “interactions among and between group members stimulate discussions in which one group member
reacts to comments made by another.” Caution must be applied to focus group interpretation, however, as “some opinions may be more extreme and some may be less verbalized than others because of the group effects.” (Berg, 1998, p.112) The findings of the focus group research were outlined in the preliminary report, and are, again, provided in the results section of this report. For additional details, see the preliminary report of the focus groups.

Limitations. By their nature, focus groups are only a small sample of a population. Even with the surveys as supplementary material, it is believed that we reached the more active and involved parents, not necessarily those who are not participating at all in the schools. It is those parents whom the schools need to reach and about whom we could learn more. Moreover, the study will be enhanced with interviews and focus groups with teachers and staff at schools, permitting their voices to be included in the examination of factors restricting parental involvement.

Focus Groups Findings

The findings can be located within the focus groups transcripts by citation (focus group number, page number, and paragraph number e.g. II, 3, ii). Pseudonyms of schools and staff members are NOT utilized in the translated version as it is not for research publication, but specifically for Dr. Katz, and should not be distributed.

In this section, it is major and detailed findings are presented with examples from the research. The below data were presented in the Preliminary Report. A summary of the themes is presented in Appendix D along with an illustration of parental involvement major factors and a table of Latino student population.

- The data suggest that Latino parents are extremely grateful for the presence of bilingual Latino liaisons, particularly at Bladensburg Elementary School and William Wirt Middle School. As one parent summarized, “Without Mrs. X we wouldn’t know what was happening.” (I, 9, xiv). However, parents at all schools noted the need for more Spanish bilingual staff, faculty, and administrators available to communicate with them. (I, 17, viii). For example, at William Wirt Middle School, there is only one bilingual paraprofessional staff member available for all Latino parents and students. There were no additional staff members or teachers that speak Spanish, or are bilingual to serve as translators in order to communicate with the Spanish speaking community, parents, and students. The ESOL teacher is not Spanish-speaking. (II, 9, iv; II, 9, v; II, 9, vi.)
• The data from all three focus groups reflect that although the efforts of current Latino parental liaisons are heroic, schools should hire not just paraprofessionals, but also trained bilingual counselors with a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree. The data suggest that paraprofessionals could receive further training while in their positions, but they often fill in the gap for counselors without the professional training or certification. The data suggest that parents feel that their children need role models who are educated beyond high school.

• Most parents depend upon public transportation or walking in order to attend school activities and noted this as a barrier to attending meetings. They requested additional ways in which to access the school for activities such as English classes in the evenings or on Saturdays. They were also concerned about how the lack of transportation impeded the ability for their children to attend after-school tutoring or Saturday classes. One parent said, “I have a daughter who needs extra help with mathematics, but there is no help with transportation.” (II, 18, iv, v, vi)

• The data show that Latino parents are willing and interested in participating in their children’s education at all levels. However, the data suggest that inadequate means to communicate this interest creates a barrier. For example, the school websites provide information on telephone lines that record information in Spanish, but few of the parents whom we interviewed own or have access to computers, including access to library computers due to barriers in obtaining library identification cards. At the elementary school, none of the parents had a computer (I, 14, 3); at the middle school, one parent had a computer (II, 16, viii; II, 16, ix); and at the high school two parents had computers (III, 4, v). Thus, schools should not depend upon announcements in Spanish upon their websites as a primary means of communicating with Latino parents.

• Even when information is sent home translated in Spanish, parents indicated that they could not understand it. One stated, “It is also worrisome, when a paper arrives and we don’t even understand it in Spanish… How are you going to sign, if you don’t understand?” (I, 10, vi and vii). Our data show that most parents did not have opportunities to learn to read or write in their native languages beyond the elementary level. Data from the survey will further help understand levels of parental literacy and ways in which translations may have to be simplified for better understanding.

• Most of the parents expressed their concerns over school discipline, gangs, and violence, particularly at the middle school level. (II, 13, vii, viii.) Parents expressed that the schools must take steps to address real or
perceived issues. These concerns are also highlighted at the elementary school, where parents felt frightened about the middle school, and they were cautioned by friends to move elsewhere rather than send their children to this school. (I, 11, x, xi). Some of these parents are moving away from the area or simply sending their children to live with other family members to ensure that they go to a different middle school.

• Focus group data suggested that the relationships between Latino parents and teachers and administrators reflect general racial/ethnic tensions between Latinos and African Americans in the middle and high schools. Latino parents report that their children are discriminated against by African American teachers. (II, 12, x; II, 13, i.) For instance, Latino parents expressed that their children receive excessive punishments (three-day school suspensions) for arriving late to class whereas Black students seemed to be allowed more tolerance. For example, Black students were granted permission to go to the bathroom or get a drink of water, whereas the same request was denied to Latino students (i.e., specifically girls). Additional research must be conducted to understand the issues related to racial/ethnic tension between these two minority groups.

• Parents expressed that after-school programs at the elementary and middle schools could facilitate or help them with parental stress, in understanding how to help their children with their homework, and how to care for their children when they are at work (e.g., child care support). Specifically, parents were concerned with their children returning home while they are at work, instead of staying at school for after-school programs (e.g., sports, tutoring, leadership training, clubs, music, etc.) as positive alternatives to joining gang activities. Most Latino parents are afraid of increasing gang activity and of their children getting beaten up either on the way to school or when returning home. Several Latino parents have seen themselves or heard of students being beaten up on the way to and from school. (I, 11, xii)

• The focus groups at middle and high school levels suggested that parents feel that they do not understand enough about the transition from middle to high school, and high school to college. Most of the parents feel that the school is in charge of their children’s education, and they do not understand enough of the U.S. educational system to follow up with the requirements for transition to high school and therefore, to college or university. For the majority of the parents, going to college is perceived as “a dream,” and therefore, too difficult to attain. College preparation regarding items such as the SAT, college application deadlines, financial aid, and other college related information are just a few of the subjects
that they feel that they are not comfortable with and do not know about. Many parents worry that attending college or university is almost impossible for their children, even though this is a primary reason for coming to this country. Some of the parents stated that many families push their children to find a job after high school, even if the child has capabilities for college. Additional research and data is required to fully understand these issues and concerns from the parents. Specifically, how to increase attendance of Latino parents at PTA and school meetings, as well as how to conduct outreach to this community.

• All the parents we interviewed unanimously expressed their desire to learn English. Parents critiqued the time and location of English classes in the community, and suggested that English classes could be held on the school campus, at a nearby library, or community center.

• Data from the focus groups supported that there are Latino cultural issues that schools need to take into consideration when working with Latino students. For example, parents expressed that the dance costumes for dance classes were inappropriate in length and style for their girls. (II, 19, i) Latino parents’ views on modesty are an issue for students’ participation in sports and other activities. Additional research must be conducted to follow up with parents’ perceptions and school requirements for these activities.

• Latino parents express a genuine desire in their role as volunteers and formal participation in classrooms. They suggested that they felt embarrassed because of lack of English skills and literacy. For instance, many parents did not know that there were classroom volunteers and wanted to know how they could participate even if they don’t speak English. (I, 11, vi). They stated that they want to participate but do not know how or even when to do so. The PTA is not as well-known among the focus group members as we believed. When we discussed information that could be gathered at the PTA meetings, only one or two parents from each level knew what the PTA was. For example, one father asked, “What is this thing called the PTA? “ (III, 6, vi). Another parent indicated, “I know about the PTA because a friend of my daughter’s told me that there was a meeting about how to go to the High School and that time I went. If not, I wouldn’t have known anything about the PTA.” (II, 20, xi).

• During our focus group at the middle school level, Latino parents voiced their concerns about having teachers understand them and their culture better through the use of Spanish language or translation. Concerns in several areas arose, not necessarily related to parental involvement, but about their voices not being heard beyond the Latino
parent representative. The data suggest that there is a rift in communication between the school and the parents. Therefore, ethically, we would feel remiss not to point out that the data suggest that there may be deficiencies in the areas of leadership, student discipline (e.g., excessive punishments meted out to Latino students), student schedule shifts resulting in students skipping classes or erroneously attending other classes, and environmental issues surrounding safety (e.g., teen pregnancy, behavioral issues regarding childhood to adulthood development, lack of parental supervision before and after school, gang activity, violence before and after school, and racial climate as well as acculturation and isolation issues). We feel that these areas must be carefully explored in research, analysis, and collaboration with the Latino and African-American community. Further analysis is required to augment the data in order to provide suggestions for courses of action.

• Focus groups were an excellent source of data collection, but of course they have limitations as they are not representative examples of the entire parent population. It is important to highlight that parents were afraid to discuss issues of citizenship and documentation. Our role was not to inquire about legal status; however, this issue surfaced as they perceived that “it was safe” to speak up about parental involvement concerns. For example, some parents were initially afraid to participate in both the surveys and focus groups, with the fear that we were going to ask about legal documentation or citizenship. Parents expressed that they do not often come to the schools, because they feel that legal status and paperwork is required. In this research we did not ask for immigration status, but the data seem to suggest that there are perceptions, concerns, and issues related to immigration and the pursuit of education beyond high school. Parents asked about whether their children would be able to attend college if they as parents were not documented citizens. The data suggest that parents need to feel safe to come to school and participate regardless of their legal status.

In conclusion, we posit that this research is an exploratory analysis that could shed light on how Latino parents are involved with their children at schools and ways in which to improve the level of involvement. The data reflect that Latino parents are deeply interested in their children’s education and that they want to be part of the school environment. Additionally, the data suggest a need for further exploration of the collaboration between school and surrounding communities. It is important to explore such partnerships, as these issues are occurring on statewide as well as on national levels. Therefore, we hope to work together in partnership with Region II to build a strong future for all
students, specifically the Latino community near the University of Maryland’s area of operation. We look forward to your comments and suggestions, and we are eager to join together towards our goals of academic achievement and urban education. Detailed findings with examples are presented next. The data is shown in both English (translation) and Spanish (original version), which is colored in blue.

Forms of Involvement

- The data analysis show that Latino parents from all focus groups regarded being present and monitoring homework as a form of involvement in their children’s education. However, some parents stated that they just stand close to their children and motivate them to complete the homework because they cannot read. For example:

In elementary school, a Latino parent stated:

“In sum, staying with them always…because of that, yes”.

“Y todo, estando siempre con ellos... Por lo pronto que sí.” (I, 4, V, H, i).

In middle school:

“Look, I tell him, you have to do your homework”.

“Mira yo le digo, tienes que hacer la tarea”.

(II, 13, v, a – forms of involvement - monitoring homework: parent’s capacity).

In high school:

“Well, since I can’t read, I push them to read and I am vigilant to make sure she does her homework”.

“Bueno, como yo no sé leer, yo le empujo a leer y estoy al pendiente de que haga sus tareas.” (II, 13, i, d – parental literacy/capacity – parent cannot read).

