

Hispanic Parental Involvement in School:  
Perspectives of Parents and Educators

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by  
TIFFANY L. CASTLEMAN  
Dr. Sandy Hutchison, Dissertation Supervisor

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# HISPANIC PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

Hispanic Parental Involvement in School:

Perspectives of Parents and Educators

presented by Tiffany L. Castleman,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of education

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Sandy Hutchison, Dissertation Supervisor

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Dr. Doug Thomas

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Dr. Barbara Martin

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Dr. Carolyn McKnight

# HISPANIC PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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HISPANIC PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL: PERSPECTIVES OF  
PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

Tiffany L Castleman

Dr. Sandra Hutchinson, Dissertation Supervisor

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of Hispanic parent perspectives about school involvement. The interview questions were semi structured and open-ended to allow for the participants to share their personal recollections and add further insights to the information. Hispanic parents do not think of parental involvement in the same way as staff in school districts, in that they place a value in supporting their child emotionally, teaching life skills at home, and by showing respect. Parents take their role of instilling values and manners in their children very seriously. The challenges arise from language barriers, low English proficiency of the parents, and economic struggles such as multiple jobs and lack of transportation. Suggestions include the creation of welcome centers for parents, inviting parents to share cultural and family information, and connecting the school resources with parents.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority group in the United States (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2014). This rapid expansion and influx of the Hispanic population has led to Hispanic children and adolescents being the largest minority group enrolled in American schools (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). However, historically there is an academic gap between Hispanic students and students from other ethnic and racial groups (especially White non-Hispanic students) in the American school system (National Assessment for Academic Progress [NAEP], 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009a). As a consequence, Hispanics have the lowest level of educational attainment in high school and college of any ethnic group in the United States (Lee & Bowen, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Hispanic students are notably behind their White counterparts in graduation rates, dropout rates, literacy rates, and college preparedness rates (Executive summary-Latinos' school success, 2012; Rodriguez, 2008).

Unfortunately, school efforts to close the gap in academic achievement between Hispanic students and White students have been largely unsuccessful to date (Beatty, 2013). In addition, a number of studies have proposed that inner-city Hispanic students may face more educational obstacles than students living in rural areas due to high stress levels caused by environmental factors of poverty, unemployment, exposure to violence, and discrimination (Constantine, Erikson, Banks, and Timberlake, 1998; Jackson, Potere, and Brobst, 2006; Kenny, Blustein, Chave, Grossman, and Gallagher, 2003; and Rodriguez and Conchas, 2009). Due to the educational, career, and environmental

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obstacles surrounding them, these combined factors may also contribute to poor academic performance (Olayiwola, Oyenuga, Oyekunle, Olajide, & Agboluaje; 2011). One third of all Hispanic children in the United States, or 5.7 million are in poverty, more than in any other racial or ethnic group (DeNavas-Walt, & Proctor, 2015). Since 2000, large-scale United States immigration occurred that is much more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse than in previous years. This resulted in a dramatic increase in the Hispanic population in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Within the next 20 years, it is predicted "the number of Hispanic children ages 5 to 13 will nearly double, and by 2030 Hispanic students will comprise one-fourth of the total K-12 school population" (NCES, p.41, 2015). Given this, how Hispanic children fare will have a profound and increasing impact on the social and economic well-being of the country as a whole.

Hispanic students have a dropout rate higher than the general population and this rate remains higher (14%) than the rate is among Blacks (8%), Whites (5%) and Asians (4%) (Pew Research Center, 2015). Current trends regarding Hispanic students indicate these youth are in crisis. This is seen by data on Hispanic kindergarten students, with 42% found in the lowest quartile of performance on reading readiness compared to just 18% of White children; by 4th grade, only 16% of Latino students are proficient in reading compared to 41% of White students (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). There is an inability of public schools to adapt to changing demographics and close the gap in achievement that exists for Hispanic students (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2011). In analyzing this discrepancy and searching for interventions, there are many factors that affect school performance. One of the factors that affect school performance is parental involvement (Sheldon, 2007).

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Parental involvement is a contributing factor in student success. Schools with effective parental practices perform at higher levels than those with less effective practices (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Parental involvement is linked to increased self-esteem, improved child-parent relationships, and increased academic success (Carranza, You, Chhuon, & Hudley, 2009). Although “parental involvement has been shown to play a part in fostering children’s cognitive growth and academic success” (Anderson & Minke, 2007, p.61), schools still struggle with increasing the amount of parental involvement, particularly in the Hispanic population.

Parents of Hispanic students are the least educated. They demonstrate low levels of involvement in their children’s education. Results from a sample of 334 adolescents showed that parental involvement was the strongest predictor of achievement (Karchach, Gottschling, Spengler, Hegewald, & Spinath, 2013). To help Hispanic students succeed in public schools, obstacles deterring parental involvement must be identified and solutions may be found to overcome them. This study examined what factors contribute to lack of parental involvement, including parent perception of involvement, and how a lack of involvement may be a catalyst for policy change.

### **Problem Statement**

Parents’ roles and involvement in schools have been largely understood in terms of *what parents do* and how that fits or does not fit with the needs of the child or the goals of the school (Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005). Indeed, studies have found status barriers, such as limited English proficiency, childcare responsibilities, or inadequate transportation, disproportionately discourage and reduce immigrant and minority parent involvement, especially in formal activities (Epstein, 2010). There are definitive findings

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that parental involvement in any child's education increases that child's probability for educational success (Karbach et al., 2013). Promoting the parent's voice, as well as observing school practices and beliefs concerning parental involvement are key.

Across all grade levels, a wealth of studies specifically link parental involvement in education with higher grade point averages, achievement in reading and mathematics, academic motivation, and school engagement, even while controlling for prior academic achievement (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, & Bamaca, 2006; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Crosnoe, 2001a; Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012; Henry, Cavanagh, & Oetting, 2011; Hill et al., 2004; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Maurizi, Ceballo, Epstein-Ngo, & Cortina, 2013, and Seginer, 2006). Yet, research examining racial, ethnic, and differences in parent involvement consistently shows lower rates among minority and immigrant parents compared to their Anglo and U.S. born counterparts. Studies have reported a decline in family engagement as children progress from elementary to middle and high school (Simon, 2004; Spera, 2005). Perhaps this is in response to adolescents' growing needs for autonomy or because parents feel less equipped to assist with more complex school material, or lack of outreach and support from the school. This may be due, in part, to educators' and parents' beliefs that older children need more "autonomy and less adult guidance" and to the difficulty of explaining and negotiating "high schools' complex environment and complicated curricula" (Simon, 2004, pp. 185–186). Even so, this decline in the involvement of parents highlights the need to better understand the nature of parental involvement that does continue into adolescence.

The results of prior studies are revealing but dated. Additionally, the research is not presented from the Hispanic parental viewpoint. Understanding perspective of

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Hispanic parents to foster involvement and engagement in their children's schools and create strong parent-school relations is an essential component for student and school improvement for Hispanic students today.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to a) explore possible obstacles to Hispanic parental involvement, b) further understand the Latino Critical Race perspective, and c) suggest how obstacles might be eliminated to increase future involvement between Hispanic parents and schools. Each school is likely to have a distinct understanding of what counts as parental involvement, as well as a diverse set of rationales underlying why involvement is, or is not, important, and a unique way of encouraging involvement (Young, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2008). Another purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how parents understand involvement in their children's education. Parental involvement has been explored in the literature from the school's perspective, but few empirical studies have been conducted that explored parental involvement from the perspective of parents (Ferrer, 2007). This study was primarily accomplished through focused interviews with parents and social workers or other school personnel whose job includes working with parents employed by the school district. Yet another purpose was to obtain and analyze data from interviews with Hispanic parents in order to uncover trends that may inform future school policy and decisions. Qualitative research methods were used for data collection and analysis in order to bring a voice to parental involvement from the perspectives of parents.

Quality relationships between parents and caregivers are associated with children's learning and social competence (Elicker, Wen, Kwon, & Sprague, 2013).

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Auerback (2012) and Epstein (2010) found that parents from underrepresented populations and high poverty are insecure about interacting with educational professionals because they perceive that they are not knowledgeable enough, articulate enough, or educated enough about the functioning of schools. In one of the first studies addressing parental involvement, Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) discovered that promising practices existed in the schools located along the Texas-Mexico border. These included, personally reaching out to parents, employing respect and kindness, and demonstrating to parents that they are working hard to provide high-quality education. Research indicated that viewing parents within migrant populations as long-term community members was helpful in increasing the involvement of parents in their children's education. (Lopez, 2001). Recent research by Rahat, Carey, Cummins, and Altidor-Brooks (2016) found parental engagement supports student achievement only when their relationships with educators in the school are identity-affirming. Many times school initiatives are developed using traditional paradigms and ideas to involve parents, since many educator training programs prepare teachers using these approaches (McKenna & Millen, 2013). Educator understandings of strategies for engaging parents are often not mindful of the needs of parents from vulnerable populations or cognizant of the assistance that parents from underrepresented groups can provide (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000).

This study did further this work in a different geographic area with a non-migrant population and expand upon the parent's perceptions from an underrepresented group.

This study does discuss:

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1. Parents shared their perspective of how they support their children's education.

This perspective provided insight to educators about whether or not the current partnership frameworks for parental involvement are comprehensive enough to be effective.

2. Parents spoke in their own voices and provided valuable insight into ways that they support their children's education and the ways in which they support their children's education that might be overlooked or not recognized by school officials. The information shared from the parents' perspective provided a paradigm for other parents that seek opportunities to support their children's education.

3. Parents shared their perspective about what relationships they have established with teachers and other school officials that have benefited their children's education. Parents are able to provide insight to other parents, teachers and school officials about the relationships that are important in helping them become involved.

4. Educators shared perspectives on strong parental involvement and what qualities make this effective for schools.

5. Educator preparation programs can use this information to make curriculum changes, or schools can see the need for new policies. This may produce educators who are prepared to partner with parents to benefit children's education.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study included:

RQ1. From the Hispanic parent's perspective, what do parents understand their role to be in supporting their children's education?

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RQ2. How do primary stakeholders describe their relationship with parents and the school?

RQ3. How do stakeholders perceive methods designed to promote effective parent/school relationships?

RQ4. What obstacles exist that impact Hispanic parental involvement?

RQ5. What do stakeholders perceive the characteristics to be of schools that have effective home/school relationships with Hispanic families?

### **Conceptual Underpinnings**

Different views exist as to exactly what constitutes parental involvement (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999) and these views vary culturally (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Fan, Williams, & Wolters (2012) found that in general, results showed that parental aspiration for children's education positively related to student school motivational constructs, whereas school–parent communication regarding student school problems negatively predicted student school motivational constructs across ethnic groups. Various definitions of parental involvement abound in the literature, including parental behaviors and parenting practices (Fan & Chen, 2001). Involvement in providing school services and participating in meetings has an array of formats, from unidimensional (Turney & Kao, 2009) to multidimensional (Wong & Hughes, 2006). Of the diverse definitions of parent involvement in the literature, Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack's (2007) definition is considered, by far, the most clear and inclusive, as it posits two distinct categories 1) school-based parent involvement and 2) home-based parent involvement. This classification has been supported by Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005) who viewed these as two “common but

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distinct activities in both public and home-school systems” (p. 346). According to Pomerantz et al. (2007), school-based parent involvement “represents practices on the part of parents that require their making actual contact with schools” (pp. 374), some of which include participating in school meetings and school events, volunteering at school, and communicating with teachers. Home-based parent involvement “represents parents’ practices related to school that often take place outside of school” (pp.375), some of which include helping with homework, course selection, communicating about school or academic matters with children, and activities such as reading.

Teachers have defined parental involvement as participation in formal activities, such as school events and meetings, or working in the classroom (Scribner, Young, and Pedroza, 1999). But if participation in school events is used as the only indicator of parental involvement, it may not provide a full picture of the contribution of parents. According to Goodwin and King (2002), when marginalized parents do not respond to the school’s request for parent involvement, they are inaccurately labeled as not involved and uncaring, as is frequently the case with Hispanic parents. Their non-conformity to the socially sanctioned view of parent involvement, which privileges mainstream groups, has portrayed Hispanics as a group that is not involved and does not value education. Many parents believe that schools do not respect, nor welcome, their presence (Ramirez, 2003). The lack of understanding about Hispanic parents has resulted in them being held culpable for their children’s low academic achievement (Zarate, 2007) and may further distance them from feeling included and invited to participate.

Scholars advance that stronger bonds between school and home reinforce the sense of community in both domains for children (Epstein, 2010; McNeal, Jr., 2015;

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Robinson, 2008). As illustrated by research, advantages attributed to parent involvement include better school attendance and improved punctuality (McConnell & Kubina, 2014; Sheldon, 2007), stronger performance in a child's academic habits and schoolwork (Deplanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Wilder, 2014), and improved pro-social conduct (McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor, & McClowry, 2013; Robinson, 2008). Very seldom do institutions address existing barriers that prevent parents from becoming involved (Valdes, 1996; Finders & Lewis, 1994).

Motivational theories, cultural capital theories, and critical race theories are based on the idea that people also have strong cognitive reasons to perform various actions, which is illustrated in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). This view of motivation focuses on the learner as a whole person and examines the relationships among physical, emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic needs (McAdams & Pals, 2006). While theory of motivation asserts that a positive classroom climate and caring student-teacher relationship are essential to the development of student motivation, this theory was rejected because it does not recognize the complexities involved in race and how the racialized experiences of students and parents may result in outcomes such as low involvement in schools.

Cultural capital theory, a sociological concept, has gained widespread popularity since it was first articulated by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). For Bourdieu, capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange, and the term is extended 'to all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation' (Harker, 1990; pp.13). Cultural capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated

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cultural knowledge that confers power and status (Bourdieu, 1986). A decade later, Hage (1998) used Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to explore multiculturalism and racism, but the theory does not lend itself to simplistic understanding of how intersections of oppressions and race manifest in the educational environment. Cultural capital does not substantially account for the relationship between social privilege and academic success (Kingston, 2001). Therefore, a cultural capital theory is not sufficiently robust for this particular research.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a broad approach to challenging and destabilizing established knowledge. In both the broad and the narrow senses, a critical theory provides the normative and descriptive bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Unger, 1987). The definition of an adequate critical theory exists:

only if it meets three criteria: it must be explanatory, practical, and normative, all at the same time. That is, it must explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation. (Horkheimer, 1993, p.45)

Critical theory can be used to explain the current power structure that exists in schools. Bohman (2013) asserted that many critical theories in the broader sense have been developed as a result of the human condition. He reported that a critical theory provides the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom of individuals. CRT focuses theoretical attention on

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race and how racism is deeply embedded within the framework of American society (Parker, Deyhle, Villenas, and Nebecker, 1998).

Therein, parental involvement through a Critical Race lens is explanatory but can be too broad and does not account for ethnicity or cultural differences in relating to separate populations. Latino Critical Race scholars assert that racism, sexism and classism are experienced amidst other layers of subordination based on immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, accent and surname (Montoya, 1994; Johnson, 1999). A commitment of CRT is to expose the injustice of people who are in the minority and bring attention to structural arrangements that disadvantage minority populations (Trevino, Harris, & Wallace, 2008), but since 1995, the CRT family tree has expanded to incorporate the racialized experiences of women, Latinas/os, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. For example, LatCrit, TribalCrit and AsianCrit are branches of CRT, evidencing Chicana/o, Latina/o, Native American and Asian American communities' ongoing search for a framework that addresses racism and its accompanying oppressions beyond the Black/White binary (Ikemoto, 1992; Chang, 1993, 1998; Chon, 1996; Delgado, 1997; Williams, 1997; Brayboy, 2002). To narrow the focus further, we turn to Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit).

### **Latino Critical Race Theory**

LatCrit is complimentary to CRT (Valdes, 1996), but expands on the scope to address issues broader than race and ethnicity in the case of Latinos. LatCrit helps to analyze issues CRT cannot or does not, such as language, immigration, ethnicity, culture identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Hernandez-Truyol, 1997; Martinez, 1994; Montoya, 1995). LatCrit is especially conscious of accounting for how additional dimensions of

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identity are subjected to different forms of discrimination or marginalization in the case of Latinos (Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998).

Both CRT and LatCrit are theories arising from legal studies that can improve our understanding of issues related to social justice and racial inequality in society (Crenshaw, Goranda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado, 1995, Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matusda, Lawrence, and Yosso, 2006). Like CRT, LatCrit can be conceived as a social justice project (LatCrit Primer, 1999). The lack of Hispanic parental involvement currently in schools can be viewed as an opportunity for social inquiry regarding the equality of a large system, such as the educational system, which may decrease equality for particular minority groups (Villalpando, 2004). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) assert that the voice of marginalized people must be captured authentically from parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community members if we are to learn anything useful about education from within those communities. The U.S. Department of Education (2003) found African American and Hispanic parents less likely than Caucasian parents to attend general school meetings and events. Research shows a connection between parental involvement and student achievement (Elish-Piper, 2008; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Sanders & Herting, 2000; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2000; and Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). If there are obstacles for minority parent's school involvement, they should be eliminated. Existing policies may need to be examined; alternative policies may need to be produced that are more inclusive and fair toward minority groups.

