

## **ABSTRACT**

TOVAR, LYNN ZAGZEBSKI. A Narrative Analysis of Barriers and Supports in School Involvement Experiences of Hispanic Immigrant Parents with Dominant Spanish Language Proficiency. (Under the direction of Dr. Sylvia Nassar-McMillan).

The purpose of this narrative inquiry qualitative study was to explore the formal (school-based) and informal (home-based) school involvement experiences of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency and to understand the personal, environmental, and social factors that influence the school involvement process of these same parents. Twelve participants, who were Hispanic immigrant parents with at least one child enrolled in elementary or middle school in a southeast state in the United States, were interviewed about their school involvement experiences. Data were obtained from the 12 in-depth interviews, demographic questionnaires, document review, and field notes. Data were analyzed using the Two Cycle coding process recommended by Saldaña (2013).

The personal, environmental, and social themes that emerged throughout the analysis of this study pointed toward the relevance of a Bioecological Systems framework in examining issues related to Hispanic immigrant parent involvement. Participants' formal and informal involvement seemed to be influenced by: program/event existence, values and prioritizing, knowledge of event, support resources, and barriers and bridges. Participants supported the academic development of their children informally through talking to the children about education, monitoring grades, insuring school attendance, supporting homework completion, and supporting literacy development. School personnel, policies and practices impacted participant involvement through influence on community, accessibility, support resources, and communication. Hispanic immigrant parents utilized different

strategies to work through language differences including preparing ahead, relying on others, turning to technology, relying on self, and learning English.

Implications for research, policy, and counseling practice are provided. Finally, conclusions are offered regarding recognizing involvement and investment of Hispanic immigrant parents in their children's education and facilitating their formal involvement in schools as a benefit to schools and communities. Hispanic immigrant parents were found to take an active stance in working through language differences and highly valued education for their children. Their formal and informal parent involvement was influenced by a dynamic interplay of social, environmental, and personal factors.

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A Narrative Analysis of Barriers and Supports in School Involvement Experiences of  
Hispanic Immigrant Parents with Dominant Spanish Language  
Proficiency

by  
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
North Carolina State University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Counseling & Counselor Education

Raleigh, North Carolina

2016

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## **DEDICATION**

These pages are dedicated to the immigrant parents whose stories parallel and diverge from the ones represented here. They are also dedicated to the many excellent educators and counselors who aspire to create programs and spaces where differences are honored and valued.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Lynn Zagzebski Tovar was born in Madison, WI. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in History and Education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Master of Education with a specialization in Counseling and Career Development from Colorado State University. Her counseling practice has included career and vocational counseling with university students and adults in transition, and mental health counseling within community agencies. She has presented on career development, multicultural, and other counseling topics at regional and national conferences. She has taught within a graduate program of counseling in Mexico and volunteered at non-profit organizations in Mexico and the United States. Lynn is a Licensed Professional Counselor Associate in the State of North Carolina and a National Certified Counselor.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Achieving this educational goal would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many. First and foremost, I want to thank the individuals who participated in this study for generously sharing their time, insight, and stories.

I am deeply grateful for the support of my Graduate Committee. Dr Sylvia Nassar-McMillan: thank you for your support, leadership, and encouragement as the Chair of my committee. Dr. Marc Grimmett, Dr. Stanley Baker, and Dr. Tuere Bowles: thank you for asking important questions, sharing your time and expertise, providing resources and guidance, and promoting meaningful scholarly contributions.

I wish to extend thanks to Dr. Jane Goodman and Dr. Rich Feller for their support and mentorship, and for inspiring full engagement in one's life and career.

I am ever grateful to Anjabeen, Syntia, Jill, and all my incredible Counselor Ed peers for their friendship, perspective, shared knowledge, and support in and outside of the classroom.

I hold deep esteem and gratitude for my extended family, neighbors, and good friends who have provided encouragement and care for my family and household along the way. Thank you to my godparents, John and Judy Fitzgerald, for believing in great things for me and for cultivating a commitment to social justice and civil engagement. Thanks to longtime friends Angel and Leigh for their heartening conversations and steadfast confidence in me. To my grandparents, for their sacrifices and commitment to family: I hope I have made you proud.

To my sister, Kathy Zagzebski, thank you for your patience, wisdom and invaluable perspective as confidant, copy editor, and friend. Indeed, where would I be without you?

To my parents, Dr. Jim and Ann Marie Zagzebski, who have instilled in me key values that have served as anchors in life, including a commitment to education, the natural world, family, community, and spiritual growth: thank you for your unwavering love and support.

To Pablo Tovar, who has stood by me through thick and thin: your love, support, insight, and humor powered that light that was needed when the one at the end of the tunnel seemed distant. I am ever grateful to walk beside you on this life's journey.

And to Sofia and Nico, thank you for cultivating joy, keeping me grounded, and reminding me to be present to what is really important in life. You are my inspiration.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Integral to the cultural legacy of the United States is its dynamic history of immigration. The push and pull factors impacting human migrations to this country continue to exert their influence, resulting in a current immigrant population of almost 40 million. Individuals born in Mexico, Central, and South America, along with their descendants often described as Hispanic or Latino, now number over 15 million individuals and comprise 16.3% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2010). This expansive group is diverse by generational history in the U.S., authorization status, linguistic ability, country of origin, and other distinguishing characteristics. One commonality, however, is that all children regardless of citizenship, economic circumstances, disability, or linguistic ability are mandated to a free, public education. Thus, certain schools become dynamic microcosms of acculturative exchanges between parents, students, and school personnel.

These schools hold great potential for multicultural and multi-lingual enrichment through the involvement of Hispanic immigrant families. Unfortunately, the potential for this enrichment is often not realized as personal, social, and environmental factors become barriers to meaningful formal school involvement of linguistically diverse parents (Turney & Kao, 2009). A potential environment of cultural integration and empowerment instead becomes a place where immigrant families are often marginalized (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; De Gaetano, 2007; Ramirez, 2003). Hispanic immigrant parents, particularly those with limited English proficiency, become involved in formal school-based activities at a lower rate than most other racial and ethnic groups, despite valuing education. Various

factors seem to contribute to this picture of divergent patterns of school involvement, from parents' inflexible work schedules to an unwelcoming school environment; language differences between parents and school personnel are often cited as contributing factors. Moreover, with little acknowledgement of the support that many of the parents provide their children at home, the topic of Hispanic parent school involvement is often presented in deficit terms.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The resounding majority of individuals from Latin America reside in states that have traditionally been considered "gateway states," such as New York, Texas, California, and Florida. As immigration patterns have changed, however, more Hispanic immigrants have moved to states such as North Carolina. New patterns of immigration place Hispanic immigrants in areas where the infrastructure and channels of social support are less extensive. With this change, a growing number of monolingual English-speaking counselors, teachers, and educational staff find themselves interacting with Spanish language dominant students and parents. Conversely, Spanish language dominant parents are faced with the task of supporting their children in public schools where there may or may not be school personnel on site who speak Spanish and which, typically, do not provide bilingual educational materials for the parents to use at home in fostering bilingual literacy (Johnson & Brandt, 2008-2009).

Between-group inequities in educational attainment continue to persist, with Hispanic students in grades 4 and 8 performing on state reading and math tests substantially below

Asian and white students (Kober, 2010). The early grade school education provides a critical foundation for subsequent educational experiences (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014). Drop-out rates for Hispanic students are higher than those of most other racial and ethnic groups (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & Kewalramani, 2011). Not having a high school diploma places these individuals on a trajectory of higher unemployment rates and lower weekly earnings (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

At 25.6% in 2012, the poverty rates for Hispanics exceed the national average, with 35% of Hispanic children under 18 living in poverty (U.S. Census, 2013). Parental school involvement correlates to higher student achievement (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Durand, 2011; Peña, 2000). Given the importance that education plays in diminished economic marginalization, it is imperative that the experiences of Hispanic immigrant parents be understood and challenges addressed.

### **Rationale for the Study**

Amidst the literature pertaining to parental school involvement, there is a growing body of research specific to the involvement of Hispanic parents in their children's schools and schooling. Excellent quantitative studies shed light on factors that contribute to a pattern of less formal school involvement of Hispanic parents, especially those who are foreign born or are less able to communicate comfortably and easily in English (e.g. LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009; Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011; Wong & Hughes, 2006). These factors include individual factors, such as beliefs and attitudes about the parental role in the child's schooling, language ability, immigration status, and self-

efficacy toward helping with homework. School factors have also been identified, such as unwelcoming environment, availability of interpreters and translated materials, institutionalized racism, and inconvenient meeting times for events and conferences.

Qualitative studies such as those of Carreón, Drake, and Barton (2005), Durand and Perez (2013), and Peña (2000) provide a closer look at the experiential components impacting school involvement of this parent population. Findings from these studies point toward the need to challenge deficit models of parental school involvement that have served toward marginalizing Hispanic immigrant parents in the process of educating their children. With language differences cited in almost every study as a barrier to school involvement, it is important to challenge our deficit thinking and consider, instead, the internal and external factors that help Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency overcome these challenges associated with language difference in supporting their children's academic development.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study utilized a constructivist interpretive framework applied to narrative inquiry to explore the school involvement experience of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency. Within this interpretive framework, key assumptions are that reality is subjective and is impacted by historical and cultural norms, lived experiences, and interactions with others (Creswell, 2013; Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). Through the recursive process of constructivist methodology, the researcher can start to understand the meaning that is made by the participants of certain events and interactions thus impacting

school involvement behavior. A constructivist approach is appropriate for a study in which the goal is to explore the experiences of a group of people (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

With narrative analysis methodology, narrative stories become both the data and the findings of the researcher's efforts to understand the lived and told experience of the participants (Clandinin, 2007). The purpose of this study was to explore the formal (school-based) and informal (home-based) school involvement experiences of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency, and to understand the personal, environmental, and social factors that influence the school involvement process of these same parents. Semi-structured interviews were the primary source of data toward understanding the context, chronology, and narratives of the study participants in their efforts to support their children's academic development.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This inquiry into the school involvement experiences of Hispanic immigrant parents utilized Bioecological Systems Theory as a theoretical framework. Bioecological Systems Theory is a developmental theory that recognizes a reciprocal process between person and environment that influences behavior and psychosocial outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The environment is envisioned as nested layers of environmental systems that influence an individual either through distal or proximal processes.

The characteristics of the person are given considerable attention within this theory and are divided into three types. *Force characteristics* are internal traits such as

temperaments, motivations, and levels of persistence. Visible characteristics such as age, skin color, perceived gender, and physical appearance are labeled *demand characteristics* as they often stimulate certain interactions of others. *Resource characteristics* include *mental and emotional resources* such as past experience, skills, and intelligence, and *material resources*, which include educational opportunities, access to safe housing, and job opportunities. These characteristics shape and are shaped by aspects of the environment.

### **Research Questions**

As noted earlier, Bioecological Systems Theory provided the theoretical framework for this study. Bioecological Systems theory posits that behavior and development are influenced through a multidimensional interplay between person and environment which occurs over time. Considering parental school involvement through this lens, it is important to consider environmental, social, and personal factors that interact with and influence involvement patterns. To that end, the study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the social, environmental, and personal factors that influence formal and informal school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents?
2. How do Hispanic immigrant parents support their children's academic development through informal parent involvement?
3. How do school personnel, policies, and practices influence school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents?
4. How do Hispanic immigrant parents work through language differences in supporting their children's academic development?

### Definition of Key Terms

There are a number of terms that are important to define in order to provide context for this study. The definitions are provided by the author informed by the literature unless otherwise noted.

1. *Parental involvement* is a multidimensional construct consisting of activities and behaviors utilized by parents to support their children's education (Durand, 2011; Epstein, 1995). Parent involvement can be *school-based* (also called formal or direct involvement), such as attendance at school events and direct contact with the teacher or other school personnel. It can also be *home-based* (known as informal or indirect involvement), such as communicating the importance of education or helping with homework.
2. *Hispanic or Latino/a*: generic terms developed by the U.S. government for Census purposes as a way to classify people either based on the common language Spanish (in the case of *Hispanic*) or (in the case of *Latino/a*) to refer to people whose heritage is of Latin American origin (including all of South America, Central America, and Mexico). Important to note is that the terms Hispanic and Latino/a are used interchangeably in much of the multicultural literature, however these pan-ethnic terms are rarely used outside the United States (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014). The term Hispanic is used within this study because of the focus on language difference in school involvement experiences.

3. *Immigrant*: refers to an individual who was born outside the U.S., Puerto Rico or other U.S. territory and who does not have a parent who is a U.S. citizen (Passel & Cohn, 2011).
4. *Spanish language dominant*: having language preferences and abilities that favor Spanish over English, to the extent that the speaker is less able to communicate orally or via written means in English. Similar terms used in relevant literature include Limited English Proficiency (LEP) which describes a limitation in ability to read, speak, write, or understand English in individuals who do not speak English as their primary language, or Spanish-monolingual. These individuals are also often called English Language Learners (ELLs).
5. *Interpreter*: a person who conveys a spoken message from one language to another. Although different than translator, which involves the written word, interpreter and translator are used interchangeably in the reporting of findings to more closely represent the terminology used by the participants.

### **Significance of the Study**

There is a growing body of research pertaining to Hispanic parent involvement in education. This study adds to that body of knowledge in the three ways. First, this study starts with the evidence-based assumption that Hispanic immigrants are supporting the academic development of their children, often through informal home-based mechanisms (e.g., Durand & Perez, 2013; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012). The assumption is also that there are certain challenges of doing so that are associated with language differences. Through a

review of this study, educators, counselors, church leaders, and other organizational leaders who seek to support Hispanic immigrant parents' efforts to support their children may gain some suggestions for ways to provide additional assistance.

Second, other studies have examined the posited impact of environmental and individual factors on Hispanic parental involvement (e.g., Durand, 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009). Findings from these studies identified such environmental factors as “unwelcoming schools” or “attitudes of school personnel” as barriers to Hispanic parental involvement. In this study, the researcher sought to understand the specific interpersonal interactions (proximal and distal processes as described in Bioecological Systems Theory) that act to embolden, encourage, and invite Hispanic immigrant parents to formal school-based involvement, as well as those interactions that create psychosocial distancing and the perception of schools as unwelcoming environments.

Finally, much of the research related to Hispanic parental involvement has been conducted in areas with traditionally large Hispanic populations (e.g., Peña, 2000; Ramirez, 2003). With a 394% increase in number of Hispanics between 1990 and 2000, the state where this study was conducted is among 10 in the United States experiencing a rapid, sustained growth of the Hispanic immigrant population. This study sought to understand the parental experience of Hispanic immigrants in an area that is considered a burgeoning Hispanic community (Villalba, Brunelli, Lewis, & Wachter, 2007)

## **Organization of the Study**

In this study, narrative inquiry was used to explore the school involvement experiences of the participants. Environmental, social, and personal factors were explored as they influenced the school involvement experience and rates of participation in different types of activities. This chapter provides an overview of the topic, research questions, as well as rationale for and purpose of the study. The literature review that follows in chapter two explores parental school involvement and, specifically, Hispanic parent involvement in the United States. In addition, chapter two provides an overview of Bioecological Systems Theory which provides the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Within the discussion of this theory, the applicability of the theory as it applies to Hispanic parental school involvement is considered utilizing the examples of two often-cited influential factors: acculturation and language differences.

Chapter three contains detail on the research design and the specific methodology of narrative inquiry that was utilized for this study. In this chapter, the research sample and site of the study are described, as are data collection and analysis methods. Finally, the role of the researcher, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations are discussed.

In chapter four, the findings of the study are described. Chapter four is divided into three sections. The first section contains a demographic overview of the participants. Individual narratives from each participant are included in the second section. The findings as they relate to each research question make up the final section of the chapter.

Finally, chapter five contains a discussion of the study findings. In this final chapter, the implications for theory, policy, research, counselors, and counselor educators are also described. A concluding statement is also provided in chapter five.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature and the theoretical framework upon which this study is grounded. The chapter begins with an exploration of parental school involvement, its relationship to student academic outcomes, school counselors' role in family/school/community partnerships, and the different ways school involvement is conceptualized and valued. Current research on Hispanic parental school involvement is reviewed, with quantitative investigations followed by qualitative ones. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Bioecological Systems Theory and its applicability for understanding school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency.

### Parent Involvement in Schools

Parent involvement as a construct is conceptualized in different ways. Kim et al. (2012) described two distinct models of parent or family engagement in schools: parent involvement and family-school partnership. The first, the parent involvement model, can be described as structural and focused on activities conducted by significant caretakers aimed at promoting the academic and social well-being of the child. The second is a family-school partnership model which is relational. Integral to this second model is bi-directional communication between school and family. Ferlazzo (2011) offered another conceptualization of school involvement. Distinguishing between involvement and engagement, he asserted that "involvement implies *doing to*; in contrast engagement implies *doing with*" (p.12).

Although the mechanism through which it supports certain outcomes is debated, parent involvement in children's education does seem to have a positive influence on student achievement (Fan & Chen, 1999). Turney and Kao (2009) purported that formal parent involvement serves several functions. It conveys to children the message that education is important through the parent placing priority on presence within the school. Moreover, it provides the means to get to know key people in the school who can discuss the children's performance and impact change. Finally, it allows parents to be privy to information about the school and about their student.

LeFevre and Shaw (2012) described formal or direct parent involvement as school-based activity (e.g., attendance at school events, participation in parent-teacher conferences, or volunteering in the classroom). Home-based activity, however, such as helping with homework and talking to children about the importance of school, has received growing attention and is recognized as informal involvement. Recognizing the value of both formal and informal parent involvement, Epstein (1995) delineated the following six types of involvement, each with corresponding challenges, redefinitions, and outcomes: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Epstein's work is also part of a growing body of research that incorporates community into a partnership model that recognizes the three major spheres of influence in children's lives: community, school, and family (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Epstein, 1995).

A number of investigations have uncovered varying patterns of school participation between parents of different ethnic and racial groups, with higher rates of formal

involvement by white U.S.-born parents. Other parent characteristics such as language ability, socio-economic status, immigrant status, educational level, and type of employment have been found to predict level and type of school involvement (Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Although the extent of direct involvement that the parent has with the school does not typically correspond to the parent's value of education, direct parent involvement provides social capital benefits that involvement of the informal nature cannot. Durand and Perez (2013) asserted that direct parent involvement is valued by teachers and administrator while the absence of direct involvement is often perceived as a lack of interest or engagement in a child's education. Given the prevailing evidence that "just about all families care about their children, want them to succeed, and are eager to obtain better information from schools and communities so as to remain good partners in their children's education" (Epstein, 1995, p. 703), this notion is troubling. The divergent valuing of type of parent involvement presents the risk that children may be penalized by teachers who interpret lower levels of school-based involvement as parents' lack of interest (Turney & Kao, 2009). This deficit perspective is being challenged by researchers and advocates who promote a vision of parent involvement that includes informal home-based activities such as helping with homework, providing encouragement, and talking to children about the importance of school (e.g., Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Durand & Perez, 2013; Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011).

Other lines of parent school involvement research relate to the corresponding involvement of different professionals, including school counselors. Charged with "creating

an environment that promotes student achievement (for all students)” (ASCA, 2012, p.1), school counselors can play a unique role in fostering relationships instrumental in promoting students’ academic, career, and personal/social development, such as with parents (Bemak & Cornely, 2002; Nassar-McMillan, Karvonen, Perez, & Abrams, 2009). With an anticipated positive impact on student achievement and behavior, Epstein and Van Voorhis (2010) proposed that school counselors should spend 20% of their time on partnership activities such as planning, implementing, and evaluating goal-linked partnership programs for their schools. However, in a national survey of professional school counselors, less than half of the participants endorsed regular participation in partnership activity (Griffin & Steen, 2010).

School counselor involvement in school-family-community partnerships is influenced by school factors and school counselor factors (Bryan & Griffin, 2010). School factors include the existence of a collaborative school climate and of principal support. School counselor factors include role perceptions, self-efficacy about partnerships, commitment to advocacy, attitudes about partnerships, attitudes about families, and lack of resources. Adyin, Bryan, and Duys (2012) investigated school counselor involvement in school, family, and community partnerships with linguistically diverse families. They found that school principal expectations, role perceptions, time constraints, and training related to partnerships explained a significant proportion of variance in involvement in partnerships with linguistically diverse families. All these studies contribute to a contextual understanding of the range of factors that foster or detract from school personnel behaviors and activities fostering school involvement of parents.

Despite the proposed merits of family-school partnerships, much of the research on parent involvement in children's schooling is conducted using the structural model (Kim et al., 2012). Given the challenge of quantifying a relationship, it is not a surprise that formal involvement, or direct contact between the parent and school, is the most common way that parent involvement is operationalized by researchers (Turney & Kao, 2009). Fan and Chen (1999) further assert that in the majority of studies, the construct of parent involvement is inadequately defined leaving ambiguity in how the findings can be interpreted. How school involvement is operationalized is one of the topics that will be explored through the studies discussed in the subsequent section.

### **Hispanic Parent Involvement**

As academic and economic inequities endure, there is a growing body of research on parental involvement in children's schooling, as described in the section above. Given the positive correlation that has been found between parental involvement and student educational outcomes, this concerted attention by the research community is warranted and desirable. Involvement specifically of Hispanic parents in their children's education has received attention in part because of differences in educational outcomes between Hispanic students and students of other ethnic backgrounds. With 11.8% of all U.S.-born Hispanic students and 34% of Hispanic students who are foreign-born leaving school without completing their degree, the school completion rate for Hispanic students is among the lowest as compared to other ethnic or racial groups (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & Kewalramani, 2011). In the prior section, literature related to parent involvement in general was explored.

This following session will provide findings of the literature related specifically to Hispanic parent involvement. As different studies are discussed, the terminology that the researchers use to describe the participants of their studies will be maintained.

Parent involvement is often evaluated as a unidimensional construct, resulting in different aspects of parental academic support being overlooked (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012). Within this unidimensional construct, parent involvement is most often characterized as visible participation in school activities such as volunteering for school events, attending PTA meetings, or participating in parent-teacher conferences. Challenging this unidimensional construct, LeFevre and Shaw (2012) utilized data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS:88), a nationally representative sample of children who were in eighth grade in 1988 and followed through secondary level and beyond, to investigate the effects of formal and informal Latino parent involvement on academic achievement. With a final sample size of 1,476 self-identified Latino students and parents, the researchers measured effects of formal and informal involvement on academic achievement of the student. Formal involvement was operationalized as a multi-item construct incorporating parent-reported contact (physical or otherwise) with the school. Informal involvement incorporated parent report of the presence of family rules about education and discussion of educational issues with the child. Both types of parental involvement were significant predictors of student achievement, with achievement measured by whether the student graduated on time. Socio-economic status and family structure also were statistically significant to the model. Like any study, limitations were noted; in this

case, the researchers described variables related to parent involvement that were not measured in this study, as well as the limitation of self-report data. Interestingly, although not discussed by the researchers, the main language spoken at home was not statistically significant in the model predicting academic achievement. An area recommended for future research suggested examining how discriminatory practices, attitudes, or actions may influence the formal school involvement of Latino parents.

Testing the ability of a theoretical model to explain Latino parents' involvement behaviors in their children's schooling, Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2011) examined Latino parents' motivation for involvement as well as their preferences for types and levels of involvement. Their sample consisted of 147 Latino parents of children in grades 1-6 in a large urban public school district in the southeast United States. These parents were predominantly first-generation immigrants from Mexico. The parents responded to questionnaires that addressed the following: personal psychological beliefs (beliefs and behaviors about responsibility for children's educational outcomes and self-efficacy for involvement), contextual motivators of involvement (general school invitations, specific teacher invitations, and specific student invitations), perceived life-context variables (time and energy for involvement, skills and knowledge for involvement), and school-based or home-based parent involvement.

With the study described above, parents reported greater involvement at home than at school. Personal psychological beliefs and contextual motivators of involvement predicted a significant amount of variance in in school- and home-based involvement. Life-context

variables contributed to the predictive power of the model, however not at statistically significant level. Skills and knowledge of the parents and general invitations from the school were not found to be statistically significant predictors of school-based involvement. Specific invitations from teachers predicted parent's school based involvement, as did time and energy of the parents. Specific invitations from the student and beliefs of a partnership role with the school predicted home-based involvement. Findings from this study contradicted deficit-oriented reports of Latino parents' involvement in that these parents were actively involved in their children's learning and educational success, especially at home. Given the strong role that specific teacher invitations had in school-based involvement, the authors asserted that most teachers' limited training in working effectively with parents is a concern and a potentially fruitful area of growth.