- The data also suggest that Latino parents find other resources when they have difficulties helping their children. Specifically, Latino parents from middle and high school acknowledged that they find friends to help the children or in other cases the older siblings. For example:

Latino parent from middle school:
“I have friends who help them when they cannot do their homework”.

“Yo tengo amistades para que le ayuden cuando no pueden hacer la tarea.”

(II, 13, v, a: forms of involvement – monitoring homework – help with homework through other resources due to parental limitations).

Latino parent from high school:

“I help, I find someone who can help him.”

“Yo ayudo, le busco a alguien que le ayude.” (III, 2, v)

• The data show that Latino parents are interested in participating in their children’s education at all levels. The parents from the elementary level suggest that the school can help more by offering activities such as workshops in Spanish about school system or policies. They could then obtain the knowledge and skills to advocate for their children’s education. In addition, they see this as an opportunity to develop a Latino parent organization. For example:

Elementary School

“Well, the idea of how to organize ourselves as Latino parents to make a change, and well, what are the resources and help we can secure. We need more so we can become educated on how to advocate for our children.”

“Bueno, la idea de cómo nosotros nos organizarnos como padres Latinos para hacer posible un cambio y bueno cual son los recursos y ayudas que podemos asegurar. Nosotros necesitamos más que se nos eduque para saber Como promover a nuestros hijos.” (I, 21, V)

• The data show that another form of involvement for Latino parents is to know the school personnel and develop effective communication with them. However, some parents mentioned difficulties in this area due to English language proficiency. Parents do not know the school personnel (Principal and Counselor) but they mentioned that they know the teachers. Considering the importance of “personalismo” in Latinos and the capability to communicate in Spanish, this can be a significant factor that hinders involvement. Furthermore, the data suggest that Latino
parents consider that attending school meetings sends their children the message that they care about them and their schoolwork. Here are some examples:

“There are times when there are conferences {parent-teacher conferences}, and go but there is no one there to translate if Ms. Rivera is not present.”

“Hay veces que hay conferencia (Conferencias de Padres- maestro), yo voy pero no tienen a nadie para traducir [sino esta la Sra. Rivera].” (II, 11)

“Well, um, that is to come, and I come and with her teacher, a Black man, um…I don’t remember his name…then…my daughter…she helps me to come.” “Bueno, uhm, eso es llegar, y vengo, y…con el maestro de ella, un morenito... uhm... no me acuerdo como se llama...luego... y mi hija... ella me ayuda a venir.” (III, 8, v)

“I communicate with a lady who knows Spanish and is a counselor”.

“Yo me comunico con una señora que sabe español, que es consejera.” (III, 7, v, d).

**Parental Aspiration**

- The data show that Latino parents at elementary, middle, and high school levels encourage high aspirations for their children. For example, they want their children to graduate from high school, attend college, and pursue a professional career. Parents’ aspirations suggest that they desire for their children better opportunities than they have. The data analysis indicates the different ways that Latino parents may encourage their children to do their best and have better job opportunities.

**For example:**

“I want her to be a teacher. However, I do not know if she can…”

“Quiero que ella sea maestra. Pero no sé si se pueda...Que tenga un sueño, una carrera... que lo puede hacer.” (I, 4, VIII, D).
“For all parents, I think they would like that their child to chart a pathway/create a future (echara camino). That he has a dream, a career…that he can do it.” (I, 4, VIII, D).

“To mine, that she doesn’t look in my mirror, [I tell her] that she doesn’t work like I work, that I want her to have a better life, I don’t want you to be like me, Ok?”

(II, 18, vii).

“Well, as father of the family, I tell him that the school is important and it is necessary to get ahead and have a better future rather than be in the street. So that they will prosper.”

“Bueno, yo como padre de familia, yo le digo que la escuela es importante y se necesita para echar para adelante y tenga un futuro mejor, no en la calle. Para que ellos prosperen.” (III, 1, viii)

**Transportation Issues**

• The data suggests that most Latino parents from middle and high schools depend upon public transportation or walking in order to attend school activities. They observe this as a barrier to attending meetings and engaging in other school activities. They were also concerned about how the lack of transportation prevents their children from attending after-school tutoring.

“Transportation, to help us arrive.”

“La transportación, eso, que nos ayuden a llegar.” (II, 21, viii).

“I think there is, but there is no transportation. I have a daughter who needs extra help with mathematics, but there is no help with transportation.”

“Creo que hay, pero no hay transporte. Yo tengo mi hija que necesita ayuda con las matemáticas, mas no hay ayuda para transporte.” (II, 22, iv).

**Economic Issues**

• The data analysis from the elementary, middle, and high schools suggest that Latino parents desire to be more involved in their children’s education but they acknowledge the importance of working to provide
for their children and family. The data also show that Latino parents are aware of the high cost of education and that it is necessary to cut back on expenses for their children education. However, some parents believed that they could not afford to send their children to college. In addition, some of them mentioned that because of the type of work that they do—such as maintenance, cleaning, and working in restaurants—they will not be paid if they are absent. Some parents explained that there are many single moms in charge of their children. The high cost of living, including the high cost of transportation, further limited parents’ participation in school activities.

For example:

“For that, right now there are not that many expenses…and we can give them more (gustos/special things?), but in the future, later, we have to cut back on expenses. And I tell them to remember these moments, because later we will have to make room for their studies. And my daughter says that she is going to do something. Well, Daddy, I have to do something.”

“A eso, horita, ya no hay tantos gastos... y le podemos dar más gustos, pero ya puedo, luego, tenemos que recortar estos gastos. Y yo les digo que se recuerden de estos momentos, pues ya ahorita tenemos que cuidar la plata para hacer brecha para los estudios. Ya... salemos a comer menos, pues eso, eso económico es fuerte. Y mi hija me dice, que va hacer algo. Pues, papi, yo tengo que hacer algo.” (I, 5, III,).

“And you have to come from work (hourly wage) and ask permission, and sometimes they do not give you permission and you can’t come.”

Relations with School Personnel
Data analysis suggests that the relationships between Latino parents and school personnel are limited due to English language proficiency, lack of bilingual school personnel, and lack of information or knowledge about school culture. Specifically, the data analysis from the middle school show that Latino parents presented issues related to trust. For example, parents articulated that teachers are not culturally sensitive enough to respond to their children’s needs. In addition, Latino parents expressed that teachers have poor communication with the students and treat them differently.

For example:

“It [varies] from class to class. So…the teachers are different from year to hear, they change. They go!”

“Puede variar de clase a clase. Pues… los maestros son diferentes de de año en año, cambian. Se van!” (II, 15, vi).

The teachers (treat the students differently.) “Los maestros (tratan diferente a los estudiantes)” (III, 13, vi). They don’t pay attention to them, they treat them differently. “No les hacen caso, les tratan diferente”. (III, 13, vi).

Latino Parental Liaison

Data abstracted from elementary, middle, and high school levels indicate that Latino parental liaisons are crucial for Latino parental involvement in schools. Specifically, the data reflect that the Latino parental liaison provides resources such as translation services, coordination, academic guidance, counseling, community service, and advice and assistance with familial problems between children and their parents. The data posits that the Latino parental liaison supports school-parents interaction that fosters communication between them.

For example, “It’s just that, there are no people who speak our language, except for Ms. X. All of the programs are translated by Ms. X. Y es que, no hay gente que hable nuestro idioma, sin Ms. X. Todos los programas son traducidos por Ms. X.” (I, 11, II) Note: Ms. X is the Latino parental liaison.
The role of the parental liaison serves as an interactive tool that links the school with the parents and the students. Furthermore, the role of the parental liaison supports parental involvement and academic support for Latino students. The data show that there is no Latino parental liaison at the high school level, consequently parents cannot effectively participate. The data from the focus groups reflect that the high school does not have any personnel in the role of Latino parental liaison.

For example, focus group question: Q1. And when you speak with the teacher, how do you communicate with her? Q. ¿Y cuando usted habla con la maestra? ¿Cómo se comunican con ella? A2. Through Mrs. X. A. Por la Sra. X. Note: Ms. X is the Latino parental liaison.

1 Q = question.
2 A = Answer.

**Parental Concerns**

- The analyses of data show that the parents had many concerns regarding the education of their children. The parental concerns seemed to grow as the student progressed from elementary, middle, and high school levels. Parents from the elementary school had less concerns than parents from the middle and high schools.
- Summary of parental concerns by educational level of students:

**Elementary School:**

- School safety due to community violence
- Issues about the lack of “identification” (e.g., Citizenship/Residency)
- ESOL issues and fear of lack of academic achievement

**Middle School:**

- School safety about before and after school violence and gang membership operations
- Residency/citizenship issues concerning school participation
- Acculturative stress and understanding U.S. culture
- ESOL and parents’ desire to learn English
- Discrimination perceptions/differential treatment of students based on race by teachers
School suspension policy and the lack of understanding of parental rights
Parental concerns about the schools’ role in the following:
Academic achievement
Security and safety of the students
Lack of Latino teachers in school and lack of Spanish language knowledge among teachers and administration
Parent lack of knowledge about school activities to involve Latino children
Heterogeneity of Latinos: Cultural competency of teachers, administrators, and counselors

High School:

Curriculum requirements and financial aid about education after high school
Lack of knowledge of PTA meetings
Lack of knowledge hinders Latino parental participation in school activities
Lack of personalismo hinders parental involvement
Latino parents’ economic struggles
Lack of a community center for parents and students
Drugs and Gangs: Parents worried because the school is not paying attention to their kids
Discrimination: Race/Ethnicity dissonance among students and conflict with teachers due to being Latino/Hispanic

Major examples of parental concerns by the educational level of students:

Elementary School:

Safety as an issue of concern reflected a major aspect of Latino parents’ lives, specifically living in fear due to increasing community violence in their neighborhoods. Parents were concerned about their children’s safety before and after school due to increasing community violence in their communities. Furthermore, some parents expressed that many families are relocating because they want to avoid sending their children to William Wirt Middle School due to its reputation.

Here are some examples:

Q. ¿Y la escuela tiene violencia?
Q. And does your school have violence?

A. No, en la escuela, pero en la comunidad. No hay seguridad.

A. Not in the school, but in the community. It is not safe. (I, 12, IX,).

Q. ¿Hay otras escuelas que le dan miedo?

Q. Are there other schools that you are fearful of?

A. Si. La William. [Referring to William Wirt Middle School.]

A. Yes, the William.

A. Sí porque hay mucho muchachito ya más grande

Con la maldad, y le dan a los niños inocentes.

De lo que yo sé, hay mucha violencia, y se agarran y le golpean.

Yo se que donde vivo yo, vi una vez a un niño que lo dejaron inconsciente

(intermisa)

Le patearon.

A. Yes, because there are a lot of children, but they are much larger.

They are wicked, and they give it to the innocent children.

From what I know there is a lot of violence and they grab them and hit them.