### **Design and Methods**

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Berg (2004) reports that good research design is essential in the social sciences to further good practice. This research study addressed the problem of low Hispanic parental involvement in schools that serve them and the barriers that exist. The methodology of the study was a qualitative design with focused interviews and observations of parents and staff. Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p.15). When data demonstrate the needs of an ethnic group are possibly not being adequately met through a predetermined format, that problem is both human and social and is appropriate for studying qualitatively.

The advocacy and participatory worldview holds that research inquiry contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants or the institutions in which individuals work or live (Creswell, 2009). The collection included data from Hispanic parents with children attending public schools in an area in the Midwest, to include public and charter high schools located in urban and rural areas, as well as perspectives of staff and leadership from each school. The goal of learning perspectives of these groups can best be achieved through conversations and qualitative questioning.

Data were analyzed using triangulation of multiple sources. It is generally accepted in action research “that researchers should not rely on any single source of data, interview, observation, or instrument” (Mills, 2003, p. 52). The emphasis is on getting the informants’ stories without imposing the researchers’ perspective or authority (Van Manen, 1990). This study grounds the answers to specific research questions in

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systematically gathered, coded, and analyzed data. The purpose is not to generate theory but to highlight the perceptions of the groups interviewed.

### **Assumptions**

In completing an interview, it was anticipated that the parents participating would answer truthfully. As a researcher, it was imperative to ask culturally sensitive questions which did not lead to expected answers but allow the parents to speak freely. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) posited, “assumptions are so basic that, without them, the research problem itself could not exist” (p. 62). To protect participants, anonymity and confidentiality was preserved and the participants were volunteers who were able to withdraw from the study at any time.

Merriam (1998) stated that time, money, and resources are research constraints that can limit a research study. This study had limited resources for completion, which relied on an individual’s goodwill to participate. As a researcher, it is imperative to be a participant observer and stay problem-focused throughout the data collection to ensure project completion goals. It is also desirable to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by current research.

Heppner, Kivlighan, and Wampold (1999) contended that the findings from a qualitative inquiry would be significantly important to others because such qualitative research is inseparable from the lives of the participants and has implications for the actions of the participants. It is assumed that consumers of research will have a vicarious experience shaped by the results of a qualitative inquiry. The vicarious experience will be shaped by the constructions of the reader (Heppner, et al., p. 248). It is also assumed that

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the qualitative findings will have profound effects on policy (Heppner, et al., p. 248).

According to Heppner, et al.:

Policymakers are often concerned with local situations and are less interested in results from random samples, in spite of those results relevance to their local situation. Qualitative findings are grounded in the context, give a rich description of the situation, and have (it is hoped) tapped the many voices of the participants. These characteristics are particularly useful when decision makers must sort through complicated issues and generate novel situations that bring communities together. (p. 248)

This study will contribute to the research on parental involvement and will generate questions for further research.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

Creswell (2009) states that terms should be defined in language available in the literature to clarify ambiguity and provide precise language. The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study.

*Achievement gap.* Achievement gap refers to the difference between ethnicity and achievement in school measures, such as tests and national assessments. This refers to the academic performance difference, typically between Whites and minorities (Carpenter, Ramirez, & Severn, 2006).

*English Language Learner (ELL).* An English Language Learner is a student from another national origin who has limited English proficiency. This term is often preferred to Limited English Proficient (LEP) (United States Department of Education – Office of Civil Rights, 2005).

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*Hispanic.* Of or relating to Spanish or Spanish-speaking countries, including Latin America. Zimmerman (1994) defined Hispanic as “Hispanic is characterized as up to third generation immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries” (p.1985).

*Latino.* See Hispanic

*LEP.* Limited English proficient. LEP refers to a student, or parent, whose level of English is not yet proficient. Proficiency is commonly measured using guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

*No Child Left Behind of 2001 (NCLB).* A United States Act of Congress that is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which included Title I, the government's flagship aid program for disadvantaged students.

*Parental involvement:* the overarching, general employment of any actions or words by parents, done in or outside of the traditional school site, which has an impact on students' academic, social, or behavioral perspectives, actions or learning outcomes.

*STEM:* Science, technology, engineering or math disciplines.

### **Significance of the Study**

Current literature examining the issue of low Hispanic parental involvement is not robust and additional explanations to this problem would add strength and extend experience to what is currently known. This study will add to the body of knowledge on Hispanic students and the involvement of their parents in public school. It is understood that recommendations which add to the body of knowledge regarding educational practices are need for educational policy regarding Hispanic students and policies for increasing parental involvement. Lastly, the study will contribute to public schools and how they view the level of Hispanic parental involvement in their institution.

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### Summary

This study examined the issue of parental involvement by Hispanic parents in their child's education. It is a qualitative design, with fixed interview questions for each group having voluntary participation. These data were collected from parents to understand their perceptions of their own involvement in school on behalf of their child. The study considered ways in which school and parent interactions shape parent attitudes toward their child's school and ways in which these interactions might inhibit or encourage parental involvement in schools. We looked more directly at educators and how they shape these interactions as well as their perceptions on involvement and participation by school staff.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Introduction

In this chapter, research on Hispanic students, causes and perceptions of underachievement among Hispanic students, parental involvement and current research on Hispanic parental involvement will be reviewed. Barriers that exist for Hispanic parents, and how this research is guided by the Theory of Critical Race, specifically Latino Critical Theory will be presented. The terms Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican immigrant, immigrant, and Hispanic are used throughout reflecting the research and writings of different authors. The terms Latino and Hispanic are often used interchangeably, as individuals from a variety of regions tend to self-identify using either classification (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001).

### **Hispanic Students in the United States**

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Hispanics are the largest minority group in the United States (Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2015), a country that no longer has one ethnic majority, according to the Census Bureau (2012). By 2043, there will be no single majority group in the country as a whole, as the share of non-Hispanic whites falls below 50%. Hispanics have tremendous diversity within collective geopolitical heritages, ethnic histories, geographic distribution, socioeconomic status, lived experiences, languages, cultural and religious backgrounds, experiences of familial or personal integration into the United States, and political orientations (Executive summary-Latinos' school success: A work in progress, 2012; Rodriguez, C. E., 2008; Rodriguez, H, 2008). Between 1999 and 2000, Hispanics surpassed African Americans as the largest minority group in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015). The changing and pronounced demographic shift among immigrant Hispanic groups has become an issue of interest in the political and social discourse, particularly in education, where public schools are seeing larger and larger representations of Hispanic students (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008) and student numbers have tripled since 1980. By the year 2028, it is estimated that one in four American public school students will be Hispanic. Nearly 14 million new immigrants (legal and illegal) settled in the country from 2000 to 2010, making it the highest decade of immigration in American history, and the Mexican government projects that mass immigration to the United States will continue at between 3.5 and 5 million people per decade until at least 2030 (Center for Immigration Studies, 2016).

Hispanic students are the largest ethnic group (US Census Bureau, 2012) with nearly 18% of the Hispanic 18 to 24 year olds in the United States high school dropouts, it is far more than the percentage of black and white students (Aud & Haines, 2012).

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Thirty percent of those same Latina/o children under the age of 17 live in poverty (Pew Research Center, 2015). Living in communities characterized as having a low socioeconomic status level is associated with “low economic development, poor health conditions, . . . low levels of educational attainment” (Ethnic and Racial Minorities & Socioeconomic Status, n.d., p. 1) and the chronic negative stress associated with financial fragility (Bzostek, & Beck, 2011). The educational disadvantage for Hispanics begins early in a child’s life because these households often have low literacy environments when parents are unable to afford books, computers, and tutors to create a literacy environment within the home (Education & Socioeconomic Status, n.d.).

Hispanic students face a number of challenges in the educational system. These challenges may include poverty (Bohn & Levin, 2013), a language other than English as the first language spoken in their homes (MacDonald, 2004), access to equitable education because of issues associated with access to early childhood education, and lower than average educational attainment (Schott Foundation for Public 10 Education, 2009). Additionally, according to Fry (2008), Hispanic youth “are much more likely than White or Black youths to attend public high schools that are large, have a high student-to-teacher ratio, and have a substantial proportion of students who come from relatively poor families” (para. 1). When a student is a member of a minority group, has a low socioeconomic status, and has limited English fluency, it increases the likelihood that the school he or she attends will not be adequately equipped to successfully address these needs (Rubinson, 2004).

There are many issues with educating the current Hispanic population. Researchers argue that Hispanic students are the least educated major population group in

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the United States, and they are severely underrepresented in higher education and degree completion (Ceja, 2006; Chapa, 1990; Cole & Espinoza, 2008; Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003; Wagner, 2015). In addition, schools that educate the majority of Hispanic students do not always acknowledge or value traditional cultural tenets and beliefs that focus on relationships (Moreno & Gaytan, 2013). According to Gay (2000), our schools give little regard to the importance of including the traditions and values of the wide-range of cultural heritages represented by the students that attend our schools. Rather, schools traditionally espouse the norms that reflect the mainstream culture and focus on individualism, self-reliance and academic achievement (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Perea & Smith, 2004).

### **Midwest**

In Jackson County, where Kansas City, Missouri, is located, over 10,000 Hispanic students (US Census Bureau, 2012) from lower socioeconomically families and with limited English proficiency reside. Hispanic students are more likely to experience language barriers, visa and immigration issues, and poverty than their Anglo peers (Gibson, 2002). These issues create challenges for educating Hispanic youth. According to the Department of Education, America's 54 million Limited English Proficient (LEP) students represent the fastest-growing student population, expected to make up one of every four students by 2025 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Furthermore, Census Bureau projections suggest that by 2025, 52% of youth age 15 to 19 will be students of color (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012). This student population has increasing numbers of immigrants, as well, with approximately one quarter of the children younger than 17 having at least one immigrant parent (Batalova & Terrazas, 2012). Moreover, the

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proportion of immigrant children tends to be higher in urban school districts (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006), rather than rural or suburban. Children who speak languages other than English at home and who also have difficulty speaking English may face greater challenges progressing in school and in the labor market (Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2015). This study's setting will be public high schools located in the urban and slightly more rural area of the Midwest.

Even as ethnic and racial minorities are on the cusp of becoming the nation's majority (US Census, 2012), schools are failing to meet the challenges of academic success, recognize the benefits of a culturally diverse population, and may not adopt policies that focus more explicitly on finding ways to accommodate cultural differences for the Hispanic student and their families (Swanson, 2010). Furthermore, disparities in academic achievement have been a problematic issue among students of different ethnic groups (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007; Borba, 2009; Borman & Kimball, 2005; Boyd-Zaharias & Pate-Bain, 2008; Clark, 2001; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; National Assessment for Educational Progress, 2016; & Wallitt, 2008; Zhang & Cowen, 2009). Similarly, the evidence suggests that a continuing safety net of support for disadvantaged students is needed to significantly improve their academic outcomes and reduce the wide gaps in achievement that now exist (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011).

The concept of equity in academic achievement for all students, regardless of ethnicity, is an issue that has captured the attention of politicians, educators, and the federal government since the 1960s with the implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (Frankenburg & Lee, 2002; Yell & Drasgow, 2005). The Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) was soon followed by the report, *A Nation at*

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*Risk*, in which the low achievement levels of students within the American school system were detailed (A Nation at Risk, 1983). The growing issue of the number of Hispanic students that are not graduating and entering post-secondary school (Wagner, 2015) creates a large discrepancy in education. While there are multiple reasons for dropping out of school, the lack of cooperation between school, parents, and community has played a role (Turner & Kao, 2010; Wagner, 2015) as American schools are more diverse and culturally complex than any time in history (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015).

A wide body of evidence suggests a link between parental involvement and schooling outcomes in math (Crane, 2012; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Muller, 1998) and reading achievement (Jeynes & Littell, 2000; Shaver & Walls, 1998). There has been a push for a more visible presence of parents of all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002), Advocates for Children (AFC), a non-profit that pushes for education reform and equality for low income students and students of color, released a report in 2009 that outlines the difficulties faced by immigrant parents who try to get involved at their children's schools. According to the report by AFC (2009), roughly 60 percent of parents of children in the New York City public schools are immigrants, but though they are the majority, these parents say they feel marginalized. Consistent with historical data, parental involvement, when used effectively and respectfully, increases student achievement and creates a positive school climate for all students regardless of their economic and cultural background (Michigan Department of Education, 2002).

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As a result, when Hispanic parents do not respond to traditional parent involvement activities, educators assume that these parents do not care about their children's education (Ramirez, 2003). In actuality, the Hispanic parents may not know or understand the expectations the school has of them to be involved (Allison, & Bencomo, 2015; Noguera, 2003). It follows that Hispanic parents may also perceive the concept of involvement in a different way from that of the educators in the schools (Kuykendall, 2004). Schools and their policies must look beyond the traditional idea of what constitutes parental involvement and understand the many ways in which culturally different parents approach their student's education (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; McNeal Jr, 2015). With the increasing Hispanic student population and the challenges that educators are facing with the growing achievement gaps between the various groups of students, there is a need to examine the perspective of Hispanic parents about involvement in their student's education as a viable strategy for the Hispanic students' academic success.

Therefore, provided in this chapter is a review of literature and related research studies on Hispanic students and parental involvement as it relates to student success. Emphasized in this review are the cultural differences in collaborating with Hispanic parents and what policies schools should adopt to foster increased involvement analyzed through the lens of Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) with a Critical Race foundation. First we look at the importance of focusing on Hispanic students.

### **Hispanic Students**

Historically, the relationship between the United States and Mexico established an environment which made assimilation for individuals of Mexican descent difficult

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(MacDonald, 2004). Consequently, there has been a history in the United States to relegate people of color to low positions in society, as Valencia (1997) and others (Feagin, 2000; Moles, 1997) have noted. In addition, Valencia (1997) suggested that there is evidence that the ideological foundations of school segregation date back to racist beliefs that White groups should not socially interact with people of color. According to Delgado Bernal (2002), Spanish-language use among Hispanic school children was a social philosophy and a political tool used by local and state officials to justify school segregation and to maintain a colonized relationship between Hispanics and the dominant society. Although progress has been made to recognize Hispanic students and the benefit of bilingualism, it can continue to be seen as “un-American” and considered a deficit and obstacle to learning instead of a benefit (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006). Consequently, these deficit perspectives contribute to Hispanic students’ failure in terms of school success (National Research Council, 2006).

Traditionally, American schools have had the job of assimilating the children of immigrants into the American education system. However, diversity has been previously viewed as a problem and issue to be fixed (Leach, 2011) and for ethnic groups to lose their “ethnic” traits and force them to acquire White-normed values and behavior (Garcia, 1995; Henderson & Kennedy, 2003). Now after decades of blaming poor families, cultural values, and lifestyles for academic underachievement, white racial superiority has resurfaced in educational debates over affirmative action and bilingual education (Flores, 2005). To create academic achievement among students of minority backgrounds, educators must implement strategies that encourage family and communities to support educational success (Foster, 2004).

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Hispanic parental involvement is an on-growing issue, with complex history. Because Hispanic students will make up almost half of the student population in years to come (US Census, 2012) and will produce a growing need for targeted intervention to increase academic success and enrollment in post-secondary institutions with the fastest growing student population in the US public schools (Digest of Education Statistics, 2013). This ethnic group has tremendous diversity within collective geopolitical heritages, ethnic histories, geographic distribution, socioeconomic status, lived experiences, languages, cultural and religious backgrounds, experiences of familial or personal integration into the United States, and political orientations (Rodríguez, Sáenz, Rodríguez, Menjivar, & Massey, 2007). As Valenciana, Weissman, and Flores (2006) found in their research, “Hispanics are retained a grade at a rate that is three times higher than that of the overall population and Hispanics are much more likely than other students to drop out of high school” (p.82). Moreover, Hispanic students comprise a unique population group that may have factors related to culture and ethnicity that should be considered (Delgado Bernal, 2002) and some researchers contend that existing cultural barriers prevent a larger percentage of Hispanic students from achieving academic success (Darder, 1991; Foiles Sifuentes, 2015; Jones, 1987). The academic achievement of Hispanic students in the United States has consistently lagged behind that of their peers (Blanchard, S., & Muller, C., 2015; Snyder, Sable, Choy, Bae, Stennett, Gruner, & Perie, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2001a) and Hispanics have higher grade retention rates; are overrepresented in low-ability groups, special education programs, and among the expelled; and they are under-represented in college-bound programs (Hirschman, & Gunnar, 2016).

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As post-secondary enrollment for Hispanic students has increased, we have not seen a proportional increase in their rates of success (Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo, 2015; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998). Lemberger, Selig, Bower and Rogers (2015) found through interviews with Hispanic students that they did not feel as if they were part of the school or the classroom; they spoke of feeling invisible, and of being treated as if they were less worthy than other students.