Numerous factors present challenges to parents' school-based involvement. Hypothesized barriers include lack of child care, language problems, lack of transportation, not feeling welcome, and language problems. Utilizing data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K: 2001), a nationally representative sample of children in kindergarten, Turney & Kao (2009) investigated race and immigrant status differences in the involvement of parents at their children's schools, as well as between-group differences in reported barriers to involvement. Noting the role of school-based activity in promoting an increase of social capital, the type of involvement examined in this study was school-based (e.g. attending open house, volunteering at school, participating in

fundraising). Parent involvement was operationalized using a multi-item variable from the ECLS-K in which parents identified extent and form of involvement.

Turney and Kao (2009) found that the majority of parents reported some type of involvement, with the top three types being open house attendance, parent-teacher conference attendance, and school event attendance, although foreign-born parents reported less involvement. Controlling for demographic and socioeconomic variables, notable between-group differences in nearly all reported barriers were found, with all foreign-born minority parents reporting more barriers to involvement than their native-born White counterparts. Foreign-born Hispanics and foreign-born Asians were more likely to report that they did not feel welcome at their children's school. English language ability also was an important predictor of perceived barriers with parents whose primary language was not English reporting the following at greater frequency: meeting times were inconvenient, school did not make them feel welcome, and meetings were conducted only in English. The relationship between immigrant status and lower levels of involvement persisted even when the researchers controlled for certain barriers such as English language ability.

Wong and Hughes (2006) investigated ethnicity and language contributions to parent involvement differences as reported by parents and teachers. Dimensions of parent involvement that were measured for parents were: positive perceptions about school, communication, parent-teacher shared responsibility, and parent school-based involvement. Teachers reported on perceived teacher-parent relationship (or alliance), parent involvement, their own perceptions of parent's value of education, and parent-teacher contact. Participants

were drawn from a larger sample of children participating in a study examining the effect of grade retention on academic achievement, thus the sample included children who had scored below the median score on a district-administered measure of literacy.

After parent education and parent employment status were controlled, significant main effects of ethnicity for parent ratings of the following variables were identified: parent involvement, communication, and shared responsibility. Findings indicated significant differences between Spanish-speaking Hispanic parents and other parents on several areas measured, specifically finding lower levels of communication and shared responsibility for their children's education. As these results are considered in conjunction with those found by Turney and Kao (2009) above, the complexity of understanding the variables deterring or fostering parent involvement is evident as different variables are studied. For example, in the Wong and Hughes study, parents were not asked if they feel welcome. With a sample of children that is distinct from the average student population, one must question whether other unmeasured variables could also account for variance in involvement.

With changing immigration patterns, increasing numbers of Hispanic immigrants are settling in rural and non-metropolitan areas that lack the bilingual resources found in larger metropolitan areas or other traditional gateway destinations. Utilizing semi-structured interviews and focus groups, Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008) sought to identify the major factors inhibiting greater involvement of Hispanic parents in their children's schools in a rural Midwestern district in the United States. An inability of parents to speak and understand English was found to be a major obstacle to communication between school and

Hispanic parents, as school correspondence and general information were not printed in Spanish. In addition, the researchers identified what they described as the reluctance on the part of parents to question authority and advocate for the rights of their children. Further recommended research included attention to effective communication practices (including written documents), case study of after-hours English language instruction, influence of immigration status, and whether cultural differences and language barriers discourage participation more than immigration status.

Latino families who vary across demographic and socioeconomic lines have been found to espouse the cultural value of *educación* which, expanding beyond the English cognate “education,” incorporates moral, academic, and interpersonal standards. This was one of the across-group themes identified by Durand and Perez (2013) in their qualitative study exploring Latino parents’ beliefs about their children’s education, advocacy and school involvement, and feeling welcome at their children’s schools. The participants were 12 Latino parents of preschool or kindergarten children at a bilingual school in the northeast. The researchers identified discontinuity between participants on the extent to which they experienced an “openness” of the school, with differences noted by level of education. High hopes of expanding educational opportunities for children was a theme spoke of only by participants of lower socioeconomic levels. All participants described their role in their children’s lives as teacher, guide, and living model of behavior. These results are congruent with findings of other qualitative studies involving Latino immigrant families (e.g., Baccallao & Smokowski, 2007; Dotson-Blake, 2010).

When challenging existing models of school involvement, sometimes new language is necessary. This is what Carreón, Drake, and Barton (2005) asserted in their reporting on the stories of three working-class immigrant parents' efforts to engage in their children's formal schooling. Using ethnographic methodology to present the stories of three exemplar parents participating in a larger study, the authors asserted that parents' *presence in schooling* provides the framework necessary to understand parental engagement regardless of whether that presence is in the formal school space or in informal personal spaces. This study differed from others in that it examined the participants' efforts to be involved in their children's formal education, highlighting a process that was both transactional and personal in nature. This process is marked by institutional characteristics and personal attributes of the participants which interact and contribute toward three forms of presence: *presence as strategic helper* (working within the boundaries of the school and using formal structure despite feeling as an outsider); *presence as a questioner* (out-of-school practices using questions about what was happening in school to create educational pathways for children); and *presence as listener* (close attention given to school experiences of child, with little to no personal relationship and participation in formal parent venues). In each of these forms of presence, the power dynamic, access to resources, as well as value system came to play in how the parent interacted with the existing power structures.

A case study approach allowed Peña (2000) to explore aspects within the educational environment that contributed to successful involvement of Mexican American parents in one school setting in an area that historically and currently has had a high percentage of Mexican

and Mexican American residents. Using direct observation of meetings, open interviews with teachers, principals and parents, and document review, Peña found the following factors influencing parent involvement: cultural attitude, language, parent cliques, parents' education, attitudes of the school staff, and family issues. Through prolonged observation and interactions in the field, the researcher was able to uncover psychosocial dynamics that seemed to impact the involvement rates at this school. Findings from this and the previously described study warrant replication in order to better understand the interpersonal and institutional processes that underlie factors impacting involvement decisions and practices of Hispanic immigrant parents.

Similar to the setting of the investigation described above, Ramirez' (2003) study was set in a predominantly Latino community in the United States. Qualitative data illuminated some of the processes taking place behind the variables often cited as barriers to Latino immigrant parents. Other research has identified a difference in parent expectations between Latino immigrant and other parents, with Latino immigrant parents less frequently endorsing a sense of shared responsibility between parent and teacher in the schooling of the child. This is often attributed to cultural differences. Findings from this study present a different picture. Several parents described an open stream of communication between parents and teachers in their countries of origin (in this case, Mexico and Honduras) which led to greater teacher accountability. When asked why they didn't go to their children's schools, the parents said "we haven't been invited" (Ramirez, 2003, p. 103). Dotson-Blake (2010) uncovered similar findings when participants in her critical ethnographic study described a

strong commitment to their children's education, coupled with marginalization and uncertainty about expectations in U.S. schools.

Villalba, Brunelli, Lewis, and Wachter (2007) collected qualitative data from elementary school counselors and teachers working within a southeastern U.S. rural area that had experienced a new, rapid, and sustained growth of the Latino population. Investigating how the educators viewed the experiences of the Latino/a children attending schools in this area, the researchers also identified several themes relevant to the engagement of the children's parents. Participants noted a gap in understanding between home and school environments that was marked by different languages and customs. Attempts to bridge that gap were made through use of translators and translated materials. Important in this study was a more comprehensive description of some of the factors impacting Latino/a children and their families in this rural area, including parental lack of resources (time, income, living space), population change contributing to reports of racism and discrimination, a strong bond of the local Latino community, a strong work ethic, and gratefulness and appreciation for the assistance provided in schools. The participants noted an achievement gap and bias in testing among the academic factors affecting the Latino/a children in their area.

Finally, in an earlier study conducted by the researcher of this proposed study, Tovar (2014) explored the lived experience that six Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency in a suburban area had engaging with and participating as parents in the schools that their children attend. Seven themes emerged in that study: knowing English, school engagement, *se da cuenta*/one notices, children and parent,

experience with interpreters, critical incident, and grade level retention. Findings from that study shed light on the challenges the participants faced in navigating through the complex school system. The complexity of big and small challenges was amplified through language differences and limited perceived support from others. Findings indicated a dynamic interplay between personal characteristics and interpersonal exchanges which influenced formal school involvement of the participants. Also revealed was a phenomenon in which the majority of participants were able to understand spoken or written English with greater ease than to speak English. The potential utility of these findings in informing cultural sensitivity and communication efforts in schools points toward further exploration with Hispanic immigrant parents who vary more widely in length of time in the United States and live in rural and urban settings. Findings from this study also contradicted deficit-oriented reports of Latino parent involvement in that the majority of parents interviewed were actively involved in their children's learning and made efforts to learn English so they could better advocate for and help their children in school.

Through the quantitative studies described at the beginning of the section, between-group differences in patterns of school participation and barriers to participation were identified. Through several of the qualitative studies, the processes through which certain factors became barriers started to be revealed (e.g. Peña 2000; Ramirez, 2003; Tovar, 2014). In this next section, the theory that frames the proposed study will be discussed.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Bioecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) provides the theoretical framework for the proposed study. Within the following section, the theory and its evolution from Ecological Systems Theory will be described. The Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) Model will be explored with attention given to how the components of the model apply to the school involvement experiences of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency.

### **Bioecological Systems Theory**

Bioecological Systems Theory is a developmental theory that recognizes a reciprocal process between person and environment that influences behavior and psychosocial outcomes. First introduced as the ecological model in the 1970s, the basic assumption of Ecological Systems Theory is that nested layers of environmental systems exist, and that these systems influence and are influenced by the development of an individual in a mutually accommodating manner. This environmental context is envisioned as a “set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3) and is often depicted visually as a set of concentric circles with the environmental context that is in closest proximity, the micro-system, encircled by more distal systems (the meso-, exo-, and macro-systems). Each has a resounding impact on the individual’s development and, thereby, behavior.

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological paradigm had a transformational effect on the way human beings and their environments were conceptualized and studied by many within the

behavioral and social sciences (Heft, 2013; Moen, 1995). Through Bronfenbrenner's assumption of interconnectedness, that individuals within a particular context are connected as are the different levels of systems that surround the individual, the theory provided a mechanism to attend to the influence that policy, culture, and societal norms have on human behavior and circumstance.

Although the environmental aspect of ecological systems theory was critical, Bioecological Systems Theory evolved from Bronfenbrenner's continued reflection on the role that individuals and genetics play in development (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). The basic premises of Bioecological Systems Theory are contained within a framework called the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Each of the components of this model is described below, with attention given to the topic of Hispanic immigrant parent involvement.

### **Process-Person-Context-Time Model**

**Process.** Within the PPCT model, process refers to *proximal processes*, which are the primary mechanism through which genetic potentials are realized (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). These are systematic interactions between a person and the environment occurring on a fairly regular basis over an extended period of time. Through these proximal processes, individuals come to understand their world and their place within it (Tudge et al., 1994). These processes are progressively more complex as the person evolves.

Within the literature on Hispanic parent involvement, considerable attention is given to the concept of informal, home-based involvement. The daily interactions between a parent

and child related to homework and school constitute proximal processes that impact how the child's innate abilities will develop into habits that influence academic outcomes. Important too are the proximal processes that occur for the child within the school environment. Within the school environment, the child also learns how his or her culture, language, and family are valued through what is communicated overtly and covertly by school personnel and by other children.

**Person.** Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) note that the proximal processes (described above) are the “primary engines of effective development. Nevertheless, like all engines, they cannot produce their own fuel nor are they capable of self-steering” (p.572). Equally critical in the interaction between person and environment are the personal characteristics of the individual. These characteristics include the traits originated from the genetic material of the individual, as well as those that come about from features of time and circumstances. These characteristics influence social interactions. Three types of characteristics are identified within the PPCT model: demand, resource, and force characteristics. Each is described below.

*Demand characteristics* are generally visible, such as age, skin color, perceived gender, and physical appearance. The initial interactions of others are often stimulated by these characteristics through expectations that are formed immediately. Although treated neutrally within Bioecological Systems Theory, by asserting the influence of these characteristics on the interactions that the individual has with others, an important space is

created within the theory to acknowledge dynamics of power and privilege associated with race, gender, and other characteristics.

*Resource characteristics* are not immediately evident in initial interactions with others, although sometimes assumptions are made based on demand characteristics. Resource characteristics include *mental and emotional resources*, such as intelligence, skills, and past experiences. They also include *material resources*, such as access to healthy food and safe housing, as well as educational opportunities.

Also distinct between individuals are general temperaments, motivations, and level of persistence. These internal traits are what Bronfenbrenner called *force characteristics*. Force characteristics provide room in the theory for the recognition that two children growing up in the same household may have the same general resource characteristics (food, access to education, housing), but their life trajectories may differ substantially given differences in motivation, persistence or personality (Tudge et al, 2009). Force characteristics influence and are influenced by other aspects of the person, as well as contextual features that are described in the section that follows.

**Context.** As in Ecological Systems Theory, the environmental context continues to be a key construct. The environmental context encompasses the nested layers of concentric structures that surround the individual. At the most proximal level is the *microsystem*. These are the settings where the individual engages in face-to-face activity as well as the pattern of roles, activities, and interpersonal relations that the person experiences. The content and structure of each microsystem impact how proximal processes occur, in this way influencing

the development and behavior of the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). The *mesosystem* refers to the relationship or connections between two or more settings containing the individual. An example for a child enrolled in school includes the relationship between home and school. The *exosystem* is made up of the interactions and relationships between two or more systems. Different than the mesosystem, the individual of interest does not directly participate in one of these two systems; however decisions made in the external system impacts the individual. For example, a parent who is undocumented and has been volunteering informally on a weekly basis in a school might find his regular involvement complicated when a school board decision results in all parents having to register as official volunteers and undergo a background check. Encompassing all is the *macrosystem* which includes general values, ideology, norms, and policies that define and organize the society.

**Time.** Finally, critical to Bioecological Systems Theory is a temporal component. Time is considered in how proximal processes change or are consistent. The impact of continuity or change within the mesosystem is also relevant. The *chronosystem*, a construct that was added later in the evolution of Ecological Systems Theory, refers to historical or life events that lead to consistency or change for the individual.

### **Application to Hispanic Immigrant Parents**

Bioecological Systems Theory is described above. In the following sub-section, the applicability of the theory is explored as it relates to two issues that often impact Hispanic immigrant parents: language and acculturation.

**The Example of Language.** An often-cited barrier to school involvement for Hispanic immigrant parents is not being able to communicate comfortably and effectively in English (e.g. Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008; Villalba, Brunelli, Lewis, & Wachter, 2007). Bioecological Systems Theory provides a powerful framework to understand this language barrier. Language ability can be considered a material resource characteristic. Although private English language instruction exists, within the public education systems in the countries of origin for many Hispanic immigrant parents there is limited to no instruction of English. Opportunities for adults to formally learn English vary within the United States. Assumptions of language ability are often stimulated (rightly or wrongly) by demand characteristics such as physical appearance. Finally, differences in language ability represent different skills or mental resources that are available to Hispanic immigrant parents. Within that range of ability lie different receptive and expressive capabilities of oral and written language. Several participants in one study described the efforts they made to learn English, highlighting differences in persistence, motivation, and opportunity (Tovar, 2014). The ability to exploit whatever language ability that existed was impacted by the interactions with individuals in the school as well as the dispositions and motivations of the participants.

Language must also be considered from a macro- and chrono-system perspective. The United States has always been linguistically diverse. Indigenous languages pre-dating the arrival of European explorers and colonists, shifting patterns of immigration (including forced migration), and geopolitical land acquisitions have resulted in a country in which, in 2007, one out of five people in the United States spoke a language other than

English in their homes (Shin & Kominski, 2010). Today, with 50 million individuals of Hispanic origin, the home language for many is Spanish (U.S. Census, 2010). At the school level, individuals described as English Language Learners currently make up 9.8 % of the school population (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Despite this context of linguistic diversity, the United States continues to be a monolingual nation in educational policy and practice. Sociopolitical tensions related to immigrants seep into educational battles resulting in linguistically repressive policy that contradicts effective pedagogical methodology and where minority languages are devalued (Johnson & Brandt, 2008-2009; Johnson, 2012). Exemplifying this to the extreme is Proposition 203 passed in 2000 in Arizona which, in effect, abolished bilingual education and English-as-a-Second-Language services. Nationwide, the experience of many language minority groups is subtractive bilingualism in which a second language (in this case, English) is acquired by children of immigrants at the cost of the first. The role of this subtractive bilingual reality on academic achievement and parent-child relations continues to be explored (Johnson, 2012; Winsler, Díaz, Espinosa, & Rodríguez, 1999).

**The Example of Acculturation.** Acculturation in its broadest sense is defined as the cultural change that occurs when groups of different cultures come into prolonged first-hand contact with one another (Berry, 2006). Originally introduced as a group-level phenomenon, the process of what is now known as “psychological acculturation” describes the affective, behavioral, and cognitive changes that occur at the individual level (Sam, 2006). Resource and force characteristics have been found to impact

individual acculturation and psychosocial adaptation outcomes. For example, in an international study on immigrant youth, intercultural experiences and the motivational sense of control over one's life had a statistically significant correlation with the participants' acculturation experience and psychosocial adaptation (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Factors in the environment, however, also were found to be important in this study.

Berry (2006) contended that certain conditions within pluralistic environments interact with individual attributes to influence the preferences that individuals from non-dominant ethnocultural groups develop or maintain related to their heritage culture. These same conditions and attributes also interact to influence the extent to which interaction with the dominant culture is sought. Maintenance of one's heritage culture while at the same time participating as an integral member of the larger society, that is, adopting an integration strategy to acculturation, has been shown to correlate positively to a number of measures of academic achievement and well-being (Yoon et al., 2013). Adopting an integration strategy is possible, however, only in a society that is "explicitly multicultural" (Berry, 2006, p. 36). Conversely, exclusion and discrimination negatively impact the behaviors and preferences that individuals from the ethno-cultural group have toward members of the dominant group.

Various researchers have identified acculturation variables as impacting school involvement practices and beliefs of Hispanic immigrant parents (Durand, 2011; Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). The focus of investigation with these acculturation variables have generally been on participant characteristics, typically resulting in the assertion that

the less assimilated the parents are into the majority culture, the less they are formally involved in their children's schools. Bioecological Systems Theory paves the way for a closer look at the contextual factors impacting acculturation outcomes.

### **Synthesis and Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the literature related to parental school involvement generally, followed with a review of research specifically pertaining to school involvement of Hispanic parents. Through the first section, the different models of parental involvement were explored with literature cited that described varying rates and types of involvement between groups. These models include formal school-based and informal home-based involvement (also described as structural models), and a more relational focused family/school/community engagement model. Parental school involvement and engagement have been found to have a positive correlation to student academic achievement, although the mechanism through which this occurs is still being debated. Importantly, the literature provides justification to consider parental involvement as a multifaceted construct, as recommended by Fan and Chen (1999).

With a growing body of literature addressing Hispanic parental involvement, several excellent qualitative studies point toward a valuing of education within the Hispanic immigrant population (e.g. Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Durand & Perez, 2013; Ramirez, 2013). Despite this valuing, evidence of divergent patterns of school involvement between ethnic and racial groups has been found, with Hispanic immigrant parents - particularly those with limited English proficiency - becoming involved

in formal school-based activities at a lower rate than other groups. Numerous studies have explored apparent factors contributing to this reality. Identified factors include the following

- individual factors: beliefs and attitudes about shared responsibility, perceptions of school environment, language ability, immigration status, support network, work schedule, acculturation level, childcare needs, skills and knowledge about involvement, self-efficacy toward helping with homework, perceptions of barriers to school involvement;
- school factors: Inconvenient meeting times, unwelcoming environment, availability of interpreters & translated materials, invisible codes, decision-making processes, institutionalized racism, attitudes of personnel;
- student factors: grade level in school, academic performance and behavior;
- contextual factors: work options in community, transportation, housing, childcare; and
- how and by whom involvement is defined.

Considering the layering of factors apparently inhibiting Hispanic parental involvement, Bioecological Systems Theory provides a useful structure to frame this investigation in order to explore aspects of this story for which there is limited information. Bioecological Systems Theory posits that behavior and development is influenced through a multidimensional interplay between person, context, and proximal processes, all of which occur over time.

Through this literature review, there is limited information on the dynamic, bi-directional processes through which school variables interact with person characteristics to

create the existing school involvement picture. Evidence of these processes was revealed through an earlier study conducted by the researcher of this investigation (Tovar, 2014). To further explore the temporal and contextual facets of these processes, this study uses a narrative inquiry approach to explore and understand how environmental and individual characteristics interact with and influence Hispanic immigrant parental school involvement and engagement.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to explore the formal (school-based) and informal (home-based) school involvement experiences of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency and to understand the personal, environmental, and social factors that influence the school involvement process of these same parents. The research questions that guided this study were as follows.

1. What are the social, environmental and personal factors that influence formal and informal school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents?
2. How do Hispanic immigrant parents support their children's academic development through informal parent involvement?
3. How do school personnel, policies, and practices influence school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents?
4. How do Hispanic immigrant parents work through language differences in supporting their children's academic development?

This chapter includes discussion of the research design and the specific research methodology that was utilized in this study. The research sample and site are described, as are the data collection and analysis methods. Finally, ethical considerations, researcher reflexivity, and the process through which trustworthiness was established are addressed.

#### **Design of the Study**

A narrative inquiry qualitative design was used to explore the parental school involvement experiences of the participants. Qualitative methodology allows for the

exploration and discovery of processes and issues that are not readily evident through quantitative methodology. Several characteristics define qualitative research. Data are often collected through face-to-face interactions over time in a natural setting within the participants' environment (Creswell, 2013). The researcher serves as the key instrument in the collection and analysis of data, utilizing multiple forms of data that are subsequently reviewed and analyzed both inductively and deductively. Throughout the study, the researcher maintains a reflexive position while seeking to understand and adequately portray the meanings the participants hold toward the phenomenon or issue. This approach is appropriate for the current study due to the need to understand the dynamic, bi-directional processes through which school variables interact with personal characteristics to create the existing school involvement picture where Hispanic immigrant parents, particularly those with limited English proficiency, become involved in formal school-based activities at a lower rate than other racial and ethnic groups.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) assert that “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (p.2). The choice of narrative inquiry for this study was made because the format was best suited to capture the stories of this study's participants. Through hearing their personal narratives about their experiences of school-based and home-based involvement in their children's academic experiences, the meaning they give to interactions with other “actors” illuminates the contextual influences on their

school involvement. Moreover, narrative inquiry allows for the interrogation of aspects of human agency and time which shape the participants' school involvement stories (Riessman, 2008). Through inviting the telling of the personal narratives of the participants, the aim of this study was to shed light on the participants' assigned meaning to their own role in supporting their children's academic development, as well as their struggles and triumphs in doing so (Chase, 2005).

## **Research Sample**

### **Site Selection**

The study was situated in a southeastern state in the United States that has undergone significant demographic changes in the last 20 years. This site was selected for researcher access and for its demographic significance in the nation as a state with the sixth-fastest Hispanic population growth rate (Chesser, 2012, August 15). Between 1990 and 2010, the Hispanic population in this state increased by 943%; it accounted for 25% of the state's population change. The state's Hispanic population – with the majority of Mexican origin – continues to grow in rural, urban, and suburban regions and plays an important role in many economic statewide needs (Chesser, 2012, August 15; Kochhar, R., Suro, R. & Tafoya, S, 2005; U.S. Census, 2011).

The urban setting selected within this site has an estimated population of more than 400,000 in 2013, and is the second largest city in the state. The city has a diverse economic base with its top industries comprised of educational and health services; professional, scientific, management, and administrative; and retail trade (U.S. Census, 2012). In 2010,

the Hispanic population comprised 11.4% of the city's population (U.S. Census, 2014).

Schools within the urban site are part of a school district that has received national attention for its changing student assignment policy; in 2010, socioeconomic status was eliminated as a factor in student placement (Samuels, 2011). Within this urban setting, parents living in the city may have a child attending a school in one of the outlying suburban towns – in a “neighborhood very different from their own” (Lockette, 2010, p.28). Since 2010, district schools have become increasingly segregated (Frankenberg & Diem, 2013).