I know that where I live once I saw a boy whom they left unconscious. They kicked him.

(I, 12, IX).

A. Bueno eso de la William nos preocupa, hay mucha violencia. Ya padres no quieren que sus hijos vayan para allá a estudiar.

A. Well, William [Wirt] worries us; there is a lot of violence. Parents now do not want their children to go there to study.
A. Otros venden sus casas, y otros cambian de renta. Aunque pagan bien los trabajos, cambian de trabajo, pues no quieren que sus hijos se matriculen en la William, se van.

A. Some sell their houses, other move from their rental properties. Although their jobs pay well, they change jobs because they don’t want their children to attend William [Wirt], they leave. (I, 20, IX)

A. Mucha violencia. También esa escuela nos da miedo, no creo que los niños aprendan nada allá.

A. A lot of violence. Also, that school scares us. I don’t think that the children learn anything there. (I, 20, IX-C).

A. También, eso de lo de la William Wirt, que se puede hacer con lo de la violencia.

A. Also, that of William Wirt, what can be done with the violence.

(I, 21, IX-C).

• Issues about the lack of “identification” (e.g., citizenship/residency) arise as part of parents concern with how to help their children with homework due to their lack of access to resources such as books and computers. Parents expressed that they were not able to borrow books or use computers at a local library due to lack of identification. Parents stated that they were not able to obtain a library card in order to borrow books and use the library resources.

Q. Van a la biblioteca?

Q. Do you go to the library?

A. Sí.

A. Yes.

A. A veces, pero se necesita un ID (identificación).

A. Sometimes, but you need an identification. (I, 14, IX-D)

• ESOL issues and fear of lack English language knowledge affecting academic achievement.
Bueno a mi hija, le da miedo, pues esta en ESOL.
Well, my daughter is fearful, because she is in ESOL.

(I, 17, IX-A, i).

Middle School:

- Discrimination perceptions/differential treatment of students based on race by teachers. The examples below show that there are cultural competency problems among students and teachers, specifically problems with teachers.

A. Pues, como que... con los otros alumnos - alumnos morenos. [voz baja].

A. Well, with the other students, black students [said in low voice]. (II, 3, viii-parental concerns about schools).

A. Problemas con algunos maestros.

A. Problems with some teachers.

(II, 3, viii-parental concerns about schools).

A. Y con otros estudiantes. (Silenciosamente – alguien dijo diferencias de raza – en baja voz – las gangas).

A. And with other students. Race differences and gangs [in low voice].

(II, 3, viii-parental concerns about schools).

A. Bueno, el año pasado, no la dejaron ir al baño. Pero a la otra persona, una morenita, el profesor le dijo si puede, y la dejaron.

Pero a mi hija, no la dejaron ir a cambiarse (kotex). No podía Hacerlo.

A. Well, this last year, they wouldn’t let her go to the bathroom. But, the other person, a Black girl, the teacher said she could go and they let her go.
But my daughter, they wouldn’t let her go to change her Kotex. She couldn’t do it.

(II, 15, viii - parental concerns about schools – parent perception of racism and discrimination towards Latinos and preference toward African American students).

- Gangs and fight problems: Parents feel that the school is not addressing the problem of drugs and gangs and that these issues have gone unnoticed. They also suggested that this problem occur because of the lack of security.

A. Yo ya he visto esto. Yo vivo cerca y veo como esto niños se pelean, mas que nada morenos, y los veo, como se... y se agarran (a pelear). Por que yo veo muchos que se pelean, allí arriba. Se agarran y se persiguen después de la escuela, sin seguridad.

A. I have already seen this. I live nearby and I see how these children fight, more than anything the Black children, and I see how...they grab each other to fight.

Because I see a lot of them fight, right up there.

They grab each other and chase each other after school, without any security.

(II, 16, viii - parental concerns about schools – parents perceive that the school has problems and lacks security).

A. Bueno, a mi hijo lo amenazaron, eso.

A. Well, they threatened my son.

(II, 16, viii - parental concerns about schools – parents perceive that the school has problems and lacks security, specifically threats to Latino students).

A. Otro... ese que se pelean...

A. Another...is that they fight.

(II, 16, viii - parental concerns about schools – parents perceive that the school has problems and lacks security).
• Suspension Problems: Parental concerns about school rules and policies. They expressed that there is a lack of information about suspension explanations and rules, as well as issues with suspension fairness.

She [points to daughter who had been brought along because she was suspended] –

I don’t have problems to speak of with her.

But this time, only because she arrived late to a class,

I don’t know how many, maybe one to two minutes, and they didn’t let her enter; they didn’t let her enter the classroom.

It is the only problem, and because of that, for that reason, I am also here. Why….

(II, 3, viii-parental concerns about schools: attendance in school, lateness, and suspension).

They suspended her for three days. And I don’t know if it is fair, I don’t know if it is fair or if there was another reason?]

(II, 4, viii-parental concerns about schools: suspension, lack of information about suspension reasons and rules, and issues with suspension fairness).

And I don’t know if it is fair.

Or if there is an additional reason, I just don’t know.

(II, 4, viii-parental concerns about schools: suspension, lack of information about suspension reasons and rules, and issues with suspension fairness).
• Parents considered that suspension is not the resolution to student problems. They suggested other methods to make students feel remorseful about their behavior.

    A. Aha... si ellas pierden clases, para que... ese tipo de castigo...

    Como estaban castigadas. Pierden clases... hasta ahora.

A. Ah…and if they lose classes…for what…that type of punishment…
B. since they were punished. They lose classes…for now.


• Role of school: Academic curriculum and requirements need to be more communicated to parents. Below is an example:

Q. And did the school notify you of any other alternatives for the suspension?

How to go to the office? Another option for suspension?

    A. No, no nos dijo.

A. No, they didn’t tell us.

(II, 8, viii-parental concerns about schools: lack of information or communication from schools).

    A. Bueno, por eso yo me siento como hasta mal... pues por eso

    mi hija ya no me tiene confianza, pues yo no le doy, este, consejos bien, yo no se lo que pensar.

A. Well, because of this I almost feel badly…well, because of this my daughter doesn’t have faith in me, well, I don’t give her, this, good advice; I don’t know what to think.

(II, 8, viii-parental concerns about schools: issues related to trust and how to meet student’s needs in schools).
• Parental concerns about school security exemplify a problem with increasing violence in the community that infiltrates the school. Below are some examples:

A. Y es que se escapan, es de seguridad. No de que, pues...

*Yo le digo, y si la encuentran en la calle... Y que le echen la policía.*

*Que yo la voy a recoger o les digo que le den un buen tiempo por ahí.*

A. And they escape; it is a question of safety.

Well, I tell her... if they find her on the street...

that they send her to the police.

I will go and pick her up

and I will tell them to give her a “good time” there.

(II, 8, viii-parental concerns about schools: lack of information or communication from schools).

A. Que se escapan muchos niños (de la escuela), yo sé porque...Yo se por que yo vivo cerquita, miro donde pasan, y cuando están de regreso otra vez... yo se...

A. A lot of children escape from the school, and I know...I know because I live nearby, see where they go by, and when they are returning back again, I know.

(II, 8, viii-parental concerns about schools: children escape from school).

• Latino parents considered that suspension is not the correct way to help the students to behave.

A. Pues ya que están retrazadas, para que la suspendan, pues me la retrazan.

*Me le dan vacaciones, con la suspensión. Por lo menos trabajo en la casa, para vigilarla.*

A. Well, now that they are behind, why do they suspend her, she gets further behind. They give her a vacation with the suspension. At least I work from home where I can watch her.
A. Pues... Y... la escuela, ¿qué? ¿Donde aprenden?
A. Well... and... the school. What? Where do they learn?

Parents considered that the school called to give complains about their children.

Q. ¿La escuela ha dicho algo?
Q. Has the school said something?

A. Cuando vienen a dar quejas, pero hoy me dijo que hoy vamos a hablar de este tema y como se iba arreglar.
A. When they come to complain, but today they told me that we were going to talk about this subject and to see how things could be fixed.

A. La escuela no ha dicho nada, ni como se va arreglar.
A. The school hasn’t said anything, not even how things will be fixed.

A. Y no es justo, que me le suspendan. Yo le he castigado, yo le quité la radio, la televisión, todo. Todo se le quitó. Y uno como padre, ¿qué puede hacer?
A. And it is not fair that they suspended her. I have punished her, I took away her radio, her television, everything. I took away everything. And as a parent what can I do?

(II, 9, viii-parental concerns about schools: lack of knowledge on how to deal with student’s suspension and family reprimands to force child to do well at school).

• Parents stated their concern about the school security and their interest to move the children to a safer school. For example: here is what several parents stated:

[Mother and father asked us] How do you parents here help your children?

Right now [she] is in the eighth grade, can you help her to go to another school?

How do you think that we can take our children out of this school to another one?

How can we help them get an internship or go to a reform school, I will do it!

(II, 12, viii – parental concerns about schools: take the kids out of the school to another school).

• Acculturative stress: Parental concerns about issues of children development, acculturation, home environment, and not knowing how to deal with these changes.

A. Yo nunca he tenido problemas con él, y su cuarto esta siempre esta limpio, pero llegando acá, vi un CAMBIO, yo sé que 6, 7, y 8 – un cambio grande.

Es decirle, que de grado a grado, a cambiado y mucho.

Yo no los dejo salir, hay veces como madre, los tengo muchos encerrados. Y por que no quiero que vengan ni sus amiguitas ni amiguitos por ahí. Así, la tengo vigilada, y si quiere salir,

Yo voy con ella.

Las tengo encerradas, y si va, yo voy – yo estoy allí.
A. I never had problems with him, and his room was always clean, but arriving here I saw a change, I know during the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, a big change!! That is to say that from grade to grade, he has changed a lot. And I don’t let them go out, there are times that as a mother I keep them in too much. And I don’t want neither her little friends [female] nor friends [male] to come around here. That is, I have her very well guarded, and if she wants to go out, I go with her.

I have them shut in and if they go, I go, I am also there.

(II, 12, viii – parental concerns about schools: issues with children development, acculturation issues, home environment, and not knowing what to do).

Q. ¿Tienen tiempo de socializar en la escuela, sus hijos?

Q. Do your children have time to socialize in school?

A. Si, creo que si, un poco. Porque este, ella, es callada y no es de mucho de hablar, pero tiene amiguitas para conversar. Ella es timida.

A. Yes, I think so, a little. Because this one, she is quiet, she is not a talker, but she has friends with whom to speak. She is shy.

A. Creo que les gusta hablar, y hay veces son muy timidas en la clase.

A. I think that they like to talk and sometimes they are very shy in class.

(II, 18, vi – teacher relations – parent perceive their children to be too shy, and may miss participating in class).