Similarly, there has been research (Cheadle, 2008; Crosnoe, Ansari, Purtell, & Wu, 2016; Wang, 2008) and attention devoted to Hispanic students and the reasons why their academic achievement is deficient compared to other population groups. Disparities in academic achievement have been a problematic issue among students of different ethnic groups (Zhang & Cowen, 2009). 34% of Hispanic parents have not completed high school versus 7% of the majority population (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). According to the United States Census Bureau (2015) compared to 88.7% of non-Hispanic whites, only 57% of Hispanics over the age of 25 have graduated from high school. Additionally, Hispanics are more likely to be unemployed and less likely to earn as much money as non-Hispanic whites. Finally, 21.4% of Hispanics are living below the poverty line compared to 7.8% of non-Hispanics. These statistics suggest that the Hispanic population in the United States is struggling to reach certain economic and educational goals in this country.

In addition, Hispanic students and their education and future achievements have caught the attention of the United States Commission on Civil Rights (Briefing, 2010) regarding minority college students who begin their college studies intending to major in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM), and subsequently leave these

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disciplines in disproportionate numbers before graduation. The Commission found that black and Hispanic students are ultimately less likely to major in or obtain doctoral degrees in STEM disciplines than are whites or Asians, and that mismatch occurs when minority students fail to have the academic credentials prior to enrollment (Briefing, 2010).

Attention was also generated by Rojas-LeBouef and Slate (2010) who highlighted discrepancies between Hispanic and Non-white students in test scores and academic foundation skills. In addition to those authors, other researchers have identified factors that exist which serve as indicators for students' lack of success: poverty, test bias, academic loss over the summer, racial stereotyping, access to childcare, parental involvement, qualified teachers, and high student mobility (Dempsey, 2005; Dillard & Pol, 1982; Petit & Western, 2004; Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2010; Roosa, 1986, Ushomirsky, Hall, & Haycock, 2011). When a student is a member of a minority group, has a low socioeconomic status, and has limited English fluency, it increases the likelihood that the school he or she attends will not be adequately equipped to successfully address these needs (Rubinson, 2004). López (2009) argued that among the interventions being used to address the issue of Hispanic students' lack of achievement, Hispanic parental involvement in education and the impact it has on student success is important. It is because of these deficits in Hispanic student academic scores that we turn our attention to an intervention.

### **Parent Involvement History**

Parent involvement first became recognized in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001) which emphasizes accountability and the role of parents in their

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children's education and spotlighted the importance of the parental role. The No Child Left Behind Act recognizes the vital role parents play in the learning and achievement of their children and emphasizes school-parent partnerships that promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. Steinberg, Lamborn, Dombusch, and Darling (1992) purport two notions about parent involvement: (a) Parents become more involved when their children do well in school, and (b) parent involvement leads to student success. Since this initial scrutiny, research on parental involvement in schooling has increased considerably and there is a large body of knowledge that demonstrates the link between parental involvement and positive schooling outcomes (Charles, Roscigno, & Torres, 2004; Chavkin, 1993; Perna, 2000; Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, & Keating, 2009). Educators and policy makers alike have become aware that such involvement has a positive impact on student's achievement (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010).

### **Parental Involvement**

Within the K-12 sector, parental involvement has been used to describe an array of parenting behaviors including aspirations for their children's achievement, communication with children about school, engagement in school-related activities and personnel, as well as education-related rules imposed in the home (Fan & Chen, 2001). Research tends to lie within one of two categories--engagement between parents and the school, or engagement between parent and student in reference to education (Ford & Amaral, 2006). Traditional understandings of parental involvement presented in education are based on the practices of White, middle-class parents (Auerbach, 2012; Lareau & Weininger, 2008) and does not specifically account for minority perspectives. Parents of Hispanic students are often perceived to be less supportive of the decision to

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attend college, even though several studies (Auerbach, 2004, 2007; Ceja, 2006) suggested that these parents do value education and express this value informally by emotionally and morally supporting their children's educational and career aspirations, assisting their children in educational decision making, and stressing the importance of education. In addition, research implies that the Hispanic culture is not accustomed to partnering with the school system (Fan & Chen, 2001; Gaitan, 2004; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). In one study (Peña, 2000), parents reported that they were always willing to be part of the school as long as they were given the opportunity. Immigrant parents have been reported to have higher educational aspirations for their children than their non-immigrant parent counterparts (Reese, 2002). Various factors that contribute to parent involvement among Mexican parents were examined, and parents reported that there were particular factors that influenced whether they chose to be involved. These factors included the school respecting the parents' cultures and language as well as an understanding of parents' choices of involvement. Epstein (2010) concurs with Sheldon (2003) that, "no topic about school improvement has created more rhetoric than parental involvement." The evidence is overwhelming (Iver, Epstein, Sheldon, & Fonseca, 2015) that "equipping high schools to more effectively engage families as partners in increasing student success remains a challenge as schools and districts continue to address persistent graduation gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged populations" (p. 28).

Desimone (1999) noted parental involvement is an advantageous policy to pursue, not only because it is required of schools by federal mandates in the No Child Left Behind legislation, but also because of the benefits: 1) it is an effort that has a great payoff; 2) it addresses issues of equity and equal opportunity; and 3) it is consistent with

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the strong belief that the primary responsibility for children lies with the parents. Schools can and should focus on parental involvement as one of the factors that affect student achievement on which they can exert some influence, since school intervention policies and programs can affect the amount and the quality of parent involvement (Smith, 2006). There are strong positive correlations between student academic success, parental involvement, and parental understanding of the many facets of the educational process (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Auerbach, 2007). It should be understood, then, why the involvement of minority/Hispanic parents in their children's education is found to be critical in their success.

Moreover, there are many variables related to parental involvement, and satisfaction with schools is ranked among the highest variables (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000), increased mathematic achievement (Jeynes, 2003), overall increased self-esteem in students, improved child-parent relationships, and success at school (Carranza, You, Chhuon, & Hudley, 2009). Likewise, Epstein (2010) and Sheldon (2003) found that parental involvement activities are strongly correlated with improved student attendance, grades, and student behavior. Consequently, the importance of parental involvement has garnered the attention of policy makers who have linked certain parental involvement expectations to Title I funding as well as dictating school policies be written regarding parental involvement (No Child Left Behind, 2006). On December 10, 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law as Public Law Number 114-95. ESSA reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 "to ensure that every child achieves." ESSA is the nation's general education law and, as such, has been revised by Congress many times over the

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years. The last reauthorization took place in 2001 and was called the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). In promoting achievement across elementary and secondary school levels, the significant role of families, family–school relations, and parental involvement in education is a strong indicator for success (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Hill & Tyson, 2009). However, educational practices that take into account differences in cultural orientations and the involvement of significant others are more likely to improve academic outcomes than do efforts intended to promote the valuing of education (Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, & Nero, 2010).

Hispanic parental involvement is less than other ethnic groups for many reasons, including insufficient Hispanic representation in school decision making and little effort to involve Hispanic parents (Epstein, Sanders, & Sheldon, 2009; Reyes, Scribner, 1999; Young, 1995). In addition, poor relationships between parents and school personnel (Torres, 2004) and a failure among school personnel to learn about their parent population (López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014) add to a decrease in effective involvement. Simon (2004) argues that “high school faculty and staff may misconstrue this decline in involvement as disinterest and dismiss parents as unwilling or unable to support their students” (pp.185-186).

Relationships are extremely important to Hispanic families, and the teacher’s personal qualities such as respectfulness, approachability, and personal interest are often perceived as more valuable than technical qualifications (Kayser, 2008). Numerous challenges which include cultural discrepancies between parents and teachers, indifferent or unresponsive school officials, language barriers, and work demands that prevent parents from complying with schools’ expectations continue to exist (Turner & Kao,

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2010). School practices and beliefs concerning positive parental involvement are essential to more formally involved Hispanic parents. More than five decades of research suggests that family involvement is a powerful influence on children's achievement in school (Rojas & Barnes, 2010) and it is a bewildering fact that parental involvement is a much underutilized resource (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). Researchers suggest that parental involvement, when used correctly, can help guarantee the scholastic success of all students regardless of their economic and cultural background (Domina, 2005). Meta-analysis conducted by Jeynes (2003, 2005, 2007, 2012) and Fan and Chen (2001) and major overviews (e.g., Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007) point consistently to positive effects of parental involvement on specific academic outcomes across scores of studies.

### **Parent Perception**

What involvement is understood to be for Hispanic parents is crucial in the problem. Hispanic parents care about children's schooling and may have different perceptions and expectations about roles of teachers and the expected roles parents as perceived by teachers and school staff (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Chavkin and Gonzalez (1995) found that Hispanic parents perceived their role as providing nurturing, teaching values, and instilling good behavior, whereas teachers and school were expected to instill the learning. Niemeyer, Wong, and Westerhaus (2009) investigated factors that will promote academic success within the Hispanic community, and students in their study reported that their parents placed more emphasis on making sure that they went to bed on time on school nights, seeing to it that they did their homework before they went to bed, and checking whether they attended school every

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day. Academic parental involvement may involve activities that take place in the home, such as checking homework as well as other activities that are less traditionally associated with school involvement such as “instilling cultural values, talking with their children, and sending them to school clean and rested” (López et al., 2001, p.256). As a result of the Hispanic view of parental involvement, they may be uncertain about what role they should assume or that they are trying to do the job of the schools when asked to take on responsibilities they traditionally view as the school’s role (Tinkler, 2002). Epstein (2010) revealed that Hispanic parents are already involved in the educational lives of their students, although not in the traditional understanding of parental involvement, and determined that schools must consider an alternative conceptualization of parental involvement.

Accordingly, parents may feel excluded from schools, “by the negative ways in which they are treated, by insensitive bureaucratic requirements, and by ways in which school-conceived parent involvement programs disregard Hispanic knowledge and cultural biases” (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999, p. 49). Young, Rodriguez, and Lee (2008) determined that trust is an essential component in the involvement of Hispanic parents in the educational process. Critical Race Theories (Gotanda, 1995) including LatCrit (LatCrit Primer, 1999) address this issue of trust by highlighting how the ethnicity of a student contributes to the lack of success if that student is polarized in a White-normed expectation and environment. This unequal environment may be lacking the trust needed for successful involvement, whereas schools that promote collaboration between school and home can strive to transform schools into a community of learners, where everyone is valued and welcomed have more success (Blankstein, 2004; Jacobs, Bleeker, &

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Constantino, 2003). There is no argument that parental influence in the lives of their children has been shown to positively impact academic and behavioral performance, reduce absenteeism and drop-out rates, encourage stronger parent-child communications, foster optimistic thoughts toward learning and school in general, and improve school and community support mechanisms in local schools (Hayes, 2011; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2011). Greater levels of parental involvement have been found to have positive benefits for the family, school, and community at large (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). Although most scholars and professional educators note the positive impacts of having parents actively involved in children's education, many teachers list parent engagement as an area where they are least prepared and least satisfied with their own performance (Collins, 2012). For the remainder of this study, a working definition of parental involvement as the overarching, general employment of any actions or words, done in or outside of the traditional school site, which has an impact on students' academic, social, or behavioral perspectives, actions or learning outcomes will be used. Next, we consider the foundational and theoretical lens by which to understand the research questions.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Theory is a broad theoretical approach to challenging and destabilizing established knowledge (Gotanda, 1995). In both the broad and the narrow senses, a critical theory provides the normative and descriptive bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms (Bohman, 2013).

CRT had its origin in "Critical Legal Studies (CLS), which was a leftist movement that challenged traditional legal scholarship" (UCLA School of Public

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Affairs— Critical Race Studies, 2009, para. 7). This opposition to legal scholarship began in the late 1960s and has been initially attributed to the works of Derrick Bell (1992), an African-American professor of law at Harvard Law School and Alan Freeman, a White scholar at State University of New York Buffalo Law School who was frustrated with the slow pace of racial reform in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; UCLA School of Public Affairs— Critical Race Studies, 2009). The framework upon which CRT is based, is that racism is normal, and it both underlies and is pervasive throughout the fabric of the dominant culture in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; UCLA School of Public Affairs—Critical Race Studies, 2009). Because of this institutionalized racism, the systemic inequalities infused into our legal system by those individuals with power, wealth and privilege override the intended colorblind legal discourse by dispelling perceived meritocracy and liberalism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Delgado & Stefancic, 2005). Secondly, CRT challenges racial oppression and the status quo in our social world (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) contend that the “rules, practices, and assignments of prestige and power” (p. xvii) is not permanent; rather, it is constructed “with words, stories, and silence” (p. xvii).

Derrick Bell, the first Black law professor to be tenured at Harvard University, fearlessly challenged the established understanding of jurisprudence in our nation during the 1970s and 1980s during the tumultuous days of civil rights activism in the United States. His work was influenced by his experience as a Black man and civil rights attorney. His activism focused on race, racism, and the law, and his work set the stage for further scholarly work in the area of racial issues enveloping the economic, social, and political dimensions of law. Yosso (2005) reasoned that CRT challenged the “deficit

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view of Communities of Color as places full of cultural poverty disadvantages, and instead focuses on the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged” (p. 69). Eventually, a small group of 30 scholars of color gathered to attend a workshop at the University of Wisconsin (Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) where they began talking about the integration struggles championed by Derrick Bell (Crenshaw, 2011).

Gradually, other disenfranchised groups deemed their own knowledge and cultures as valuable and began to see CRT as “a framework that can be used to theorize, examine, and challenge ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures, practices and discourses” (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Specifically, the two central tenets focused on “understanding how an establishment of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color has been created and is perpetuated and undoing the relationship that exists between law and racial power” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 53). As CRT evolved, other disenfranchised groups (including feminists; other persons of color; persons with disabilities; and individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender), used CRT as a foundation to describe the difficulties they experienced because of their status as a minority group (Crenshaw, 2011). These theories are sometimes referred to as Outsider scholarship or OutCrits (Romero, 2005; Valdes, Culp, & Harris, 2002) that push beyond the Black/White racism that has been so prevalent in the ageism, racism, sexism, and classism in the United States. Outsider Critical Theory provides theoretical frameworks for AsianCrit, FemCrit, LatCrit, QueerCrit, TribalCrit, and WhiteCrit (Crenshaw, 2011; Romero, 2005; Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) asserted

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that the branches that have evolved from CRT “are not mutually exclusive or in contention with one another” (p. 72).

LatCrit Theory specifically addresses the issues plaguing a minority group that has been historically disenfranchised in the United States. LatCrit theory in education is defined as “a framework that can be used to theorize and examine the ways in which race and racism explicitly and implicitly impact on the educational structures, processes and discourses that affect People of Color generally and Latinas/os specifically” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 479). Being part of an outside group means that members of that group have both the need and momentum to attain the same “basic rights, goods, and services that are substantially necessary to human well-being” (Valdes, Culp, & Harris, 2002, p. 831). LatCrit emerged from the previously held debates involving scholars who established Critical Race Theory in the 1960s. It was at this gathering during turbulent dialogue and debates about race, pedagogy, and affirmative action that the underpinnings of CRT materialized from the shadows (Crenshaw, 2011). The LatCrit scholarly movement, according to Valdes (2005), began at the Hispanic National Bar Association at a colloquium in 1995 in response to the “long historical presence and enduring invisibility of Latinas/os in the lands now known as the United States” (p. 148). LatCrit and CRT share the same suppositions and foundations; however, according to Davila and Aviles de Bradley (2010), LatCrit allows for a framework to view the historical and social positioning of Latinas/os in the United States. It also serves to encompass the resistance and oppression of their life experiences. Johnson (1999) and Montoyo (2002) asserted LatCrit adds “immigrant status, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, accent [,] and surname” (Yosso, 2005, p. 72) to the existing attributes of racism, sexism, and

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classism layers already established in CRT. LatCrit can be viewed by exploring how CRT encompasses all People of Color by enlarging the paradigm and analysis to include the cultural, political, and economic impact of a White dominant culture (Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010).

One of the most powerful elements of CRT in education is that it provides critical researchers with a lens not offered by many other theoretical frameworks—that is, the ability to examine how multiple forms of oppression can intersect within the lives of people of color and how those intersections manifest in our daily experiences to mediate our education (Perez Huber, 2010). CRT is becoming an increasingly important tool to broaden and deepen the analysis of the racialized barriers erected for people of color (Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005).