The rural setting selected is a county characterized by small towns, mixed industry, farmland and rolling hills; it lies just outside of the city described above. Ranking 10<sup>th</sup> in the state in agricultural sales, the county receives a significant proportion of its revenue and employment from agriculture. In 2013 the Hispanic population had grown to 13.2% of the county's total population (U.S. Census, 2013). The county school district has an enrollment of 33,341 students, 20% of whom are Hispanic (Johnston County Schools, 2014).

### **Participant Selection**

The sample for this study was selected using maximum variation sampling. Qualitative research requires a sample that can provide rich information to generate an understanding of the phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2002). Maximum variation sampling, as a type of purposeful sampling, requires the determination of essential criteria to use in selecting participants. Initially, the study called for participants to have at least one son or daughter currently enrolled in a public elementary school that is not a dual language or language immersion school. Because of

difficulty recruiting a sufficient number of participants who met this requirement, the criteria were expanded to allow the participation of participants who had a child in a public elementary or middle school. Criteria were also expanded to include participants with a wider range of English language ability than the originally proposed criterion that follows: participants evaluate their ability to speak English as “none” or “little,” *or* whose English language skills are such that the participant has difficulty conducting ordinary daily business in English. The decision to include participants with greater language variance acknowledges the reality of the Hispanic immigrant population within the selected site. The participants of this study were all *Spanish language dominant*, meaning that their language preferences and abilities favored Spanish to English to the extent that the speaker was less able to communicate in English. Additional essential criteria for selection were as follows.

1. Participants identify as their country of origin Mexico or a Central or South American country where the official language is Spanish.
2. Participants identify Spanish as their first language.

This study utilized maximum variation sampling in which criteria that differentiates sites or participants are determined in advance, thus revealing differences in experience and perspective (Creswell, 2013). Participants were recruited from the urban and rural settings.

In determining sample size, Mason (2010) recommends the concept of saturation be used as the guiding principle. This concept refers to reaching a point in data collection where further data does not lead to additional information. Recommendations for minimum sample sizes for qualitative research studies vary depending on research design or purpose of the

study. Recommendations specific to narrative inquiry range from a single individual to 10 or more (Creswell, 2013; Mason, 2010). For this study, 12 participants were recruited from two settings: urban and rural. Participants with varying lengths of time living in the United States were sought. The participants were recruited through suggestions from community leaders and through informal presentations, telephone calls, and distribution of fliers at community centers, schools, English-as-a-Second-Language program sites, Hispanic ministries, and businesses that serve the local Hispanic community in the settings described above.

### **Procedure**

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained prior to conducting this study. The approved Informed Consent Form is included as Appendix A. After an initial telephone screening process, individual interviews were scheduled in the participant's home or in another mutually agreed upon location, such as a local public library. An in-depth interview was conducted after informed consent was obtained. A written copy of the Informed Consent form (written in Spanish and English) was provided to each participant at the time of the interview, and the form was reviewed verbally in Spanish with the participant. Each interview was conducted face-to-face in Spanish by the primary researcher. A demographic questionnaire was administered orally at the start of each interview. At the end of the interview, participants were given a \$10 gift card to a local grocery store in appreciation of their time. After interviews were complete, the researcher ensured that the participants had the contact information of the interviewer if they wished to

clarify their comments or review the interview transcript for the purpose of member checking. Detailed field notes were taken immediately following each interview.

Interview recordings which included oral administration of the demographic questionnaires were transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist. Each transcription was reviewed for accuracy by the primary researcher. Questionnaire data was compiled. Translations of transcriptions were completed and maintained as a reference for the peer review process. Interview data responses were analyzed in the original language. A resource document was created that includes resources and advice offered by the participants for other Hispanic parents in response to several prompts during the interview (see Data Collection).

Participants were contacted after the interviews to encourage comments in person or by telephone about their interview data or additional information. Resource documents were delivered to all participants with whom the researcher met in person. Detailed field notes were taken immediately following all face-to-face or telephone interactions.

### **Data Collection**

For this study, multiple methods were used to collect data. Multiple sources of data provide opportunity for triangulation. Most importantly, they provide multiple opportunities and methods for the stories of experience - the primary focus of narrative inquiry - to unfold and be provided context (Connelly & Candinin, 2014).

### **Demographic Questionnaire**

Individual stories need to be situated within the participants' personal experience, culture, and historical context (Riessman, 2008). The closed-ended questions of a

demographic questionnaire conducted orally provided opportunity to build rapport while, in parallel, gaining background information about the participant. Conversation was invited about contextual aspects of the person's life that may be relevant in the exploration of parental school experience. In addition, through asking the demographic questions orally, adequate provision for varying levels of literacy was made. The demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) contains information pertinent to each participant's age, educational background, English language background and perceived level of English proficiency (receptive and productive, oral and written), occupation, family, country of origin, grade levels of children, and ages of children.

### **In-depth Interview**

Interviews are a basic method used in qualitative research to gather experiential data about an event or episode in the life of a participant (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Narrative interviews require two active participants, the narrator and the questioner/listener, who collaborate in the construction of a story that depicts the narrator's experience. Also important is the establishment of a climate that invites storytelling (Riessman, 2008). In this study, individual interviews were conducted using an interview guide (Appendix B). The interview questions were developed in English. They were translated to Spanish with the support of a native speaker of Spanish who is bilingual in English. Feedback from a bilingual (English/Spanish) colleague on interview questions was incorporated into the interview protocol.

**Question development.** In addressing each of the research questions, the following areas, informed by the literature review and the theoretical framework of Bioecological Systems Theory, were among those explored.

- Participant's background (English language exposure, family of origin background, residential history in the U.S.);
- Participant's formal parent involvement (detailed accounts of parent school involvement events, description of participant's relationship with the school); and
- Participant's informal parent involvement (detailed accounts of interactions with child related to education and school).

Consistent with narrative inquiry, the open-ended questions were designed to invite extended accounts of formal and informal parent involvement of the participants in the schooling and schools of their children. Moreover, they were developed to create a story line that has temporal and contextual components. The table below describes the rationale and background for inclusion of each question. It also includes notation of the alignment of each interview question with the four research questions.

- Research question 1 (RQ1): What are the social, environmental and personal factors that influence formal and informal school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents?
- Research question 2 (RQ2): How do Hispanic immigrant parents support their children's academic development through informal parent involvement?

- Research question 3 (RQ3): How do school personnel, policies, and practices influence school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents?
- Research question 4 (RQ4): How do Hispanic immigrant parents work through language differences in supporting their children’s academic development?

Table 1

*Interview Question Background, Rationale and Alignment with Research Questions*

Interview Question	Research Question Addressed	Background
What is a typical week for your family?	RQ1, RQ2	In the opening questions, this question both serves a rapport-building function and provides contextual information about external factors such as work that may impact parent involvement. It also provides a way to identify whether certain routines surrounding homework are established.
Tell me about your children and their educational experiences. How has school been for her? What are some things that you’ve done to help them with school? What are some things you do to help them with homework? How does your partner/spouse support your children’s academic development?	RQ2, RQ4	Through the conversational style important in Narrative Inquiry, this set of questions provides a context for the participant to respond to a direct question about informal parent involvement.

Table 1 continued

<p>Was there an instance when you had to visit the school to advocate for your child? Please tell me about this experience.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What was the situation?</li> <li>b. What steps did you take to advocate for her/him?</li> <li>c. What was the most challenging part of that experience?</li> <li>d. What was the outcome, and was it to your satisfaction?</li> </ol>	<p>RQ1, RQ2, RQ4</p>	<p>Using a Critical Incident question (Flanagan, 1954), this question is aimed at generating a narrative that includes the participants' actions, motivations, and challenges in supporting their children in school.</p>
<p>What resources have been helpful to you in supporting your child's academic development (workshops for parents, online, tutoring, etc)?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How did you learn about these resources?</li> <li>b. What steps did you take to secure them?</li> </ol>	<p>RQ2, RQ3, RQ4</p>	<p>Findings from an earlier study indicate substantial effort taken by Hispanic immigrant parents to secure resources (tutoring, computer access) to support their student (Tovar, 2014). This question provides opportunity to explore internal and external factors influencing the ability to secure helpful resources.</p>
<p>Let's talk a little about your child(ren)'s school(s).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What do you like and dislike about it?</li> <li>b. When you enter the school, who helps you with any questions that you have?</li> <li>c. Who else do you talk to?</li> <li>d. What do you do to communicate with people who don't speak Spanish?</li> </ol>	<p>RQ1, RQ3, RQ4</p>	<p>Prior researchers have identified between-group variance in how school culture and environment is perceived (e.g. Carreón, Drake, &amp; Barton, 2005; Turney &amp; Kao, 2009). In an earlier study, findings indicated interactions between school staff and Hispanic immigrant parents that fostered or hampered efforts to establish relationships (Tovar, 2014). This question aims to build on prior research by asking about salient features of the school and patterns of interaction that may impact school involvement.</p>

Table 1 continued

<p>Now let's talk about your experiences in your child(ren)'s school. Here is a list of different activities or events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend a parent/teacher conference</li> <li>• Volunteer in the classroom</li> <li>• Attend a parent/teacher association meeting</li> <li>• Attend a special event (e.g., science fair, school play, holiday party, sports game, school club meeting, student presentation in the classroom)</li> </ul> <p>Since the start of this school year, which (if any) have you participated in? How did you learn about this activity? Tell me about your decision to (or not to) attend and (if applicable) your time participating in this activity. (Probe for thoughts, feelings, events, and interactions with teachers, administration, other parents and support personnel)</p>	<p>RQ1, RQ3, RQ4</p>	<p>There is limited information in the research literature on the dynamic, bi-directional processes through which school variables interact with personal characteristics to create the existing formal school involvement picture with Hispanic immigrant parents, particularly those with Spanish language dominance, having less formal school involvement than other ethnic groups. These processes are explored through this question.</p>
<p>When thinking about your children and their education, what is most important to you?</p>	<p>RQ1</p>	<p>Internal factors such as values and beliefs are posited to influence behavior (Bronfenbrenner &amp; Ceci, 1994). This question explores participant values about education.</p>

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Clandinin (2007) recommends that interviews end with the equivalent of a debriefing. Recognizing the importance of closure to a conversation in which the participant may have revealed emotion-laden experiences, the last question is “*How was it for you to participate in this interview?*”

### **Field Notes**

Field notes in qualitative research are important tools to capture observations of people, places, and interactions that might otherwise get lost in the research process (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Field notes provide space for the indication of voice tone and environmental conditions that can impact or characterize the conversation between the researcher and participant, as well as provide important context useful in exploring the meaning given by the participant to certain events and interactions. For this study, a field guide was developed to guide the recounting of environmental, interpersonal, and reflexive details that transpired during the collection of data (Appendix D). After each interview and informal interaction with the participants, the researcher recorded salient observations into a log of field notes.

### **Documents**

Chase (2005) stated that researchers need to know the “parameters of the story that others similarly situated could tell so as to invite this person’s story” (p. 662). In developing a contextual understanding of the participants’ narratives, the researcher reviewed school district, school, and community information available online and in public spaces (e.g., public libraries, community centers) for data related to parent involvement, English Learner support, and school and community culture. These documents included: district websites

from each setting, several school websites from each setting, hand-outs provided during Hispanic parent events attended by the researcher during the data collection period, community information from each setting, and Spanish-language community newspapers available in public libraries. A list of documents that were reviewed is included in Appendix F. These documents were reviewed to identify school events, information relevant to parent involvement, and community information thereby providing a means for triangulation of data collected through interviews and contextual information about the site. A document review guide (Appendix G) provided structure for the document review.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative analysis is the systematic process of organizing, making sense of, and representing the data generated through the course of the study (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the primary sources of data were the semi-structured interviews and demographic questionnaires conducted with all participants. Data from other sources (field notes and documents) were used to triangulate interview data. This other data also provided context and aided the researcher in analyzing the personal accounts generated through this narrative study. The data from demographic surveys were coded and analyzed in conjunction with the interview data. The online and hard copy documents were reviewed for parental involvement information (e.g., events at schools, parent information sessions, information about parent-teacher association activity) thereby serving to triangulate interview data.

Analytic memos that detailed ongoing researcher reflexivity, documented emergent themes and concepts, and described procedural decisions were maintained throughout,

(Saldaña, 2013). These memos were discussed with peers through peer review, and reviewed and updated during the data analysis process.

Data from interviews, field notes, demographic questionnaires, memos, and document review were stored on a password protected computer storage drive. Interview and demographic questionnaire data were organized and coded using NVivo. Data from each participant source were labeled utilizing pseudonyms with date and type of encounter specified (e.g., initial contact, interview).

Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) recommend an analysis process that occurs concurrently with data collection. For this study, individual transcriptions were read first while listening to the oral recording in order to locate the voice within the narrative and understand the overall shape of the narrative (Chase, 2004). Following this initial review, each narrative was analyzed textually for broad storyline episodes such as turning points and epiphanies (Riessman, 2008). Introductory quotations for the participants' individual narratives were also identified. These quotations were evaluated as indicative of the values about education that the participant held, and were used to set the tone for each individual narrative.

Texts from interviews and demographic questionnaires were reviewed line-by-line. Data were coded in two major stages: First Cycle and Second Cycle (Saldaña, 2013). First Cycle coding is a way to initially condense data through the assignment of a code to a significant segment of data. In the Second Cycle of coding, patterns and interrelationships between codes are identified in order to cluster codes into categories or themes.

Multiple approaches of coding can be used in First Cycle coding, depending on the function and purpose (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2013). An open coding process was followed during the first cycle where descriptive phrases and/or words were assigned to segments of data. Through use of gerunds, process coding was utilized to connote action and activity describing Hispanic immigrant parent involvement. First Cycle coding also incorporated initial codes derived from the conceptual framework and research questions of this study (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Examples of codes from the initial list are: relationship with teachers, communication with school, communication with children, school policies, beliefs about education, language ability, and work schedule.

Once the First Cycle coding was complete, Second Cycle coding was done to group the codes into categories relevant to each research question. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify themes relevant to each research question. Throughout the analysis, a comparative approach was used where the researcher considered how each segment compared or contrasted to corresponding segments in narratives of other participants.

Consistent with narrative inquiry, efforts to preserve sequence within narratives were made while larger patterns and meaning were explored within the narrative segments and categories (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008). Charmaz (2005) asserts that “no analysis is neutral—despite research analysts’ claims of neutrality...What we know shapes, but does not necessarily determine, what we ‘find’” (p. 511). By providing extensive quotations from the participants’ stories in the presentation of data, room for the reader’s alternative interpretations of the data was made (Chase, 2005).

### **Establishing Trustworthiness**

At the heart of any study lies the question of whether the study is “believable, accurate and plausible” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p.78). Within narrative studies such as this one, two levels of trustworthiness demand attention: whether the story of the participants is represented accurately, and whether the analysis is valid (Riessman, 2008). Ultimately, the validity of the study must be such that the implications of the study are backed by rigorously identified conclusions (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). This section describes the strategies that were used to establish trustworthiness.

Validation in qualitative research is the process of documenting and establishing the accuracy or trustworthiness of a study (Creswell, 2013). The use of multiple strategies is important in establishing validity. For this study, the following strategies were used.

- *Prolonged engagement* and persistent observation, as described by Creswell (2013), includes learning the culture, building trust with the participants, and long-term contact with the people involved in the study. Through personal, volunteer, and professional initiatives, the researcher continues to demonstrate her commitment to and maintain contact with the Hispanic population at the local level. Considerable attention was given in each interview to establish rapport and build trust utilizing an interview style honed by the researcher’s personal and professional experience related to Hispanic cultures.
- Through *triangulation*, different methods or sources of data are used to confirm the emerging findings and search for convergence in themes or perspective

(Creswell, 2013; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In the current study, data from interviews, demographic questionnaires, field notes, and documents were triangulated.

- *Peer review*, important in “keeping the researcher honest” through asking hard questions and debriefings was utilized (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Peers were asked to comment on the findings as they emerged. Peers included participants in a dissertation writing group that met monthly, counselors who worked with Hispanic immigrant families, and another doctoral student trained in qualitative methodology. Data generated through memos were shared with peers while discussing findings.
- Utilizing a *comparative approach* attending to the similarities and differences among personal narratives provided further grounding for validity (Reismann, 2008).
- The process of member checking also was utilized in this study. Member checking, or seeking the participants’ views of the data, analyses or interpretations, is often recognized as a critical validation strategy (Creswell, 2013). Because of concerns for confidentiality articulated by the IRB, the researcher maintained data generated from the interviews (i.e., transcriptions) separate from participant contact information. Thus, the member checking process was revised from that of reviewing the interview transcript to providing the participants the opportunity to elaborate on or modify interview data as well

as comment on emerging analysis. Nine participants participated in the member checking process. Telephone messages were left with other participants encouraging them to call the researcher for the purpose of member checking.

- Trustworthiness related to qualitative research in a second language requires the ability to effectively communicate with and understand the participants. The researcher's second language skills were developed through four years of living in Mexico, formal and informal language study in Mexico, continued exposure to Spanish in a bilingual, bicultural household, and continued professional work in a behavioral health clinic that serves the local Latino community.

### **Reliability**

Issues of internal and external consistency continue to be of concern and relevance to qualitative researchers (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Observations and interviews were documented using written field notes and audio-recordings. Two audio-recorders were utilized during each interview. Careful documentation of processes used to collect and interpret data (an audit trail) was utilized to increase reliability (Reismann, 2008). Memoing was used to keep track of the evolution of findings. In addition, the researcher's position is described below in a separate section.

### **Transferability**

Considerable attention in quantitative research is given to the concept of external validity, or the generalizability of a study to the sample's or other populations. Qualitative studies, which typically rely on data derived from small samples, demand attention to a

different evaluative attribute called transferability. By providing rich, thick descriptions of the theme, context, or case, readers can determine whether there are sufficient shared characteristics to transfer the findings to other settings (Creswell, 2013; Riesmann, 2008). Rich, thick descriptions are utilized in the subsequent chapters of this current study in order to provide substantial detail for transferability. Whenever verbatim quotations are used, they are translated into English within the chapter unless the quotations are sufficiently short (less than five words) or unless they serve as introductions for individual narratives. The verbatim quotations in the original Spanish language are provided with their English translations in Table 2 (see Appendix E). A multi-setting design and maximum variation sampling procedure are two additional ways that transferability was addressed in this study.

### **Researcher Role and Reflexivity**

Narrative inquiry recognizes and emphasizes that researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and their participants' stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In qualitative studies, the researcher is often the primary research instrument used in collecting data, analyzing data, and offering interpretations and conclusions based upon the findings. Recognizing the integral role that researchers play in the co-construction of the participants' narratives and preservation of the participants' voices, the story of the researcher must also be known (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2004).

The researcher's interest in this topic developed out of a long-time interest in issues related to acculturation and immigration. Applying these interests to the specific context of schools stemmed from experiences during her first child's kindergarten year. During this

year, books were sent home with each kindergartener; families were directed to read aloud with their child in the effort to increase literacy. Despite a large number of Hispanic families in this school, the Spanish and bilingual book collection was limited. To the researcher's bicultural family (her husband identifies as Mexican and she as Polish/German-American), this characterized one more challenge in maintaining their child's paternal language and cultivating their child's bilingual literacy. To other families where the parents' English literacy was limited, the researcher wondered how this weekly reading assignment impacted other families' homework experiences, their family dynamics, and their relationship with the Spanish language.

Also during that formative year in the researcher's family, the process of student assignment in the district changed significantly and suddenly. With English as her first language and the privilege of general institutional knowledge about schools in the United States, it took effort to understand procedures, policies, and protocol impacting her own children's academic experience at the school-level up to the district and state levels. Prior social justice values that had been strengthened through four years of immersion in a country with high rates of poverty and regions with limited economic opportunity (Mexico) had attuned her attention to issues related to acculturation and immigration in the United States. Her personal experiences as a parent converged with these values thus influencing her interest in the topic of this current study. During diverse doctoral counseling internships at a large public high school and at a behavioral health clinic serving the local Latino community,

direct and indirect interactions with Hispanic immigrant families stirred up different questions that shape this study.

As this section was prepared, the researcher recalled the statement from Riessman (2008) that “narrative truths are always partial-committed and incomplete” (p. 186). Several details of her story that interact with and impact her role as a listener and questioner are provided above. Ultimately, the researcher’s own narrative as it relates to the participants and this topic continues to unfold throughout this study and thereafter.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Qualitative research demands attention to the ethical issues that surface in all steps of the process. For the current study, several issues are salient. When working with vulnerable populations, including those which are marginalized through citizenship, language, minority, or other statuses, researchers need to be sensitive to the potential for further marginalizing the people under study. Consideration of how publication of the study could affect the participants’ reputations or relationship with authorities must also be taken (Clandinin, 2007; Creswell, 2013). Citizenship status was not solicited; however citizenship status often permeates the lived experience of those whose status is in question (Lahmen, Mendoza, Rodriguez & Schwartz, 2011). Measures were put in place to protect confidentiality of the participants; as part of the informed consent process, participants were informed in oral and written form of these measures and limitations.

Maintaining sensitivity to the potential vulnerability of the participants is important. At the same time, recognition is also important of the capability and competence of

participants who may otherwise be further “othered” through characterizing their status and selves as solely vulnerable (Lahmen, Mendoza, Rodriguez & Schwartz, 2011). The researcher for this present study recognizes her responsibility in treating the participants sensitively during the data collection and subsequent stages of this study, including protecting the confidentiality of participants. Concurrently, recognition is made of the multifaceted dimensions of the participants who in one context are vulnerable, and in other contexts (i.e., family, local Latino community) hold power.

During the interview process, a hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is often established (Creswell, 2013). This occurs despite the reality that the interviewee is truly the expert and the researcher is the learner (Clandinin, 2007). Sensitivity to this potential power imbalance requires avoiding leading questions and maintaining trustworthiness with the participants. Additional measures taken to address the potential power imbalance in the current study was the integration of a resource sharing mechanism through the creation of a resource document. Through this document of *consejos*/advice the researcher provided detail on some of the resources and strategies that participants discussed during their interviews. In this way, the researcher worked toward framing the participants as the experts.

With a narrative inquiry, participants are asked to share their perceptions, stories and time. Important to consider are issues of reciprocity, or what they will gain from their participation in this study (Creswell, 2013). Through informed consent, the participants were told of the potential indirect benefits of their participation in this study. Participants also

received compensation for their time in the form of a gift card for a local grocery store.

Chase (2004) asserted the importance of considering the role of narratives and narrative research in impacting small-scale, localized social change. Reciprocity is also a factor in considerations of how the findings from this study will be shared with local and national audiences.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the formal (school-based) and informal (home-based) school involvement experiences of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency and to understand the personal, environmental, and social factors that influence the school involvement process of these same parents. Using a narrative inquiry methodology, the following research questions were addressed.

1. What are the social, environmental, and personal factors that influence formal and informal school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents?
2. How do Hispanic immigrant parents support their children's academic development through informal parent involvement?
3. How do school personnel, policies, and practices influence school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents?
4. How do Hispanic immigrant parents work through language differences in supporting their children's academic development?

Bioecological Systems Theory provided the theoretical framework for this study. Maximum variation sampling were used to generate a sample of 12 Hispanic immigrant parents from two settings (rural and urban) in a southeast state in the United States. Twelve semi-structured interviews served as the primary source of data. Data were analyzed using the Two Cycle coding process recommended by Saldaña (2013).

This chapter, organized in four sections, describes the findings of the study. The first section contains a demographic overview of the participants. Individual narratives from each

participant are included in the second section. Within the third section, overarching themes from the individual narratives are described. The findings as they relate to each research question make up the final section of the chapter. With the exception of introductory quotations that are included with each individual narrative and short quotations (i.e., less than five words), only the English translations of quotations are included in the chapter text. This choice was made for readability purposes. The verbatim quotations alongside their English translations are found in Table 2 (Appendix E).

### **Demographic Overview of the Participants**

Three men and nine women participated in this study. All participants were born outside of the United States. The majority of participants identified Mexico as their country of origin. With ages ranging from 29 to 47, the average age of the participants was 39. All but one of the participants had lived in the United States for more than 10 years. The majority of the participants described their marital status as married or with a partner (domestic partnership). The participants had a range of educational and vocational experiences. Participant demographics are provided in Table 3 below. Pseudonyms for each participant are used in this study.