• Parents desire to learn English: Overall all parents stated that they have a genuine desire to learn English and be more helpful for their children. When we asked what would you like the schools to do for you to assist you with parental involvement? They responded that they wanted the schools to help them learn English, so they can help their children. (II, 21, I – parents lack of English – parents’ desire to learn English and would like the school to offer English classes for parents).
• Parents’ concern over the lack of Latino teachers and the Spanish language: Parents perceive that Spanish language and culture are important for their children’s education, and there is a lack of Latino
teacher role models. Specifically, parents felt that the lack of Spanish-speaking or Latino/Hispanic teachers influence their children’s education (II, 21, viii – parental concerns about school – parents perceive that Spanish language and culture are important for their children education, and there is a lack of Latino teachers’ role models). However, Latino parents felt that the teachers were good, but students may find the subject difficult, and therefore, may need someone who speaks their language so they can understand. Moreover, if the subject is difficult, parents feel that there is a need for the school to help the student after school hours. Here is an example that illustrates this major point:

*A. Pero si el estudiante no entiende tiene problema, necesita mas ayuda. Y necesita ayuda, más ayuda fuera del salón. La materia es más complicada para ellos.*

A. But if the student doesn’t understand, he has a problem and needs more help. And (the student) needs more help outside of the classroom. The material is more complicated for them.

(II, 21, viii – parental concerns about school – parents perceive that the students have problems with the material and do not know how to seek help outside of the classroom).

• The data reflect that there is a lack of information about school programs, such as extra-curricular activities and after-school programs. Also, parents perceive that culture must be considered when selecting uniforms for school activities such as gym, sports, and band.
• Heterogeneity of Latinos: Parents suggested that schools must know that Latinos/Hispanics are all different. Thus, Latinos are a heterogeneous group and schools must understand the differences between Latino ethnic subgroups. Specifically, schools must consider Latino culture in school activities, in the classroom, and in homework. Parents suggested that culture must be considered when selecting uniforms for activities such as gym, sports, and band.

**Example:**

*A. Si, no es... si... fíjese que no todos los Latinos somos iguales. Tenemos diferentes tradiciones y palabras.*

A. Yes...its not...yes...pay attention that not all Latinos are the same. We have different traditions and words.
A. Bueno. O sea, la mía, no usa ni falda, ni nada, solo pantalones, nada más. 
   Más respeto en la vestimenta.

A. Well, about mine, she doesn’t use a skirt, nothing but pants, nothing else. 
   She has more respect with her dress.

A. Mas, otras se visten mas modernas, okay, pero no sin respeto.

A. But, others dress more modern, okay, but not without respect.

A. Vestirse respetable, a ir a la escuela. La vestimenta es importante, debe 
   haber uniforme. Como, yo digo, así, para la escuela.

A. To dress respectably to go to school. The dress is important, there should be 
   a uniform. Like I say, for the school.

A. La mía se viste como se viste su madre.

A. Mine dresses like her mother.

A. Yo digo así, como, su mama.

A. I say the same thing, like her mother.

(II, 23, viii – parental concerns about school –Parent perceive that culture must 
be considered when selecting uniforms for school activities such as gym, sports 
and band).

Q. ¿Y “talent show” o baile?

Q. And talent show or dance?

A. No quisieron ir.

A. They didn’t want to go.

A. Si, pero las niñas no quieren vestirse con ropa tan corta. No es nuestra 
   costumbre. Y como no podían vestirse como las otras, no quieren venir a 
   bailar. Ya mi hija no se puede vestir así de esa manera, no es nuestra 
   costumbre.
A. Yes, but the girls don’t want to dress with clothes that are so short. It is not our custom. And since they couldn’t dress like the others, they didn’t want to come to dance. My daughter cannot dress in that fashion, it is not our custom.

A. Es cultura.

A. It is culture.

A. ¡Yo no quiero que mi hija se vista así!

A. I don’t want for my daughter to dress like that!

High School:

• Economic requirements about education after high school: Parents express lack of knowledge about financial aid and requirements for college entrance.

Question:

Are you aware of financial aid? ¿Conocen de ayudas económicas?

Examples:

No [all stated.] No [dijeron todos.]

I don’t know much. No sé mucho.

Question:

Do you know what the requirements are – how many years of mathematics, and of science, what is necessary [to attend the university]? ¿Ustedes conocen cuales son los requisitos - como cuántos años de matemática, y de ciencia, lo que se necesita [para asistir a la universidad]?

Examples:

Completely ignorant…. [a father.]. Ignorante completamente... [un padre.]

I don’t know. Yo no sé.

I don’t know… No sé…
(All parents noted that they did not know).

(III, 6, viii–parental concern–lack of knowledge of financial aid, requisites for college entrance, desire to know how to help their children to go to college).

• Lack of knowledge of PTA meetings: Latino parents expressed that they did not know anything about the PTA at the schools and this purpose of the organization.

Question:

And how many of you go to the PTA meetings? ¿Y cuántos van á las reuniones de PTA?

Examples:

I didn’t know… No sabía.

What is this thing called the PTA? [father.] ¿Qué es eso de la PTA? [father.]

(III, 7, viii–parental concern–lack of knowledge about PTA organization and meetings).

• Lack of knowledge hinders Latino parental participation in school activities: Latino parents expressed desire to know more about school activities, and would like to come. Parents explained that they did not come to the school because they did not know that they needed to come, otherwise, they would have come to the school.

Example:

Up to now, because of work. However… I, from now on, I didn’t know all of these things… I am going to get more involved with this… I am going to personally come to find out everything I can about what is going on here in the school. [father.] Hasta ahora el trabajo. Pero… yo no sabía de esto, ahora en adelante estaré más envuelto en esto yo voy a venir personalmente para enterarme de todo lo que esta pasando aquí en la escuela [padre.]

(III, 8, viii–parental concerns and school –lack of knowledge of student and school issues).

(III, 8, v–forms of involvement-(personalismo)-come to school to get information face to face).
• Lack of *personalismo* hinders parental involvement: Parents expressed that they come to the school, but they feel that there is a lack of *personalismo*.

**Example:**

I have a young man who is attending here… brand new. The truth is that I will tell you, I haven’t come before, this is the first time, and like they say “*hacer no saber*,” absolutely. *Yo tengo un muchacho que esta atendiendo aquí... ya nuevo. Pues la verdad le voy a decir, yo no he venido anteriormente, esta es la primera vez, y como dice... hacer no saber, en absolutamente.*

• Parents expressed concerns about lack of supervision at the school.

**Example:**

I see boys and girls that escape from the school... perhaps their parents do know, perhaps, they may not be paying them enough attention. *Yo veo niñas y niños que se escapan de la escuela... los padres quizás no saben, no les ponen atención.* (III, 10, viii–parental concerns- lack of supervision and attention to the children from parents and school).

• Latino parents’ economic struggles: Latino parents expressed that due to economic struggles, most parents want their children to finish school and begin working.

**Example:**

*Ahhh, there are many parents who think, think that the children are only a responsibility until they reach the age of eighteen and then they put them to work.*

*Aha, si hay muchos padres que, creo que, a los hijos únicamente los tienen como una responsabilidad para que lleguen a la edad 18 años y los pongan a trabajar.*

(III, 10, viii–parental concerns- some parents want their child be 18 to send them to work).

**Question:**
Why do you think parents want to get rid of their children after the age of 18?
¿Por qué cree usted que los padres quieren salir de sus hijos después de los 18?

Example:

I think that some, when they have children, don’t do it for love, but only maybe for satisfaction. Maybe when one is young…the way to be amused, especially one who comes…from far from here, is sex. Then, a man has sex with someone, a baby is born, that baby is born and one doesn’t know that he has been born, only that there was relations. Ahh, when this baby is born, the responsibility one has, to raise him until he is eighteen years old and then let him fly with his own wings. That is what is happening.

Creo que alguien, cuando tiene hijos, no lo hace por amor, sino tal vez lo hace por equivocación. Tal vez cuando uno esta joven... la forma de divertirse de uno, especialmente uno que viene...fuera de acá, es el sexo. Entonces, uno de hombre tiene sexo con alguien, nace un niño, ese niño nace y uno no sabe que ha nacido, únicamente que fue relación. Aha, cuando ese niño nace, la responsabilidad de uno, es criarlo hasta los 18 años después que vuele con sus propias alas. Esto es lo que esta pasando.

(III, 11, viii–parental concerns- parents responsibility with their children).

• Lack of community center: Parents expressed a need for a community center for meeting. They expressed that the library is not a viable place to meet because they cannot obtain a library card.
• Drugs and gangs affect school and community. Parents worried because the school is not paying attention to their kids. Moreover, parents feel that the school is not addressing the issue of drugs and gangs in the Latino student community, and that these issues have gone unnoticed.

Examples:

Well, it is my understanding that on top of gangs, there are drugs.

Bueno, yo tengo entendido que sí, además de gangas, hay drogas.

(III, 12, viii–parental concerns- parents concerns of gangs and drugs).

Excuse me, like the gentleman was saying, it is a problem…yes, yes,
it is one of the problems in which we are very interested in because it never gets attention.

Perdón, como estaba diciendo el señor, es una de problema....

[Sí, sí] es una de los problemas en que nosotros nos estamos Muy enterados porque nunca nos llaman la atención.

lack of attention to Latino students are being treated differently than other students).

Well, what I want to say is that I have a son here also, I am separated from his father, my son wants to live with him (his father) because he wants to have freedom. There are weeks that he doesn’t go to classes, and that is my worry, my son, and I tell him: “son, study.” And sometimes when he comes to the house to see me, he says, “look Mom, I want money.” And I tell him, “my son, I don’t have it. “Give me 50 dollars,” he says to me. “Your father can give it to you.” And he tells me, well, he doesn’t give it to me. And I tell him, why you don’t leave it.

He doesn’t worry about you. And I love my son, and I am very worried about him.

Bueno lo que yo quiero decir, tengo mi otro hijo aquí también, yo estoy separada de su padre, mi hijo quiere vivir con el (su padre) por lo mismo que quiere tener la libertad. Hay semanas que no viene a la clase, y es mi preocupación, mi hijo. Mi hijo es que me preocupo mucho por él. Llego a recoger mi hija, y veo a mi hijo, y yo le digo: Pero hijo estudia. Y hay veces que llega a la casa (her home) a verme y me dice: Mira mami, quiero dinero. Y yo le digo: Mi hijo, yo no tengo. Dame 50 dólares (me dice). Que tu papa te de. Y yo le digo – no pues no me da. Y yo le digo – por que no lo dejas. El no se preocupa. Y a mi hijo yo lo quiero, y yo me preocupo, demasiado.

(III, 16 viii – parental concern with school, lack of support from counselor).

Question:

Have you spoke with a counselor? ¿Ha hablado con un consejero?
Example:

Yes, I have. Yes, but the truth is that my son is very intelligent. But my daughter tells me that he is around not so good friends, and I do not want that life for my son. Yo he hablado. Sí. Para la verdad, él es muy inteligente. Pero mi hija me dice que llega con unos amigos, que no son unos buenos amigos y yo no quiero esa vida para mi hijo.