Race emerged as the main form of identity in those societies where it functions to stratify the social system (Smedley, 1999). In other words, the emergence of racial identity was closely linked to racism, a system of oppression organized around these socially constructed racial categories. Therefore, critical race theorists also argue that while they consider race to be a social construction, it is nonetheless *real* in the sense that there is a material aspect and weight to the familiarity of being *raced* in American society, a materiality that in important ways has been created and sustained by law (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Given this explanation, then, critical race theorists agree that the practice of racialization is a social one; in the American context, it is one that establishes and maintains differences in racial categories for the clear purpose of racial subordination. These frameworks enable us to analyze patterns of racial exclusion and other forms of discrimination against populations. While legally sanctioned racial

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discrimination may no longer exist overtly in American education, CRT and, further, LatCrit help us recognize patterns, practices, and policies of racial inequality that continue to exist in more insidious and covert ways (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

### **Intersectionality of Theories**

CRT is the foundation of LatCrit and by using these interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives to analyze data gleaned from interviews, I hope to be able to identify ways that race, racism, ability status, education, and cultural capital may be imbedded in how being Hispanic and having multiple labels of difference validates and impacts my subjects' lives (Tefera, Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Chirichigno, 2011). Using the intersection of these theoretical approaches has helped me to explore the marginalization of Hispanic parents and allowed me to find central themes from their experiential knowledge. It is through these lenses that LatCrit enables researchers to better articulate the experiences of Latinas/os specifically, through a more focused examination of the unique forms of oppression this group encounters (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) as conceptual frameworks offer a way to analyze parental involvement and develop more culturally relevant practice using a social justice lens. "These theories are transdisciplinary and draw on many bodies of progressive scholarship to understand and improve educational experiences of students of color" (Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, & Nebecker, 1999). CRT and LatCrit have added layers of complexity to the formation of identity and construction of knowledge by looking at the intersections of immigration (Garcia, 1995; Johnson, 1997), migration (Johnson, 1997), human rights (Hernandez-Truyol, 1997; Iglesias, 1996; Roamny, 1996-1997), language (Roamny, 1996), gender (Rivera, 1994), and class

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(Ontiveros, 1998). Ultimately, these theories provide a lens from which to frame and inform this study, allowing an analysis of data from Hispanic parental perspective on education and parental involvement.

An unequal environment may exist for Hispanic youth's parents. Several studies, first by Floyd (1998) and later by Rolon-Dow (2005) have shown that their participation in the schooling process is decreasing. CRT asserts that racism is a permanent component in society and neutrality and objectivity cannot diminish completely (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It follows that examining racism and oppression in relation to parental involvement may yield useful information to improve the achievement of students. Research shows a connection between parental involvement and student achievement (Epstein, Sanders, & Sheldon, 2009; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001) and if there are obstacles for minority parent's school involvement, they should be eliminated. Existing policies may need to be examined and potentially produced that are more inclusive and fair toward minority groups.

### **Latino Critical Theory**

LatCrit Theory specifically addresses the issues plaguing a minority group that has been historically disenfranchised in the United States. The LatCrit scholarly movement, according to Valdes (1996), began at the Hispanic National Bar Association at a colloquium in 1995 in response to the "long historical presence and enduring invisibility of Latinas/os in the lands now known as the United States" (p. 148).

"CRT in education explores the ways in which race-neutral laws and institutional structures, practices, and policies perpetuate racial/ethnic educational inequality" (Solórzano et al., 2001, p.274) and is becoming an increasingly important tool to broaden

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and deepen the analysis of the racialized barriers erected for people of color (Solórzano et al., 2001). Additionally, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and LatCrit grew out of the idea that the logic and structure of law are influenced by the existing power relationships of society and, as a consequence, the oppressed will never be adequately served by the law (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Educational equity should exist for all students regardless of minority, race, gender, or any other limiting characteristic, and injustice exists if these characteristics create an unequal experience in an academic environment (Delgado Bernal, 2002). CRT and LatCrit identify storytelling, giving voice, and naming one's reality as valid scholarship and valuable tools for research (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado Bernal, Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). Education operates under the illusion that Hispanics have an opportunity to succeed that is equal to that of majority white students and CRT and LatCrit challenges this ideology (Yosso, 2006).

Valdes (1998) posited four functions of LatCrit: the production of knowledge, the advancement of transformation, the expansion and connection of Hispanic struggles, and the cultivation of community and coalition. Through these four functions, LatCrit theorists aspire to “assess the multidimensionality of the Latino/a identity to understand how White supremacy impacts the Latina/o community, and the ways in which Latina/os may reinforce White supremacy. In so doing, LatCrit can help develop a new foundation for building coalitions with other communities of color” (Trucios-Haynes, 2000, p.4).

As multicultural educators, the decision to adopt LatCrit as an analytic tool was heavily influenced by the analysis of Christine Sleeter and Dolores Delgado Bernal (2002), who argue that multicultural education could be sharpened in three significant ways by drawing on a more critical theory of race. First, they maintain that a focus on

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race and racism furthers the anti-racist goals of critical multiculturalism while forwarding an analysis of the intersections of racism with other forms of domination. They argue further that CRT challenges hegemonic epistemologies and ideologies such as notions of meritocracy, objectivity, and neutrality; and they point out the benefits of counter-storytelling as a pedagogical practice and as a tool that could be useful in educational research (Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004). LatCrit challenges the standard Black/White binary that tends to limit considerations of race and racism to the power relations between African Americans and European Americans, thereby creating discursive space for Latinos/as, who can be of any race, as well as for individuals who may identify as multiracial or multiethnic. Such an expansion is crucial to understanding the complexity of the context facing Latino/a youth in schools today, while taking into account intersections with culture and ethnicity.

A Hispanic student may experience cultural alienation, not only based on their ethnicity as a Hispanic female, but by how she is treated in regard to gender, a member of a certain socioeconomic class, and in relation to her English language proficiency and immigrant generational status (Castillo-Rosenthal, & Demers, 2001). For people of color, each of these dimensions of one's identity has potentially elicited multiple forms of subordination, yet each dimension has been subjected to different forms of oppression (Carbado, 2013) For Hispanic students, the application of these frameworks requires that the students' experiential knowledge be central and viewed as a resource stemming directly from their lived experiences. Following, their experiential knowledge is viewed as an asset, a form of community memory, a source of empowerment and strength, and not as a deficit (Delgado, 1989, 1995; Lopez, 2003; Olivas, 1986).

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CRT and LatCrit challenge the ideology that all persons are treated equal by exposing how subtle racial discrimination occurs by policies and institutions in general. It is not their culture or race that has placed these students at the greatest disadvantage, but the lack of understanding and CRT and LatCrit place emphasis on race and socially constructed categories as central to understanding (Solórzano, 2005).

### **Parental Involvement in Relation to Theory**

The lack of Hispanic parental involvement that exists currently in schools can be viewed as an opportunity for social inquiry regarding the equality of a large system, specifically the educational system, which may operate in such a way as to decrease equality for particular minority groups ((Goldberg, 2009; Leong, 2013; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009; Zhou, 1997). In seeking solutions to the under-representation and under-achievement of ethnic minority students within higher education, sociologists proposed increased access to education for such students coupled with an education of compensatory cultural experiences which were considered to be lacking in their home environments (Gale & McNamee, 1995). However, as the parental involvement research has evolved, it has also become clear to most researchers that parental involvement is a multidimensional rather than homogeneous construct (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Kelley-Laine, 1998; Kim, 2002; Park, 2008). Where parental involvement theories do not account for how race and accepted policy intersects with educational issues is where LatCrit accounts for how the status quo perpetuates a problem. Solórzano and Ornelas (2004) have explained that critical race theory “consists of basic insights, perspectives,

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methods, and pedagogies that seek to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom” (p.17).

It is for these reasons that Critical Theory is the broad concept from which CRT and LatCrit are used as the theoretical lens to investigate the existing ideology and implementation of the parental involvement of Hispanic students. Researchers, practitioners, and students are still searching for the necessary tools to effectively analyze and challenge the impact of race and racism in society (Yosso, 2005). Racial justice is an inherent component through which culturally responsive schools emerge and CRT in education “provides critical researchers with a lens not offered by many other theoretical frameworks--that is, the ability to examine how forms of oppression can intersect within the lives of People of Color and how those intersections manifest in our daily experiences to mediate our education” (Perez Huber, 2010, p. 77).

This study will examine factors which contribute to parental involvement for Hispanic students and how the involvement, or lack of, may be a catalyst for policy change. Increasing culturally sensitive practice towards parents and involvement by Hispanic parents in schools improves the educational success and outlook for the Hispanic student (Mena, 2011). Schools that acquire a better understanding of the historical and current experiences of the communities from which Hispanic students emerge create more equitable practices and policies in schools (Valverde, 2006). The goal is for Hispanic students to increase their academic achievement and attention is given to how improved parental involvement can help to attain the desired results.

### **Summary**

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In the nation's public schools, Hispanics have recently reached new milestones. For the first time, one-in-four (24.7%) public elementary school students are Hispanic, following recently reached milestones by Hispanics among public kindergarten students in 2007 and public nursery school students in 2006 (Pew Research Center, 2015) and among all pre-K through 12th grade public school students, a record 23.9% were Hispanic in 2011. From fall 2002 through fall 2012, the number of White students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools decreased from 28.6 million to 25.4 million, and their share of public school enrollment decreased from 59 to 51 percent. In contrast, the number of Hispanic students enrolled during this period increased from 8.6 million to 12.1 million students, and their share of public school enrollment increased from 18 to 24 percent (NCES, 2016). The U.S. Western region and its public schools are in the midst of a racial and economic transformation, as the area witnesses a shrinking white majority, a surging Latino minority, and a growing class of poor (Kucsera & Flaxman, 2012). The persistence of gaps in the test scores between white students and their black and Hispanic counterparts are universally acknowledged (Bali & Alvarez, 2003; DePaoli, Fox, Ingram, Maushard, Bridgeland, Balfanz, Pierson, & Byrnes, 2014; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Pierson & Byrnes; 2015). A strong case can be made that strong parental involvement and students' success is linked; therefore, it is important that schools look for ways to engage parents in their children's education (Epstein, Sanders, & Sheldon, 2009).

As the need to address issues surrounding the low achievement among Latinos increases, it is imperative that educators focus on the school *and* the home. Although school system factors have been addressed as bearing responsibility in structuring

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inequalities among Latinos (Conchas, 2001), the family has become a focus for contextualizing the low academic achievement of these students. Marginalized parents, especially Latinos, are being held culpable for their children's low levels of achievement. LatCrit uses a critical examination of society and culture, to the intersection of race, law, and power, to help explain these discrepancies in achievement and low Hispanic parental involvement.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

##### Introduction

In the United States, due to demographic shifts, public schools are seeing larger and larger representations of Hispanic students (Fry, Gonzales, & Pew Hispanic, 2008). Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population grew by 61% respectively, and it is predicted that by 2025, nearly half of all students will be students of color (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). Hispanic students are the largest ethnic group (US Census Bureau, 2012) and they are more likely to experience language barriers, visa and immigration issues, and poverty than their Anglo peers (Gibson, 2002). Nationally, 24% of students of "Hispanic origin" between ages 16 to 24 leave school before graduation or do not earn a high school diploma or equivalency credential, whereas the high school dropout rate of White and Black students is 10%, respectively (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007).

These changing demographics will be of great importance for educators now and in the future. The highest rates of growth in the Hispanic population can be seen in

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children and youth under the age of 18; for example, between 2000 and 2010, the growth rate for Hispanics under age 18 was 28%, while the rate of change in the same period for non-Hispanic youth actually decreased by 5% (NCES, 2015). Understanding what contributes to Hispanic student success to graduate high school, and succeed in a post-secondary choice is a focus of schools today.

The growing issue of the number of Hispanic students that are not graduating and entering post-secondary school (Beatty, 2013) and closing the existing achievement gap, is a focus of intervention. While there are multiple reasons for dropping out of school, the lack of cooperation between school, parents, and community has played a role (Scribner, 1999, Turner & Kao, 2010). One effective intervention is increased parental involvement (Carranza, You, Chhuon, & Hudley, 2009). Parental involvement in children's education has been associated with children's school success, including higher academic achievement, better behavior, lower absenteeism, and increased positive attitudes toward school (Overstreet, Dvine, Bevans, & Efreom, 2005). The topic of parental involvement has been heavily researched and its impact on academic achievement has been well documented in the literature (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Niemeyer, et.al., 2009). Although much of the research conducted in the field has not featured racially and ethnically diverse families (Cardona, Jain, & Canfield-Davis, 2012) and this is significant given the rapid increase in the number of individuals of diverse backgrounds in the United States (United States Department of Commerce, 2012). The way families view parental involvement is strongly influenced by their ethnicity, language, education, and other factors (Cardona, Jain, & Canfield-Davis, 2012)

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and this involvement can positively impact the achievement of Hispanic students (Schwartz, 2001).

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand Hispanic parental involvement from parent and staff perspectives. Each school is likely to have a distinct understanding of what counts as parental involvement, as well as a diverse set of rationales underlying why involvement is, or is not, important and a unique way of encouraging involvement (Young, Rodriguez, & Lee, 2008). Realizing the perspectives of staff could benefit the existing research of what characteristics schools have that serve Hispanic students well. Parental involvement is a focus of this research in an attempt to increase success for students and families.

A review of the pertinent literature revealed parental involvement in the Hispanic population is low (Hill & Tyson, 2009) and although parental involvement has shown an increase with white parents, a past study has shown that low income minority parents have decreased the contact they have with their children's schools (Floyd, 1998) or, not significantly increased their involvement (Epstein, 2007). Accordingly, included in this chapter are the research questions, the rationale for the research design of this study on parental involvement, and the limitations involved in such a study. Additionally discussed is a description of design controls, the participants, a discussion of the data collection and instrumentation, and procedures of data analysis.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1. From the Hispanic parent's perspective, what do parents understand their role to be in supporting their children's education?

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RQ2. How do primary stakeholders describe their relationship with parents and the school?

RQ3. How do stakeholders perceive methods designed to promote effective parent/school relationships?

RQ4. What obstacles exist that impact Hispanic parental involvement?

RQ5. What do stakeholders perceive the characteristics to be of schools that have effective home/school relationships with Hispanic families?

Addressing these questions will support the stated purpose of the study of investigating parental involvement from the perspective of Hispanic parents. In addition, this study has extended the knowledge in the field of parental involvement with a critical race lens by considering an examination of society and culture, to the intersection of race, law, and power.

### **Design**

It is important as a researcher to understand the fundamental tenets and philosophy of an inquiry paradigm (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). This fundamental knowledge aids the researcher in selecting the appropriate paradigm that includes research methods, inquiry, questions, and purposes that best fit the specific area of inquiry. The research methodology chosen for this study was qualitative in nature. When data demonstrate the needs of an ethnic group that is not able or willing to give its' opinions through a predetermined format, it is both a human and social problem and is appropriate for studying qualitatively (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Carter and Hurtado (2007) asserted, "research as a catalyst for change or a form of advocacy...can be an effective means for conducting... research on marginalized groups and for populations where

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simultaneous interventions and research are needed" (p. 32). Creswell (2007) echoed this assertion, positing that, "[b]esides dialogue and understanding, a qualitative study may fill a void in existing literature, establish a new line of thinking, or assess an issue with an understudied group or population" (p. 102). Creswell (1998) also emphasizes that the researcher's role should be as an active learner instead of an expert judging research participants.

Research is conducted on the qualitative or the quantitative level, where qualitative generally does not translate aspects of the world into numbers to be analyzed mathematically, and quantitative does use numbers (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative methodology was the best approach to answer research questions: about parent and staff perceptions of parental involvement. While quantitative methodology can produce good answers to questions, "not all experiences can be accounted for without employing qualitative research" (Hatch, 2002, p. 6). In this study, understanding parent and staff perceptions about school being involved was best answered through an interview format.

To learn how Hispanic parents feel about parent-school relations and involvement with their child's school in general, a conversational style was the appropriate way to achieve the goal. A level of trust had to be established, through introductions and a research explanation, and deeper conversations had to occur in order to learn honest perceptions from parents. A qualitative approach "demands that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 5). In addition, the study was designed to identify which activities Hispanic parents choose to engage in and to understand why they choose to

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become involved. While some of the research questions could have been addressed through a questionnaire, the interview style addressed all issues under investigation and facilitated the development of a rich, thick description of the constructs in question. These interviews can be viewed through a Critical Race, and particularly a Latino Critical Theory lens.

LatCrit as a lens can serve larger, transformative purposes to advocate for marginalized groups such as women, ethnic/racial minorities, members of the gay and lesbian communities, people with disabilities, and those who are poor (Mertens, 2003). In this current study the Hispanic population is considered a marginalized group, which requires extra attention in research to understand the level of school involvement. Through a qualitative framework, the human and social problem explored is that of Hispanic parents' perceptions of their student's school and their perceived barriers to being involved and the school's perspective of the level of outreach that occurs.

During this qualitative process, triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007). The data were triangulated through peer debriefing, member check, and an audit trail. Data collection generally will occur in a relatively short period of time and involves a single population and then data are integrated in the final analysis. Because this study used a qualitative method, the decisions made were about implementation (data collection), the priority (which method is given precedence), and integration (process of analysis and incorporation of findings) (Creswell, 2003). These processes will be explained further in this chapter.