Table 3  
*Participant Demographics*

	Age	Country of Origin	Years in U.S.	Occupation	Attained education	Marital Status
Adalberto	46	Dom. Republic	0.5	seeking work	college	divorced
Adilene	29	Mexico	15	homemaker	9th grade	domestic partnership
Antonio	46	Mexico	20	disabled	6th grade	married
Elena	42	Mexico	15	food service	some college	single
Eliana	45	Mexico	15	family business	12th grade	married
Estrella	34	Mexico	24	homemaker	9th grade	married
Luz	34	Mexico	20	cleaning/food service	4th grade	domestic partnership
Magali	34	Panama	19	family business	some college	married
Mariela	37	Mexico	14	food service	6th grade	married
Marisol	45	Mexico	19	cleaning	6th grade	married
Mary	35	El Salvador	17	cleaning	7th grade	married
Memo	47	Mexico	16	family business	6th grade	married

The above table provides descriptive information about the participants. Also relevant to this study is information about the participants' children. The participants provided basic information about the grade levels of their children, as shown in Table 4. All participants had at least one child who was enrolled in middle school at the time of the interview. Seven of the participants also had one or more children enrolled in elementary school. Two of the participants had adult children, and four of the participants also had children who were preschool age or younger.

Table 4  
*Grade Levels of Participants' Children*

	Children by grade level				
	Pre-K or earlier	K-5	Middle School	High school	Adult children
Adalberto	0	0	1	0	2
Adilene	1	4	1	0	0
Antonio	1	0	1	0	3
Elena	0	0	1	0	0
Eliana	0	2	1	0	0
Estrella	1	1	2	0	0
Luz	0	2	1	0	0
Magali	0	1	1	1	0
Mariela	0	1	2	0	0
Marisol	0	0	1	1	0
Mary	2	0	1	0	0
Memo	0	2	1	0	0

### Individual Narratives

This section includes individual narratives of the participants. Within each of the narratives, aspects of the following are provided: the participant's immigration story, educational background, work history, familial context, language story (how English was learned and currently used), and critical incidents involving the participant's child or children. Each of these components informs the data analysis pertaining to the research questions. A quotation from the participant serves as introduction of each narrative. These quotations were chosen because they were representative of the values about education that the participants held; the words were elicited through use of a direct question of what is most important about education. The individual narratives described below emerged from data

from interviews, demographic questionnaires, and post-interview field notes. An analysis of the narratives in aggregate form as relating to each research question follows this section of individual narratives.

### **Adalberto**

*La mejor riqueza que tiene el ser humano es lo que aprende, porque todo lo otro desaparece./* The best treasure of humanity is that of learning, because all the rest disappears.

Adalberto came to the United States from the Dominican Republic less than one year ago, moving to North Carolina to be close to his children and because he felt the area was peaceful. Having worked in a multinational corporation for 16 years prior, he had been in the United States other previous times for vacation.

Because of health problems, Adalberto's work options were limited. Thus, he focused on helping his daughters as his ex-wife worked. His time became particularly important for his youngest daughter who had struggled with adapting to a new culture and school system. After learning of her poor grades in math, Adalberto bought a chalkboard and started giving her math lessons every day. With efforts from the family, the school and, above all, his daughter, Adalberto classified the process of adaptation for his daughter as "*bien avanzado/* well advanced." He verbalized optimism about the year ahead.

Having never considered moving to the United States before as he didn't like the frenetic pace of the large cities that he tended to visit, Adalberto stated he hadn't focused much on deepening his knowledge of English. He classified his skills as "*medio/*medium" with his ability to read higher than other English language abilities. He was spending several

hours each day improving his English skills using self-study programs he had purchased. With increased English language facility, he expected to be able to better integrate into society, including increasing involvement in his daughter's school.

Adalberto spoke at length about the importance of education. He made efforts to read a lot, and tried to have his daughter read too. Reading and developing one's intellect is "*la base del ser humano*/the base of being human," he commented. He went on to state "when there is an earthquake, people flee and leave their home, leave their car, leave their money, and only want to save their life. With their life comes their intellect, that which they have learned." Adalberto considered participating in the interview as a learning experience for him, and looked forward to returning home to talk to his youngest daughter about the experience.

### **Adilene**

*La escuela te sirve porque es tu futuro./* School serves you because it is your future.

Having grown up in the large capital city of Mexico, Adilene came to the United States when she was 14, arriving first in California. She completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Mexico.

With children ranging from 18 months to 12 years old, her narrative was colored by worry about her children and health concerns in her family. Some of her children had received support services because of learning and other difficulties. One of her children had been bullied and physically assaulted by another student. At the time of the interview, she noted concern about a letter she had received from the school regarding unexcused absences of one of her children.

Adilene's partner and children's father worked full-time in a construction-related position. Adilene did not work outside the house and lacked her own transportation. She described her English skills as poor, with her ability to understand spoken English a little higher than her ability to read, speak, or write. Her close support system included family members and neighbors; at the time the interview was scheduled to start, she was helping one neighbor color her hair. Involvement in a church community reportedly had a great impact on her family, increasing their cohesion as a family and teaching them to respect others.

She expressed concern about the length of the interview as she had to go visit a family member who was in the hospital. Her children came in and out of the room while the interview was conducted, with the eldest occasionally helping Adilene recall details and the youngest regularly expressing his wishes for her attention.

As the interview drew to a close, she expressed what participation had meant to her. She had felt as if someone was listening and was interested in her opinion - "*que cuento/that I matter.*"

### **Antonio**

*Sin el estudio, uno no es nadie./ Without an education, you are nobody.*

Antonio, now in his mid-forties, grew up in a rural area in central Mexico. He and his 15 siblings had to walk more than an hour each way to attend elementary school. "*Con lo poquito que tenían /with the little they had,*" his mother prepared them breakfast each morning before they departed for school. On their way to and from school, the children took

turns riding a small bicycle they had. Antonio completed elementary school. He was thankful that he learned to read.

First coming to United States in his mid-teens, Antonio worked as a field laborer. He moved around a lot until settling down once he married and had children. Antonio's work status changed when, in 2001, he had an accident and became disabled. At the time of the interview, he was the primary caretaker of his younger children while his spouse worked full-time.

Antonio and his wife benefitted from the help and guidance of a good friend who they had met while Antonio was laboring in the fields. Without her guidance he thought maybe their life would have been different. Although she died six years ago, her husband still occasionally helped Antonio when he needed support with communication or navigating systems.

Antonio learned English on the job. Eventually, he purchased a DVD home study program to help him learn. Antonio described his English skills as intermediate noting a language barrier that occasionally impacted his communication with his children.

Antonio agreed to participate in the study because of his interest in the topic, his belief that parents – especially Hispanic fathers – should participate in their children's schools and his hope that he had something that he could add.

### **Elena**

*Que nunca se rinda./* Never give up.

Growing up in the capital city of Mexico, Elena's mother always encouraged her to go to school. In fact, Elena described her extended family as one that valued education

resulting in almost all of her cousins having professional careers. Her father had a different view; he, in contrast, questioned the value of school if one was just going to marry, have children, and not work. Elena completed one year of university in her hometown, but left her studies because, “as you know, it is difficult to study and work.”

As a single mother, Elena had grown accustomed to working two jobs for most of her 15 years in the United States. Working only one job at the time of the interview, she finally had time for formal study again. She was taking an English class at the local community college.

Elena and her daughter had also moved around a lot; changing homes always meant different schools for her daughter. In fact, her daughter had attended a year of school in Mexico. With different school experiences, Elena had the opportunity to reflect on cultural differences. She believed that, despite their problems (such as student drug use), schools in the United States were more organized and had a higher academic level.

Elena’s daughter went through a time when she didn’t want to go to school. Concerned about whether someone was bothering her daughter, Elena finally learned that her daughter was scared of a teacher who she characterized as particularly strict. Elena empathized with her daughter but continued to push her, setting expectations about homework and grades. Elena also advocated for formal tutoring through the school for her daughter. She had regular contact with the school counselor and with her daughter’s teachers. Wanting to support her daughter’s career interests, Elena had also made efforts to get her involved in relevant volunteer activities.

Elena spoke appreciatively about participating in the interview at the end, stating “*me gusta que nos tomen en cuenta/ I like it that we are taken into account.*” Her participation in the interview stemmed from her own curiosity, and from a desire to help.

### **Eliana**

*No puede quedarse sólo a la mitad del camino porque se está cerrando sus posibilidades a su futuro...Porque no puede pasar como nada, tiene que ser algo, alguien. Dejar una huella en la comunidad en la que viven./ One can't stop in the middle of one's journey because that would be closing off your future possibilities...Because you can't get through as nothing, you have to be something, someone. You have to leave a footprint in the community where you live.*

With early dreams of becoming a lawyer, Eliana came to the United States when she was 30 years old having promised her mother that she would return to the small town in the southeastern state of Mexico where she grew up. She hadn't returned yet. In the meantime, her perspective had changed, incorporating, among other things, different views about gender roles in raising a family.

With a high school education focused on business administration, Eliana worked in small businesses including the one that she ran with her husband. Eliana and her husband divided work and family tasks, although she was the one who usually helped their children with homework. Eliana regularly sought out educational resources from area stores to compliment what her children received in school. Moreover, she would review their educational materials to compliment her own learning, especially in the development of her

English vocabulary. Eliana first learned “*los basicsos/the basics*” of English in middle school stating that English had always been something she liked. She had taken classes in computation and English in the community, and attended parenting workshops given by her church. She was active in a local church, and would regularly turn to her faith for guidance and help. Eliana encouraged her children in their own faith development and described occasions when their faith helped them get through difficult times.

Eliana was committed to maintaining the primacy of spoken Spanish within their household. She believed bilingualism and being able to speak Spanish as well as English would help her children in their careers. The lack of programs in the schools that helped Hispanic children “feel that Spanish is an important language that one needed to know” was one of a few areas of dissatisfaction that she expressed about area schools.

Eliana had volunteered in her children’s schools, and occasionally visited them at lunchtime. Eliana’s daughters were doing well in school, with her eldest taking advanced classes. Yet Eliana spoke passionately about a deficiency of programs that helped students who were at risk of dropping out of school. She came to participate in the interview in part because of her interest in learning new ways of developing programs and involving parents in education.

### **Estrella**

*Ponte a estudiar./ Study!*

Originally from Mexico, Estrella had been in the United States for 14 years. With four children, including one not in school yet, Estrella saw her primary work as that of homemaker. She also occasionally took care of friends’ children.

On the weekends, the family sometimes would go together to look for items to purchase and then sell at her husband's booth in the local flea market. Estrella's children were around at the time of the interview, and her oldest one occasionally added input. Estrella requested that the interview not be recorded as she felt uncomfortable with the voice recorder on.

At the time of the interview, Estrella characterized her English abilities as "*mal/bad*." When needing to go to her children's schools, she would often bring someone who could interpret for her or she would talk with an administrator at the school who spoke Spanish. Her daughter interjected during this part of the interview reminding her mother that she could speak some English, to which her mother responded "*si, los basicos. Tiene que./Yes, the basics. One has to.*"

Overall, Estrella said she liked her children's schools. Estrella briefly mentioned an incident at school that resulted in her daughter getting suspended. She verbalized frustration about the outcome, but stated "*reglas son reglas/rules are rules*" and they can't be changed. This sentiment was reiterated when mentioning her disagreement with another school rule that she believed was bad for her children's health.

Estrella enjoyed attending dances or concerts in which her children participated at school. While describing these events, she also spoke of how different these events were in Mexico. She described how in Mexico all the parents sat together and talked. In contrast, in the United States there was less socializing and more confrontation if one parent blocked another's view.

As Estrella considered her children's education, she commented on conversations she had with her son about studying. She would emphasize how finishing school would help him have a better job – one that wouldn't involve being out in the sun as much as his father. Education was more than academic studies to Estrella. She wanted her children to respect others so others respect them.

### **Luz**

*El estudio siempre lo llevas contigo, vayas a donde vayas, llegues a donde llegues, siempre te van a pedir tus estudios: hasta qué grado llegaste... ese es el nivel de trabajo que te van a dar..* You'll always carry your education with you, no matter where you go, wherever you arrive, they will always ask about your education and what grade you got to... This is the level of work that they're going to give you.

Luz came to the United States at age 14. She had wanted to finish her studies in Mexico but for Luz parents, time studying was time lost. They came from a very low socio-economic level and Luz's cousin presented the family with the opportunity to bring her to the U.S. to work. At one point, a family for whom Luz worked offered to send her to school, however her cousin never provided the needed permission to do so. "When you have a person who... doesn't support you... who takes away your dreams, you will never be able to better yourself" Luz commented. Since this early time, she has dedicated herself to work.

Although she used to be shyer, Luz came to describe herself as risk taker. She wanted to do more things including study again. She took three months of English classes when she was able to accommodate the schedule between "*dos turnos*/two shifts" of work.

She also learned through a self-study program that her partner bought and through an online course when they had internet access at home. She said that she was now able to understand and say some English words. For her, it was easier to learn in a formal class.

Luz met her partner at age 18, and they had their first child when she was 21 purposefully waiting a few years to start a family. Luz described her life as one of work where she never had a childhood or adolescence, yet she didn't regret some developments in her life. Her family brought her purpose and meaning; informed by thoughts of the person that she "*no pud(o) ser/couldn't be*" she tried to give to her children what her parents were not able to give her. She worked two jobs, thus her time at home was limited. She stated her work options were impacted by her undocumented immigration status.

### **Magali**

*Si quiere llegar lejos, el estudio es el éxito./ Studying is the key to success and going far.*

Magali lived the majority of her childhood in Mexico until immigrating to the United States at age 15. She completed high school and two years of community college in the United States. Magali was married and had three children ranging from early elementary to high school age. She worked full-time in a small business that she ran with a family member.

At the start of the interview, Magali inquired about the process of obtaining a Ph.D. Her own educational aspirations had been impacted by difficulties with English and financial concerns. After starting community college, she had dropped out in the first semester

frustrated by difficulties with the written material as well as the prospect of having to take remedial classes in English. Encouraged by her husband and motivated by her drive to learn, she returned to school and earned an Associate's degree in Business Administration. She spoke animatedly about others who also had considered higher education options, but were not able to obtain financial aid because of documentation status.

Magali had considered it important to teach her children to read in Spanish at an early age. Having had more time at home with her older two children, she spoke of how being able to read in Spanish helped them sound out some words in English. At times, Magali felt guilty about not spending as much time with her youngest child because of work and household responsibilities.

Magali's interview was interspersed by English phrases and words. Her descriptions of her own struggles with comprehension and production of academic written English showed a keen awareness of the impact of second language development on the facility of completing school, as well as on the existing assumptions about the primacy of English. She expressed her concern about the decreased availability of after-school academic support programs noting the particular impact on Hispanic families, including hers, where the parents had difficulties with English.

In Magali's family, the children knew the importance of earning good grades. Magali spoke of conversations she had with her children about how getting good grades could make it possible for the children to secure a scholarship and be able to go to college. Although her

children didn't know yet what they wanted to pursue as occupations, Magali encouraged them to study in order to get good jobs.

### **Mariela**

*El estudio que tu tengas es tuyo./* Your education is yours.

Originally from the south of Mexico, Mariela had lived in the United States for over 10 years. She had moved back to Mexico for an extended amount of time during at least one occasion. In her interview, Mariela expressed concern about the impact that these extended stays in Mexico had on her son's language development and general adjustment citing behavioral problems he was having in school.

Mariela requested that the interview be kept short so she could attend the soccer game of one of children. Her kindergartner accompanied her to the interview and quietly looked at books while the interview was conducted.

Mariela described feelings of confusion about recent events in her son's middle school. He had been suspended more than once, and each time she struggled with knowing whose side of the story, her son's or that of the school administrator, to believe. Adding to this confusion was her frustration about the use of suspensions to discipline a child. Noting that her child didn't enjoy school, the suspensions drew the comment "*pues, feliz para él/* well, happy for him (he is happy)" as he wouldn't have to attend school. Informed that there are no other mechanisms for discipline in the state, Mariela was left to try to convince her son that school really was important for him, that the "*estudio que (él tiene es suyo)/* Education is his."

Mariela described her ability to read English as “six” (on a scale of 1-10) and her ability to write “about a two.” She was able to speak and understand English, but not well. As their family did not have internet access in their home, Mariela would bring her children to the library when needed to complete homework. Mariela’s other two children were doing well in school. Drawn to participate in this study because of her interest in learning ways to be able to support and guide her children in their “*camino adelante*/journey ahead” so they would not abandon their studies, she found time in her busy work schedule to do so.

### **Marisol**

*Que escojan lo que a ellos les gusta, que luchan por sus sueños, que se pongan metas, que las cosas no son fáciles, que tiene que luchar por lo que quiere./* It’s important that they choose what they like, that they fight for their dreams, that they have goals...that they know that things aren’t easy, and that they have to fight for what they want.

Arriving to the United States in her late teens, Marisol lived in several other states before settling down in North Carolina. The cost of living in North Carolina was attractive to her, as was the state’s natural environment that reminded her of the region in Mexico where she grew up. Marisol worked part-time, spending the other parts of the day preparing food, taking care of household tasks and occasionally walking. Her husband’s construction job took him to worksites often in different states, thus it was rare that he was home during the week. Weekends were family time, eating, praying, and going to church together. Every day Marisol tried to have “*comida*” (a mid-afternoon meal) prepared for her children when they arrived home from school hungry.

Marisol characterized her English skills as intermediate in speaking and understanding spoken English. She could read rather well, however her ability to write in English was lacking. She learned English through attending Saturday classes at a language program in a different state, paying for her classes on her own. Practicing English with her boss and fellow workers was what helped her the most, she said.

Marisol's faith came up several times during the interview. She talked with her children about their faith, and encouraged them to entrust God with guiding them in important decisions and through difficult times. The family prayed and attended church together. Marisol wondered why schools discouraged children from expressing their faith.

Marisol described two incidents in which her children were physically hurt by other children. In each case, she found out about the incidents through friends of her children – a fact that pained her as she valued family communication. Marisol was able to work through these critical incidents with support of the school administrators. Her oldest child helped her with email correspondence, but she was able to manage verbal interactions on her own.

Marisol was one of three participants who engaged in volunteer activities within her children's school. She had helped shelve books in the school library and also had helped out at the school's fundraising run. She spoke about how she felt "*fuera del grupo*/outside the group" while volunteering at the run because "all the others spoke English well and what I spoke, was just a little." This feeling of discomfort wouldn't dissuade her from volunteering again, she asserted, however because of commitments she wasn't currently volunteering. At

the end of the interview, she expressed gratitude for “*tomar(le) en cuenta*/taking (her) into account.”

**Mary**

*Que aprenda lo más que pueda./ Learn as much as you can.*

Mary came to the United States from El Salvador. Working two cleaning jobs, Mary reported little time to do anything else but work. She suffered an accident earlier in her life that impacted her outlook tremendously. Her husband, also from El Salvador, worked in construction. She was accompanied to the interview by her three children; the eldest kept an eye on the pre-school aged children while Mary talked.

Through a referral from her children’s pediatrician, Mary had learned about the Head Start program for her youngest two children. She spoke with pride about the children’s increased ability to communicate in English because of their involvement in Head Start. She also liked the colorful drawings that the children regularly brought home. That the school system provided transportation to and from the Head Start program made it possible for her children to participate; they were cared for by a neighbor during the day.

Mary stated that she did little to support her children’s academic development, as her English skills were very limited. The middle-school aged daughter hadn’t had problems in school, and was able to advance academically with the initial support of the English-as-a-Second-Language program and the occasional help of Mary’s brother-in-law. Mary attended school conferences each year, although that year none had been scheduled. In motivating her daughter, Mary stated that she tried to tell her “what happened... what one suffers and what one has suffered in order to come here.”

## Memo

*La educación es la base del ser humano, para que crezca para que se desarrolle./*

Education is the base of being human, so that (humanity) grows and develops.

Enthusiastic about learning English when he first arrived in the United States in the mid-1990s, Memo went to night school for about three months. But “*(el trabajo) lo mata a uno/work kills a person,*” he stated. Working in construction, he had to get up early each morning, and had to cook for himself in the night in a house where he lived with many others. The kitchen was always occupied when he got home from work, so he had to choose between making a meal and going to school without eating.

Memo came to the United States on two previous occasions, first to earn money to pay for his mother’s cancer treatment and then to buy a truck. After the deaths of both parents, Memo’s brothers encouraged him to return to the United States once more. He then met his wife and together they made a life.

As a small business owner, he acknowledged how helpful it was that he had flexibility to his work schedule. He was able to regularly chaperone for his children’s class field trips, and attended all teacher conferences and parent meetings that he could. His wife usually was the one who helped the kids with their homework; to read and understand English he had “*estar meditando/to be meditating*” on the material before he could answer. He would participate in conferences conducted in English, but before meeting with teachers, he would formulate in his mind three or four specific questions and plan out what he would say.

Memo placed high value on spending time with his family, helping get the children ready and off to school each morning. He was active in the church, and participated in a weekly small group that supported each other's Christian living. With a family history impacted by alcoholism, Memo spoke passionately about the importance of providing a positive example for children to "*comience una generación nueva/start a new generation*" so that "*el mundo pueda cambiar/the world can change.*" He felt good about participating in the interview because he could "*expresar lo que siento/express what he felt.*"

### **Findings per Research Question**

The findings as they relate to each research question are described in this final section of the chapter and are provided in Table 5 below. To identify these themes, the texts from transcripts of interviews and oral administration of demographic questionnaires were first examined line by line. Through First Cycle coding, data were initially condensed through the assignment of a code to a segment of data. In the Second Cycle of coding, patterns and interrelationships between codes were examined in order to identify themes pertinent to each research question and then overarching themes. Data from interview transcripts and demographic questionnaires were triangulated with data from field notes and documents.

Table 5  
*Findings by Research Question*

<i>RQ#1: Social, environmental and personal factors influencing Hispanic immigrant parent involvement</i>		
Values and prioritizing	Barriers and bridges	Program/event existence
Knowledge of event	Support resources	
<i>RQ#2: Ways academic development is supported through Informal Parent Involvement</i>		
Talking to children about education	Monitoring grades	Supporting homework completion
Insuring school attendance	Supporting literacy development	
<i>RQ#3 Influence of School Personnel, Policies and Practices on School Involvement</i>		
Community	Support resources	
Accessibility	Communication	
<i>RQ#4: Working through language differences</i>		
Preparing ahead	Relying on others	Relying on self
Turning to technology	Learning English	

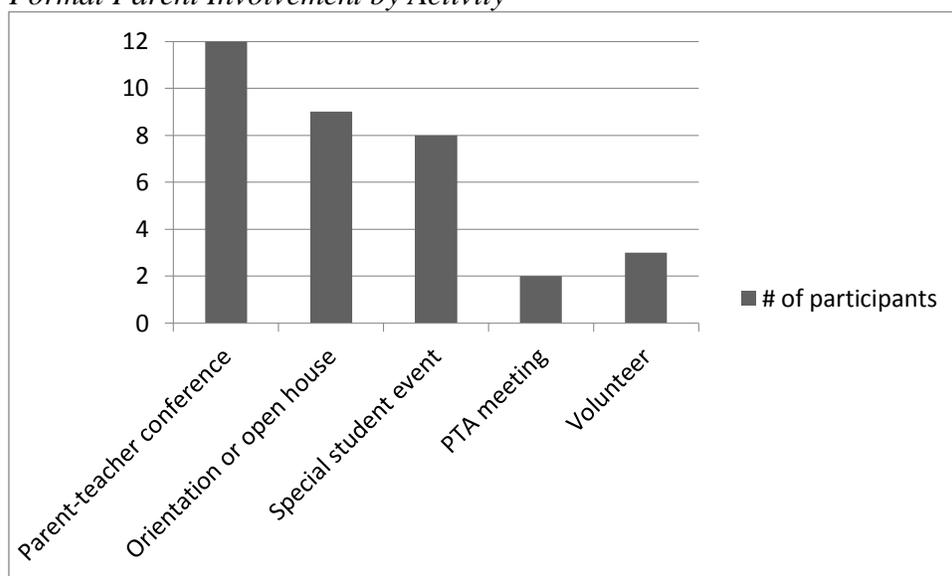
### **Research Question One: Social, Environmental, and Personal Factors Influencing Parent Involvement**

This section addresses the first research question of the study: what are the social, environmental, and personal factors that influence formal and informal school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents? Informal parent involvement is often defined as the home-based activities and behaviors utilized by parents to support their children's education (Durand, 2011; Epstein, 1995). Because this type of involvement occurs outside the school, it is often less visible than formal parent involvement and, thus, less recognized by school personnel. Formal parent involvement is considered school-based involvement of the parent

in their children's education, such as attendance at school events and direct contact with the teacher or other school personnel (Durand, 2011; Epstein, 1995).