(III, 16, v- Forms of involvement- come to school to talk to the counselor).

(III, 16 viii – parental concern –about drug and gangs).

• Discrimination: Latino parents feel that there are issues of racial discrimination toward Latinos in the school, specifically aimed at Latino students by their teachers.

Question:
What is the problem? ¿Cuál es el problema?

Example:

What she says, that they discriminate against the children. Lo que ella dice, que a los niños los discriminan. (III, 13, viii–parental concerns about discrimination issues).

Between the Blacks or among the Latinos? Or between the two? ¿Entre los morenos o entre los mismos Latinos? ¿O entre los dos?

The problem is between the teachers and the Latino students.

El problema es entre los maestros y los estudiantes Latinos.

(III, 13, viii–parental concerns about discrimination issues between teachers and students).

Are there Latino teachers here? Or are they Black? ¿Hay maestros Latinos aquí? ¿O hay morenos?

Example:

There is discrimination between students of different races, I don’t know about what the children say but it is the same thing that my nieces and nephews say,
they say that they believe they treat Hispanics badly become we are from Mexico.

Hay discrimen entre estudiante y estudiante por diferentes razas, no sé de lo que los niños me dicen que es lo que ellos y mis sobrinos también me dicen que es lo que ellos les parecen le tratan mal a los Hispanos pues como somos de México.

(III, 14, viii–parental concerns about discrimination issues).

**Cultural Capital**

- A line by line analysis between aspects of culture and ways that parents feel empowered by aspects of culture and language seemed to point at a source, often stated as cultural capital. The aspects of cultural capital are exemplified in the following:

  **Q. ¿Cuántos de ustedes leen con sus hijos?**

  Q. How many of you read with your children?

  *A. Bueno yo leo con ellos.*

  A. Look, I read with them.

  *(I, 13, VI-B) Cultural capital – reading to child*

  *A. Bueno, ellos leen y yo me siento cerca a ver el libro.*

  A. Look, they read and I sit next to them and look at the book.

  *(I, 13, VI-B) Cultural capital – reading to child*

  *A. Él lee con la niña grande.*

  A. He reads with the oldest daughter. *(I, 13, VI-B) Cultural capital – reading to child*

  **Q. ¿Van a la biblioteca?**

  Q. Do you go to the library?

  *A. Sí.*
A. Yes.

A. A veces, pero se necesita un ID (identificación).

A. Sometimes, but you need an ID.

(I, 14, VI-C) Cultural capital – library

Q. ¿Tienen libros en la casa?

Q. Do you have a lot of books in your house?

A. Sí.

A. Yes.

(I, 13, VI-A) Cultural capital – books at Home

Summary

The results of the current study contribute to a greater knowledge of Latino parental involvement in their child(ren)’s education, and outlines the challenges of realizing educational aspirations. Recommendations and directions for future research, policy, and practice, as well as the limitations of the study are presented.

The research study results show that Latino parents are interested and are involved in their childrens’ education. There are two major pillars of Latino parental involvement in the education of their child(ren): (1) at school and (2) at home (Holman, 1997; Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, & Ocampo, 1993; Padilla, 1985; Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). In participation at schools, Latino parental involvement consists of attending school meetings, visiting the school, talking with teachers, and bringing children to school. In participation at home, Latino parental involvement includes supporting children in their homework, motivating them, making them snacks as they study, getting other tutors to help their children, and finding translators.

For Latinos, parental involvement is related to the family as a whole (e.g., familism³) (Abalos, 1998; Trueba, 1999; Zambrana, 1995; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). However, the results suggest that there are nine factors that may impede or promote parental involvement. These factors are: communication, role of
Latino parental liaison, economic issues, forms of involvement, teacher relations, parental aspirations, parental concerns about schools, and Latino cultural and social capital.

3 Family concept – Latino cultural value of the relationship between members which increase resiliency and togetherness.

Communication. There are two major factors here that impede Latino parental involvement: language barrier and illiteracy. With the language barrier there are two issues: parents’ lack of English language skills and the schools’ lack of bilingual personnel. With the literacy barrier, there is a major issue concerning parents’ literacy level (e.g., mostly elementary school, primarily 2nd grade level) and the schools’ natural expectations that the parents know how to read, write, and interpret information. Although parents expressed the desire to learn English to help their children with homework and to participate more in their children’s school, they stated that they did not have access to ESOL/ESL and adult literacy programs.

Role of Latino parental liaison. Most parents communicate with school personnel and teachers through the assistance of the school Latino parental liaison. Translation services, counseling, support, and advice are provided by the Latino parental liaison, which becomes the only link between the parent and the school. The lack of qualified and bilingual Latino parental liaisons proportionate to the student population hinders Latino parental involvement and student attendance, therein achievement.

Economic issues. Economic resources are a major issue that hinders parental involvement and the students’ achievement. Most parents work hourly-wage jobs and cannot afford to leave work to attend a meeting or talk with a teacher (e.g., person to person). However, parents felt that if meetings were conducted after work hours, they would come if transportation were to be provided. Other factors are unemployment or impermanent part-time work opportunities that hinder the economic conditions of Latino families and their abilities to provide the basic resources for their children.

Transportation issues. Public transportation is the main source of transportation for Latino parents, walking or riding with someone are their only other options. If public transportation is unavailable (e.g., after hours), most parents are nevertheless willing to walk to the schools for meetings. However, due to lack of child care, parents are often forced to come to the school with the students’ siblings.
Forms of involvement. There are three major forms of involvement for Latino families. These are: monitoring homework, attending meetings, and calling teachers/school personnel. The problems that parents face in accomplishing these forms of involvement are: family size, poverty level, and transportation issues. These factors are interrelated with home characteristics, home literacy, and parenting strategies.

Teacher relations. The lack of teacher relations with Latino parents hinders their involvement at school. Teachers may not know how to connect with Latino parents and their children. Parents expressed that they felt that teachers did not know them. Consequently, there is a need for teachers to become aware of Latino culture and home environment characteristics, and sensitivity to the Spanish language and customs, which is crucial for the foundation of a strong teacher-parent relationship.

Parental aspirations. There is a barrier between parental aspirations and educational possibilities beyond high school. This barrier is intertwined with issues of immigration status and acculturation to the U.S., economic restraints and the lack of knowledge on how to obtain government educational assistance (e.g., grants, scholarships, loans). Consequently, transforming parental aspirations into student achievement becomes very challenging. Student awareness of these issues is a consequential factor that further thwarts students’ motivation and academic achievement for educational success.

However, within Latino parents’ aspirations for their children are deeply-held beliefs about the value of education. Parents have great hopes and aspirations for their children, which they express in exhortations to work hard at school, to have a better life, and stories about parents’ sacrifices to come to the U.S. These familial positive messages are often encumbered by the likelihood of Latino students’ lack of access beyond high school graduation. However, Latino cultural value-centered strategies promote Latino students’ attendance and achievement, but do not directly translate into a support system of academic achievement and success for all the students.

Parental concerns about schools. Parents voiced many concerns about the schools. The concerns reflect two major issues for the schools and its Latino constituents: (1) lack of forum for parents to be heard; and (2) parents’ desire to participate in their child(ren)s’ education, but do not know how to advocate for them effectively. The results suggest that schools may not know what parents may need or feel, and consequently, may hinder parent-school relationships.
The results further suggest a need for Latino parental advocacy training, and understanding of parental rights.

For example, the factors related to parental concerns about schools include school safety and gang violence, sex, drugs, and unfairness (e.g., favoritism, intolerance, inequality, bias). These factors are compounded by the lack of school personnel who understand Latino culture, and the lack of communication with parents. Furthermore, parental involvement seems to be stalled by the lack of membership of Latino parents in the Parent Teacher Association, and the Board of Education. The results show that most Latino parents did not know about the PTA association or the Board of Education.

Additionally, parents expressed that students make schools better, when parents are part of the overall school community. Parents stated that they feel that there were many teachers that went the extra mile for their students and their families. Furthermore, parents feel that without the Latino parental liaison, they and the students would be lost in the system.

Some examples of the reflection of the parents’ voices are:

*Most parents*...

- ... did not know the principal, in person.
- ...felt that the only communication they had with schools was through the Latino parental liaison.
- ...perceived that the only communication they had with the schools was when their children were in trouble or suspended.
- ... do not agree with the schools’ punitive system because it did not match their cultural expectations (e.g., Latino cultural value of respeto\(^5\)). Parents strongly voiced that the schools should not suspend students because suspension will force students to miss school and fall behind their peers, and students will not learn anything from this action. Parents are forced to miss work due to safety issues associated with neighborhood violence and gang activity. Parents recommended that students should do work that benefits the school such as beautification projects for the school grounds and conduct support projects for their teachers.
- ...believe that Latino students must respect and value the school and its teachers’ efforts.
- ...perceived schools to be part of the daily life of Latino students and their families, therein influencing their minds, behaviors, and future.
Cultural and social capital. There is a major issue related to aspects of cultural and social capital on two levels: parental strategies for resiliency and schools’ expectations versus parental expectations. In parental strategies for resiliency, the results posit that Latino parents seem to use cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1985) to create strategies for empowerment and resiliency in order to help their children at home or at school. These strategies are:

The cultural capital perspective refers to the parental practices that are associated or linked with culture. Parents use cultural capital as tools for empowerment to provide a support system beyond school. Using culture as a source of capital, parents’ involvement with their children at home and at school is exemplified by the family practices that manifest on the students’ education. For example, Latino parents find Spanish language and Latino culture to provide a bonding relationship between their children and their community as a whole.

Social capital establishes networks and relationships among community members to provide resources for academic support. Cultural capital is used by parents to further promote their parental involvement. For example, Latino parenting practices are highly associated with Latino culture, which facilitates children’s school performance. Particularly, Latino culture reflects on parents’ expectations and demands of their children such as: obligation, expectation, trustworthiness, information exchange, and norms about Latino families and their children’s schools.

“In Latino cultural capital has not been easily translated into social capital in U.S. society. Cultural wealth can be defined as a set of values and norms that guide behavior. The resilience literature identifies three domains that are associated with resilient individuals: internal resources, family climate, and social environment” (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Brooke, 1994; The National Alliance for Hispanic Health, 2000; Zambrana and Zoppi, 2002, p. 14).

“Social capital refers to family and community networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. These family and community resources provide access to benefits and investment in individuals’ human capital” (Bourdieu, 1985; Putnam, 1993, 1995; Portes, 2000; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002, p. 2).