### **Participants**

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Individuals of Hispanic origins are a part of the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States (United States Department of Commerce 2006, 2008). Persons of Hispanic origins represented approximately 16% of the total U.S. population as of the 2010 census. It is anticipated that the growth of the Hispanic population will continue through the first half of the twenty-first century and that their segment of the population will increase from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million by 2060.

With regard to academic achievement and educational attainment, students of Hispanic origins generally have not achieved at the same rate as their non-Hispanic counterparts (Aud, Fox, & Kewal-Ramani, 2010). In addition, students of Hispanic origins have scored significantly lower on standardized tests than their non-Hispanic counterparts, have graduated high-school at lower rates (DePaoli, Fox, Ingram, Maushard, Bridgeland, Balfanz, Pierson, and Byrnes, 2015) and attended college at lower rates (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). The review of literature has shown that parental involvement makes a positive difference (source) but further investigation with regard to parental involvement from the perspective of parents is needed. The Hispanic population has experienced rapid growth in the United States over the last decade and is expected to have continued growth. The purpose of the current study was to investigate parental involvement from the perspective of Hispanic parents to add to the body of knowledge which might positively affect Hispanic students.

The researcher selected the use of a purposeful sample (Creswell, 2003; 2007; Merriam, 1998) to meet the parameters which were developed by the literature review. The participants were further selected by each having at least one student enrolled in the

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school in one of the three Midwest schools selected. Participants who were appropriate for this study were Hispanic parents or guardians who have school-aged children. All parent participants were at least 18 years old, which is the age of legal consent. Due to the nature of the study and the questions being addressed, all participants were of Hispanic origins. Limiting the participants to Hispanic parents, or guardians, was acceptable due to the fact that any knowledge gained from the study specifically benefited the study population. No other protected groups were recruited for this study. Because generalizability beyond the participants of the group is limited, the research sample needed to represent a close approximation of the population of interest (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007), in this case Hispanic parents.

Merriam (1998) based purposeful sampling on the premise of wanting “to discover, understand, and gain insight... {to} select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p.61). The more specific the population under consideration, the less likely the existing research findings is currently robust. This study will add to the existing body of knowledge about parental involvement. The specific population utilized for this study was Hispanic parents.

The population for this study included Hispanic parents from three public school districts in one metropolitan area in one Midwestern state. The data from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website was used to determine school districts with a predominantly high Hispanic student population percentage in the Midwestern area. These districts included an inner city public school, one charter school, and one school considered slightly outside of the inner city. Parent liaisons, school counselors, and English Language Learner teachers employed by these school districts

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were interviewed. These staff members worked directly with parents as part of their job description for the school district. This input was analyzed to determine the level of parental outreach and effectiveness.

Data were collected from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education statistics Midwest school districts and three districts were targeted due to their high percentage of Hispanic students per total student population. The state average is 5.6% of students are Hispanic in Missouri (Missouri Department of Education, 2016). These districts were selected due to their high percentage of Hispanic students attending. School District 1 is a charter school district and had a total of 711 students district-wide and 90.7 % Hispanic students, School District 2 has a total of 4,660 students with 630 student of Hispanic ethnicity at 13.5%, and School District 3 is located outside of the inner city boundaries with a total student population of 4,795 and serving 15.7% Hispanic students.

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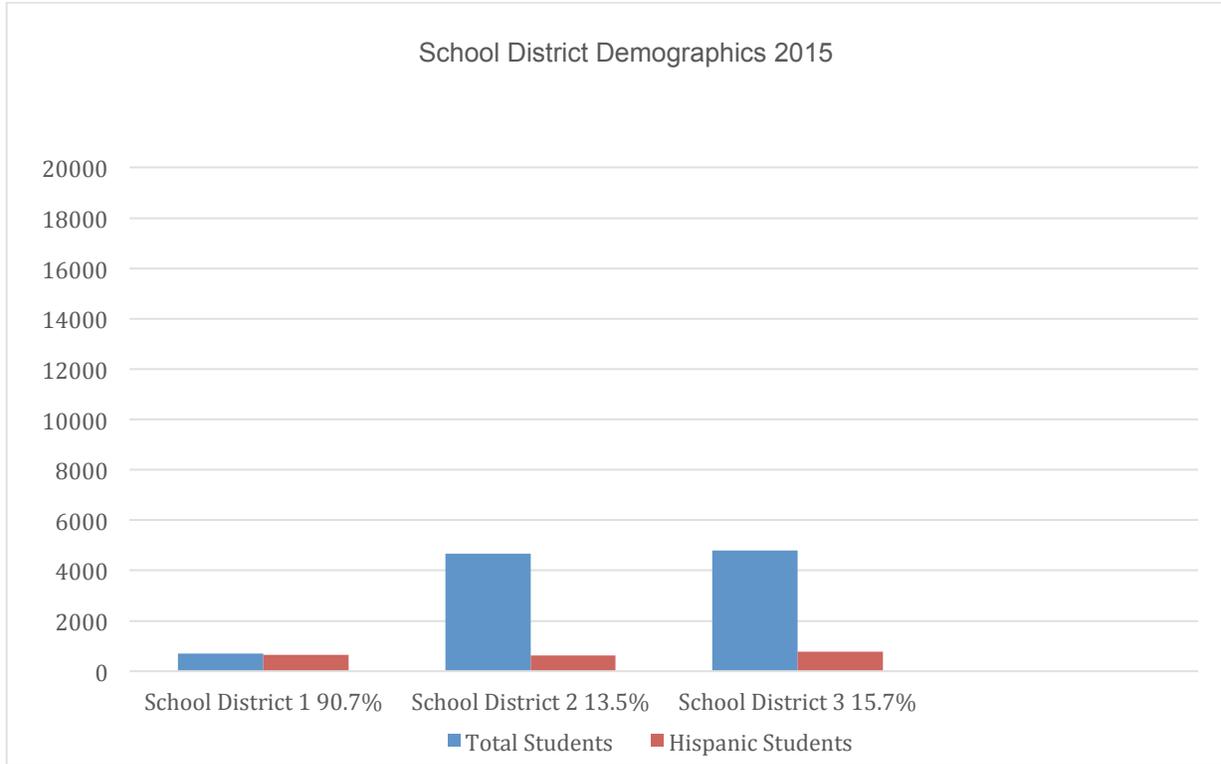


Table 1: School District Demographics

In attempting to capture the voice of the Hispanic parents, selecting schools with a highly representative Spanish speaking parent population was suitable for the purpose of the study. Selection of schools involved a process that began with requesting each district's permission to conduct research at their district. Once district permission was granted, the researcher contacted principals and staff who worked closely with parents to inform them of the study and request access to their campus and complete interviews. The investigator visited the schools and explained the study and obtained consent. The volunteers then contacted the researcher about participating and setting up an interview.

### **Data Collection and Instrumentation**

This study focused on understanding the nature of involvement among Hispanic parents and their children's schools. It utilized a qualitative design, with interviews

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conducted with Hispanic parents and staff who worked with parents, utilizing a set group of questions in an individual interview. Qualitative research methodology was used in an effort to gain a rich understanding of the complexities of participation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

At two sites, the principal investigator was allowed to make a detailed announcement about the study, which included an overview of the study, the informed consent form, and assurances of confidentiality. Each announcement was made in English and in Spanish, and a Spanish interpreter was used. At another site, an announcement was made at a community event by the district. Parents and staff members contacted the lead investigator about participating and a time and place was arranged. In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 Hispanic parents of students. All 12 parents identified themselves as being of Hispanic descent. This study included face-to-face interviews using a predetermined set of open-ended questions. The researcher's role was to ask the predetermined questions; to listen attentively, giving only minimal verbal responses such as "yes," and "I understand." This included asking follow-up questions to probe for a deeper understanding and to follow up with immediate member check (Creswell, 1998). Phrasing for the immediate member check normally used wording such as, "Allow me to summarize what I think I heard," or "What I think you are saying is..." A protocol was established to record the date and time of the interviews. A number was randomly assigned to each interviewee for confidentiality purposes and initials were used in reporting. All staff interviewees decided to meet at the school to participate in the interviews which was allowed by the building administrators.

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The participants' responses were audio recorded and notes were made on the interview guide. Parents were provided with a copy of the interview questions, in English or Spanish, for their reference as the questions were read to them. Those responses were later reviewed with the participants to ensure accuracy with a random call check to confirm conversations as a means of validation. This form of member checking helped to ensure that the information obtained was accurate and reflected what was intended by the interviewees (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Member checking allowed for those interviewed to add detail, or clarify statements that were made. Recordings were translated and transcribed immediately after the interviews. Eight of the twelve interviews required translation from Spanish to English followed by transcription.

### **Data Analysis**

Parents and school staff were interviewed. Each interview was transcribed in its entirety using a Word document within three days of the interviews to ensure accuracy and retention since the researcher recognized that the delay in transcribing data ran the possibility of jeopardizing the quality of analysis (Creswell, 2003). The researcher made notes after each interview to describe her own thoughts and other issues that would not be evident from the transcription alone (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After each interview was transcribed, the researcher re-read the entire transcription in order to gain a clearer understanding of what was being expressed. Significant words, phrases, and thoughts were underlined in each transcription, highlighted, and extracted into a separate document as categories began to form. "Advocacy research provides a voice for these participants, raising their consciousness or advancing an agenda for change to improve their lives" (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). Looking at the interviews separately and then as a

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whole provides an overview of the existence of perceptions of outreach and support, and to identify obstacles that exist for Hispanic parents in schools. Data were analyzed separately and then integrated to help to identify significant ideas.

The qualitative data were coded for relevant parts. A code in qualitative inquiry is a short phrase or a word that symbolically captures the essence or attribute for a portion of language or picture (Saldana, 2009). This open coding process identified existing barriers in schools and parent perceptions that allowed themes to emerge from data, while using a CRT lens to reveal often unseen structures of oppression (Malagón, Pérez Huber, & Velez, 2009). Open coding occurs where the researcher categorizes phenomena, breaking it into discrete parts (Mertins, 2005). These parts were analyzed between subjects and the data as a whole. Categories or recurring themes in participant's answers were coded and emphasized in the description of the data. Emergent coding design will allow themes to reveal themselves naturally as the transcripts are reviewed. Emergent themes are particularly important given that the topic under investigation is parental involvement from the parent's perspective as it specifically relates to parents of Hispanic origins. The emergent design also allowed for the use of in-vivo codes which will help to ensure that the findings will be reflective of the participants (Saldana, 2009). Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 1998) were used to establish a typology (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) of related concepts.

The data collected throughout the study were compiled and in a secure database which contained all field notes, consent documents, narratives and other material collected. To address the issue of researcher bias during the data collection and interpretation phases of this project, a research journal was kept. The journal was used to

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record the principal investigator's thoughts, ideas, concerns, and feelings related to the study. The journal allowed the principal investigator the opportunity to reflect on the research process as it was occurring. In addition, this step allowed the principal investigator to address issues related to bias as they arose (Hatch, 2002). Issues that were not revealed or addressed during the data collection and interpretation phases are reported in the limitation section of the report.

### **Human Subjects Protection**

This research involved adult subjects, over 18 years of age, who gave permission to participate prior to completing and answering questions. Participants understood their rights, including the free volition to participate and withdraw at any time from the research shown by a verbal acknowledge and a signed consent. This study received the permission of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Missouri-Columbia that oversees the protection of the rights, welfare, and wellbeing of subjects involved in research conducted or supported by the University. This IRB proposal ensured the confidentiality of the individuals involved in the study were protected (Creswell, 2009; Hatch, 2002; Mertens, 2003).

### **Role of Researcher**

Qualitative research is interpretative in nature and requires that the researchers immerse themselves in the research project (Creswell, 2009). The researcher conducted interviews posing semi-structured open-ended questions. This research was included in a doctoral dissertation by a researcher relatively new to the field. Design and triangulation strategy helped to control for inexperience.

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In a critical approach to research, it is imperative to appraise one's personal values before proceeding in order to "check [one's] own biases" (Fink, 2006, p.20) within the context of the study as well as the biases reflected in the literature and the character of data and data collection. Rather than trying to eliminate these biases, it is also imperative that "the qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) expanded on this assertion when noting, "Interviewers are not expected to be neutral or automatons... [but they have] to be self-aware, examining... biases and expectations that might influence the interviewee" (p. 30). And lastly, the LatCrit researcher should aim for some modicum of equilibrium in his or her positionality. As Litowitz (2009) espoused, "The outside perspective is valuable in the first place because it provides check and balance against the views of the insiders; so that what results is an overall balance between inside and outside. And that is our goal – a balanced view" (p. 307).

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was supported through several means: triangulation of methods using interviews, research observations, and school/district documents related to actual parent involvement; reflection on the process, awareness of researcher impact on the project, highlighting any potential biases throughout the research; and comparison of analysis of the data with the analysis of colleagues who are familiar with the research

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methods and theory. Inquiry auditors were used to help the researcher interpret the data and to assist identifying potential bias or misinterpretation. Peer reviewers were able to help the researcher confront personal values and bias during the study while triangulation ensured consistency of evidence across all sources of data (Mertens, 2003) and with the construction of the interview questions.

“The connection between reliability and internal validity from a traditional perspective rests for some on the assumption that a study is more valid if repeated observations in the same study or replications of the entire study have produced the same results” (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). There have been previous studies which examine parental involvement but this study was conducted with Hispanic parents and school staff. so that it can be replicated to expand or replicate the results. “If we cannot expect others to replicate our account, the best we can do is explain how we arrived at our results” (Dey, 1993, p.1). Joppe (2000) provides the following explanation of what validity is in quantitative research:

Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit "the bull's eye" of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others.

This research strives to contain premises from which the conclusion may logically be derived and the limitations encountered will be detailed in the next section involved in conducting research and replicating research.

### **Limitations and Assumptions**

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Research occurs in a natural setting, therefore a limitation exists that the researcher may be viewed as intrusive, whereby participants being questioned may behave, or answer, differently than they normally might answer (Creswell, 2009; Hatch, 2002). It is important that the researcher was extremely objective and as unbiased as possible in the line of questioning of subjects. To provide a holistic picture of the findings, the researcher ensured not to oversimplify or exaggerate participant perceptions (Merriam, 1998). There was frequent clarification checks and all interviews were audio-recorded. The recordings were transcribed and read and reread for understanding and accuracy.

Generalization can only be drawn from this study to other similar public school districts in the state of Missouri. Important to note is that Hispanic populations in different states, such as Texas or California, may have a more migrant population or other prevailing factors which prevents information from this Midwest study to be generalized to that population.

Another limitation is the recruitment and selection of participants. A few parents in this study were recruited from a parent meeting. This may have contributed to bias in their results because parents who attend these meetings may have certain predispositions to being involved. Therefore their opinions may differ from those parents who were not accessible for this study. This occurred in two school districts and included six of the twelve parents. The nature of the topic necessitated that the parents be recruited at whatever settings were accessible to the researcher. One setting involved a community meeting in the neighborhood on a weekend day but was a meeting that all parents of the school district were invited to attend. Since this study aimed to capture the views and

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perceptions about parents, it was important and necessary to recruit parents that would be willing to share their experiences with the researcher. Volunteering was one way to ensure that the parents in each group would be open about their views on parent involvement.

The researcher was not a native Spanish speaker and had to rely upon a skilled interpreter to provide the questions and parent answers. The interpreter had native fluency in a target language and a source language (e.g. Spanish/English). She was born in Panama and had firsthand experience living in a Hispanic culture. She holds a Master's degree and has many years of job experience working with families.

### **Delimitations**

For the purposes of this study, the term Hispanic is defined as including individuals whose origins are from Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, South America, Central America or other Spanish cultures, regardless of race (United States Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, United States Census Bureau, 2010). However, one of the delimitations of the study includes the fact that Hispanic parents were treated as a single group. Despite the plurality of the Hispanic culture, much of the literature, including the current study, treats people of Hispanic origins as a single homogeneous group. In this group of parents there were individuals originally from Mexico and El Salvador.

### **Confidentiality and Data Anonymity Assurances**

Throughout the data collection process, the confidentiality of Hispanic parents was ensured. All personally identifiable information was stripped from individuals' transcripts prior to data analysis and frequent member checks completed. The

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demographic data was coded by initials and placed in Chart 1 and 2. The staff data were given a number at the time of the interview which ensured their confidentiality.

### **Summary**

This study examined the issue of low parental involvement by Hispanic parents in their child's education and staff perception of involvement. It was a qualitative design, using focused interviews to determine the effective interventions and outreach experienced by parents. These data were collected from parents and staff to understand their perceptions of their own involvement in school on behalf of their child and how that involvement was perceived by staff.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Introduction

The focus of this qualitative study was to examine parental involvement from the parent's perspective. Furthermore, the study sought to additionally speak with school staff and understand their perspective on parent's being involved in the school. Within Chapter Four, an overview of the study design, data collection methods, interview questions, and analysis of data will be provided. The researcher will further present the participants, settings of interviews and schools, and observations. The purpose of this chapter is to capture the voices of the Hispanic parents as they relate to parental involvement and explore barriers, concerns, and characteristics to being involved in school.