How the parents supported their children informally through home-based activities is described in the next section of this chapter. Notably, all participants described some sort of informal parent involvement. All of the participants also had participated in some type of formal, school-based activity ranging from attending parent-teacher conferences to volunteering. Salient in the data, however, was a clear pattern of formal school involvement that differed by activity. This pattern is detailed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1  
*Formal Parent Involvement by Activity*



All the participants in the study reported participating in a conference with their children's teachers. The majority also had attended an open house or special student event (such as an awards ceremony or class concert). Three of the participants reported having volunteered, although only two of the participants did so regularly.

Several themes emerged when exploring the dynamic aspects influencing the participants' formal and informal school involvement. These themes include: values and prioritizing, program/event existence, knowledge of the event, support resources, and barriers and bridges.

**Values and prioritizing.** As evident in the introductory quotations included with individual narratives earlier in this chapter, the participants valued education. The importance they placed on their children's education was also evident in six of the participants' explanations of why they chose to participate in the current study: to learn more about ways to get involved in or support their children's education. The value that the participants placed on education was one of the factors that seemed to influence them in the many efforts to support their children's academic development through the mechanisms described later in this chapter.

The parents involved in this study indicated great concern for the welfare and futures of their children. Verbalized by many was a keen awareness of the existence of opportunities in the United States for their children to obtain a quality education and for their daughters and sons to have good professional opportunities. Antonio contrasted life in his country of origin with that in the United States, stating "so then, in Mexico you see that there are countries where it's difficult to get ahead...life is a little more complicated." He went on to talk about his wishes for his daughters, commenting "so I want them to try to achieve their goals and get ahead...that they become someone in life." Adalberto voiced a strong desire for his youngest daughter to finish school and go to college in the United States, stating "I

feel that here it is worth it. You will say, but why here and in your country, no? In my country, also, but here there are more opportunities for young people.”

The participants considered education to be critical to their children’s futures. Evident in the participants’ comments was how important their children’s education was to them. Whether this valuing stemmed from a desire to have their children integrate into society, have a better life than their own or be the best people they could be, education was something the participants sought for their children. They wanted their children to complete their studies – to, as Mariela expressed, “not leave their studies only mid-way through.”

Between work, household chores, and family care responsibilities, all the participants spoke of multiple priorities that required their attention and time. The decision to participate in a formal school activity or event required determining the value in doing so. Elena described this prioritizing stating “if it’s important, I go. I do all that is possible to be there, and when I am free, I go to whatever activity.”

The direct involvement of their children influenced levels of participation. For school events such as student concerts and recognition ceremonies, the parents spoke of going if their children were involved. Several mirrored Antonio’s comments that follow in believing their presence at student events was important: “they are happy when someone applauds for them when they receive their recognition awards...perhaps in this way they feel supported. On the other hand, if they see no one, they are going to feel bad.”

Within the group, there also were high levels of participation in parent-teacher conferences which, by nature, pertained directly to the child. Critical incidents involving

their child's behavior or well-being also elicited formal involvement of the parent, although for many of these incidents home-based resolution (e.g., conversations with the child about the situation) was tried first.

The perceived usefulness of the program or event also was found to influence involvement. Grade level orientations that took place at the beginning of the year provided the parents with the opportunity to know about rules and expectations; parents whose children attended school in the district that had these orientations generally attended these orientations.

Parents also spoke of things they had learned from teachers during conferences and from instructors of parent education programs. For example, Luz spoke of advice she had gotten from teachers about how to support her children with their homework when she didn't understand it:

In the meetings they tell us "if you don't understand or you can't or the child doesn't understand or can't do the homework, just circle the part that he doesn't understand and have him go early to get help from the teacher"...So that's what we've done.

Another parent, Elena spoke of learning different ways to support her child's career exploration. Several described parent education focused on creating a secure environment for their children. When participation helped to empower the parent, further participation was encouraged.

**Program/event existence.** As noted earlier, the nature of activity impacted parent formal school involvement. Important to note is that involvement in activity is impacted not

just by parental factors (e.g., personal choice, work schedule, knowledge about the activity). School districts and schools offer different types of programs and organize formal school involvement activities in a variety of ways, as evident in information conveyed by participants. In addition, data from interviews were triangulated with information revealed through review of various online and hard copy documents to identify the types of events and programs that were offered (see Appendix F). Parents in the urban setting of this study had access to an extensive offering of parent workshops offered by the school district that were conducted in Spanish or with Spanish interpretation. Workshop topics ranged from bullying to digital tools in the school and home. Parents in the rural setting were invited each year to formal orientations at each of their children's schools. Within this rural setting, there also were several district-wide Hispanic family events each year that included parent workshops on topics related to supporting children's education.

Schools and classrooms had different types of volunteer formats and needs. Arrangements for conferences also differed by schools, with middle schools having fewer structured opportunities for conferences with teachers. Few parents mentioned community-building activities such as school festivals taking place in schools; this reflection paralleled observations made while reviewing documents (e.g., school event information on school websites).

**Knowledge of event.** Clearly, communication to and from the school impacted the participants' formal school involvement. Communication was multi-faceted. It involved provision of information that the event or program was happening. This basic information

was provided through hard-copy documents sent home with the child, telephone calls (including automated or personal phone calls from a teacher, administrator, or person involved in parent outreach), personal notes from a teacher, or the child notifying his or her parent and encouraging involvement. It also was provided through online mechanisms, including postings on the school or district websites. Within the documents that were reviewed, information about events that were specifically targeted for Hispanic families was written in Spanish and English.

Communication also involved relaying information about the school or teacher expectations of a parent participating in an event. For example, when discussing conferences with teachers, some of the participants spoke of conferences that they were asked to attend because of student performance or behavior. Other participants mentioned conferences that were scheduled as part of general protocol, for example, as Eliana described, to see their children's "*progreso y avances*/progress and how much they are advancing." The parents' participation was expected, and parents made time to do so.

Communication involves conveying the value or importance of participation in an event. Within documents from schools and school districts the concept of volunteering within the school was more often communicated as an opportunity for the parent than a need of the school. The conveyance of need seemed to be important in order to elicit involvement. As Marisol expressed:

If there is something I can help or do for the students – because I am also a mother – well, I am happy to do it. To help the other parents, and to help my own children. To help them, yes.

Memo, who volunteered on field trips within his children's schools, spoke explicitly of his understanding that the teachers needed more help, stating "But yes, I feel that teachers also need help. I saw it well, I analyzed it. They need help because the kids always are wanting to walk all over, so one has to be aware in helping them.

Finally, communication involved clear information about what the particular organization, such as a parent-teacher association (PTA), or event is about. Cultural differences may exist in purpose and purveyance between parent associations within the United States and those in the countries of origin of the participants, thus reinforcing the importance of clear information. School website information about the parent-teacher associations within the settings of the participants was often vague in conveying the purpose of the organization. One PTA's homepage included only names, contact information and an organizational chart of the association's officers. When asked about participation in the PTA of their children's schools, about half of the participants were able to describe what the organization was or did. One parent, Luz, stated the following:

They have sent information and all that, but I don't know what this program is about. To be sincere, I've never focused on how it works. They have invited me but neither have I been able to go to see what this program is about.

Only one parent attended meetings on a regular basis. Another described having attended a meeting when it was scheduled in conjunction with a school open house.

**Barriers and bridges.** Various environmental and individual challenges to school involvement were revealed during interviews with parents. These challenges included language differences, academic background, lack of transportation, and, above all, work schedules. Surpassing these challenges involved the efforts of schools and families.

Language differences seemed to impact the experience that some parents had in participating in some types of events or programs, specifically volunteering and participating in a PTA meeting. “Yes, I’ve gone to the meetings,” Elena stated, “but at times I haven’t understood everything. For that reason at times I don’t go, because I didn’t understand everything.”

Several participants also indicated that they did not volunteer because they believed they needed to know more English in order to do so. Adalberto commented “With everything that has to do with my daughter, I want to advance more in the language to involve myself more.”

Language differences also impacted the ability of some parents to satisfactorily resolve critical incidents pertaining to child behavior, well-being or academic performance. Difficulties with language were associated with several negative emotion codes, such as *feeling like an outsider, feeling lost, feeling impotent, and feeling uncomfortable*. For example, Adilene stated “I don’t know where to go or how to find the answer” as she described difficulties in resolving an issue pertaining to her daughter’s attendance. Many of

the participants, however, contrasted the difficult language experiences with descriptions of *feeling welcome*, *feeling supported*, and *feeling optimistic*. Luz described her experiences in this way:

I haven't yet had a school where they were unfriendly. To the contrary, they have been very friendly when we enter... where I have been to enroll my kids, I like it, because there are very friendly people and I've never been uncomfortable with any school.

For some, the disparateness between emotional experiences seemed to relate to participant differences, such as self-efficacy and language skills. The efforts that schools and groups made to support parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency, such as having a Spanish-speaking administrator available or front desk staff members who convey a sense of welcome through words and body language, however, had a bridging effect between parents and school.

The parents' own academic strengths and weaknesses, as well as their English language capacities, seemed to influence their participation in direct homework support. Participants who had completed higher levels of formal education, such as Magali and Eliana, generally expressed greater facility with direct homework support. Others, for example Antonio, described their partners who had attained a higher level of education than themselves as more able to help their children with homework.

Yet educational background was not the determining factor for providing homework support. Parents with less formal education demonstrated varying levels of self-efficacy as

applied to homework support. Several stated resolutely that they were not able to help their children with homework; in these cases, school-based academic support programs provided essential support. Memo, with a primary education, made sure his children's homework was at least written clearly; his "I can" attitude also seemed to impact his formal involvement levels. Luz, who had completed fourth grade, spoke enthusiastically of being able to support her children's homework efforts, even if this meant circling the part that she and the children didn't understand and having them go early to get help from the teacher. Several described supporting their children in mathematics while not being able to help with academic subjects that were more language-based, such as language arts or social studies. Estrella, who had completed *secundaria*, stated she was able to help her fourth grade child with multiplication. As shown by Luz, who spoke of a teacher teaching her how to collaboratively work together in homework efforts, these varying levels of self-efficacy applied to homework support could be influenced by positive interactions with others.

In addressing critical incidents, many of the parents went directly in-person to the school to elicit administrator or other support. For example, Elena described:

The few times I've gone...I always enter the office and ask about whatever I came for. I ask the secretary or the receptionist what it is that I need. If it is with them, they tell me, and if not, they send me to the counselor.

Schools where a sense of approachability existed and that included within protocol the ability to connect with appropriate personnel without prior appointment were helpful in creating positive formal school involvement experiences.

Extended family provided knowledge important to helping participants navigate school systems. For example, Antonio spoke of how his nephew shared information about different schools in their area, thereby influencing his daughter's school choices as the district made changes to the school assignment policy. Extended family also provided support in times of crisis, as exemplified by Memo whose concerns for his brother and family arose regularly throughout his interview. While Memo's brother faced some legal troubles, Memo and his family visited them regularly. "We are supporting him," Memo said, "so he can realize that being with the family is the most important thing."

The role that work played in the lives of the participants and their families was significant. Several parents commented on the relationship between work opportunities and immigration. For example, Elena noted the following:

Since I arrived I've always been working. I worked two shifts, I had two jobs. When one comes from another country, one comes with the goal to pull together money to return.

Like many parents, the participants of this study struggled to balance the demands of work with those of other life roles. The struggle of many of the participants of the study was intensified by the need for them or their partners to work in jobs with limited scheduling flexibility and low wages.

Magali and others spoke of how work schedules impacted their routines, including informal involvement in their children's education. Before she started working outside the home, she would get all the housework and cooking done while the children were at school

and “when (the children) arrive, you’re free because you’ve been all day in the house. You have time for the homework.” She, like others, still monitored homework and talked to her children about the value of education, but she was not able to spend as much dedicated time supporting the literacy and academic development of her youngest child.

For Antonio, not being able to work due to an accident caused him to take on a greater role in his children’s education than what he described as custom for men within his culture; “*se cambiaron los papeles*/the roles changed,” he stated, as he then stayed home with their youngest child and his wife dedicated herself more to work. Memo also acknowledged how he was able to spend more time with his children because his work schedule as a small business owner afforded him some flexibility.

Like several other participants, Luz worked two jobs. She described her routine saying:

I have cleaning job in the morning, and in the afternoon I work in (a restaurant).

Depending on the schedule, sometimes I work from 3:00 to 11:00 at night...So I do nothing more than get home, sleep, and get up early. I get up at half past four and I go to work. I’m not at home a lot.

With a rigorous work schedule, Luz worked with her partner to make time to support their children’s homework, have family time on the weekends, and provide for their family’s needs.

Lack of transportation was a reported challenge for one participant, Adilene. She indicated she would have liked to volunteer with her children’s schools, but not being able to

drive presented a problem. The primary volunteer need that she knew about was that of a chaperone, and she was not able to drive to the field trip sites.

Many of the participants referenced their personal faith during interviews. Faith manifested through frequent expressions of “*Gracias a Dios/Thank God*” to praying for God to help her child manage a situation to attending church or praying together as a family. Eliana described a conversation she had with her daughter who was having problems with a peer in this way:

Look, when you go to church, pray for this girl. Ask Jesus that he enters her heart because this girl isn't a bad girl, because there aren't bad children. Perhaps her parents aren't being careful and she's watching some program where she sees this and is only repeating what she hears. You have to ask God and tell him to enter her heart, and you'll see, if you trust, that she'll change.

For those who spoke of it (namely Eliana, Adalberto, Antonio, Adilene, Marisol and Memo), personal faith and guidance from the church influenced participant actions, provided inner strength, and was a source of family unity.

**Support resources.** Available resources in the community and from the school came into play when parents spoke of supporting their children's academic development. Community resources included programs that were offered through schools and churches. They also included internet access and online resources. Written materials were a third type of support resources.

Through programs offered in the community, including through their churches, participants learned ways to support their children. Adilene was supported in cultivating values. She stated “we go to church and there are teachers there who meet with the kids to talk with them, to teach them as a principle to respect other people.” Eliana and Memo spoke of a church program that taught them how to create a safe environment for their children. Through a school program, Elena learned ways to protect her child from bullying. Luz attended a meeting through which she learned how much time her child should be studying and reading each day. Knowledge gained through these programmatic resources guided the parents in supporting their children at home and also seemed to increase their self-efficacy in the related areas.

Families who had access to the internet were afforded another rich source of support in helping their children. Antonio, who also had adult children, described the change that the advent of the internet brought: “And now for whatever little thing, one goes to the internet and there you find it quickly. Before, one battled a little more because one always had to go all over the place looking for a book.” Luz spoke of the teacher’s role in guiding them to quality sites on the web: “The teachers always send me a page where they can go to learn their reading or their math.” As the children got older, they were able to navigate the internet on their own to helpful sites.

Written materials were a third support resource, however they were only referenced in one of the interviews. Eliana described materials she would purchase from Sam’s Club to supplement her children’s learning. She also described the homework materials sent home

with her children that she used to learn alongside her children: “At times they give them little books to practice, and I look with them...or sometimes even I learn, I say “Wow! This also is helpful to me!”

This void of written academic reference materials contrasted to the norm described by one of the key informants who, like the participants, was a Hispanic parent. She stated that in her country of origin, Peru, textbooks provided comprehensive information about the curriculum that parents were able to put to use in supporting their children. In addition, in Mexico elementary school students are provided free text books that are updated every year. The conclusion that a well-organized textbook could provide the needed support for parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency in helping their children with homework is not supported through this data, however cultural differences appear to exist that may impact informal school involvement.

### **Research Question Two: Supporting Children’s Academic Development through Informal Involvement**

In the previous section, factors seeming to influence informal involvement were described. In this section, the question as to how Hispanic immigrant parents support their children’s academic development through informal parent involvement is addressed. All of the participants of this study described at least one of the following activities or behavior characterized as informal parent involvement: talking to children about education, monitoring grades, supporting homework completion, ensuring child’s school attendance, and supporting literacy development.

**Talking to children about education.** One of the forms of informal involvement in which all of the participants participated was talking to their children about the importance of education. These conversations had a number of different dimensions to them. These dimensions, or themes, included career and work implications, societal importance, and ownership. Notable in five of these exchanges about work and school was the idea that school would allow the children to have different work options and thereby different lives than their parents. This *counter-role modeling* is described in greater detail at the end of this section. Examples of the exchanges are provided below.

***Contributing to society.*** Some conversations between parent and child conveyed abstract beliefs about education enriching humanity or allowing a person to make a contribution to society. Adalberto reiterated to his daughter that “the richest treasure that human beings have is what they learn, because everything else disappears.” Eliana spoke to her children about how education helped them be someone, thus they had to finish school, stating:

You can't stop in the middle of the road because that's shutting off your future possibilities. What you're going to be, what you're going to accomplish in this society that you belong to...Because one can't pass through like nothing, one has to be something, someone. To leave a footprint in the community that one lives in. Why? Because that's why we are here.

She emphasized the importance of living a purposeful life and doing “a good job in whatever you do in your life.”

**Ownership.** Also salient in these conversations was the idea of ownership over one's education, specifically that education, once achieved, cannot be taken away.

Acknowledging that ultimately her children had to decide for themselves whether to work or continue to study, Luz would tell them:

I tell them that it's not so much work because if one works one always is going to work, and one's studies you always carry with you. Wherever you go, wherever you arrive, they're always going to ask you about your studies: what grade you got to, what level you made it to.

Similarly, Adalberto emphasized that education is something you take with you, telling his daughter that "when there's an earthquake, people flee and leave their home, leave their car, leave their money and only want to save their life. With their life comes their intellect, that which they have learned." He stated that this "is the idea that I try to instill in her."

**School and work options.** The participants spoke of verbal exchanges they would have with their children about the connection between school and work, often incorporating comments of vocational choices that required post-secondary training or a college degree.

Financial implications of staying in school were also reinforced by parents. For example, Mariela told her children the following:

Well, I tell them that really life isn't easy -- to get a job...that can pay more or less, because really if there's no education, well, there's no good work either. Then, for them to be able to have their house, the things they want in life, well it's easier if they have a diploma.

Adilene dreamed of her five children going to college and securing professional positions such as doctor, lawyer, social worker, and teacher. “When you are older” she would say to them, “your mom won’t pay for a doctor, because I’m going to have a doctor” (meaning her son or daughter would be the doctor). In this way she relayed her hopes and dreams for their futures to her children.

Magali’s three children were reminded regularly that good grades could lead to a scholarship that would make it possible for them to go to college. “*Las escuelas son muy caras/schools are very expensive*” she and her husband would tell them, stating that a scholarship would make it possible for them to pay for school and get ahead. She would ask them where they wanted to work: “in a McDonald’s, or do you want to work in an office, well dressed, perhaps a doctor or a lawyer?” Magali’s children heard that everything depends on the education that they achieve.

*Providing example and counter-role modeling.* Many of the participants verbalized to their children an example from their own lives that they wanted the children to note. Having completed college and worked in a multi-national corporation, Adalberto, for example, encouraged his daughter to take note through his own experience of how education can help you secure professional positions of leadership. Countering this, in more than five of the narratives the participants spoke of at least one instance in which they encouraged their children to complete their education in order to avoid vocational circumstances like their own or their partner. This counter-role modeling, where the parent would offer his or her life as an example of what to avoid, is exemplified below.

Adilene, when talking to her son who was resisting going to school, would say “if you don’t study, you are going to be like your mom. Or do you want to have a job where you are in the sun all day, where they don’t pay you well?” Elena worked in a restaurant and had a variable work schedule. When her daughter told her she didn’t want to go to school, she would tell her:

Well, do you want to work like me? You see how I arrive exhausted. You see my schedule. At times I have to leave you at home alone because I have to go to work.

Do you want to be like this? Well then, don’t go to school.

Mary spoke of telling her children that “they should learn, so that they aren’t the same as me who doesn’t know anything.” Luz and Estrella had similar comments that reflected a sort of counter-role modeling process.

**Monitoring grades.** Monitoring their children’s grades was another way that the participants involved themselves in their children’s education. If the children’s grades are okay, they (the school and the child) are “doing their job.” Magali’s comments illustrated this process: “Now and then I check their homework, they bring me the report cards. If I see that they are getting 95, 97, 98, I don’t worry because they are doing their homework and getting good grades.” Observations of a grade dropping instigated parents to take action. Actions included requesting meetings with teachers, seeking tutoring for the child, as well as talking with the child about expectations and source of academic difficulties.

Luz described how grades were used as a gauge of how school was going for her children:

For the time being, the teachers have informed me that their grades aren't good, but they're not super low. They're so-so, nothing more. But for example, if they get a two or a three – usually they bring home a two or a three – I talk with the teachers. I go and I ask them. I try to get an appointment and I meet with them, and then I ask them why the grades are low, why he got that grade, and how we should help.

The reliance on report cards and communication from school was evident in her statement.

Mariela spoke of seeking support from the school as, along with behavioral problems, her son's grades dropped in one particular semester. She thought that perhaps language differences were the cause of her son's academic difficulties as he had attended his third grade in Mexico. "Perhaps he (got in trouble) and doesn't want to do his homework, his work in school," she hypothesized, "because of his English skills and he is embarrassed to speak, I don't know." Mariela had regular interactions with the school in her attempts to resolve the problem; she also leaned on the relationship she had with her son to try to encourage him to improve his academic performance and behavior.

Antonio's comments mirrored others who relied on family communication and the relationship they had with their children to influence positive changes. At one point, he relayed, they were having some problems with one of their older daughters. When she started getting bad grades he and his wife "tried to talk to her so that she wouldn't continue and would instead try to focus herself more on school." They reinforced the idea with their daughter that "going in the direction she was going was not going to lead to anything good."

One of the positive outcomes of their family's efforts was their daughter's enrollment in and completion of college.

**Online student information.** Online student information, or "digital classrooms," (e.g. Google Classroom, Home Base) provided access to student outcomes, i.e., grades, for some parents but not all. Adalberto spoke of how his wife, who worked full-time in a professional position, monitored their child's grades via the internet. Other parents had just learned about the digital classroom access that they had through the public school system when it was demonstrated by the presenter in a parent information meeting the prior month. Estrella spoke of her daughter using the internet to check assignments and grades; Estrella did not use this resource herself. At least one parent, Mariela, accessed the internet primarily through the public library. Online access to specific student information was a resource that was inequitable in use.

**Supporting homework completion.** Throughout the interviews, participants spoke of efforts to influence their children to complete homework. "Ponte a estudiar/ sit down and study," several participants would tell their children. Or they would ask "ya, terminaste tu tarea?/ Did you finish your homework?" Some spoke of either themselves or their partners sitting down regularly with their children to do homework. Others would verbally prompt their children to do homework, with occasional resistance. Notably, some participants reported that their children did not have much homework, including those in the upper elementary and middle school grades. Additional details about homework support are included in the findings about navigating language difference.

**Ensuring child's school attendance.** As the participants described their day-to-day lives, the process of ensuring their children's school attendance was routine for many. Transporting children to and from school or the bus stop was integrated into schedules that included meal preparation, work schedules, sometimes church involvement and often family activities. Memo spoke of driving his older child to the bus stop each morning. Once there, they would say a prayer and he would give her a kiss before she headed off to school. Adilene spoke of her efforts to get the children to school:

Yes, we get up early...I like to motivate them, if they get up early I have to serve as an example and get up early too - to encourage them. In the meantime you brush your teeth, I'll make breakfast, to show them that they have a commitment and I do too. My commitment is to take care of them, that they have food and that they're alright. But their commitment is to go to school, to learn and to get good grades.

Like my husband, he tells them that their work is to go to school.

Finally, Adalberto drove his child directly to school, supporting the daughter's continued attendance there despite her having moved to a different school zone.

Spending time together as a family was also important for participants. Participants spoke of efforts to spend time together on the weekends and talk together at the day's end. To Eliana, observations of older children who resisted being with their families caused her to feel *inquieta*/worried.