In schools’ expectations versus parents’ expectations, the data suggest that Latino parents feel confused about what the school expected from their children
and themselves as parents. This lack of understanding hinders the parents’ self-esteem, which causes anxiety between the student and their parents. For example, parents expressed that their children become embarrassed by their parents’ lack of education and English skills, which further isolates parents from children. Incidentally, parents perceive that schools are further alienating their children from their Latino culture and consequently, Americanizing them. In order to deal with these issues of competency and acculturation, the data shows that Latino parent practices are linked to cultural and social capital. However, further research is necessary to explore how Latino parents use cultural and social capital, and how they navigate the acculturation processes that support or hinder Latino student educational success and access to college or university.

Recommendations, Implications for Future Research, and Limitations

In short, this research sets forward the ideal that schools must invest in Latino families. As a key strategy to improve educational achievement, schools must invest in the student and their family, specifically by focusing more on parental influence and involvement (Sampson, 2003). Family is at the center of educational improvement, as it offers the greatest opportunity for motivation, aspiration, and empowerment (Hurst, 1996). Based on the findings of this research, the study affirms that Latino families have great aspirations for their children, particularly in educational access and success. Consequently, the core strategy for schools is derived from school enhancement through the understanding of the Latino student demographic population changes and needs. In this section, I provide a discussion of core school enhancement strategy recommendations within the scope of this study, and implications for future research.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are subject to further collective discussion and analysis to provide measurable objectives for its effectiveness on Latino school-family connection and student academic achievement. Strategies for school enhancement are crucial for the overall success of academic achievement through parental involvement and shared governance with schools; however, an overall recommendation that answers all the issues of school enhancement for Latino parental involvement and student achievement is complex to provide. Therein, the proposed suggestions may overlap and repeat each other, as a domino effect strategy that attempts to effectively and efficiently respond to the needs of schools at addressing Latino education and its future.
In order to simplify these recommendations, the themes reflect school enhancement by the factors found in this research: (1) communication, (2) role of schools and parental liaison, (3) economic issues, (4) transportation issues, (5) forms of involvement, (6) teacher relations, (7) parental aspirations, (8) parental concerns about schools, and (9) cultural and social capital of Latino parents.

**Communication.** This strategy aims at removing language barriers between the parents and the schools.

- Provide translators who are sensitive to the parents’ culture, language, education, and socio-economic levels.
- Provide second language acquisition workshops to all school personnel working directly or indirectly with Latino students. Educate faculty and staff on techniques for teaching children whose primary language is not English.
- Develop a core of Latino parent volunteers to serve as staff members to communicate with parents.
- Increase communication with Latino parents and students.
- Prepare bulletin boards and announcements in Spanish for parents.
- Create a telephone message system to contact parents in Spanish and English.
- Offer parents other options of communication that may benefit them.

**Role of school and parent liaison.** This strategy aims at school enhancement by addressing the needs for schools to: (1) respond to the changing student body demographics; and (2) invest in parental involvement for academic access and achievement.

- Offer Spanish language courses for school staff and teachers which would earn teacher in-service credits.
- Increase the number of Spanish-speaking and Latino school staff, and teachers.
- Hire Latino/a school staff and teachers, who speak Spanish and serve as role models.
- Hire and maintain full-time Latino counselors with a bachelor’s degree in school counseling.
- Create a strategic plan to cultivate Latino teachers from the schools’ own Latino student population. Teachers and counselors have pioneered effective programs that provide nurturing to young Latinos/as who would like to become educators.
- Bring role models from outside the schools to serve as partners in activities and events sponsored by teachers and the school.
• Increase the volunteer pool for school and classroom enhancement. Ask parents and students as well as local community leaders to serve as volunteers.
• Implement Latino cultural competency classes for school staff and teachers. (Example: www.sonoma.edu/cihs/c4/ - cultural competency training).
• Be familiar and understand the differences within its constituents’ culture, language, history, and diversity as it relates to educational empowerment not by marginalizing the students’ cultural identity, but rather by celebrating and integrating it with the overall educational curriculum and instruction.
• Increase proficiency of Latino family issues (e.g., economic and transportation) when sponsoring activities, events, workshops, and field trips.
• Provide school staff and faculty with a current Latino resource handbook for instructional development to address cultural competency.
• Partner with a local community college or university to increase faculty and school personnel development on issues related to Latino education, culture, and language to help increase cultural competency and diversity.
• Become aware of agencies that can serve as a referral to support parents and students with their needs beyond school hours.
• Create outreach programs and workshops for Latino parents.
• Increase Latino attendance in the PTA by offering onsite childcare.
• Contact local community organizations (such as Casa de Maryland or local Catholic Churches) to encourage parents to become involved in their children’s schools. See a listing of local Latino agencies and organizations as resources for partnerships.

Economic issues. This strategy aims at addressing economic issues that hinder parental involvement.

• Recognize that economic survival is a primary concern for many families. Economic constraints limit the ability of parents to attend school meetings. Failure to attend these meetings may be a reflection of an economic issue instead of lack of interest in child(ren)’s education.
• Coordinate with inter-agencies to support sponsorship and referral systems for Latino families and their children. Specifically, teachers and administrators must be aware of the situation and provide families with referral resources to assist them in their struggles.
• Serve as a spokesperson for the families and provide referral information available through various social services agencies.
• Create a parent pool in the classroom that will assist in orienting the parents to government agencies that could assist them with their economic challenges.

Transportation issues. This strategy aims at addressing transportation issues that hinder parental involvement.

• Conduct meetings, activities, and/or workshops in a location accessible to parents (e.g., public transportation or walking distance) by relocating meetings where is easier for parents to attend. Note: Determine best location and meeting times by formulating a small survey that addresses logistical questions for maximizing their attendance.
• Ensure that hours of teacher conferences, activities, events, and workshops match Latino parents’ family schedule.

Forms of involvement. This strategy focuses on empowering and motivating parental involvement to in turn benefit Latino families.

• Validate parents’ strengths by encouraging parents to participate and become part of the school governance.
• Encourage parents to maintain Latino culture and language.
• Welcome parents to come to class to talk about their country and experiences. Some examples are:
• Create a cultural day in school that allows families to showcase their native language, culture, history, and traditions. Recognize that Latino families bring a rich cultural and social context to schools. Most parents feel that Latino culture and language is important for their families. Rather than Americanizing them, allow them to share their culture and language with all students.
• Search for areas of expertise between the parents and allow them to demonstrate these skills in meetings, class sessions, and assemblies.
• Provide workshops for childhood development strategies that can provide support and partnership to parents as they raise their children.
• Advocate activities and events that address issues of identity and diversity among students of diverse ethnic/racial backgrounds.
• Coordinate with students and parents to create multicultural activities that address issues related to the students’ identity development, self-esteem, and empowerment.

Teacher relations. This strategy sets forward a foundation for teacher-parent and student relations by establishing a connection between the schools and Latino parents (Holman, 1997).
• Lessen the intimidation factor by providing a warm, welcoming and non-judgmental reception.
• Take time to listen to parents and respond with an open communication style.
• Provide outreach home visits for parents who cannot come to the schools. Through personalized greetings, schools send a strong message that states: “we care for you!”
• Realize that some parents may lack formal education. Parents with a limited educational background will have difficulty helping their children with school work and supporting their children in advancing their education.
• Adjust homework assignments accordingly.
• Be mindful that parents may not be literate in their own language.
• Arrange for assistance by providing verbal information instead of oral information to parents.
• Create a tutoring pool of student and parent volunteers to support students and parents with homework and information.

Parental aspirations. This strategy aims at parental aspirations and student motivation empowerment.

• Assess the aspirations of all Latino parents and the students, and how schools engage in nurturing the reality of these aspirations. Research student needs in relation to motivation, specifically what motivates Latino students into academic achievement and success. Other areas of assessments are: self-esteem, identity, decision making, and goal achievement.
• Create student to student support system, in which students empower each other to become successful.
• Provide teachers and school personnel with research about Latino student motivation and how to motivate Latino students.
• Create a student-teacher appreciation day to have Latino student award teachers that help them become a successful student.
• Implement a parent training program that will teach Latino parents to learn about:
  • The U.S. education system, the PTA, and steps for ensuring that children will be prepared for college, both financially and academically.
  • Teach parents how to interact with school staff and teachers.
  • Provide parental orientation about child development from elementary through middle and high school, and American customs during these years.
• Offer English language classes for parents.
• Create a literacy project and pilot it in school areas where there is a higher Latino population. The literacy project should be a partnership between a local university and an urban community where the majority of the families live.
• Provide opportunities for adults to read and respond to literacy materials of personal interest.
• Develop a parent-teacher support group for literacy learning: PARENTS AS ROLE MODELS.
• Improve parental skills and relationships between Latino families and their schools.
• Increase understanding of culture and acculturation, which has an impact on psychological well-being within the family.
• Provide a forum for adults and their children to share family experiences.
• Provide a recognition program for family literacy.
• Provide a series of workshops on the role of parents in the students’ school preparation:
  • How to help your children with their homework.
  • How to boost your child’s self-esteem.
  • Living and adapting to U.S. ways of living.

Parental concerns about schools. This strategy aims at addressing some of the major concerns that parents felt about the schools by linking schools with partnerships.

• Ensure that school environment is safe and nurturing for children. Many acts of violence and sexual activities occur when non-students enter school grounds or its vicinity.
• Establish policy to remove non-students from the school grounds who have not obtained a visitor’s pass. Monitor current policies and enhance rules to address specific Latino parental concerns.
• Work with local law enforcement agencies to provide patrolling on a regular basis to deter crime before and after school hours.
• Ask for parent volunteers to serve on a committee for school ground safety and crime prevention. Some parents expressed that they would be more than happy to help and assist school personnel in monitoring school grounds before and after school hours. Additional research must be conducted in this area. Currently there are various gangs operating in the area: the Crips, the Bloods, Latruche, La 13, and others.
• Partner with other agencies that provide before and after-school activities for parents and their children at schools and local community centers, as well as libraries or churches, which are easily accessible.

Note: There is a growing need for extra-curricula activities that will support children’s motivation. Here are some examples:

• Boy and Girls scouts programs.
• YMCA.
• Music (e.g., guitar, drums) and singing lessons.
• Recreational, educational, and artistic activities offered by the Department of Parks and Recreation, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.
• National Council of La Raza – Student achievement and leadership.
• University of Maryland’s Latino student organizations.
• Maryland Community Colleagues Latino student organizations.
• University of Maryland Latino Faculty and Staff Association.
• National Hispanic Institute for Latina Leadership.
• Develop and implement a constant assessment and evaluation system of student/teacher/parents’ needs in relation to academic support and achievement.
• Ensure that curriculum and instruction address the needs and the diversity of each student by providing nurturing and safety.
• Create educational programming to address Latino culture and acculturation to the U.S. public educational system. For example, familiarize families with school procedures and organization, especially their rights.
Advise parents of different ways to help their children progress academically.
Provide a tour of the school.
Have ‘café con leche y pan’ with the parents (coffee and pastries).
Take time to know the parents, especially let them know you.
Provide a forum where parents may ask questions, express their concerns, and obtain answers.
Create a recognition system that awards parents for their efforts and involvement in the school.
Ask for their help: they will support the school if asked. Often parents do not know how to help. But if they are asked to help in areas where they are experts, they will provide support.
Schools can reach out to the community to make a difference in the overall home environment of the student by creating strategies that aim at new educational support outsourcing.