#### **Participants**

The total population consisted of parents whose children attend one of three schools in the Midwest and staff from each school district. A total of 18 participants volunteered to participate in this study. Twelve of the participants were parents with at least one child in one of three Midwest school districts. Six of the participants were employed by the three school districts, two from each district. Staff members were purposefully selected because their job descriptions included working directly with parents of English as a Second Language students. The participant's sampled for this study varied by age and gender and reflected diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Seven out of the sixteen parents reported that their children were not doing

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well in school, while the other nine parents reported that their children were thriving in school.

Participant	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Country of origin	Years in US	Number of children	Children attending research site	Grades of children	Parent Level
Herman	F	31	M	Mexico	6	1	1	4	8 <sup>th</sup>
Eduardo	M	34	M	Mexico	8	3	2	6,8	7 <sup>th</sup>
Ramira	F	32	S	Mexico	12	2	1	8	8 <sup>th</sup>
Valeria	F	38	M	El Salvador	11	1	1	6	9 <sup>th</sup>
Felicita	F	39	M	Mexico	6	4	2	1,5	9 <sup>th</sup>
Leticia	F	35	M	Mexico	20	2	2	2,5	8 <sup>th</sup>
Adella	F	33	M	Mexico	5	1	1	3	7 <sup>th</sup>
Carla	F	33	S	El Salvador	9	5	3	5,3, Pre-K	9 <sup>th</sup>
Malia	F	39	M	Mexico	7	4	2	9,11	10 <sup>th</sup>
Jose	M	46	M	Mexico	6	4	1	11	12 <sup>th</sup>
Veronica	F	31	M	Mexico	10	2	2	9,12	8 <sup>th</sup>

Table 2: Parent Demographics

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he data from Table 2 explains that all parents had immigrated to the United States from another country of which the majority of the parents were from Mexico, but two parents stated that their country of origin was El Salvador. There were two males and ten female parents included in the study and all parents had at least one school aged child, while many had multiple children attending the school district include in the study. Only one parent had an education that included completion of high school, and the majority (ten out of twelve) did not have education beyond ninth grade. The average time in the United States for all parents was approximately 16 years and the average age of the parents was 35years old. The ages of the students that the parents had attending school in the district ranged from 1<sup>st</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

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Participant	Sex	Age	Years in district	Title	Experience in another district
Vanessa	F	56	11	ELL Teacher	N
Dylan	M	53	14	Center Employee	N
Stephanie	F	50	24	Counselor	N
Emma	F	52	23	Counselor	N
Patricia	F	44	10	Parent liaison	Y
Lisa	M	51	9	ELL Teacher	Y

Table 3: Staff Demographics

Of the six staff included in the interviews, the average amount of time employed in the school was 15 years. All staff had contact with parents included in their job description and the majority (four out of six) had spent their entire educational career in the same district employed at the time of the interviews. This meant the staff members were very knowledgeable about the parents in their district. All study participants were assigned a pseudonym. The demographics of the subjects are outlined in Table 2: Parent Participants.

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### **Study Design**

This qualitative study was utilized to gain an understanding of the perceptions of Hispanic parents in the Midwest. A qualitative approach was utilized because it is “...designed to provide an in-depth description of a specific program, practice, or setting” (Mertens, p.229). In this research study, state demographics about students were examined to target three school district with high (>13% ) percentages of Hispanic populations. According to the Missouri Department of Education (2016) 5.6% of students in Missouri are Hispanic. School District 1 is a charter school district and had a total of 711 students district-wide and 90.7 % Hispanic students, School District 2 has a total of 4,660 students with 630 student of Hispanic ethnicity at 13.5%, and School District 3 is located outside of the inner city boundaries with a total student population of 4,795 and serving 15.7% Hispanic students. These school districts represent inner city students, slightly more rural students, and charter school students.

The majority of the settings of the interviews were the available spaces in the school building in which the parent had a child attending. This provided a comfortable, familiar setting for the parents. On two occasions the researcher visited parents in their homes for the interview due to multiple children or parent preference.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Before announcing information about the study, or approaching staff in the school districts, the researcher received permission from the gatekeeper at each school, the superintendent of the school district. Next the researcher completed the Institutional Review Board application with the supporting university institution. After obtaining both permissions, the researcher visited the districts to explain the study to staff members and

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attend several parent meetings to announce the study and ask for participants. The researcher obtained signed informed consent forms explaining the participant's involvement and rights within the parameters of the detailed study. These consent forms were provided in the language of Spanish and English. The participants then contacted the researcher to set up a day and time for the interviews to occur. There were 18 face-to-face interviews that occurred in three different school districts. The school districts were purposefully due to their percentage of Hispanic students and staff personnel employed that worked with the English as a Second Language (ESL) student population. The confidentiality of parents whose answers were submitted for the study was ensured because individual answers could not be linked to specific students, institutions, or parents as all identifiable information was removed. The confidentiality of staff was safeguarded by assigning each individual a number at the time of the interview.

### **Interview Protocol**

An interpreter accompanied the researcher to all interview sites. Each interview began by asking the volunteer if they preferred speaking in English or in Spanish. If the parent volunteer preferred Spanish, the interpreter was brought into the interview. The interpreter was introduced, confidentiality was explained, and the confidentiality agreement signed by researcher and interpreter was shown to the participant. All interviews were audio-taped and followed an interview protocol. Some participant's were spot checked after the interviews by telephone call. This process of member checking was used to allow the participants the opportunity to revise or offer feedback on their interview (Creswell, 2007). Using qualitative analysis, data were collected through

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individual interviews, using open-ended and semi-structured questions. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using open and axial coding.

### **Interview Questions**

Parent interview questions were asked in an open-ended, conversational style. Each question was structured to help answer one of the overarching five research questions and also tell the parent's story about their perception of involvement. Each parent had volunteered to participate and the researcher reminded them they could stop the interview at any time. They could ask for some, or all, of their interview answers to not be included in the study at any time. All parents verbally acknowledged this information about the study. The researcher assigned initials and observed gender of each participant.

After greeting the parent, explaining the study and purpose again, and confirming consent, the first question asked gave some background about the parent: Tell me a little about yourself and your family, and how long you have been in the country and school district. Of the twelve parents, all were friendly and open about explaining about themselves and their children. Next the researcher asked some demographic questions: age, martial status, country of origin, years in the United States, number of children, children attending research site and grade, and parents' educational attainment. Two of the parents had a child with them who was not yet school age. The younger child usually watched a video on their parent's phone or just sat in their parent's lap.

The answers were varied, with different ages of children and amount of time in the United States. Valeria stated:

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Buenos dias. I am a parent in this area of [the city] and I have a child in the fifth grade. My family came here from Mexico before I was married and we've lived here for a while, maybe ten years? I am learning English and my child has been going to this school. We've been in this school for six years now.

Carla said:

I'm a parent with several children. My oldest is in high school and I have a 7<sup>th</sup> grader and a 4<sup>th</sup> grader. My 4<sup>th</sup> grader has reading problems, so I am at school a lot for them. We've been in the school for, what? 8 years now?

Three of the parents had been in the country for less than five years. Those parents only spoke Spanish. The next question spoke to their involvement: "What opportunities do you have to be involved in your child's school?" Many parents recognized the most overt ways that the school wants them to participate. Felicita reported:

I go when they have a special program for the parents. I just went to the Valentine's play and my child wasn't on stage but her friends were there. I like talking to the other parents and seeing the school. I don't understand everything but I feel ok and it's nice.

A few parents mentioned the reasons for being at school, "Sometimes the school calls me for a meeting. Then I go to school if I can. A neighbor took me one time. It was to talk to the nurse." And "Every now and then my daughter forgets her computer or cord. I can't always bring it up, by if I'm not working I do."

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While in the school, the parent may come in contact with office staff or their child's teacher. When asked whether they found the school to be warm and inviting, the majority of the parents answered affirmatively, but one parent said even further:

I like that I can always talk to Emily in the office because she speaks Spanish. I can ask her about things that are happening and explain when my kids are gone. She's friendly and that's nice. It helps that she speaks my language and I don't feel nervous if I can talk to her.

The parents frequently have difficulty if they only speak Spanish. Several of the parents mentioned that for the school to feel warm and inviting, they feel better if the office staff greets them, especially in Spanish. The parents had the most to say about the following question: What do you think parent involvement means? The answers were varied and long, but centered around the theme of home. Adella shared:

I try to make sure that my kids have stuff they need. I ask them everyday if they have homework. Sometimes they say no, but I ask them to show me their papers. I have a place for them at the table to work. They have papers a lot to and I can't help much but I always check and ask.

Veronica said:

I make dinner every night and sometimes they have chores and things to do at home but I try to make sure they can get their schoolwork done. I ask them about what they are learning and I tell them to respect their teachers and the principal. We're lucky they have a good school to go to. I want them to have a better life.

Jose said:

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The teachers teach the kids. I don't know a lot of what the kids are learning and I tell them to have manners. I got a call from the school last week and [my child] had left a classroom and I talked to [my child] about how this is bad. I can't teach my child but I can tell them how to be respectful.

Carla reported:

We hope to get internet. [My child} tells me how we need it as home. I don't work outside the home so when we have the money we'll get it. My husband takes [my child] to the library sometimes when he needs to do something the teacher sends home. Sometimes he stays after school and rides the late bus home so he can get his work done.

The parents spoke of how providing things at home was what they saw as their responsibility. Frequently, the parents remarked how they 1) could not speak English, or 2) could not help with the schoolwork, but, they could teach manners and respect. The parents confirmed that it was a reflection on the family when the child was outside the home. "I teach him/her to be good!" was a frequent remark by the parents about the advice they give. Along with this idea of what parent involvement means to the parents, what the parents believed that they could do to help their child academically was at their house. Several parents shared about helping at home. Ramira said:

I didn't ever learn much beyond the [what is the same as] 6<sup>th</sup> grade in school and some of the things they teach differently now, like new math. I am not a lot of help when they have questions about the schoolwork, and just tell them to ask the teacher. They just have to ask how to do it.

Malia shared:

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I try to get [my child] to the library if they need it. This year they have a computer so they can look up more stuff to help them. We talk about it in Spanish and sometime I even learn things! School was hard for me and all I did was in Mexico at the school in my neighborhood. It wasn't the same as here.

When parent's elaborated on what was the parent's responsibility and what was the school's responsibility, the majority of the parents spoke about the division between academics and values. The majority of the parents (nine out of twelve) knew at least one teacher at their child's school and said something favorable or nice about the teacher(s). One parent said, "It's my responsibility make sure they are good. I hate if I go to the school and they say she hasn't been good. Sometimes I'm embarrassed." Herman added during their interview:

I teach at home how we should respect the *maestros* and *maestras*. They are the important and teach a lot. They work long hours and went to school a long time to know all the things they do about their subject. I don't know as much as the teachers!

Parents spoke favorably of their child's school and the staff. A parent said, "Sometimes I don't understand some things but I know that what they are doing is to help." The parents have a trust in the school that is evident by their sense of respect and the positive way they describe the staff.

All twelve of the parents answered yes to the question of whether they had visited their child's school this year. The interviews occurred in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the school year, so there had been 6-7 months of school for the current school year. An interview question of "Would you like to make more decisions at school?" was met with confusion

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from several (five out of twelve) of the parents. The parents spoke respectfully about the school their child attended and reported some concerns about having access due to the language barrier, or having the ability to use the parent portal, but overall did not have negative things to say. In addition, the question, “Do you feel that you have equal partnership as other parents in the school?” was met with agreement. The parents did not report being excluded or wanting more power in the school. Cari said:

The school sometimes will ask about our opinion on things. During conferences there was a survey for parents to complete that asked about the start time of school and when we'd like for school to end and the food. I filled it out because at the high school level the starting later is good but the other schools need to be earlier because I can't leave the kids by themselves when I go to work. They need to go to school when I leave. I put that down.

Valeria said:

I think I can come in the school anytime and see [my child] in their classroom. I walk them to their classroom in the morning every morning. Everybody can do that. I see other parents doing stuff like that too.

Three of the parents asked for clarification on the question. The researcher said, “As a Hispanic parent, do you think you have the same opportunities as parents of other ethnicities?” Of the three parents who asked for clarification, they each answered yes.

The good things that the parents had to say about the school was also long, and also addressed the questions, “What does the school do well to serve your child? And “What do you like about the school?” Eduardo remarked, “They have young and smart teachers.” The parents did not remark on anything that they could not see when visiting

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the school, such as long range goals or school board initiatives. The parents' answers were sometimes simplistic or brief about topics they did not seem to be really knowledgeable about.

In the interview questions, several spoke to the parent's motivation about factors that influence involvement or what the school could do to make them feel more connected. All parents communicated a desire to be a part of school and be connected. Many parents talked about what they did not know or understand about the school.

Felicita said:

I know they have to take the state tests at the end of the year. I don't know much about college or how to go about any of that. No one in my house has ever gone to college. I know it's a way to a good life if you are smart.

Cari said:

The stuff my kids learn on computers now is big. They know how to do so much more than I ever have known. Sometimes I don't know what [my child] is talking about that they are doing as celebration. I know about the regular things, like holidays, but they just did the 100 days? I had to ask what that meant.

Ramira noted:

I would feel like I could come and do more if I understood how things work. I feel like I don't know about how things are done enough. I just tell the office if something is happening...I come and do things if another person I know is here and needs help.

Finally, the last questions involved barriers and suggestions, "Are there factors that exist that prevent you from feeling connected or would you like to see anything

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improved?” The parents were comfortable by the end of the interview and their answers were varied. Most expressed a desire to know and understand more about the school.

Herman wanted more explanation of how things work:

I wish the school would explain more. They act like we already know but a lot of times I don't know at all. Like, looking online at grades. One year they showed us how to do it at the Back to School night and that was nice.

Veronica also stated:

It's different for me being Mexican. I didn't have a lot of school. I need for the school to tell me things in Spanish and I will try to help. I need for [my child] to attend school during the day so I can work.

Leticia is hoping the school personnel will better understand her situation:

I like the school but I wish they understood all the things we have to do to be here, to live, to get ahead. I know they are helping and teaching my child but I just want them to be understanding. I want them to know I care about [my child] and I want him to do well.

Not all parents gave as in depth answers for every question, but felt strongly about particular things. All the parents did care strongly about their children, evidenced by their passion when speaking. A couple of mothers even cried when talking about their hardships or journey to immigrate to the United States. All spoke emotionally about their values and providing opportunities for their children.

### **School Staff**

School staff were interviewed to understand what the school was providing that the parents might not be aware of, how the staff perceived parent involvement, and the

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characteristics that involved parents possessed. Two staff members were interviewed from each of the three school districts and started with the background of how long they had been employed by the school district. On average, the staff had been employed for approximately 15 years, therefore, most of the staff had been purposefully selected because they had experience with the parents in the district. One district had an ESL teacher and a staff member that staffed the Welcome Center. Another district had a parent liaison and a social worker. Two counselors were interviewed at the third district. The staff spoke about how involved they believed that the Hispanic parents were in their district, the activities parents can be involved in, and how the school involves parents. Stephanie shared the following:

Our parents are very supportive. They attend when they can, sometimes bringing younger or older children with them. Our Hispanic parents work a lot so sometimes it's hard for them to get to school. If it's important, though, like conferences, they are here.

Vanessa said, "We have days for dads and days for grandparents, other days, we have different activities for different family members. We want our families to attend." The general consensus with the staff members is that Hispanic parents are not physically present in the building as much as the White parents. The staff recognize that the group is caring and supportive, but not as physically present due to economic issues, and other reasons.

The biggest point that all six staff members stressed was the ability to speak and understand English. The staff believed that if the parent had a level of acculturation, they were more likely to be seen at the school and involved. Emma said:

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I see the biggest barrier not something the school does, or does not, do, but language. If the parent can understand and at least speak some English, then they feel comfortable enough to come in and help with events or attend activities. If they need interpreting, then for important meetings we will have it, but we don't ever see the parents who just arrived to this country.

Other staff members repeated the idea that familiarity and language skill is important in being connected. Dylan noted:

We see our newest parents in the Welcome Center a lot. They are the parents who need assistance with utility bills, how to understand grades, or citizenship forms. These parents need the most support with living in the US tasks. They don't feel very comfortable yet.

The parents who do not speak or understand any English struggle to help their children with school things. They have good relationships with their children but academic things are not something they understand. To some degree, they must trust the school and the decisions (such as grade progression, ESL support, etc.). Patricia stated:

If the teachers can't speak Spanish, we have a language line. The parents can have the message translated into English. The school's mission is for the teachers to connect with the parents during the year.