For some parents, ensuring school attendance became more complicated when, for whatever reason, their children refused or resisted going. Family communication and

discussions with children about the value of education were tools used to motivate children to go to school when routine was not enough.

**Supporting literacy development.** A third of the participants described efforts to read to or alongside their children. Believing bilingual literacy to be valuable, Magali worked to teach her children to read first in Spanish. Marisol expressed a higher comfort level when reading to her child in Spanish. Eliana conveyed how her daughter would resist reading, saying “Ay! It’s just that I don’t want to read!” Eliana would respond, telling her “we’re going to read – both of us together.” In this way, she was able to get her daughter to read. Adalberto and Elena also made a practice of reading alongside their daughters; Adalberto spoke regularly with his child about how reading enriches humanity.

### **Research Question Three: Influence of School Personnel, Policies, and Practices on School Involvement**

The third research question of this study addresses how school personnel, policies and practices influence school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents. Findings from the analysis of data gathered through interviews, documents, and field work are described in this section. Themes that emerged from the findings are: communication, community, accessibility, and support resources.

**Communication.** Communication was a dominant theme in the findings related to school personnel, policies, and practices impacting the participants’ school involvement. Communication included school-to-home communication practices. It also included interpersonal communication between school personnel and parents.

School-to-home communication practices were found to play a role in the parents' involvement. Participants spoke of learning about events and happenings through notes that their children would bring home. Emails and calls, including automated calls, also served as important outreach tools to parents, although return emails from the parents were at times hindered by parents' difficulty in writing in English. For example, Marisol, who characterized her ability to speak and read English as intermediate, described her English writing ability as "terrible." She looked to her daughter for assistance in emailing an administrator on one occasion when she needed to resolve a problem.

Interpersonal communication between school personnel and parents also influenced school involvement of the participants. Positive feedback from teachers also encouraged parents to interact more, as evidenced in Luz's comments. She noted a teacher told her that "I like it when you come to ask questions about your child." Luz made efforts to interact regularly with her children's teachers. Memo spoke of earlier fears about how his efforts to help with class field trips would be received, as well as doubts about his ability to help given difficulties with communication. Despite this fear, he said "I got up my courage and said 'I'm going.'" He found that his efforts were received positively, and now he volunteers regularly as a chaperone.

Some teachers were described as *amable/friendly*, *comprensiva/understanding* or *linda/lovely*. Marisol spoke of the positive experiences that she had had with her children's teachers, saying "I believe I've had good experiences with the teachers of my children. They

have been very good even though they don't speak Spanish and I, much English. But we understand each other.”

One parent, however, expressed confusion about her interactions with school personnel. She struggled to make sense of differing perspectives of events involving her son:

He tells me one thing and the principal tells me another. So I, well, yes I believe him and what he tells me. I have always told him whatever happens in school you have to tell me the truth, especially the bad stuff you have to tell me. You can't lie to me because I can't help you if you do.

Her son characterized a teacher's behaviors toward him as *racista*/racist; the mother didn't know what to think. Her confusion and anguish about several events resulting in her son's suspension were part of her reasons for participating in the study as she wanted to learn how to support him and guide him better.

**Accessibility.** The way that “drop-by visits” were handled impacted some parents' efforts to collaborate with the school in resolving problems. Although one parent described having her daughter help her in writing an email to a principal to address a critical incident, more parents mentioned going directly to the school. Eliana considered herself fortunate to have the principal walk out at the precise moment she was walking in; this principal, who speaks Spanish and English, was able to provide the needed assistance in resolving a problem Eliana's daughter was having with several schoolmates, as described by Eliana below:

And I told her “let's go see the principal.” And it was incredible that just at that moment the principal came out of his office, and then, since we found ourselves

there, and I asked him if we could speak a little. And I told her “explain to him.” And she told him what happened. And the principal, very understanding, said “I appreciate that you are sincere and tell the truth...”

Adilene went to the school bringing with her a video and photos of some injuries her son had received after being assaulted by another student. She was able to meet with the principal that day on the issue.

The availability of Spanish-speaking personnel was noted by some as important. One parent lamented about how there never was anyone who spoke Spanish at one of her children’s schools when she went to clear up an attendance issue. Another stated that she was always directed to a person who could help her, thus also suggesting the ability of English language dominant front desk personnel to interact effectively with parents with Spanish language dominance.

**Community.** How a school fosters a community of diverse parents seemed important. Estrella described feelings of pride but isolation when attending some of her child’s performance events at school. She remembered similar performance events in Mexico when all the parents would sit in a circle together and talk, unlike at a recent event in the United States where the parents lined up their chairs and chided others for impeding their view. Marisol spoke of feeling like an outsider when volunteering for a student event when the other parents and two teachers, all English-speakers, were standing in a group talking.

A sense of community was also addressed more broadly in terms of impact of school assignment policy. Antonio described his daughter’s disappointment in learning that the high

school to which she would be assigned by the district was different from the one her older sisters had attended.

Three years ago they changed the schools and, in the area where we are living, before it belonged to (a different) high school...Now... nothing more than these streets or something like that, moved perhaps because of too many children in this school here...And then she said that she doesn't want to go...She wants to go here where the others graduated.

Changes to student assignment can impact a sense of community as well as familiarity with staff members.

**Support resources.** Funding decisions impact the existence of school-based programs, including parent education, student academic support, and student extracurricular activities. At least in part because of cost and convenience, school-based tutoring programs were seen as important resources for this group of Hispanic immigrant parents. Magali lamented about the lack of afterschool tutoring programs stating the following:

The most difficult is reading, especially if one is Hispanic. Imagine a parent that didn't speak English. How are they going to help their child...But now there aren't these programs, this tutoring, in reading or in mathematics. Because I've asked...and they tell me 'no, now there aren't any (tutoring programs) here.'

Magali's older daughters had participated in such programs at their school. Because of the cost of private tutors, Magali had not been able to secure tutoring for her youngest child despite academic challenges.

#### **Research Question Four: Working through Language Differences**

As noted in an earlier section, a range of language abilities was evident within the sample of this study. The section addresses research question four: how do Hispanic immigrant parents with Spanish language dominance work through language differences? The participants of this study were *Spanish language dominant*, meaning that their language preferences and abilities favored Spanish to English to the extent that the speaker is less able to communicate in English.

For some, this meant that they were not able to express themselves with the full range of fluency as they could in Spanish, including use of idioms or social small-talk. Others described their English abilities as very limited. Difference in language proficiency between children and parents caused distress for at least one participant. Antonio spoke of how language differences impacted family communication, stating “the language barrier at times makes it so one can’t communicate...or they (the children) ask for help and one ends up just looking at each other because you can’t communicate with them.” Some were able to read English with more facility than speak or understand spoken English. Writing in English posed a challenge for most participants. Thus, all had something to say about how they worked through language differences.

The categories of response fell within the following two areas: interactions with the school and supporting their children in completing homework. The themes that emerged when exploring how the participants worked through language differences were: learning

English, preparing ahead, seeking help from others, turning to technology, and relying on self.

**Preparing ahead.** Formal school involvement of Spanish dominant parents required advanced preparation or additional steps in order to secure language assistance. Several of the parents spoke of asking a bilingual person they knew (e.g., a family member, friend, or community advocate) to accompany them when going to school to resolve a problem in order to serve as an interpreter. Antonio would look a family friend or one of his older daughters who had already graduated from high school. Adilene brought an “American friend” who spoke Spanish and English.

For formal conferences, parents were often offered the support of a professional interpreter from the school; this support was possible for conferences that were planned in advance.

For some, working through language differences meant mental preparation and rehearsal. Memo, who regularly attended school conferences and other events, spoke of his process to prepare. He stated:

What I do is formulate two or three questions, nothing more...Before I begin, I think about what it is I'm going to say. Like a plan. I make it and I carry it out, it's the only thing I do.

With this advanced preparation, Memo carried out most of his conversations at his children's schools in English.

**Relying on others.** For many of the parents, the existence of school personnel who spoke Spanish facilitated their communication and involvement with their children's schools. Parents sought out or were directed to an administrator, teacher, or counselor who spoke Spanish. Overall, the participants spoke positively about the language support provided, with the exception of Adilene who verbalized feeling overwhelmed and not knowing to whom she should talk in order to resolve a problem involving a child's school attendance.

They would also look to others to serve as an interpreter or help compose an email. At times, this would mean soliciting the help of their child. Marisol spoke of an occasion in which her daughter helped her write an email to the principal describing an incident that occurred on the bus. Elena asked her child to accompany her to talk to the school staff, saying to her daughter "*Ayúdame en caso de que algo no pueda/* help me in case there's something I can't (understand)."

In supporting homework completion, some relied on teacher support. In soliciting this support, most entrusted the help-seeking behavior to the child whether by default or through specific directive. When available and when the child qualified, enrolling their children in the appropriate after school programs became an important way in which parents worked through language differences to support their children, as described by Luz:

She stays Monday to Thursday. On four days, they help her with homework and the work that she hasn't finished and all that. They help a lot. I've seen her advance with this help – she has advanced a lot.

Finally, the participants would occasionally seek assistance from the older child or a relative to help the child with homework.

**Relying on self.** The parents also would often rely on their own English skills in interactions with the school. Estrella, who described her own English skills as “only the basics,” stated she would “explain myself as I am able.” Evident in her interview response was her reticence to do so; it was her daughter who volunteered that she did know some English. Eliana, who usually took care of school affairs without the assistance of others, would ask the person to repeat or clarify the significance of any words that she did not understand.

In helping their children with homework, parents would also help in areas in which they did have capacity, such as in mathematics or penmanship. Antonio spoke of collaborating with his spouse to help in academic areas where he lacked capability; “*entre los dos*/between the two of them” they were able to help. Luz described how her partner would help their children with mathematics while she would help with project-based homework. Elena spoke of simply reviewing the homework for completion even if she didn’t understand all the words.

**Turning to technology.** Technology provided another source of language support. Occasionally participants would also use technology for translation purposes. Memo described the process in this way:

I don't read a lot, but what I sometimes do is translate (the documents) on the computer to be sure of what I am reading and signing...Although it takes me a lot of time to do it...in this way I'm sure of the information I'm getting.

The greater availability of online translation tools such as Google Translate helped parents confirm or increase their understanding of written documents that were sent home.

Participants also described utilizing internet resources to help their children with homework, including taking the child to the library to use the internet if they didn't have access at home.

**Learning English.** Finally, participants worked through language differences by increasing their own capacities in English. Whether on the job, via auto-didactic mechanisms or through formal English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs, the majority of participants mentioned efforts to increase their English language skills. These efforts were confounded by competing priorities, above all the need to work. In addition, there was variance in English language instruction within the different communities where participants lived including in their communities of origin.

Adalberto, who had moved to the United States the most recently of all the participants, spent nearly three hours per day learning English. He hoped within six months that his efforts would pay off, allowing him to achieve 80-90% fluency. To achieve this goal, he had purchased various auto-didactic English courses. Elena who after years of holding two jobs was finally working in only one position, was taking an ESL course through the local community college. Luz would at times learn through the English courses that she and her partner purchased. Yet she preferred formal instruction to self-study, stating "it's

different with a computer than with a teacher that explains things to you.” Despite her learning preferences, she, like others, was hindered in taking formal English classes by her work schedule.

### **Summary**

This chapter reported the findings of this narrative study exploring the school involvement experiences of 12 Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency. The chapter began with an introduction and demographic information about the participants. The second section of the chapter contained individual narratives from each participant. The findings related to each of the four research questions were detailed in the third section of this chapter. Chapter five contains further discussion and interpretation of the findings as they connect to the literature, as well as limitations, conclusions, implications for counseling practice, policy implications, and recommendations for future research. The integration of results with theoretical framework is also provided in chapter five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Through the narratives of the parents participating in this study, multiple stories replete with examples of barriers, supports, and resiliency emerged. Their narratives enrich the discourse that occurs throughout the national and local communities on involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency in their children's schooling and education. Through the participants' stories and the ensuing analysis conducted for this study, a rich portrait emerged of the ways that the participants of this study supported their children often through informal involvement, and worked through language differences to do so. Moreover, some of the features that challenged their school involvement are presented through this study. The experiences of the parents seemed to be impacted by a dynamic interplay between social, environmental, and personal factors, thereby highlighting the importance of using a Biopsychosocial lens when examining issues of Hispanic immigrant parent involvement. The major contributions of this study are the multi-factor framework to consider Hispanic parent formal school involvement, as well as the details contributing to a deeper understanding of informal parental involvement, particularly when impacted by language difference.

In this chapter, the findings from the study are examined within the context of the previous literature and are integrated with the theoretical framework of the study. Limitations of the study are discussed. This chapter provides implications for counselors and counselor educators, policy implications, as well as recommendations for future research. This chapter is divided into seven sections: summary of the study, discussion of findings,

limitations, recommendations for research, implications for theory, policy implications, implications for counselors and counselor educators, and concluding statement.

### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the formal (school-based) and informal (home-based) school involvement experiences of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency and to understand the personal, environmental, and social factors that influence the school involvement process of these same parents. This qualitative study into the school involvement experiences of Hispanic immigrant parents utilized Bioecological Systems Theory as a theoretical framework. The following research questions were addressed.

1. What are the social, environmental, and personal factors that influence formal and informal school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents?
2. How do Hispanic immigrant parents support their children's academic development through informal parent involvement?
3. How do school personnel, policies, and practices influence school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents?
4. How do Hispanic immigrant parents work through language differences in supporting their children's academic development?

A narrative inquiry approach was used to capture the stories of the 12 participants about their formal and informal parental involvement experiences with their children's schools and schooling.

Maximum variation sampling was used to generate a sample of 12 Hispanic immigrant parents with Spanish language dominance from two settings (rural and urban) in a southeastern state in the United States. Six of the participants were from the rural setting and six were from the urban setting. The participants had at least one child attending an elementary or middle school within the designated settings. Spanish language dominance, as defined in chapter one of this document, refers to having language preferences and abilities that favor Spanish to English to the extent that the speaker is less able to communicate orally or via written means in English.

In-depth interviews conducted in Spanish by the primary investigator provided the primary source of data. Additionally, data were collected from field notes, demographic surveys, memos, and document review. These data from field notes and document review were used to triangulate and provide context for interview data. Interviews were transcribed and coded using a Two Cycle coding process recommended by Saldaña (2013). The demographic surveys which were administered orally were also transcribed and coded using the same Two Cycle process. Pattern coding within the second cycle focused on identifying patterns and themes pertaining to each research question. Translations and verbatim quotations used in the description of the findings are provided in Appendix E.

Findings, as detailed in Table 5, indicate distinct themes related to each research question. Social, environmental, and personal factors that emerged as influencing the participants' formal and informal school involvement included: values and prioritizing, program/event existence, knowledge of event, support resources, and barriers and bridges.

Participants supported the academic involvement of their children informally through talking to the children about education, monitoring grades, ensuring school attendance, supporting homework completion, and supporting literacy development. The exploration of how school personnel, policies, and practices impacted school involvement generated the following themes: community, support, accessibility, and communication. Finally, for the fourth research question, the following themes related to ways Hispanic immigrant parents work through language differences: preparing ahead, relying on others, relying on self, turning to technology, and learning English.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Findings from this study reveal factors that impacted the participants' formal involvement in the schools of their children. Additionally, the narratives of the participants illuminated efforts that the parents made to support their children through home-based activity.

#### **Valuing Education**

The findings of this study support previous research indicating a strong commitment of Hispanic parents to their children's education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Dotson-Blake, 2010; Durand & Perez, 2013). This contradicts the perception by some teachers and administrators that Hispanic parents are not interested or engaged in their children's education (Durand & Perez, 2013). Indeed, the participants of the study at hand verbalized a strong commitment to their children's education, stating that education was important for their children's futures. Whether this valuing stemmed from a desire to have their children

integrate into society, have a better life than their own, or be the best people they could be, education was something the participants sought for their children.

The parents involved in this study indicated great concern for the welfare and futures of their children. Verbalized by many was a keen awareness of the existence of opportunities in the United States for their children to obtain a quality education and for their daughters and sons to have good professional opportunities. For many of the participants, the opportunities in the United States contrasted to difficult conditions in the parents' countries of origin. Despite struggles with low wage jobs and sometimes challenging living conditions, parents persevered in believing the importance of providing what they could for their children. Through the participants' narratives, the findings of this study provide greater depth of understanding to the meaning Hispanic parents give to education and align with Epstein's assertion that "just about all families care about their children, want them to succeed, and are eager to obtain better information from schools and communities so as to remain good partners in their children's education" (1995, p. 703).

### **Recognizing Informal Involvement**

Prior research on Hispanic parental involvement indicates higher levels of informal involvement than formal involvement (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). This study's findings align with this prior research. Moreover, the findings take this assertion further in providing the context of family life that shapes the home-based involvement of the parents in their children's education, as well as some of the factors that impact their informal involvement.

Throughout the narratives, the centrality of family emerged as a recurring theme, aligning with other research that indicates a strong Latino parental orientation to family (Arredondo et al., 2014). Extended family provided knowledge important to helping participants navigate school systems. Extended family also provided support in times of crisis. Participants valued strong communication within their family. When problems arose, participants spoke of discussions they would have with their children to address critical incidents in school or on the bus. Lapses of communication appeared to cause distress. Spending time together as a family was also important for participants. Participants spoke of efforts to spend time together on the weekends and talk together at the day's end.

The participants of this study engaged in activities at home that supported their children's education, including supporting homework completion, monitoring grades, ensuring school attendance, and supporting literacy development. In addition, they nurtured additional values including family unity, faith, and respect of others. Many were buoyed by their own desire to provide their children a different life than the one they had experienced. Workshops, conversations with teachers and other education experts, as well as programs at church also were important in helping the parents develop specific behaviors and skills in supporting their children's academic development. Their narratives align with the vision of parent involvement which is currently being promoted by some researchers and advocates (e.g. Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Durand & Perez, 2013; Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2011). This vision, which the researcher of this study shares, emphasizes the

importance of recognizing the value of informal home-based activities such as helping with homework, providing encouragement, and talking to children about the importance of school.

Many Hispanic immigrant parents are having success in supporting their children's education. However, inequities in educational achievement of Hispanic students persist. It is important that schools and communities persevere in identifying ways to help parents develop effective strategies in supporting their children's academic achievement. These strategies should build off of the rich cultural and cognitive resources that exist within the Hispanic immigrant families.

### **Influencing Formal Involvement**

The findings from this study indicate that formal involvement is influenced by a dynamic interplay of personal, social, and environmental factors. Given this interplay of factors, the findings from this study provide a useful perspective for schools and communities to consider patterns of Hispanic immigrant parents' engagement in their children's education and ways to engage with families utilizing a multi-factor framework.

Aligning with Turney and Kao's (2009) findings, this study indicated some level of formal involvement for the majority of parents. The most frequently cited types of participation in this study were parent-teacher conference attendance, open house attendance, and special student event attendance. Participants stated that when an activity was important, they participated. Implicit within the events and programs in which the participants were most frequently involved was direct involvement of their child.

Findings described in the previous chapter depict the themes that emerged when discussing participant involvement in school-based activities. Considered in conjunction with findings from other studies and starting from the foundational assumption that education is valued by parents, the multi-factored framework can be used to examine current levels of formal involvement and make decisions about actions to take to positively influence on formal involvement. Starting from the theme of program/event existence, schools can look at what programs they have in the school in which parent participation is desired. Within each of these programs, the other factors can be examined, including how knowledge about the event is conveyed. Are statements such as “this will help you learn ways to support your child in school” made? Schools are also encouraged to examine how expectations for attendance are conveyed. Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011) found that specific invitations from teachers were one of the predictors of Latino parent’s school based involvement. Through specific invitations from teachers, the importance of an event is conveyed and important relationships between teacher and parent are fostered.

Turney and Kao (2009) asserted that formal involvement provides the means for parents to develop social capital through getting to know key people in the school who can discuss the children’s performance and impact change. Participants whose narratives expressed frustration and dismay about not knowing who to talk to or believe during critical incidents involving their children, pointed toward the value of social capital in problem resolution. However, as other participants described, schools that are approachable and have key people who are accessible can have a positive impact on the ability of a family and

school to collaborate in problem resolution regardless of level of formal involvement of the parent.

### **Working through Language Differences**

Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency face certain challenges in supporting their children's education because of language differences (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008; Villalba, Brunelli, Lewis, & Wachter, 2007). The findings of this study indicate that these challenges fall predominantly in two categories: supporting children's homework completion and interactions with school personnel. The findings of this study also revealed an active stance that most parents took toward working through language differences. The actions they took included using available resources, collaborating with others, advanced planning, and furthering their own English language development.

Certain characteristics of schools and school personnel aided the participants in working through language differences. These characteristics are important to take into account as schools make policy, practice, and personnel decisions. Easy access to Spanish-speaking school personnel simplified the process of resolving problems. However, not all parents participating in this study indicated they utilized or needed an interpreter for all interactions. Previous research indicated the important role that school personnel and other parents served in fostering or, in effect, shutting down the communication efforts of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency (Tovar, 2014). Within the present study, findings indicated the importance of having school personnel that were approachable. In addition, it was helpful to have policies and procedures in place that

facilitated parents being able to go directly to the school to address questions or concerns in-person.

### **Limitations**

As with any study, the present study had limitations that could influence the conclusions made from this study. The study utilized a narrative inquiry methodology in the effort to explore the informal and formal school involvement experiences of the participants, as well as their efforts to work through language differences. Within a qualitative methodology, generalizability to an external population is not the goal, however, rich thick descriptions were provided to allow for evaluation of transferability of conclusions. Limitations included participant characteristics and instrumentation.

Despite efforts to recruit participants with different experiences, all but one participant had lived in the United States for 10 years or more. In addition, although most participants described significant difficulties with communicating in English, several participants described their verbal language abilities as relatively strong. This research does support an understanding of the factors that impact the formal and informal involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency. Further research involving participants with less experience in the United States would help to inform efforts of educators and counselors in reaching out to disenfranchised populations.

Further limitations included the expansion of criteria to participants who had children in middle school. School expectations for parental involvement change as children progress into higher grades, with children expected to demonstrate greater levels of independence in

terms of homework completion and parents having fewer structured opportunities for interactions with teachers. Thus, the widened scope of experience may have detracted from the ability to identify certain themes from the data.

Additional limitations relate to instrumentation with the researcher who conducted interviews being an outsider, including not being Hispanic and not being a native Spanish speaker. Participants may have shared information they thought was socially desirable in a cross-cultural interaction. The researcher made efforts to address this limitation through building rapport at the beginning of the interview, utilizing a narrative approach that invited storytelling, and establishing the use of a pseudonym at the on-start of the interview. In addition, interviews were scheduled in locations identified as convenient and comfortable for the participants.

### **Implications for Theory**

The theoretical framework that guided this study was Bioecological Systems Theory, which is a developmental theory that recognizes a reciprocal process between person and environment that influences behavior and psychosocial outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karnik, 2009). The personal, environmental, and social, themes that emerged throughout the analysis of this study pointed toward the relevance of this Bioecological Systems framework in examining issues related to Hispanic immigrant parent involvement. For example, consideration of how parents work through language differences requires not just an examination of the individual traits and actions of the parent but also what programs and resources are available within the environment that can help with

language interpretations and translations. Moreover, one can consider aspects of the parents' social support network and whether there are individuals within it who can help the parents with school issues.

The Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) provides a relevant framework to use in exploring school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency. As described previously, P (for process) represents proximal processes, or the interactions between person and environment. The second P (for person) includes demand characteristics, resource characteristics, and force characteristics. The context component of the model (C) is multi-layered and includes the microsystem, ecosystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem. Finally, the T (for time) within the model denotes what is known as the chronosystem.

Through the push and pull factors of immigration at the micro- and macro-systemic levels, the participants of this study settled in a southeastern state, with two starting their United States journeys in California. In most cases, the individuals moved to the southeastern state 10 to 20 years ago contributing to a demographic shift, fueled in part by a robust regional economy, whereby the state's Hispanic population increased by at least 250% (Kochhar, Suro, & Tafoya, 2005; U.S. Census, 2011). As was the reported trend, the participants tended to arrive young, were unmarried, and had lower levels of education.