- Create a central location that could serve as a community center for after-school activities and events where parents and students can meet with educators.
- Provide support to parents in obtaining library cards, access to public transportation, social programs, and other community resources that parents could access.
- Create a co-op that addresses logistical concerns about transportation, child care, flexible/workable meeting hours and dates, translation services, a referral system to other government agencies, counseling services for families, medical information, HIV and sexual transmitted disease information, a gang and violence clinic, etc.
- Obtain the names of all businesses around the school area and invite them to become partners with the shared goal of school enhancement.
- Develop school share governance by allocating Latino students and parents to be part of the school enhancement program. Build an alumni chapter of students who graduate from the schools, and would like to participate in school enhancement.
- Provide a teen resource guide for parents to help them with a support system across the county and the state. Help parents be self-sufficient by providing them with tools that can empower them and their families.
- Bring Latino government and non-government agencies to provide information to parents and their students on topics of interest, for example:
  - Shorten the path to get a college degree.
  - Curriculum requirement to get into college.
  - Scholarships and grants versus loans: Paying for college.
  - Educational and employment agencies: Education and work.
  - Families issues on child development: Parenting resources agencies: www.parentsoup.com
  - Aid for teens: www.aidforteens.com or teen help: www.teenhelp.org
  - Youth in action network: www.teaching.com/act
  - Substance abuse, gang violence, sex, and rape. Many websites.
  - Support for families: www.familiesanonymous.org

* Cultural and social capital. * This strategy aims at school enhancement by creating shared governance between parents, students, and school
personnel. The strength of the schools is founded in the relationship between parents, students, and school personnel in shared governance. For Latino parents, their voices reflect a genuine desire for their children’s education, despite the odds. In order to obtain partnership with Latino parents, schools must:

• **Become a family beyond the classroom.** Most parents do not have other relatives (e.g., grandparents) to support them in child rearing and assist them in understanding child development issues.

• **Serve as a supportive unit to address issues of acculturation and isolation.** Latino families may be experiencing isolation and seclusion due to acculturation and isolation issues related to cultural differences between U.S. and Latino cultures. Further research must be conducted to understand aspects of familial isolation and seclusion due to immigration patterns.

• **Engage in parental enhancement.** Schools could assess parents’ needs and provide a series of workshops for parental enhancement such as: (1) English for everyday use, (2) U.S. culture and U.S. education, (3) Effective communication with your children and their teachers, (4) How to help your children with homework, and (5) Supporting your child in school.

• **Parental literacy and advocacy programs must be embedded within the school by-laws for parental involvement.**

Finally, school systems should find a venue to conduct research and survey their constituents on a regular basis. Mechanisms of assessments can serve as administrative and management tools for school enhancement and student achievement. School personnel can benefit from research assessment tools to address specific needs between the school, its personnel, and its constituents. Through school enhancement assessments, school personnel become partners with the school administration to formulate, coordinate, and execute strategic plans with specific deadlines for student services and academic support goals. In this way, school enhancement assessments are reshaped by the construction of research and practice, in which everyone is a co-participant of the overall school system success for their students and their parents.

**Implications for Future Research**

Although the findings of this report are very important, the results can be generalized to the entire Latino population. Further research should be conducted to understand Latino parental involvement and students’ educational
success. Most research is conducted without linking the research to practice; therefore, it is critical that further research be developed to create specific programs that give back to the schools and their constituents.

Future research should aim at areas of further exploration on Latino parental involvement as it relates to student achievement and empowerment. Based on this research, the following recommendations are provided for exploration, as three research agendas that outline schools, parents, and community as a whole.

School.

- School personnel and teachers’ knowledge of Latino students’ needs and how these needs are met.
- Impact of outreach efforts on school achievement of Latino students: Factors that hinder or support student academic achievement and empowerment.

Community.

- School environment and organization and how it impacts Latino education.
- Home environment study: Investigate Latino students’ home and neighborhoods.

Parents.

- Parent literacy, advocacy, and leadership: What parents have and do not have, and what schools need to know and do?
- Latino parental aspirations and realities: Phenomenology research study on parents and their dreams.

Further research on learning environments should be conducted to explore and understand the following issues related to Latino education achievement:

- *Diversity issues from to student to student study*. To address friction between African American and Latino communities--bring parents and teachers from both groups together into focus groups to enhance understanding of the nature of this friction and how schools can act to minimize tensions.
- *Latino parents’ leadership skills study for empowerment*. Many parents are natural leaders, even if their English skills are still limited. Study the leadership qualities of Latino parents and ways in which schools can
cultivate this leadership to improve Latino-school cooperation and communication. Schools could invest in preparing workshops of capacity building such as parental leadership and advocacy training for empowerment.

- **School curriculum and instruction assessment study.** Curriculum and instruction are critical components of academic achievement and empowerment. A research study can be initiated to review some areas of the curriculum and instruction that supports or hinders Latino education. Studies should aim at investigating class sessions, materials, texts, and overall curriculum and instruction methodologies. Additionally, the study should investigate extra-curricula activities that support Latino student self-esteem and motivation to study beyond the challenges. The study should focus on families of students that are doing well in school, and how these students navigate the path to educational advancement.

- **Encouraging Latino children to learn.** Assess and expand parental knowledge of curriculum and instruction needs so parents may prepare their children for higher education or other promising opportunities. This would include explaining U.S. educational requirements, procedures, and opportunities to Latino parents such as following a college-bound curriculum and understanding financial aid.

- **Bienvenidos a América.** Issues of acculturation and U.S. culture on Latino families and students study:
  - **Hablando Inglés - Learning English Study:** ESOL and students’ academic achievement and English language proficiency. The role of ESOL in the Latino students’ academic success path. What factors hinder or support Latino students’ success?
  - **Changing school culture through staff development study:** Focus on teachers’ best techniques as they relate to students’ achievement. In this study, teachers should be given a survey of their knowledge of Latino culture and follow up with class observation to explore how teachers use the curriculum to enhance and make a difference in Latino students’ academic achievement. School administration and organization should be part of this study to evaluate past and current staff development activities and how these activities are impacting the teachers’ instruction on behalf of the Latino student population.

Finally, research must link role models to the community. *Latino researchers are brokers for educational research on Latino education.* Latino researchers become brokers for change as researchers—we don’t simply go in and leave without contributing to the literature (Sofia Villenas and Marta Montero Sieburth). It is crucial that Latino students
and their parents see Latino educators and researchers as part of the solution of their concerns. As a Latina researcher, I feel that my role is interconnected with my desire to help and support Latino academic success. It is our role to inform about the research and to link it to best practices. In this way we become part of the educational system and community as a Nation.

Limitations

The current study was designed to understand Latino parental involvement in the student’s attendance and achievement. Our discovery of common elements within and across Latino families in this study lends credibility to these findings. We acknowledge, however, that the study’s design, sample size, and composition necessitate caution when interpreting its results. Future research needs to be conducted to understand better how Latino parents participate in their child(ren)’s education, specifically how parental aspirations for their child(ren) are transferred among Latino families, and how these families compel resources to realize the dreams they have for themselves.

Finally, the findings cannot address the larger Latino population living in the United States. However, it is possible that the patterns observed in this study may be unique to the sample because its context of race/ethnicity, new immigration patterns, SES, educational background, and acculturation differences between sample participants within Region II, Prince George’s County, in Maryland area. These new Latino immigration patterns reflect the demographic changes in public school systems within Maryland and Washington D.C. metropolitan areas. This research provides a foundation for future research on Latino access and success in education that helps us realize a different contextual view of education within the voices of Latino parents.

Conclusion

Latinos are the fastest growing minority group and the largest minority group in the U.S. (Education Commission of the States, 2004). However, the data reveal that they are economically poor, educationally disadvantaged, socially segregated, and politically disempowered (Haro, 1983; Llagas & Snyder, 2003; Meier, 1992; Trueba, 1999). The prognosis for improvement is poor because Latinos living in the U.S. are not represented economically, educationally, socially, and politically in positions of leadership and policy making to powerfully advocate and influence their national state (MALDEF, 1990a, 1990b). Thus, upward mobility for Latinos will be an uphill battle.
Solidarity among Latinos is complex (Trueba, 1999). Latinos are ethnically and racially divided among themselves based on their own ‘self-identity’ as well as social, economic, and educational differences (Olmedo & Padilla, 1978). While some call themselves Latinos and others call themselves Hispanics or even by ethnic group (e.g., Cuban, Mexican, Puertorrican), which suggest an identity divide that further reveals the difficulty of Latino solidarity based on their heterogeneity and diversity or mestizaje (e.g., between Hispanic/Latino multiple ethnicities, immigration status, and wide-ranging cultures such as Spanish-speaking, Native Indian, African, Caribbean) (González, 2000). Latino/Hispanic diversity is further complicated by variation of individual acculturation, which further challenges Latino solidarity and poses additional obstacles to political power, leadership, and upward mobility.

Consequently, education offers the formula for success: desire + opportunity = success. This research posits that Latinos have the aspiration and desire to succeed. However, education must foster the opportunity for Latino students and their families to maximize their experience in public education. The future of education is foremost important for the nation as a whole. Education is the highest public gift for society’s advancement and humanism. Fail one, and thus, we fail all!

Contact Information

Please direct any questions to Dr. Irene M. Zoppi (zoppi@wam.umd.edu) or Dr. Martin L. Johnson (mljohnson@umd.edu) or feel free to mail to the address listed below.

University of Maryland College of Education MIMAUE - Latino Education Research Center

Attn: Dr. Irene M. Zoppi/Dr. Martin L. Johnson 3119 Benjamin Building College Park, Maryland 20742-1121

Appendices

Appendix A – Timetables
Appendix B – Demographic Survey (English version)
Appendix C – Parent’s Current Occupation
Appendix D – Major Research Themes

Appendix A

Timetables

Below is a summary of major research events that highlight the progress of the research, including accomplishments, planned activities, and major challenges:

Accomplishments to Date

IRB approval obtained Nov 2005

Survey design and letters completed Dec 2005

Coordination with schools and their approval obtained Dec 2005

Focus group volunteers obtained Dec 2005

Address labels obtained* and printed surveys Jan-Mar 2006

Begin survey preparation for mailings Feb 2006

Completed survey mailings Mar 1, 2006

Completed focus groups

#1 Focus Group Feb 28, 2006

#2 Focus Group Mar 13, 2006

#3 Focus Group Apr 22, 2006

Picked up last surveys from schools May 15, 2006

Completed transcriptions and translations of focus groups May 2006

Preliminary report to Dr. Katz (Focus Group Data Only) May-June 2006

Survey data entry completion May 31, 2006

Begin coding of focus group data June-July 2006
Conduct data analysis of surveys June-July 2006

Prepare final report July-September 2006

Present report October 2006

* Student address labels were incorrect, which delayed the mailing of surveys.