Lisa said:

Parents who don't speak as much English check in with our parent liaison (other staff member) and it is a little harder for them. We're not sure what they need or what questions they might have. The library in town offers English classes so that's a way for our families to learn English.

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The staff members continued with this language point with the question, “What characteristics do really involved parents have?” Dylan reported:

Our parents that are involved are the parents who have a group of others that they are connected to, English ability, and time. We see parents very involved in the ROTC program and sports. Those two activities seem to be the ones that parents understand the most. Plus, sports are kind of universal. The rules are the same no matter what language they speak.

When staff members were asked, “Do all parents have the same opportunity to be involved?” all six of the staff agreed that Hispanic parents do have the same opportunities presented to them as all parents. “The school encourages parents to be a part of the events and do not have any barriers that Hispanic parents would have more so than any other parent.” Another staff member reported that, “If we don’t have interpreters, or some things are hard to interpret, like plays or choir, then we may not have as many Hispanic parents.”

All three of the school districts reported that parents attend parent teacher conferences well in the schools. One district with the highest percentage of Hispanic students reported the largest attendance at their conferences, at 91%. Also, each district sends out important written information in both English and Spanish, although one staff member said, “It isn’t all (information) in Spanish, so we get calls at the Welcome Center about things that were sent home but aren’t in Spanish.”

Youth with positive perceptions of their school environment are less likely to exhibit externalizing behaviors such as aggression (Goldweber, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2013). All 3 of the school districts in the study had an anti-bullying focus and

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psychological awareness of how good emotional health may positively affect school success. Besides this, previous research tells us that family-oriented institutional practices effectively highlights the importance of support for students outside the school (Rydell & Boucher, 2010). Parents spoke at length about how they tried to provide support in the home by providing basic needs, communicating to students, and having a place for students to work or transporting to the library. The staff mentioned the important of relationships, Vanessa said:

We try to build relationships with our student's families. We reach out with information and activities to promote being connected to teachers to staff at the school. I think if this included more cultural activities it might be more successful. We know that students do better if we all work together.

There is evidence that parent expectations and positive parent/school relationships are beneficial throughout the schooling years (Jeynes, 2010). Dylan stated:

A family that we see support their child, in sports or in band or whatever, we feel comfortable reaching out when other things happen. We know that a foundation of trust or familiarity has been built. That way we believe we can contact the family about other things.

A family-school partnership promotes children's learning and positive behaviors, and the relationship between parents and teachers is a key aspect. Parents who feel comfortable talking with teachers and contributing to their child's academic success promote school importance and ability for their children. All the parents interviewed believed that their children could have a better life by achieving at school.

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### Summary

The Hispanic parents in the school districts in the Midwest may not have many of the same characteristics of their middle class Anglo counterparts. They might not have been in the country long, have much formal education, or speak fluent English. Many of these Hispanic parents don't think of parent involvement in the same way as traditional school staff may have been accustomed to viewing it. Hispanic parents may respect the school but also place a value in supporting their child emotionally or with life skills for a better life, such as a more lucrative vocational than their own. Parents take their role of instilling values and manners in their children very seriously.

Hispanic parents view teachers favorably and appreciate all the help they give their children. Teachers may utilize technology, or the office staff may notify parents through the use of automated calls or emails, and parents find this technology challenging. The challenges arise from language barriers or the lack of understanding or knowledge about how to use the school online portal for grades. This creates a disadvantage and a distance between the school and parents because parents are missing the essential information school finds important to communicate. This creates a disenfranchised group within the school instead of a supported one.

Obstacles exist in traditional schools for Hispanic parents such as English only events or communication. One district in the study staffed a welcome center that was extremely well received by Hispanic parents, as a much needed support. This welcome center was perceived by Hispanic parents as beneficial for all types of needs and may even contribute to a growing Hispanic population in the school district.

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Other barriers for the parents were working multiple jobs, transportation problems with traveling to school, or lack of bilingual staff.

Parents express the desire for schools to recognize the Hispanic heritage the students bring into classrooms and the hope that the future school staff and teachers will welcome and embrace the culture of the students and families. Appreciation of traditional Hispanic culture makes the parents feel included and connected. Schools which emphasize the strengths that exist in families have the strongest characteristics for enhancing connection and parental involvement.

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## FIVE

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This study aimed to explore Hispanic parents' perceptions and beliefs about parent involvement in their child's education and also how staff working in the schools perceived involvement. Barriers and challenges were discussed and examined from a critical race stance and how this might affect the perceptions or involvement of parents. This study intended to expose alternate ways to conceptualize parent involvement through the lens of Hispanic parents and highlight areas that schools do well. The educational needs of minority students and, in particular, Hispanic students in the United States, are of growing concern, at least partly because of the increase in the population, and high school dropout rate still higher than that of other ethnic groups.

#### **Findings**

This section includes a discussion of the research questions and how they relate to the interview questions. In answering the research questions, three themes emerged from the interviews with parents and staff: 1) parent involvement means different things to different stakeholders; 2) barriers exist; and 3) the level of English proficiency of the parents is related to the level of involvement.

RQ1. From the Hispanic parent's perspective, what do parents understand their role to be in supporting their children's education?

The parents in this study understood their involvement in their children's education from a broader perspective. The interviews of the parents in the Midwest area supported the research that Hispanic parents strongly value education and have high

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expectations for their children (Fuligni, 2007). In addition, the findings of this study revealed that parental involvement from the parent's perspective extended beyond the school and included, "involvement in every aspect of my child's life." As such, parents did not view the school as the only source for attaining their children's education. They acknowledged that the school was the primary place where the children learned academic subjects but they also believed that education was bigger than what occurred at the school.

How each parent interpreted being involved depended on a variety of factors. Some of the factors that parents faced each day included juggling work requirements or multiple jobs, juggling multiple children's schedules and needs, navigating single parenthood, the parent proficiency of English as a second language, and varying socioeconomic factors. Parents that immigrate from their native land are motivated for socioeconomic gain, therefore gainful employment is the primary economic engine for these families, it follows that in most of the Hispanic families interviewed, one or more parents worked multiple jobs. "I want more for my children and coming here makes that possible" is a common sentiment among the Hispanic parents. The parents' actions and reactions to their life circumstances, their experiences, their resources, their morals, their judgments and their values determined their level of involvement with their children's education. Herman said, "I treat my parents with respect just like I expect that of my kids." Staff spoke of parent's sharing values with them. Jose said, "[a child in my class] parent tells me thank you every time I see them and always asks about their child's behavior."

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Sometimes support is from other supportive members being involved in their child's school. The parents report greater involvement at home (vs. at school) and greater involvement of significant others (vs. themselves) in their children's education than other groups of parents in the school. Focusing on parent (as opposed to other) involvement may also be misguided to the extent that efforts to increase involvement are based on an assumption that the problem lies with parents who are deficient and in need of change (Clare & García, 2007; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Lightfoot, 2004; Ramirez, 2003). This deficit thinking excludes parents and does not promote further connection and involvement. Parents may not have academic teaching talents but other skills.

Parents also gave a different definition than always being physically present in school buildings, as important for involvement. Leticia reported, "involvement in every aspect of my child's life includes sports, friends, and activities outside of school." The majority (nine out of twelve parents) said that academic support was only one aspect of involvement. Several parents reported they talk with their teenagers about school activities and things teenagers are studying in class, or help teenagers with tasks. These learning at home activities are examples of important ways that home and school overlap to support teenagers' development and academic progress. Parents of students talked about the parenting role as one of providing support and encouragement. Ramira said:

I think the responsibility is shared and it's a shared responsibility because we have to educate our children at home. We have to advise them at home, and the teachers and principal are helping us at school with their education. I appreciate them.

Parents spoke about how parental involvement is not always just being at

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school but also supporting their child's hope and dreams. These parents tend to believe the school is responsible for educating their children, while parents are responsible for ensuring children are prepared and equipped for school by making sure children are rested, fed, and properly attired (Lareau, & Weininger, 2008). Additionally, some research by Auerbach (2007) has suggested that parents of urban children also believe it is their responsibility to launch their child for success by motivating, encouraging, and guiding their children, and by maintaining a positive relationship with children through support and open communication with their child. Parent involvement, as defined by parents in the study, encompassed many different areas. Cari related:

I think there are different ways to be involved with what my child is doing. Sometimes I see parents at school events and they tell me about taking work home and doing it for the teacher. Sometimes people send in snacks or supplies, if they can. I go up and help at lunch time some days when I can leave work.

And Valeria spoke to this point of what involvement means:

I want good things for my son. I want him to grow up into a good man that does for others and makes a good living for a family. He wants to be professional soccer player and I watch him in his games but I tell him to do good in school and get good grades because there are a lot of soccer players.

Parents have desires and goals for their children that mean, "a better life than it is for me." We know that parents who are more involved have more opportunities to learn from other parents and teachers about school procedures, ways to enhance their

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children's education at home, extracurricular opportunities, and ways to handle difficult situations (Lareau & Shumar, 1996). The parents in the study agree that this to be true that they can learn how to do more for their child by being present at school, talking to other parents, and receive advice or instruction. All the parents (twelve out of twelve) cared greatly about their children and their future. Staff members may not immediately recognize this desire in the parents, evidenced by the second research question.

The conclusion to this research question involves recognizing that parents' perception of involvement may mean support at home and emotionally. It may also mean other extended family members stepping in when parents are unable to. Staff members may need to conceptualize involvement to mean this support and guidance that parents provide outside of school.

RQ2. How do primary stakeholders describe their relationship with parents and the school?

In education, deficit thinking is the practice of holding lower expectations for students with demographics that do not fit the traditional context of the school system. Teachers may represent the deficit beliefs that permeate the educational community that educates students from low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Weiner (2000) asserts that an impersonal, bureaucratic school culture undercuts many of the teaching attitudes and behaviors that draw on student strengths. Critical Race Theory addresses this issue of trust by highlighting how the ethnicity of a student contributes to the lack of success if that student is polarized in a White-normed expectation and environment. A staff member at the school, Vanessa said:

We reach out to parents and want them to come in to the school. We think they have a lot to offer our school and their children. We don't have many parents take

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us up on the offer, though, to participate when we send out a letter about something. At least, on the secondary school level. The parents do a lot on the elementary level.

Dylan also commented:

We'd like for parents to be involved more and be at the school more. It's hard to get all the parents here without transportation and a bad bus system. If our bus system was easier and didn't take as long we might have more parents.

In an early study, Okagaki and Sternberg (1993) found, for example, that Mexican American and Mexican immigrant parents of elementary-school children valued social skills more strongly than did White parents, and White parents valued cognitive skills more strongly than social skills. The parents in this study spoke of being involved at the elementary level due to their ability to "showing my child how to behave is good." The parents were not as intimidated at the elementary level because all parents interviewed had at least an early high school education. In accordance with this, various scholars have reported Hispanic families' strengths and assets as they pertain to their views about their children's education. Romo and Falbo (1996) did an early longitudinal study about 100 "at-risk" students and found that parents continuously express their commitment to their children's education through the use of *consejos* (narratives aimed at giving advice). These narratives are more prevalent in early school years than in the secondary level. Staff reported that parents do not always share the advice that they give to students when the school frequently calls them to report bad behavior or discipline actions, and more of a collaboration would benefit students. When staff were asked about the characteristics really involved parents have, Patricia elaborated:

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Those parents speak more English and may not work, or only work one job. They are able to understand when we are explaining something about school, or their child, to them. They see the benefit to what we are saying and how we are trying to help. They explain to us what they are doing to support us.

The conclusion to this research question involves recognizing that staff may not understand that culturally parents may support students with consejos, activities outside of school, and socioeconomic constraints may limit physical involvement. Staff may not recognize their contribution and still define involvement as being in the school and conforming to school ideals.

RQ3. How do stakeholders perceive methods designed to promote strong parent/school relationships?

### **Teachers**

The majority of the parents mentioned teachers as their gateway to their children's progress. Seven out of twelve parents said that they had interacted with a teacher that was "good." Parents described teachers as "good" or "bad" when mentioning their perception of teacher quality. They judged the teachers based on their perception of the relationship they had with the teacher, the perception of teachers giving more or less resources to help students, and teacher's classroom management. Nine out of the twelve parents held positive views of American teachers. Parents' perceptions about the teacher's role in their child's education point to the ability of the teacher to provide a positive learning environment where their child feels valued and respected and where the home's values are accepted or embraced. When teachers provide effective collaboration and access to institutional

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resources for Hispanic students, the students develop a sense of social belonging and academic success (Conchas, 2001). For these parents it was important that a teacher provided extra help, cared about the students by showing interest and allowed students to express themselves in different ways and understood the differences and difficulties that Hispanic students exhibited in the classroom and in school. The Hispanic family members in this study categorized teachers as good when they understood the differences between students and the difficulties that struggling students face. Cari related that, like students, she appreciates being able to reach out for aid:

I wanted to attend the field trip with my daughter so I called the welcome center and asked them for help. They asked the teacher for me because I don't speak English and then told me all the things I needed to know, like time.

Indeed, many teachers maintain communication with parents throughout the school year regarding school events and student progress. Additionally, teachers particularly invested in parental involvement often convey involvement expectations to parents at the beginning of the school year (Pang & Watkins, 2000) and provide parents with feedback about the effectiveness of their involvement during parent-teacher conferences, weekly phone calls, or in some cases, daily notes in students' agendas (Jones, White, Aeby, & Benson, 1997). This level of interaction can be directed by the school leadership, or inherent in a teacher's training, but is well received by parents in the home, as evidenced by parent responses in this study. Adella said:

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I know the teacher's job isn't easy. I appreciate all that the teachers do. My little girl's teacher cares about the kids a lot and is always helping them. She is nice and young and is just out of school.

The majority of the parents (ten out of twelve) expressed their desire to communicate with the teacher on a regular basis. The focus on parent involvement may be misunderstood to the extent that efforts to increase involvement are based on an assumption that the problem lies with parents who are deficient and in need of change (Clare & García, 2007; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Lightfoot, 2004; Ramirez, 2003). When speaking to the staff, they expressed the need for parents to understand how to help. This does not mean that they believed them to be deficient but it does not put the focus on how the staff might provide more explanation, or teaching to parents. In addition, whether Hispanics can be characterized as less involved than others appears to depend on the way in which involvement is defined and if it includes other support persons (Desimone, 1999; Grolnick et al., 1997; Lee & Bowen, 2006). A parent, Ramira, related:

Sometimes I can't go to the school but my mom can go and help [my child] during the day. My mom doesn't speak English but she can watch a school program or have lunch with [my child.]

Hispanic parents frequently spoke about a network of family that helps with the children, which might include aunts and uncles or grandparents. It is valuable and helpful for teachers to recognize that this is also involvement.

This focus on explicit acts has ignored the subtle, hidden, and often insidious forms of racism that operate at a deeper, more systemic level. When racism becomes "invisible," individuals begin to think that it is merely a thing of the past and/or only

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connected to the specific act. Rarely is racism seen as something that is always present in society and in our daily lives (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1995a; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Valdes et al., 2002). A way for parents to feel connected and not experience the subtle ways that Hispanic parents might feel marginalized, is by offering services such as a welcome center, English classes for parents, or information sessions that focus on how to be involved.

Training for teachers that includes cultural appreciation and basic Spanish so that teachers can communicate with parents would strengthen connections. It is an example of invisible racism when English speaking teachers do not recognize the need to learn new ways to include parents. This is not always just the parent's responsibility to make communication easier. School leaders must be prepared to work with individuals who are culturally different and help create learning environments that foster respect, tolerance, and intercultural understanding.

### **Technology**

Simon (2004) states, "According to parents, the more often school staff contacted them about how to help their teenagers with homework, the more frequently parents worked with their teenagers on homework or school projects, regardless of the student background or achievement" (pp. 200-201). Eleven out of twelve parents mentioned receiving automated calls from the school and one of the three school districts had a way that the parent could hear the message in Spanish by pushing a number to have it replayed. Another school district sent all messages home in both English and Spanish but a couple of parents expressed that the messages were long or unimportant. Veronica said, "I don't listen to the messages because then they

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are so long.” Eleven of the twelve parents spoke specifically about a language barrier between themselves, office staff, or teachers. A majority of the parents (nine out of twelve) said that they liked getting calls from school, just that it is hard if they do not understand them. Herman said, “I try to do what they are calling me about. Sometimes it is come to school. Sometimes it’s a message about how Juan (pseudonym) is doing.”

All twelve parents knew about the information system the school uses for grades which is online. Cami said, “I don’t know how to do it myself” and seven out of twelve parents said they must ask their child how to check grades and look at the portal. Felicita suggested that:

If they offered showing parents at the beginning of the school year how to do it, I would go. Even if they had a sheet with instructions, that would help, but so many times the instructions are in English. I can’t read in English and so I’m still asking my child how to do it. I want to know that they are doing ok and not failing classes.

Parents also do not have internet at home and many only have internet on their phones. Two parents said that looking at grades on their phone is hard because the screen is so small. Carla suggested having computers for parents to use in the office would be helpful.