Person characteristics interacted with contextual ones as the participants built their lives in the rural and urban settings of the southeastern state. As the participants had children, they enrolled them in the local public schools, demonstrating a value of education

that was shared across participants. Notably, only one clear delineation between urban and rural experience emerged in the analysis: the participation in after-school tutoring programs for some of the children of urban participants. With greater frequency, participants in the urban setting noted that their children were involved or were invited to be involved in school-based tutoring programs. Without additional academic data related to the children, it is not possible to conclude that this marks a clear contextual difference between urban and rural settings; there may have been certain demographic differences between children of the participants. However, this contrast does illustrate the importance that contextual factors such as availability of support services can have in the psychosocial and academic outcomes of individuals and families.

Men and women participated in this study, offering a glimpse at how demand characteristics such as gender impact formal and informal involvement. The three men who participated spoke of changes that occurred in their perspective about gender roles, moving toward their current perspective about the importance of shared responsibility in supporting their children's academic development. They attributed this change in perspective to either macrosystemic factors (exposure to the values and norms of the United States) or chronosystem factors (life events that changed their life course, such as an accident or getting sick, thereby being forced to leave the paid workforce). From their perspective, the cultural norms within the Hispanic culture contributed to a pattern of less parental involvement on the part of the fathers and they were exceptions to this pattern.

The daily interactions between the parents and their children constituted the proximal processes impacting how the children's innate abilities would develop into habits that influenced academic outcomes. Some of the parents expressed uncertainty about what to say or do in order to insure academic success for their children; for these parents, school personnel support through conferences or parent workshops promised important direction. Important too are the proximal processes that occur for the child within the school environment. Within the school environment, the child also learns how his or her culture, language, and family are valued through what is communicated overtly and covertly by school personnel and other children. Two cases within this study illuminate certain concerns that merit awareness and further investigation. One parent spoke of difficult interactions between her family and school personnel which her son characterized as racist. Another spoke of the desire that Hispanic children within the school system be supported in learning the value of speaking Spanish; this desire stemmed from what she ascertained to be a lack of support. Continued attention is merited in the academic and educational communities on how culture, language, and family are promoted within the community and school system.

### **Implications for Research**

The present study contributes to the growing body of knowledge of the experiential components impacting school-based involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency in their children's education. Moreover, the findings present greater detail of Hispanic immigrant parental informal involvement, as well as the

strategies utilized to work through language differences when supporting the children's education.

Further research is indicated that explores parental involvement of immigrant parents who have lived in the United States for less time. This research could take an action research orientation whereby research is conducted while providing support and programming to parents. Measures of self-efficacy, knowledge, and skills related to providing homework help, supporting literacy development, and navigating educational systems can be taken in pre- and post-test intervals. Challenges in recruiting participants should be addressed by partnering with already established community organizations, including faith-based ones.

The findings from this study help to reveal the types of conversations that Hispanic immigrant parents have with their children about education. Exploration of the meaning-making that occurs for the children when conversing with their parents about education would help illuminate the proximal processes that impact a child's psychosocial and academic development. Of particular interest is the counter role-modeling process through which some participants encouraged their children to complete their education in order to avoid vocational circumstances like their own or those of their partner.

Additionally, research focused on the self-efficacy, assumptions, and experiences of school counselors and other personnel in working with immigrant parents with other language dominance is encouraged. Exploratory qualitative research can be used to shed light on counselor experience within multilingual exchanges. Findings can be used to inform the development of specific training for increased efficacy in counseling situations in which

language differences are present. A semi-experimental design could be used to test the efficacy of this training as an intervention.

### **Implications for Policy**

As stated earlier, inequities in educational achievement of Hispanic students persist. Given the importance that education plays in economic mobility and diminished economic marginalization, continued or increased funding of effective academic support programs is critical. It is important that schools and communities persevere in identifying ways to help parents support their children's academic achievement.

Language differences are often recognized as a barrier to formal and informal parental involvement (Smith, Stern & Shatrova, 2008; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Indeed, the findings of this study indicated challenges associated with language differences related to helping with homework and communication with school personnel. For many of the participants of the study having Spanish/English bilingual personnel at their children's school was helpful. Thus, it is recommended that communities continue to prioritize such staffing resources.

The issue of language difference, however, also requires a look at how bilingual language development is nurtured and cultivated in children who grow up in families where Spanish is the primary language spoken. Clearly, the development of English language literacy and communication skills is critical for children to advance and succeed academically in the United States. Current educational policy, however, favors English-only educational programming, despite research that shows promising outcomes for bilingual

approaches (Brooke-Garza, 2015; López, McEneaney, & Nieswandt, 2015). Policymakers are encouraged to challenge current cultural bias toward English-only approaches. Doing so could promote positive educational outcomes for Hispanic students who are also English learners. These strategies would build off of the rich cultural and cognitive resources that exist within the Hispanic immigrant families and create an environment for all students where biculturalism and bilingualism are valued.

### **Implications for Counselors and Counselor Educators**

The findings from this study help to inform counselors and counselor educators of the many ways that Hispanic immigrant parents with Spanish language dominance are involved in their children's education, as well as the considerable extent to which education is valued by these same parents. In addition, these findings provide insight into the challenges, including language differences, that exist and the actions these same parents take to work through these challenges. Counselors can play an important role in supporting Hispanic immigrant parents' school involvement efforts. Implications from these findings include the following recommendations.

**Recognize involvement and investment.** These findings indicate that a strength-based perspective in working with Hispanic immigrant parents is warranted starting from an assumption that education is valued by most parents. Counselors are encouraged to examine their own assumptions about parental involvement to identify personal biases that may impact their work with this population. For example, is physical presence within the school for volunteering and school events equated with the parents' level of care for their children's

education? Within interactions with Hispanic immigrant parents, counselors are encouraged to utilize strength-based language that reinforces parent efforts and recognizes parent investment in their children's future. This reinforcement, for instance, could be verbal praise during a parent program of the efforts the parents make to talk to their children about education, check for homework completion, and ensure school attendance coupled with discussion of how these efforts have a positive impact on student performance. Counselors are encouraged to take an active advocacy stance within their respective professional communities to encourage parallel strength-based language that recognizes informal involvement as a valuable activity.

Recognizing the investment that Hispanic immigrant parents already are making in supporting their children, counselors are encouraged to collaborate with school, district, and community members to supporting programming and provision of psychoeducational materials in Spanish related to helping children succeed in school. Recommended programming components include expert presentations and collaborative problem-solving sessions where parents are encouraged to share questions and concerns. If childcare is not provided, conveying a family-friendly stance (from non-verbal dynamics to making available materials such as crayons and coloring pages for children) can help address some of the barriers that may exist for families in participating in programming.

**Facilitate further involvement.** School counselors are encouraged to facilitate further involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents with Spanish language dominance at home and in the school community through the following ways. Accessibility and

approachability of school personnel, including the school counselor, should be assessed. For example, school counselors can talk with front desk and other personnel to consider how drop-by visits can be handled. School personnel can identify environmental indicators that impact approachability of a school through policy and practice, such as key signage in multiple languages, and steps that front desk personnel take to address language differences of parents. They can also assess how easy it is to secure interpretative support if necessary. School counselors should be aware of the variance in English language abilities and the accommodations they can make to facilitate parent understanding through slowing down speech, using visuals including text, demonstrating patience and encouragement, communicating directly to the parents even when an interpreter is present, as well as making known interpretative services that are available.

School counselors can advocate for schools to provide practical, user-friendly information in Spanish when report cards are issued. Useful information can center on the following topics: explanation of the grading system and ways to reach out to key contact people at the school if the parent has any questions. Information about the role of key contact people can be made explicit through parent information sessions and written materials (online and hard copy). School counselors can collaborate with other school personnel to create welcome letters that include photographs of key personnel including the child's teacher. Additionally, information can be provided on strategies to support the child's academic development through collaboration with the school.

Finally, school counselors should continue to advocate for and be knowledgeable about a variety of resources (e.g., internet-based, church-based, and volunteer tutors) that Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency can turn to in order to obtain help for their children.

Counselors who are not based in schools are also encouraged to familiarize themselves with school practices, policies, and resources in order to support Hispanic immigrant parents in understanding systems and practices impacting their children. Counselors can explore and support increased parent self-efficacy related to informal and formal involvement. When indicated, counselors can be ready to help clients identify concrete steps to navigate systems, for example how to request a referral for an evaluation of a student for a possible learning disability or to address behavioral issues of children impacting homework completion and literacy development. Counselors can encourage parents to connect with other helping professionals and support resources in the school and community (including churches).

**Training counselors.** Recommendations for counselors described above address knowledge, skills, and awareness that are pertinent to the Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies (American Counseling Association, 2015). These competencies, which integrate counselor self-awareness, client world view, counseling relationship, and counseling and advocacy interventions, provide a useful framework for counselors working with Hispanic immigrant families and should be discussed and evaluated within counselor training programs.

Additionally, few counselor education programs integrate training specifically related to working with families or clients with other language dominance (Morales, Yakushko & Castro , 2011; Paone, Malott & Maddux, 2010). The inclusion of an interpreter invites certain complexities into the counseling relationship (Miller, Martell, Pazdirek, Caruth, & Lopez, 2005). Counselors must also be aware of the range of English language skills that are present within the Hispanic immigrant population and be able to adjust their own communication skills accordingly in a respectful exchange. Adequate training related to working with families and clients with Spanish and other language dominance should be integrated into counselor education programs, school in-service programs, as well as other venues for continuing education for counselors.

### **Concluding Statement**

Hispanic individuals now number over 15 million individuals and comprise 16.3% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2010). With tremendous differences in terms of immigration history, economic circumstances, and linguistic ability, parents within this segment of the population join parents of other cultural groups in supporting their children's academic development within and outside of school. Formal and informal involvement in a child's education has been shown to correlate positively to a child's academic achievement. Thereby, schools and communities at large have a vested interest in doing all that they can do to foster and facilitate inclusive parent involvement at the school level and most effective parent involvement within home settings. Communities will benefit from all children

reaching their maximum potential, thus supporting parents' efforts to support their children is essential.

The focus for discussions about how to increase diverse parent involvement has all too often, however, been focused primarily on the parent and child, and how the parent actions can help the child. Schools, too, benefit from increased formal involvement of all parents. Schools hold great potential for dynamic acculturative exchanges between parents, students, and school personnel through the involvement of Hispanic immigrant families. Studies such as this one provide a rich picture of the personal, social, and environmental factors that impact formal school involvement of Hispanic immigrant parents with dominant Spanish language proficiency. Moreover, this study shines light on the concerted efforts that Hispanic immigrant parents are already making to support their children through home-based activity. Hopefully, the findings from this study can help to inform the efforts of involved parties, from school personnel to community advocates to parents, in achieving the potential that schools hold of being rich multicultural and multilingual communities where parents from all backgrounds are empowered and included in the conversation.

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**APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A: Informed Consent Form**

North Carolina State University  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

Title of Study: A Narrative Analysis of Barriers, Supports and Resiliency in School Involvement Experiences of Hispanic Immigrant Parents with Dominant Spanish Language Proficiency

Principal Investigator Lynn Tovar

Faculty Sponsor Dr. Sylvia Nassar-McMillan

### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You have been invited to take part in a research study. This study is about Hispanic parent involvement in their children's schools and education. The purpose of this form is to inform you about this research study and what you can expect from participating in this research study. You may choose not to participate or you may stop participating at any time without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not influence your relationship with the organization or person that referred you to the study.

### **¿Cuáles son algunas cosas generales que usted debe saber acerca de los estudios de investigación?**

*Usted ha sido invitado a participar en un estudio de investigación. Este estudio es sobre la participación de madres /padres hispanos en las escuelas y la educación de sus hijos. El propósito de esta documento es informarle acerca de este estudio de investigación y lo que usted puede esperar al participar en esta investigación. Usted tiene el derecho a declinar su participación o terminarla en cualquier momento sin ninguna penalización. Su decisión de participar o no en este estudio no tendrá ninguna influencia en su relación con la persona u organización que lo refirió a este estudio de investigación.*

### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this research study is to learn about your experience and feelings as a parent supporting your children's academic development in activities at home and in their schools.

### **¿Cuál es el propósito de este estudio?**

*El propósito de este estudio de investigación es aprender acerca de su experiencia y sentimientos como padre o madre en apoyar el desarrollo académico de sus hijos con actividades en el hogar y en sus escuelas.*

### **What will happen if you take part in the study?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will schedule an interview with the researcher at a location where you feel comfortable. This can be at your home or at a community center, church or other location. At the start of the interview, you will take a questionnaire. The

interview and questionnaire will last 60-90 minutes total and will be audio-recorded on a password protected recording device. Once the interview is completed, I or a research assistant will transcribe your interview to have a written account of what you and the interviewer said. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript and make sure the transcription is accurate. This review would involve 15-30 minutes of your time. Upon receiving your transcript, you will be given a \$10 gift card to a local grocery store.

**¿Qué sucederá si usted decide participar en el estudio?**

*Si usted acepta participar en este estudio, se le programará una entrevista con la investigadora en un lugar donde se sienta cómodo. Esto puede ser en su casa o en un centro comunitario, iglesia u otro lugar. Tomará un cuestionario al principio de la entrevista. La entrevista y cuestionario tendrá una duración de 60-90 minutos en total y estarán audio-grabada en un grabadora protegido con una contraseña. Una vez que se haya completado la entrevista, la investigadora o un asistente de investigación transcribirá la entrevista para tener un relato escrito de lo que usted y la entrevistadora dijeron. Usted tendrá la oportunidad de revisar la transcripción y asegúrese de que la transcripción es exacta. Esta revisión implicaría 15-30 minutos de su tiempo. Después de recibir la transcripción revisada por usted, le obsequiaremos una tarjeta de regalo de \$10 de algún supermercado local.*

**Risks**

The level of risk is low. However you could feel uncomfortable discussing your experiences within your son's or daughter's schools worrying that your answers could affect your child's relationship with the school. I am not a representative or affiliated with your son's or daughter's school. To minimize this risk, a pseudonym (false name) will be used to identify you in all transcriptions and written documents, and your son's or daughter's school will not be identified. Your contact information will be kept for 5 years in a location separate from your interview and questionnaire responses. At no time will you be asked to disclose the immigration status of yourself or anyone in your family.

**Riesgos**

*El nivel de riesgo es muy bajo. Sin embargo algunas personas pueden sentirse incomodas en platicar sobre sus experiencias en la escuela de su hijo o preocuparse que sus respuestas puedan afectar la relación de su hijo con la escuela. Yo no soy representante ni estoy afiliada con la escuela de su hijo/a. Para minimizar este riesgo, un seudónimo (nombre falso) se utilizará para identificarte en todas las transcripciones y documentos escritos, tampoco vamos a mencionar identificar el nombre de la escuela de su hijo o hija. Su información de contacto se mantendrá durante 5 años en un lugar separado de sus respuestas de la entrevista y cuestionario. En ningún momento se le pedirá a revelar el estado de inmigración de usted o alguien de su familia.*

**Benefits**

The indirect benefit expected from this study is the generation of knowledge that could help counseling and school practitioners develop more effective ways of meeting the needs of Hispanic parents with Spanish language dominance and other individuals who are not fluent in English.

**Beneficios**

*El beneficio indirecto que se espera de este estudio es la generación de conocimiento que podría ayudar a los educadores y consejeros que trabajan en las escuelas a identificar maneras de mejorar su habilidad para apoyar a las familias hispanos con uso predominante del español y otros individuos que no dominen el Inglés.*

**Confidentiality**

Your comments from the interview and questionnaire will be used as part of a published research study. Participants will be identified only by pseudonym in any report, publication or presentation about this study. Your contact information and real name will be kept separate from your interview and questionnaire responses in order to protect your privacy, and your real name will not be mentioned in the study. Interview and questionnaire recordings will be stored securely stored on a password protected computer storage drive until transcribed. Once transcribed, the recordings will be deleted. The interview and questionnaire transcripts will be securely stored on a password protected and encrypted computer storage drive for up to five years.

**Confidencialidad**

*Sus comentarios de esta entrevista y cuestionario serán utilizados como parte de un estudio publicado de investigación. Los participantes serán identificados únicamente por un seudónimo en cualquier informe, publicación o presentación de este estudio. Su información de contacto y verdadero nombre se mantendrán separados de sus respuestas de la entrevista y cuestionario para proteger su privacidad, y su verdadero nombre no se menciona en el estudio. Grabaciones de la entrevista y del cuestionario serán almacenadas de forma segura protegida con una contraseña hasta que se transcriba. Una vez transcritas, se eliminarán las grabaciones. Las transcripciones de las entrevistas y cuestionario serán almacenadas de forma segura protegida por una contraseña y encriptado en una computadora por un máximo de cinco años.*

**Compensation**

All participants will receive a \$10 grocery store gift card. Participants who withdraw from the study will also receive this gift card.

**Compensación**

*Todos los participantes recibirán una tarjeta de \$ 10 de algún supermercado local. Los participantes que decidan retirarse del estudio también recibirán esta tarjeta de regalo.*

**What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, please contact the researcher, Lynn Tovar, at 919-749-2390 or [lmzagzeb@ncsu.edu](mailto:lmzagzeb@ncsu.edu).

**¿Qué pasa si usted tiene preguntas sobre este estudio?**

*Si usted tiene preguntas en cualquier momento sobre el estudio o los procedimientos, por favor póngase en contacto con la investigadora, Lynn Tovar, al 919-749-2390 o [lmzagzeb@ncsu.edu](mailto:lmzagzeb@ncsu.edu).*

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-515-4514).

**¿Qué pasa si usted tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante de la investigación?**

*Si usted siente que no ha sido tratado de acuerdo con las descripciones de este documento, o que sus derechos como participante de la investigación han sido violados durante el transcurso de este proyecto, puede ponerse en contacto con Deb Paxton, Administrador de Cumplimiento Normativo, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-515-4514).*

**Consent To Participate**

- "I have read or had it read to me, and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled." Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature signifying having reviewed the informed consent with and provided a copy to the participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Consentimiento para participar**

- "He leído o me han leído, y entiendo la información anterior. He recibido una copia de este documento. Yo voluntariamente estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio con el entendimiento de que yo puedo dejar de participar en cualquier momento sin penalidad o pérdida de beneficios a los que tengo derecho de otra manera." Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del Investigador que significa que ha revisado el consentimiento informado y proporcionó una copia al participante: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix B: Interview Guide

Pseudonym:	Place:
Interviewer:	Scheduled Time:
Date:	Start: _____ End: _____

#### **Interview Protocol (Spanish)**

##### **Opening Questions**

1. ¿Cuáles son sus razones para participar en este estudio?
2. ¿Podría contarme un poco sobre usted?
  - a. ¿Dónde creció?
  - b. ¿Cuándo llegó y donde ha vivido en los Estados Unidos?
  - c. Como aprendió inglés y como usa el idioma
3. Hábleme de su familia. ¿Cómo es una semana normal para su familia?

##### **Questions about Parent Involvement**

4. Cuénteme acerca de sus niños y sus experiencias escolares. ¿Cómo ha sido la escuela para ellos?
  - a. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las cosas que usted ha hecho para ayudarles con la escuela?
  - b. ¿Cuáles son algunas cosas que usted hace para ayudarles con la tarea?
  - c. *Si es aplicable*: ¿Cómo apoya su pareja/su esposo(a) en el desarrollo académico de sus hijos?
5. ¿Hubo algún caso en que tuvo que visitar la escuela para abogar por (o defender a) su hijo/hija? Por favor dígame acerca de esta experiencia.
  - a. ¿Cuál era la situación?
  - b. ¿Qué medidas tomó usted para abogar por él / ella o defenderlo(a)?
  - c. ¿Cuál fue la parte más difícil de esa experiencia?
  - d. ¿Cuál fue el resultado, y fue de su satisfacción?
6. ¿Qué recursos han sido de ayuda para usted en el apoyo del desarrollo académico de su hijo/a (talleres para padres, ayuda por internet, tutorías, etc)?
  - a. ¿Cómo se enteró acerca de estos recursos?
  - b. ¿Qué hizo usted para contar con ellos?
7. Vamos a hablar un poco acerca de la escuela(s) de su hijo(a). Por favor, dígame un poco acerca de la escuela.

- a. ¿Qué le gusta y no le gusta de la escuela?
  - b. Al entrar en la escuela, ¿quién le ayuda con cualquier pregunta que usted tiene?
  - c. ¿Qué hace usted para comunicarse con personas que no hablan español?
8. Ahora vamos a hablar acerca de sus experiencias en la escuela de su hijo(s). Aquí está una lista de las diferentes actividades o eventos.
- Asistir a una conferencia o reunión con la maestra o el maestro de su hijo/a
  - Ser voluntaria/o en el salón de su hijo/a
  - Asistir a una reunión de la asociación de padres y maestros (*parent/teacher association*)
  - Asistir a un evento especial (por ejemplo, feria de ciencias, obra de teatro, fiesta de celebración, juego de deportes, reunión del club de la escuela, presentación de los estudiantes en el salón de clases, etc.)
- Desde el inicio de este año escolar, ¿en qué eventos ha participado? ¿Cómo se enteró acerca de esta actividad? Hábleme de su decisión de asistir o no asistir. Si asistió, ¿podría contarme sobre la experiencia participando en esta actividad?
9. Al pensar en sus hijos y su educación, ¿qué es lo más importante para usted?
10. ¿Qué consejos le da a su hijo(a) sobre educación?

### **Closing Questions**

11. ¿Hay algo más, que no hayamos hablado, que le gustaría añadir en este momento?
12. ¿Cómo se siente de haber participado en esta entrevista?

---

*Gracias por compartir sus experiencias y participar en esta entrevista.*

### **Interview Protocol (English)**

#### **Opening Questions**

1. What are your reasons for participating in this study?
2. Tell me a little about yourself.
  - a. Where you grew up
  - b. Timeline in the United States
  - c. English language learning and usage
  - d. Formal education experiences
3. Tell me about your family. What is a typical week for your family?

#### **Questions about parent involvement**

4. Tell me about your children and their educational experiences. How has school been for them?
  - a. What are some things that you've done to help them with school?
  - b. What are some things you do to help them with homework?
  - c. How does your partner/spouse support your children's academic development
5. Was there an instance when you had to visit the school to advocate for your child? Please tell me about this experience.
  - a. What was the situation?
  - b. What steps did you take to advocate for her/him?
  - c. What was the most challenging part of that experience
  - d. What was the outcome, and was it to your satisfaction?
6. What resources have been helpful to you in supporting your child's academic development (workshops for parents, online, tutoring, etc)?
  - a. How did you learn about these resources?
  - b. What steps did you take to take to secure them?
7. Let's talk a little about your child(ren)'s school(s). Please tell me a little about the school.
  - a. What do you like and dislike about it?
  - b. When you enter the school, who helps you with any question that you have?
  - c. What do you do to communicate with people who do not speak Spanish?
8. Now let's talk about your experiences in your child(ren)'s school. Here is a list of different activities or events.
  - Attend a parent/teacher conference
  - Volunteer in the classroom
  - Attend a parent/teacher association meeting
  - Attend a special event (e.g. science fair, school play, holiday party, sports game, school club meeting, student presentation in the classroom)

Since the start of this school year, which (if any) have you participated in? How did you learn about this activity? Tell me about your decision to (or not to) attend and (if applicable) your time participating in this activity.

(Probe for thoughts, feelings, events and interactions with teachers, administration, other parents and support personnel)

9. When thinking about your children and their education, what is most important to you?

10. What, if any, consejos (advice or words of wisdom) about education do you give to your child?

**Closing the Interview**

11. Is there anything else that we have not covered that you would like to add at this time?
12. How was it for you to participate in this interview?

*Thank you for sharing your experiences and participating in this interview.*

### Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

#### Demographic Questionnaire (Spanish)

Seudónimo: \_\_\_\_\_

Edad: \_\_\_\_\_

Estado civil: \_\_\_\_\_

País de origen: \_\_\_\_\_

Edad y nivel académico de su(s) hijo(s):

Hasta que nivel escolar ha cursado?

¿Trabaja fuera del hogar?

En caso afirmativo, ¿qué tipo de trabajo tiene usted, y cuantas horas trabaja?