Appendix B

Demographic Survey - *Parental Involvement in Student’s School Attendance and Achievement*

*University of Maryland*

College of Education, Maryland Institute for Minority Achievement and Urban Education

College Park, Maryland

SURVEY IDENTIFICATION # ________

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire as a volunteer. You must be at least 18 years of age to complete this questionnaire. The information gathered from this questionnaire will be used to help the school system to gain a greater understanding of our student population and their needs. The information will be used ONLY for this purpose. Please do not put your name on the questionnaire; all responses will be kept confidential. If you cannot read or write, or if you need special assistance, please feel free to contact Dr. Irene Zoppi at 410-451-5949. You can also complete your survey via telephone or face-to-face, at your convenience. Dr. Zoppi is bi-lingual in
Why Me? You have been selected to be part of a sample of people representing members of the student population in Prince George’s County Public Schools. You were selected to participate because we believe that you can help us to understand how to better serve you. If you have more than one child at a Prince George’s County Public School, Region II, at the following schools, Riverdale Elementary, Rogers Heights Elementary, Port Towns Elementary, William Wirt Middle, and Bladensburg High, please note that we are asking that one survey be filled out per family. If you do not have any children in the above stated schools, please return the survey.

Why should I bother? Do surveys change anything? Statistics from questionnaires provide valuable information to researchers, educators, policy makers, and planners. The results may influence discussions on student and parent relationships with the schools. Your response counts and will provide important information.

Will my questionnaire responses be kept confidential? Your response will be kept confidential and the release of information will not occur except in cases of evident child abuse, or by court order.

Please do not write your name on the questionnaire. Your participation is voluntary and returning a completed survey indicates your consent to participate in this study.
What is the purpose of asking these questions? We are asking these questions to understand parental involvement with their children’s education. There a total of 24 questions, which will take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time. Please answer all the questions on the questionnaire that apply to you. If you misplace your questionnaire, please contact Dr. Zoppi at the below contact information, and we will send you an additional questionnaire. For comments, ideas, or suggestions, please use the empty space provided at the end of this questionnaire. The research study title is

*Parental Involvement in Student’s School Attendance and Achievement in Prince George’s County, Region II, Public Schools* (IRB Application #05-0464). If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742, or e-mail irb@deans.umd.edu, or call (301) 405-0678. If you would like to volunteer for a parent discussion session (focus group) please contact Dr. Zoppi at zoppi@umd.edu or via voice/fax at 410-451-5949.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION &

PLEASE BEGIN COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE. WHEN YOU COMPLETE IT, PLEASE RETURN IT TO THE STUDENT’S TEACHER OR MAIL IT IN THE ATTACHED SELFADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE PROVIDED.

*Parental Involvement in Student’s School Attendance and Achievement*
Demographic Survey

1. Are you a parent/custodian of a Latino/Hispanic student attending one of the Prince George County schools?
   _Yes  _ No

2. Which school(s) do(es) your child(ren) attends/attend?
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

3a. In what city and country were you born?
   City _________________________________
   Country ______________________________

3b. If you were born outside of the United States, which year did you move to the U.S.?
   ________________
   _ Not Applicable; I was born in the U.S.

3c. Mark the statement that best describes you, if you are Hispanic/Latino.

   Please mark ONLY ONE.
   _ Not applicable, I am not Hispanic/Latino.
   _ I am 1st generation Hispanic/Latino: I was born in a Hispanic/Latino country.
   _ I am 2nd generation Hispanic/Latino: I was born in the United States, but one or both of
my parents was (were) born in a Hispanic/Latino country.

_ I am 3rd generation Hispanic/Latino: Both of my parents and I were born in the United States, but at least one of my grandparents was born in a Hispanic/Latino country.

_ I am 4th generation (or further) Hispanic/Latino: Both of my parents, all my grandparents and I were born in the United States.

4. What is your current marital status?

_ Single, never married

_ Single, engaged to be married

_ Married

_ Separated

_ Divorced

_ Widowed

5a. How many children live with you?

_ 1

_ 2

_ 3

_ 4 or more

5b. How many children do you have attending Prince George’s County Public Schools?

_ 1

_ 2
6. What is your racial background?
Mark all that apply.
- African-American/Black
- Native American or Alaska Native
- Anglo/White
- Asian
- Hispanic, White
- Hispanic, Non-White
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- South American Indian
- Other ____________

7. If you are a Latino/Hispanic, what is your Latino/Hispanic cultural background?
Mark all that apply.
- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
8. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? Mark only one and state field of study (Example: Bachelor's Degree - Arts).

_ Elementary School
_ Middle School
_ Trade or Vocational School
_ High School
_ Some college
_ Bachelor’s Degree
_ Some graduate school credits
_ Master’s Degree or equivalent
_ Doctorate or professional degree
(such as MD, DDS, Ph.D., or JD)
_ Other: ______________________

9a. Did you attend school in the U.S.?
_ Yes, ___ years! **GO TO QUESTION 10.**
_ No

9b. What level of education did you obtain outside of the United States?
_ Elementary School
_ Middle School
_ High School
_ College/University

9c. What type of school system did you attend?
_ Private _ Public

10. What is your current occupation?

_________________________________

11a. Which newspapers do you read the most?

_________________________________

11b. Which radio stations do you listen to the most?
11c. Which community centers do you go to the most?

_________________________________

12. In what language do you prefer to get information?

__ English
__ Spanish
__ Both
__ Other: _________________________

13. What is the primary language spoken in your home?

__ English
__ Spanish
__ Both
__ Other: _________________________

14. What is the primary language spoken at home by your child(ren)?

__ English
__ Spanish
__ Both
__ Other: _________________________

15. How often did you and/or your spouse attend school activities?

__ Weekly
__ About once a month
__ About twice a year
16. When was the last time your child or children read a book that was not assigned for school work?

__ Within a week
__ Within a month
__ Within 1 year
__ More than 1 year ago

17. When was the last time you talked to your child(ren)’s teacher?

__ Within a week
__ Within a month
__ Within 1 year
__ More than 1 year ago

18. When was the last time you visited your child(ren)’s teacher?

__ Within a week
__ Within a month
__ Within 1 year
__ More than 1 year ago

19. How frequently do you assist your child(ren) with their school homework?

__ Not that often
__ Often
__ Sometimes
Never
__ Other: _________________________

20a. How often do you take your child(ren) out of school?
__ Weekly
__ About once a month
__ About twice a year
__ About once a year
__ During Latino Holidays
__ During Holidays of my country: _____________________

20b. What Latino Holidays do you celebrate that are not on the Prince George’s County Schools Holiday Calendar?
__ Not applicable to my family
__ Día de Los Muertos
__ Día de Los Reyes Magos
__ Día de la Independencia de mi país
__ Navidad
__ Other: _________________________

20c. When your family celebrate any holiday, for how long does your child(ren) usually stay out of school?
__ 1-2 days
__ 3-5 days
__ 1 week
__ More than 1 week

20d. When do you take your child(ren) out of school in classes are in session?
__ Help me with a sick child(ren) at home
__ Help me with work
__ Help me when I get sick
__ He/She is sick
__ Other reason(s): ________________________________

20e. When you take your child(ren) out of school for a holiday, do you travel out of state?
__ Yes
__ No
__ Sometimes

Thank you very much for your cooperation. Please return the survey to the student’s teacher or mail it in the attached self-addressed stamped envelope provided. When you return it early, you could obtain a booklet on parental involvement in the student’s education. Limited copies are available, only when you return it quickly. Ask the student’s teacher for an available copy.

Appendix C

Parent’s Occupation: What is your current occupation? (Survey question 10)

Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty Salon</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Specialist</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Management</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chauffer Driver</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete Worker</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Networking</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delierson</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food</td>
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<td>Homemaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
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<td>6.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Systems</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor/Work</td>
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<td>17.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscape</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logistician</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lunch Monitor Elementary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance Engineer</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance Supervisor</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Assistant</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part Time</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Administration</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
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<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store Manager</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
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<td>.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Univ. of Maryland Registrar Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Major Research Themes

The major themes regarding factors that promote or impede Latino parental involvement in schools.

I. Communication
A. Language Barriers
   i. Parents’ lack of English
   ii. Schools – lack of bilingual personnel.
B. Written information or computer access.

II. Role of Latino Parental Liaison

III. Economic Issues

IV. Transportation Issues

V. Forms of Involvement
A. Monitoring Homework
B. Attending Meetings
C. Calling teachers, administrators

VI. Teacher Relations

VII. Parental Aspirations

VIII. Parental Concerns about Schools

IX. Social and Cultural Capital

Illustration of the Major Themes by Percentage Responses of Latino Parents:
2006
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read/write in Spanish language</td>
<td>The Latino parental liaison when the Latino student population is high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination, sex, delinquency, drugs, suspension, and inequity/prejudice</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge about academic requirements for high schools and entrance to college/university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge about academic requirements for high schools and entrance to college/university</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge of financial aid information to pay for college/university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools’ lack of Spanish speaking personnel: Teachers and administrators (non-Latino school personnel)</td>
<td>Translation services: orally and written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary based on wages (hourly)</td>
<td>Forms of involvement: Lack of monitoring homework, before/after-attending meetings, and calling or meeting with Latino teachers/administrators through the school Latino parental liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some parents cannot read either in English or Spanish</td>
<td>Motivation and support for parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High number of children at home: Balance of care and support for each child to meet their needs</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge of parental rights in the U.S. school systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of information about the schools’ activities, events, or programs</td>
<td>Counseling parents on parental skills to deal with students’ issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication is through the parent liaison and not the school staff or principal</td>
<td>Mother is often the homemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of how to help or volunteer in the schools, but parents are willing</td>
<td>No Latino PTA: Parents do not know about the PTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural capital untapped</td>
<td>Lack of local community centers to gather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of how to help or volunteer in the schools, but parents are willing</td>
<td>Organizational culture and environment do not welcome Latinos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents want to learn English but do not know where to go. Unable to handle all issues: Parents feel disappointment and need support from the schools. Voices unheard and therefore, silent. Lack of access to county library card to obtain books or access computers. Lack of Latino and Spanish speaking personnel in professional roles.

References

Below is a list of references by area of research

I - References

Adler, A. (1956). The individual psychology of Alfred Adler: A systematic presentation in selection from his writings. HL


II - References


Reed, Charles B., Collaborating for excellence. Vital Speeches of the Day, 0042742X, 06/01/99, vl. 65, i. 16.

III - References


IV - References


Bonjean, R. Romo & A. Alvarez (Eds.), *The Mexican American experience: An interdisciplinary anthology*. Austin, TX: University of Texas.