¿Cómo calificaría su nivel para leer los documentos que están escritos en inglés? (Ninguno, no bien, bien, muy bien)

Para escribir en inglés? (Ninguno, no bien, bien, muy bien)

Para entender inglés hablado? (Ninguno, no bien, bien, muy bien)

Para hablar inglés? (Ninguno, no bien, bien, muy bien)

#### Demographic Questionnaire (English)

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status \_\_\_\_\_

Country of origin:

Ages and grades (if applicable) of child(ren):

How much school did you complete?

Do you work outside of the home?

If yes, how many hours do you work? What kind of work do you do?

How do you rate your ability to read English? (*none, a little, some, a lot*)

To write English? (*none, a little, some, a lot*)

To understand spoken English? (*none, a little, some, a lot*)

To speak English? (*none, a little, some, a lot*)

### Appendix D: Field Guide

Participants present (pseudonyms):	Place:
Observer:	Purpose of Observation:
Date:	Start: _____ End: _____

1. What were my initial impressions about the setting and people in it (i.e. sensory details, look and feel of setting and people in it).
  
2. What were the key events or incidents that occurred during this observation?
  
3. What were my reactions to the events and/or setting?
  
4. What did I learn from this observation regarding my research questions?

### Appendix E: Original Text and Translations

Table 2  
*Original text and translations*

Page number	Participant	Original Text	English Translation
70	Elena	Como usted sabe, es difícil estudiar y trabajar.	As you know, it is difficult to study and work.
74	Luz	Pero cuando tú tienes una persona que, como dicen, si no te apoya o no te echa una mano o te quita los sueños, nunca vas a poder superarte.	When you have a person who, like they say, doesn't support you or give you a hand or who takes away your dreams, never are you going to be able to better yourself.
79	Marisol	No me sentí parte del grupo porque ellos todos hablaban bien inglés y si yo hablaba, era lo más poquito.	I didn't feel part of the group because all the others spoke English well and what I spoke, was just a little.
80	Mary	Pues tratar de decirle lo que pasa...lo que uno sufre o lo que uno ha sufrido para venir hasta aquí.	Well, I try to tell her what happened...what one suffers or what one has suffered in order to come here.
85	Antonio	Entonces pues, más allá en México, ya ve que son países donde está difícil de salir adelante, un poco más complicada la vida. Entonces yo quiero que ellas traten de lograr sus metas y salir adelante y que sean alguien en la vida.	So then, in Mexico you see that there are countries where it's difficult to get ahead...life is a little more complicated. So I want that they try to achieve their goals and get ahead...that they become someone in life.
85	Adalberto	Pero yo quiero que ella vaya a la universidad, porque yo siento que aquí vale la pena. Usted dirá: '¿porqué aquí sí y en tu país no?' En mi país también, pero aquí hay más oportunidades para la juventud.	I want her to go to college, because I feel that here it is worth it. You will say, but why here and in your country no? In my country, also, but here there are more opportunities for young people.

Table 2 continued

86	Mariela	Entonces sí, si a veces sí me gustaría aprender más, saber más cómo poder apoyarlos a que no dejen el estudio a medio camino. Eso es lo que sí me preocupa.	So yes, at times I would like to learn more, to know more how to support them so they do not leave their studies only mid-way through. This is what indeed worries me.
86	Elena	Si son cosas importantes sí voy, hago lo posible por estar allí, y cuando tengo libre, a alguna actividad siempre voy.	If it's important, I go. I do all that is possible to be there, and when I am free, I go to whatever activity.
86	Antonio	Que a ellos les da gusto que les aplaudan o algo cuando reciben sus reconocimientos....Quizá a lo mejor ellos también se sienten muy apoyados por ese lado. En cambio, si no miran a nadie, pues, van a sentirse mal.	They are happy when someone applauds for them when they receive their recognition awards...Perhaps in this way they feel supported. On the other hand, if they see no one, well, they are going to feel bad.
87	Luz	En las juntas es lo que nos dicen: "si ustedes no entienden o no pueden o el niño no entendió o no puede hacer la tarea, simplemente circulen la parte donde él no entendió y que vaya más temprano y que le ayude su maestra..." Entonces, así lo hemos hecho.	In the meetings they tell us "if you don't understand or you can't or the child doesn't understand or can't do the homework, just circle the part that he doesn't understand and have him go early to get help from the teacher..." So that's what we've done.
89	Marisol	Si hay algo que yo pueda ayudar o hacer por los estudiantes -porque yo también soy mamá- pues yo lo hago con gusto. Para ayudar a otros papás y para ayudar a mis propios hijos. Ayudarles a ellos, sí.	If there is something I can help or do for the students – because I also am a mother – well, I am happy to do it. To help the other parents, and to help my own children. To help them, yes.

Table 2 continued

90	Memo	Pero sí, yo siento que también los maestros necesitan ayuda. Ya lo vi bien, lo analicé. Necesitan ayuda porque los niños siempre están queriendo caminar por otro lado, entonces uno tiene que estar pendiente de ayudarles.	But yes, I feel that teachers also need help. I saw it well, I analyzed it. They need help because the kids are always wanting to walk all over, so one has to be aware in helping them.
90	Luz	Me han mandado información y todo eso, pero ese programa no sé ni para qué es. Para serle sincera nunca me he enfocado en cómo trabaja. Me han invitado pero tampoco he tenido eso de poder ir a ver de qué se trata ese programa.	They have sent information and all that, but I don't know what this program is about. To be sincere, I've never focused on how it works. They have invited me but neither have I been able to go to see what this program is about.
91	Elena	Sí he ido a las reuniones. Pero a veces no he entendido todo. Por eso a veces ya no iba, porque no entendía todo.	Yes, I've gone to the meetings. But at times I haven't understood everything. For that reason at times I don't go, because I didn't understand everything.
91	Adalberto	Yo, en lo que tiene que ver con mi hija, quiero avanzar en el mismo idioma, para irme involucrando más.	With everything that has to do with my daughter, I want to advance more in the language to involve myself more.
91	Adilene	No sé a dónde referirme o cómo encontrar la respuesta.	I don't know where to go or how to find the answer.
92	Luz	No me he tocado por ahora con ninguna escuela que pongan mala cara, al contrario, han sido muy amables cuando entramos... Allí donde yo he ido a apuntar a mis hijos, me gusta, porque hay personas muy amables, nunca me he sentido incomoda con ninguna escuela.	I haven't yet had a school where they were unfriendly. To the contrary, they have been very friendly when we enter... Where I've enrolled my kids, I like it, because there are friendly people. I've never felt uncomfortable with any school.

Table 2 continued

94	Memo	Lo estamos apoyando para que se dé cuenta de que estar con la familia es lo más importante.	We are supporting him so he can realize that being with the family is the most important thing.
94	Elena	...porque yo siempre desde que llegué estuve trabajando. Trabajaba dos turnos, tenía dos trabajos. Cuando uno viene de otro país, viene con esa meta de juntar dinero para regresar.	...because since I arrived I've always been working. I worked two shifts, I had two jobs. When one comes from another country, one comes with the goal to pull together money to return.
94	Magali	O, como le digo, con las otras niñas mías cuando yo estaba en la casa, no trabajaba. Yo sacaba más tiempo. Mientras ella va a la escuela, uno hace todos los quehaceres de la casa, la cocina y todo. Cuando ellos llegan, uno está libre porque uno está todo el día en la casa. Saca el tiempo para la tarea...	Or, I tell you, with my other girls when I was in the house, I didn't work. I had more time. While they were at school, you do all the housework, cooking and everything. When they arrive, you're free because you've been all day in the house. You have time for the homework...
95	Luz	Yo trabajo en la mañana en limpieza, y en la tarde trabajo en un (restaurante). Dependiendo del horario a veces trabajo de las tres a las 11 de la noche...Entonces nada más llego, me duermo y me levanto temprano. Me levanto a las cuatro y media y me voy a trabajar y así. No estoy en casa casi la mayor parte.	I have cleaning job in the morning, and in the afternoon I work in a (restaurant). Depending on the schedule, sometimes I work from 3:00 to 11:00 at night...So I do nothing more than get home, sleep and get up early. I get up at half past four and I go to work. I'm not at home a lot.

Table 2 continued

96	Eliana	Mira, cuando tú vayas a la iglesia, ora por esa niña, pídele a Jesús que entre en su corazón porque esa niña no es que ella sea una niña mala, porque no hay niños malos. Tal vez sus padres no tienen cuidado, está mirando ella algún programa donde ve eso ella y eso ella sólo lo está repitiendo. Tienes que pedirle a Dios y decirle que entre a su corazoncito, y verás que si tú confías, ella va a cambiar.	Look, when you go to church, pray for this girl. Ask Jesus that he enters into her heart because this girl isn't a bad girl, because there aren't bad children. Perhaps her parents aren't being careful and she's watching some program where she sees this and is only repeating what she hears. You have to ask God and tell him to enter her heart, and you'll see if you believe, that she'll change.
96	Adilene	Nosotros vamos a la iglesia y hay maestras ahí que llevan a los niños para hablarles ahí, enseñarle como principio de uno mismo a respetar a las demás personas, cosas de Dios, así.	We go to church and there are teachers there who meet with the kids to talk with them, to teach them as a principle to respect other people, God things, like that.
97	Antonio	Ya ahorita cualquier cosita luego se van a la Internet y allí rápido lo encuentran. Anteriormente se batallaba un poquito más, porque siempre tenía uno que andar buscando en algún libro o que ve a tal parte a buscar.	And now for whatever little thing, one goes to the Internet and there you find it quickly. Before, one battled a little more because one always had to go all over the place looking for a book.
97	Luz	Un recurso en Internet sería una página donde ellos estudian o donde ellos pueden practicar la lectura o las matemáticas. Siempre los maestros me mandan una página donde ellos pueden entrar para que agarren su lectura o sus matemáticas.	An internet resource would be the page where they study or where they can practice reading or math. The teachers always send me a page where they can go to learn their reading or their math.

Table 2 continued

97	Eliana	A veces les dan unos libritos para practicar y yo veo ahí y digo: "Bueno, esto está bien." O a veces hasta yo aprendo, porque digo: "¡Wow, esto también me sirve a mí!"	At times they give them little books to practice, and I look with them and say "Well, this is good." Or sometimes even I learn, because I say "Wow! This also is helpful to me!"
99	Adalberto	Además, estudiar enriquece al ser humano. Leer. Yo leo mucho y trato que ella lea mucho también. A ella le gusta leer, sí. Trato que lea porque esa es la base del ser humano. La mejor riqueza que tiene el ser humano es lo que aprende, porque todo lo otro desaparece. Cuando hay un terremoto la gente huye y deja su casa, deja su carro, deja su dinero y sólo quiere salvar su vida. Con su vida va su intelecto, lo que ha aprendido.	In addition, studying enriches humanity. To read. I read a lot and I try to have her read a lot too. She likes to read. I try to read because that's the foundation of being human. The richest treasure that human beings have is what they learn, because everything else disappears. When there is a storm and the people flee and leave their house, their car, they leave their money and only want to save their life. With their life comes their intellect, that which they've learned.
99	Eliana	No puede quedarse sólo a la mitad del camino porque se está cerrando sus posibilidades a su futuro. Lo que va a ser, a cómo va a desempeñarse dentro de la sociedad a la que pertenece. Porque no puede pasar como nada, tiene que ser algo, alguien. Dejar una huella en la comunidad en la que viven, ¿por qué? Porque a eso venimos. En un propósito en su vida.	You can't stop in the middle of the road because that's shutting off your future possibilities. What you're going to be, what you're going to accomplish in this society that you belong to. Because one can't just pass through like nothing, one has to be something, someone. To leave a footprint in the community that one lives in. Why? Because that's why we come. To leave a purposeful life.

Table 2 continued

99	Eliana	No, no te olvides que ante todos tienes tus principios espirituales y morales, y sea lo que sea, donde quiera que estés, tienes que recordar que tiene que hacer un buen papel en lo que tú hagas en tu vida.	No, don't you forget that above all you have your spiritual and moral principles, and be what may, wherever you are, you have to remember that you must do a good job in whatever you do in your life.
100	Luz	Les digo que no tanto es el trabajo, porque si uno trabaja siempre uno se la va a pasar trabajando, y el estudio siempre lo llevas contigo, vayas a donde vayas, llegues a donde llegues, siempre te van a pedir tus estudios: hasta qué grado llegaste, hasta qué nivel llegaste.	I tell them that work isn't everything, because if one works, you're always going to end up working. And your studies are what you carry with you, wherever you go... wherever you arrive. They will always ask you about your studies, to what grade and level you got to.
100	Adalberto	Cuando hay un terremoto la gente huye y deja su casa, deja su carro, deja su dinero y solo quiere salvar su vida. Con su vida va su intelecto, lo que ha aprendido... Trato de meterle eso en su cabecita	When there's an earthquake, people flee and leave their home, leave their car, leave their money and only want to save their life. With their life comes their intellect, that which they have learned. That's what I try to teach her.
100	Mariela	Pues les digo que realmente la vida no es fácil, conseguir un trabajo... que puedan pagar más o menos o porque realmente si no hay estudio pues no hay buen trabajo tampoco. Entonces para que ellos puedan tener su casita, cosas que ellos desearan tener en la vida pues es más fácil teniendo un título.	Well, I tell them that really life isn't easy -- to get a job... that can pay more or less, because really if there's no education, well, there's no good work either. Then, for them to be able to have their house, the things they want in life, well it's easier if they have a diploma.

Table 2 continued

100	Adilene	Y la educación de la escuela, pues no, hasta me imagino cómo ya se van a graduar en la universidad, o sea yo, es mi pensamiento. Y yo le digo a ellos, tengo hoy cinco, ya cuando ustedes estén grandes, tu mamá ya no va a pagar un doctor, porque voy a tener un doctor, ya no voy a pagar un abogado, ya no voy a pagar. O sea les intento decir que es un sueño.	And the education from the school, well no, even I imagine that they're going to graduate from college, or anyway this is my thought. And I tell them, I have five children, so when you are older, your mom won't have to pay for a doctor, because I'm going to have a doctor. I'm not going to pay for a lawyer... anyway that's what I try to say, that it's a dream.
101	Magali	...En un McDonald's? o ¿quieren trabajar en una oficina así bien vestiditos siendo doctor o un abogado?	...In a McDonald's, or do you want to work in an office, well dressed, perhaps a doctor or a lawyer.
101	Adilene	Si tú no estudias vas a estar como mamá, o ¿quieres tener un trabajo donde estés todo el día en el sol, dónde no te paguen bien?	If you don't study, you are going to be like your mom. Or do you want to have a job where you are in the sun all day, where they don't pay you well?
102	Elena	Le digo: "¿Pues quieres trabajar como yo? Ya ves cómo llego de cansada. Ya ves mis horarios. A veces te tengo que dejar sola porque me tengo que ir a trabajar, ¿quieres ser así? Entonces no vayas a la escuela."	I tell her "well, do you want to work like me? You see how I arrive exhausted. You see my schedule. At times I have to leave you at home alone because I have to go to work. Do you want to be like this? Well then, don't go to school."
102	Mary	Que ellos aprendan, que no sean igual que yo que no sé nada.	They should learn, so that they aren't the same as me who doesn't know anything.

Table 2 continued

102	Magali	De vez en cuando yo la chequeaba, me traían los <i>report cards</i> . Si yo veo que llevan 95, 97, 98, no me preocupaba, porque están haciendo su tarea y están sacando buenos grados.	Now and then I check their homework, they bring me the report cards. If I see that they are getting 95, 97, 98, I don't worry because they are doing their homework and getting good grades.
102	Luz	Por ahorita los maestros me han informado que en calificaciones van no muy bien, pero no muy bajas. Están como nivelados, nada más. Pero, por ejemplo, si sacan un dos o un tres —la mayor parte siempre me traen un dos o un tres— yo hablo con los maestros. Voy y les pregunto. Intento que me hagan una reunión con ellos y me reúno con ellos, y ya les pregunto por qué va bajo, por qué sacó esa calificación, en qué forma quiere que les ayudemos.	For the time being, the teachers have informed me that their grades aren't good, but they're not super low. They're so-so, nothing more. But for example, if they get a 2 or a 3 – usually they bring home a 2 or a 3 – I talk with the teachers. I go and I ask them. I try to get an appointment and I meet with them, and then I ask them why the grades are low, why he got that grade, and how we should help.
103	Mariela	Yo a veces, siento que a lo mejor, tal vez lo hace o que no quiere hacer su tarea, su trabajo en la escuela porque le falta más inglés o le da pena hablar bien o no sé.	Perhaps he (got in trouble) and doesn't want to do his homework, his work in school because of his English skills and he is embarrassed to speak, I don't know.
104	Antonio	Pero tratamos de hablarle para que no continuara, sino tratar de enfocarse más en la escuela y que eso no le iba a llevar a nada bien.	But we tried to talk to her so that she wouldn't continue and would instead try to focus herself more on school, and that (what she was doing) was not going to lead to anything good

Table 2 continued

105	Adilene	Sí, nosotros nos levantamos temprano... me gusta motivarlos, si ellos se levantan temprano yo tengo que poner el ejemplo que levantarme temprano con ellos, animarlos. Mientras tú te lavas la boca yo te hago un desayuno, pues a enseñarles que ellos tienen compromiso como yo también. Mis compromiso es atenderlos, que tengan comida, que estén bien. Pero el compromiso de ellos es ir a la escuela, aprender y tener buenas calificaciones. Como el de mi esposo, mi esposo les dice que es su compromiso de ellos, es su trabajo ir a la escuela.	Yes, we get up early... I like to motivate them, if they get up early I have to serve as an example and get up early too - to encourage them. In the meantime you brush your teeth, I'll make breakfast, to show them that they have a commitment and I do too. My commitment is to take care of them, that they have food and that they're alright. But their commitment is to go to school, to learn and to get good grades. Like my husband, he tells them that their work is to go to school.
106	Eliana	"¡Ay! ¡Es que no quiero leer!". Y ...le digo: "Vamos a leer las dos juntas." Entonces así es como ella se interesa.	"Ay! It's just that I don't want to read!" And I tell her "we're going to read – both of us together." And in this way, she becomes interested.
107	Luz	Y me dice la maestra: "Me gusta que cuando vienes hagas preguntas por los niños."	And the teacher tells me "I like it when you come and ask questions about the children."
107	Memo	Pero yo me lleno de valor y digo: "Yo voy."	Got up my courage and said 'I'm going.'
107	Marisol	Se puede notar, pero creo que con las maestras de mis hijos he tenido muy buenas experiencias, han sido muy buenos a pesar de que no hablan ellos español, ni yo mucho inglés, pero nos entendemos.	One can note, but I believe I've had good experiences with the teachers of my children. They have been very good even though they don't speak Spanish and I, much English. But we understand each other.

Table 2 continued

108	Mariela	Él me cuenta una cosa y la directora me cuenta otra cosa. Entonces yo, pues sí le creo a él lo que él me dice. Yo siempre le he dicho, pase lo que pase en la escuela tú me tienes que decir la verdad, por más malo que sea tú me tienes que decir. No puedes echar tú mentiras porque yo no te puedo ayudar de esa forma	He tells me one thing and the principal tells me another. So I, well, yes I believe him and what he tells me. I have always told him whatever happens in school you have to tell me the truth, especially the bad stuff you have to tell me. You can't lie to me because I can't help you if you do.
108	Eliana	Y le digo: "Vamos con el director". Y fue algo tan increíble que justo el director venía saliendo de su oficina, y entonces como que nos encontramos allí, y le dije si podíamos hablar un poquito. Y ya le digo: "Explícale." Y ella le dijo. Y el director, muy comprensivo, le dijo: "Te agradezco que seas sincera y que digas la verdad...."	And I told her "let's go see the principal." And it was incredible that just at that moment the principal came out of his office, and then, since we found ourselves there, and I asked him if we could speak a little. And I told her "explain to him." And she told him what happened. And the principal, very understanding, said "I appreciate that you are sincere and tell the truth..."
109	Antonio	Hace tres años cambiaron las escuelas y en el área donde estamos viviendo nosotros , anteriormente pertenecía a este área de (la otra) high school...Entonces ahora...no nada más esas calles o algo así, movía quizá a lo mejor por demasiados niños en esta escuela de aquí...Y entonces dice que a ella no le gusta ir, no quiere ir...Quiere ir acá, donde terminaron la escuela las otras.	Three years ago they changed the schools and, in the area where we are living, before it belonged to (the other) high school...Now... nothing more than these streets or something like that, moved perhaps because of too many children in this school here...And then she said that she doesn't want to go...She wants to go here where the others graduated.

Table 2 continued

110	Magali	Lo más complicado es la lectura, y más para uno que es hispano. Imagínese un padre que no hable inglés, ¿cómo le va ayudar a su hijo en el español?...Pero ahora ya no hay esos programas en la escuela, el <i>tutoring</i> , ya sea de <i>reading</i> o de matemáticas. Porque yo le he preguntado ...Y me dicen "no, aquí ahorita no hay."	The most difficult is reading, and especially if one is Hispanic. Imagine a parent that didn't speak English. How are they going to help their child in Spanish?...But now there aren't these programs, this tutoring, in reading or in mathematics. Because I've asked... and they tell me "no, now there aren't any (tutoring programs) here."
110	Antonio	La barrera del idioma hace que a veces uno no pueda comunicarse con ellos, o que le piden ayuda y que uno se queda ahí nada más mirando, que no puede comunicarse con ellos.	The language barrier at times makes it so one can't communicate with each other, or they ask for help and one ends up nothing more than looking at each other because you can't communicate with them.
112	Memo	Lo que hago es hacer dos o tres preguntas nada más. Las formulo yo... Antes de comenzar, pienso qué es lo que voy a decir. Como un plan. Lo hago y lo llevo, es lo único que hago.	What I do is formulate two or three questions, nothing more... Before I begin, I think about what it is I'm going to say. Like a plan. I make it and I carry it out, it's the only thing I do.
113	Luz	Ella se queda de lunes a jueves. Son los cuatro días que le ayudan con la tarea, con los trabajos que ella no ha terminado y todo eso. Les ayudan mucho ahí. Yo he to este avance en mi hija con eso, en que ha avanzado mucho.	She stays Monday to Thursday. On four days, they help her with homework and the work that she hasn't finished and all. They help a lot. I've seen her advance with this help – she has advanced a lot.
113	Estrella	Solo los básicos...me explico cómo puedo.	Only the basics...I explain myself as I am able.

Table 2 continued

114	Memo	No leo mucho inglés. No leo mucho pero lo que hago a veces es traducirlos en la computadora para estar seguro de lo que estoy leyendo, de lo que estoy firmando... Aunque me toma mucho tiempo pero lo hago... De esta manera estoy seguro de la información que estoy recibiendo.	I don't read English well, but what I sometimes do is translate (the documents) on the computer to be sure of what I am reading and signing... Although it takes me a lot of time to do it... in this way I'm sure of the information I'm getting.
114	Luz	Porque es diferente a una computadora que un maestro te explique qué es.	It's different with a computer than with a teacher that explains things to you.

## Appendix F: Documents Reviewed

### Web sites:

- Public elementary schools (two from urban setting, two from private setting)\*
- Public middle schools (two from urban setting, two from rural setting)\*
- School districts (urban, rural)\*
- Elementary schools in Mexico (two private, two public)
- Public Education Secretary in Mexico

### From rural setting:

- Program guide: Parent Advisory Committee Meeting
- School district's Guide for Career Planning for Students and Parents
- Promotional brochure: National Line for Migrant Family Education
- Outreach flyer: Migrant Head Start program
- Information brochures: statewide college foundation (financial aid information)
- Promotional brochure: community college ESL program
- Information brochure: early college program
- Catholic parish bulletin
- Relocation guide\*

### From urban setting:

- School district's information brochure: "What to do if you believe your child is struggling"
- Information brochure: community college programs
- Information brochure: statewide college fund scholarship
- Outreach flyer: Early Head Start program
- Non-profit organization's information brochure: "Playing to Learn: Activities for Children and Parents"
- Non-profit organization's information brochure: "Effective Ways to Discipline School-Aged Children"
- School district's program listing brochure: "Parent Academy" workshops for parents\*\*
- Information brochure: Science night sponsored by Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
- Catholic diocese magazine\*

\*in English

\*\*in English and Spanish

**Appendix G: Document Review Guide**

Name of Document	
Source	
Date Obtained	Document written in (circle): Spanish/English/Both/Other_____

1. What is the general content of the document?
2. What are the key events or topics described in the document?
3. Who is the target audience for the document?
4. What did I learn from this document regarding my research questions?