Parents’ comments about talking to their children about school and stressing the importance of school to their children underscores Valdes’ (1996) assertions that Hispanic parents value and respect the school expectations and want to honor what schools expect of their children. Parents spoke of respecting the rules of school, the

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power of education and academics, and the teachers who taught their children. The parents view their responsibility to include the foundation for values that will allow them to be successful and develop and establish positive interactions with teachers and administration. These comments were consistent with research completed in 2001 by Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, and Garnier which points out that Hispanic parents hold high expectations and aspirations for their children. Malia, a parent of a high school student reported:

School and education is a way for my child to do better. It's the way to work easier than I have to work and to make more money. I work many jobs and my child will work one with time off. School is how you get there. You have to respect the people at school... for it will make a better life.

Fostering the kinds of relationships between school personnel and parents that will improve student outcomes is a characteristic of schools with more parental involvement. Much research has been done about how increasing parental involvement will benefit students and parents speak of the benefits of school and teachers but don't always know how their physical involvement is beneficial.

### **Schools**

Seeing involvement as an initiative that the schools should help foster is a focus of legislation, as well as good practice. Finding ways to include parents more, what works well with establishing connections and ongoing interactions, and doing the specific activities that improves involvement should be a continuous focus of schools. Staff and schools that are always looking to improve how they do things is good for students. A

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staff member said, “I like knowing my student’s family so that I have context about where they come from.”

This research question raises the question of how teachers are perceived and connections that result from those interactions, as well as how technology can be a bridge between school and home, if used. Many parents did not understand the technology, or did not have access to internet otherwise than on their mobile phones, so looking to overcome these barriers by offering open computers for use or offering classes about how to use the online programs would be helpful. Schools that see what can be done to help and then take action to do those things result in parents with more opportunities.

RQ4. What obstacles exist that deter Hispanic parental involvement?

### **Lack of Visible Support**

The lack of support provided by schools is indeed what Solorzano and Yasso (2001) and Madison (2005) would see as the silent, unseen social discourse that needs to be addressed and solved for the empowerment of Hispanic families. The welcome center that existed in one school district is a large example of parental support provided by the school district. This welcome center is staffed by Spanish bilingual school personnel that can be reached for any concern or question during school hours by phone or email. Dylan said:

Parents see the welcome center as a resource for any type of problem. Sometimes we have parents bring in a utility bill, or come in to get assistance with citizenship paperwork. We aren’t lawyers, but we try to help with what we know. Primarily the calls we receive are about school issues, but not always. We’ve been here for

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over ten years and we all try to help with whatever we can, besides doing translating work and interpreting for things like Individual Education plans.

This welcome center exists as a symbol for the new families and a physical support for their questions and needs. Research indicates that a lack of involvement is often interpreted as a lack of concern (Hill & Craft, 2003; Jones, 2003) when, in contrast, the staff at the welcome center sees a lack of involvement as a lack of education and skills on behalf of the parents.

### **English Proficiency**

Due to a lack of formal education, many disadvantaged families do not possess the literacy levels in their native tongue to learn a second language. The parents sampled in the study, most (ten out of twelve) did not have more than a few months of high school education. The average time in the United States for the parents was approximately sixteen years and this may not be sufficient time to understand the culture and acquire language fluency without formal training. Hispanics living in the United States are consistently seen as less American than their Caucasian American counterparts, thereby highlighting the disassociation between ethnic and national identities (Devos, Gavin, & Quintana, 2010). The language barrier adds to this perception of lower class individuals besides being a large challenge to overcome.

An insistence by mainstream society that all people understand and speak English is one such structural hegemonic force, and it may be a real possibility that some Hispanic families are shying away from school events when they feel embarrassed by their lack of English skills. Jose said, "I don't understand a lot of what is being said. I'm not sure where to go or what to do if it's not a ballgame." Olsen (2000) reports that the

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negative impact of “language shock” has on immigrant students and their families may result in negative issues. Olsen states that we live in a “society, which neither values, accepts, nor easily tolerates biculturalism and bilingualism” (p.201). As a result, families may exist between two languages and two worlds. This point supports Valdez (1996) and the assertion that immigrant parents often feel alienated from the world that they thought would grant them opportunities. This languages, and immigrant status, may result in parents not feeling comfortable in the school and feeling disenfranchised from the institution of school. CRT states a commitment is to expose the injustice of people who are in the minority and bring attention to structural arrangements that disadvantage minority populations (Trevino, Harris, & Wallace, 2008). How parental involvement is viewed by school personnel is an arrangement that benefits the mainstream middle class parent, who has transportation, the available time to be in the school, and the knowledge of how the system works. When school staff do not see Hispanic parents in the school it can be perceived as many things it may not be such as lack of interest or support.

In multiple cases, parents described reasons they were unable to participate in school. These reasons ranged from limited English skills, more than one job, only one parent in the home that included multiple children, and lack of transportation. Hispanic parents are also less likely to engage in learning activities outside of formal schooling with their children, but are more likely to allow space for homework, talk to their children’s teacher and attend parent-teacher conferences (Fulungi & Fulungi, 2007). One of the parents, Leticia, stated how English proficiency is a factor:

I am not able to help them or teach them in any subject from school because I don’t speak English. I only taught them how to speak Spanish. I cannot

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help even my little children with their school work. When I ask them if they have homework they always tell me no. They did it at school. I know that isn't always the case.

Hispanic parents who cannot communicate well with other English-speaking parents and teachers may appear to be less involved even though they engage in a variety of less visible behaviors (Hill & Torres, 2010). This study supports that construct by the report of parents that they provide food and support at home, care about their children, and their futures.

### **Other Barriers**

Three parents spoke about how they work during the time that the office is open. The job that they have does not let them have a phone during the day so they struggle to be able to call the school about problems or just to check on their child. Recognizing patterns, practices, and policies of racial inequality that continue to exist in more insidious and covert ways is research that Solórzano and Yosso (2001) completed working with graduate students. This idea can be applied to the availability of supports and resources for Hispanic parents by the school system. Hispanic parents frequently work several jobs, or low paying jobs, that have many rules and not much autonomy, such as free time during work hours. The school system expecting parents to be able to take off of work, attend meetings or events during school hours, or other assumed ways that activities are offered during traditional work hours for middle class is a practice that covertly excludes Hispanic parents. Hispanic parents traditionally do not work jobs that have paid time off or vacation time.

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This research question speaks to the barriers that exist for Hispanic parents and that creates a marginalized atmosphere. This marginalization may not always be intentional but may exist for Hispanic parents in schools. Recognizing and overcoming these barriers is essential to increasing parental involvement. Communicating with families about how the school could take a leader role in assisting with the barriers is suggested for increased connection on the part of the parents.

RQ5. What do stakeholders perceive the characteristics to be of schools that have positive home/school relationships with Hispanic families?

### **Office**

Bilingual office staff were present in two of the three school districts, and having someone to speak to in their language in the school was mentioned by every parent in some capacity (twelve out of twelve). Being able to call in and speak about a concern, or an issue, in their own language was preferred and helpful. Knowing this was the case made the parents less fearful of communication. In one district, Stephanie said,

If a parent only speaks Spanish, this welcome center exists to help bridge that gap. A parent can call in and speak in Spanish, and then their concern, or need, can be communicated to right person at their child's school. I'd like for this to happen with email, but our parents just aren't there yet. Many do not have internet at home.

Hierarchical administrative structures that emphasize the school's authority (relative to parents and students) are perceived by parents as controlling and manipulative, and may result in parents' disengagement from the school, or parents'

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distrust of school personnel (Griffith, 2001). The parents report they liked to be asked about issues and the parents appreciated when the structure of the school was inclusive. When they were greeted in the office in a welcoming way they felt connected. Carla said, “When Elizabeth says, Buenos dias, I know I can speak in Spanish.” Inclusive school climate allows families to participate and develop relationships with the faculty and staff as well as with other families. This encourages families to be an integral part of decision-making on issues affecting their children's education.

### **Cultural Recognition**

Besides employing bilingual staff, research reports that the schools’ rejection or validation of parents’ culture determines the extent of involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1993; Valdes, 1996). Delgado-Gaitan has explored how culture plays a role in parent involvement and that parents may lack the cultural knowledge to interact effectively with schools. Cari, a parent, spoke to this issue in the interview by saying:

I’m proud of our heritage and where we come from. It makes me happy to come in the school and see a board about one of our holidays from home. I don’t think that the teacher always understands things about us like, Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), or family traditions. It would be good for the school people to know more about our home country and the good that is there.

By failing to recognize and value the students’ home culture and country, schools fail to foster trust and familiarity, but instead a sense of alienation for

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Hispanic parents and families. If schools choose to highlight and stress the positive importance of the students' heritage, this fosters a partnership between school and parents that continues over into all aspects of interactions.

The conclusion to this research question involves a warm and inviting atmosphere and placing positive emphasis on the cultural characteristics families, and students, bring with them into the school. This focus creates a strong connection between differences and celebrates these characteristics instead of creating disenfranchised groups of people. Capitalizing on students strengths is a way to increase involvement.

### **Conclusions**

The interviews of the parents in the Midwest area supported the research that Hispanic parents strongly value education and have high expectations for their children (Fulgini, 2007). These parents do experience barriers though, such as low English proficiency, unfamiliarity with the school system, and differences in cultural norms, that can limit parents' participation and communication with school. Although the literature suggests that Hispanic parents are a marginalized group, and may be excluded from the same opportunities as other types of parents, this is not a prevailing belief from the parents interviewed in this study.

Parents' initial apprehension to becoming involved in school activities is generally the result of feelings of low self-worth and alienation from a system they do not readily understand (Petersen & Warnsby, 1992) evidenced when Jose says, "I don't know about the things at school. I didn't go to school very long." The lack of Hispanic parental involvement that exists currently in schools can be viewed as an opportunity for social inquiry regarding the equality of a large system, such as the educational system, which

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may operate in such a way as to decrease equality for particular minority groups (i.e. Hispanics) (Villalpando, 2004). This study concluded that Hispanic parents may not be involved for many different reasons. In this study the parents reported that they had the same opportunities as other groups of parents in the school but due to their race, class, immigrant status, language proficiency and level of education, many English Language Learners parents fit the description of a marginalized group (Hudak, 1993).

The U.S. Department of Education (2003) found African American and Hispanic parents less likely than Caucasian parents to attend general school meetings and events, the reason for this reluctance (found by this study) to attend school meetings arose from the lack of English language proficiency by the Hispanic parents, as well as regular economic hardship, which other lower income families also experience. However, marginalized status does not mean that ELL parents are not concerned about their children's education. On the contrary, research has confirmed that linguistically and culturally diverse groups share a deep concern about the education of their children (Yao, 1988; Faltis, 2001).

Exclusion of parents is manifested when the schools do not recognize the need for all written communications to be sent in home in native languages, as well as English, or if phone calls are not sent in both languages. This creates confusion and an alienation, on the part of the non-English parent and may result in the parent not attending or following the requests made by the school. It is imperative that school districts with ELL students make an effort to communicate in the native language. This is also the case when sending recorded phone messages to parents. In this study parents spoke of how they sometimes received messages in Spanish and

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that allowed them to understand what the school was communicating.

### **Implications**

The findings and conclusions of the study have raised several issues and practical implications for stakeholders and school policy. A greater understanding of parental involvement has several implications for educators, policymakers, and parents.

#### **Educators**

As suggested by Knopf and Swick, 2007, the relationship between parents and educators should be one of mutual respect and consideration. Parent's support of the work of educators is important, and educators should recognize that a parent, as their child's first teacher (Pelletier & Brent, 2002), has valuable information to offer teachers and other school officials about their children. It is a collaboration between stakeholders to work together and for families to feel connected.

Educators should not assume that parents need to be fixed or trained in order to be adequately involved in their child's education (Nieto, 2004). School initiatives are often developed using traditional paradigms and ideas to involve parents, since many educator training programs prepare teachers using these approaches (McKenna & Millen, 2013). Parent involvement can come in many different things to the parents: instilling values, supporting children emotionally, and teaching respect of the educational system as a way to a better life. Frequently, Hispanic parents do not have the necessary skills to help with homework, or fluency in English to help at school, but by emphasizing the importance of school and providing a stable home environment they may still be very involved with their child's education.

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We know that family involvement in children's education declines precipitously in high school (Simon, 2004) but the findings of this study indicated that parents oftentimes have barriers (i.e. work schedules, transportation, single parenting, English skills) that keep them from being able to be physically present in school. These barriers exist despite immigrant parents' desire to participate in their children's educational and schooling experiences. The school providing access to social supports for families or just recognizing these difficulties as reasons for absence can be beneficial to the overall feeling of connectedness by both families and teachers.

Addressing economic obstacles that hinder parental involvement by providing extra supports, such as babysitting for younger siblings during meeting and conferences, and recognizing that economics is a primary concern that limits the ability of many parents to attend school meetings if helpful. Many families immigrate to the United States for economic reasons and may require extra social service support. Coordination between local agencies and Hispanic families would be beneficial for the students.

Another obstacles is transportation. Scheduling activities in a location where parents can reach it by public transportation may support more effective parental involvement. An effort to ensure that the hours of parent teacher conferences, activities, meetings, and workshops match the hours Hispanic parents are available will help with involvement.

### **Policymakers**

If the goal of policymakers is to strengthen partnerships between parents and schools there must be changes in the language and perceptions of the national standards that allow parents and educators to work together collaboratively in a less traditional way.

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Schools should not assume that all parents are deficient in their parenting skills and that realize parents strengthen and enhance their child's education when they offer them learning experiences outside of school. Pelletier and Brent (2002) reported that parents are a child's first and most important teachers and parents provide the experiences that equip children with life skills, abilities, and attitudes that promote school success.

Hispanic parents also rely on their family and social networks to support their children and these resources should be acknowledged as helpful and included as involvement.

### **Parents**

Empowering and motivating parents to get involved by encouraging parents to go to their student's school or classes and share their Hispanic heritage and culture is another recommendation. This activity can promote teacher-parent relations and allow the parents to feel part of the school community. It allows the parent to become the "expert" and fosters better communication and connection between the parent and child in the class as well. Recognizing, respecting, and addressing families' needs, as well as class and cultural differences, sets up a successful collaboration between school staff and parents.

Parents in the study reported that they appreciated communication between themselves and the school and removing language barriers between the parents and schools is important. Providing culturally sensitive translators is essential for parents who struggle with the English language. This could be accomplished by developing a core of parent volunteers in the school through a separate welcome center, or a parent/teacher organization. It may be the parents' responsibility to support their children to the best of their abilities, and if this means seeking out English classes and learning the language to communicate better with school and staff in their child's education, this might be a focus

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and a goal to encourage. The school providing English classes would be a way to further enhance connection. Parents can contribute to learning environments by bringing their cultural knowledge and teaching others about their heritage. They can offer to tell others about their traditions and values. Parental involvement may be many other things to parents and communicating this to teachers and school staff will help establish and strengthen a connection between the child's involved supports.

School officials and educators need to recognize that some parents lack formal education and have difficulty helping their children with school work or understanding rules and policies at school. The United Way-Harvard Family Engagement Project (2011) indicated that at the onset of the school year, parents felt unwelcomed by schools and a lack of sufficient communication from schools about the course and credit requirements each year, as well as timely information on student progress, hindered their ability to be involved. Communication from teachers and schools at the beginning of the year explaining the rules and procedures would be beneficial to starting with the school year with open communication. Also, teaching parents how to use the online portal for grades would help with communication on progress during the year.

Workshops for parents on helping their children at home have been linked to higher reading and math scores. Implementing parent training programs might be well received, along with English classes. Programs such as these would help the school be a resource for the Hispanic families in the school district.

### **Limitations**

It is possible that parents who choose to be interviewed about parent involvement are somewhat more involved in their child's schooling than parents who choose not to

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participate, thereby introducing the probability of bias in the sample. It follows that these parents feel more comfortable to participate are also more comfortable to be involved at school.

It also follows that staff interviewed that have working with parents as part of their job description may not be critical of themselves or the school. These staff members may feel that their efforts are already sufficient, or even under recognized, and may not be willing to be critical of how their involvement might affect parents. Some of their actions are received well but there are other actions that might not be as successful or might even reduce involvement and honest self-evaluation is important.

The data are correlational and thus do not allow causal conclusions. The reflections on the effect of the welcome center in one district was not the focus of the study, therefore causal conclusions can not be made from the observations of the lead researcher, although statements from parents point to a positive effect.

### **Reflections**

I am a middle-class Caucasian female writing a paper about the involvement of Hispanic parents and I cannot ignore that my experiences are different from the parents being interviewed. Esterberg (2002) recommends that a researcher not necessarily approach a group as a neutral observer who acts disinterested in what is going on in their society. I was an active participant, that is, someone who is earnestly interested in helping the people of the Hispanic community overcome some of the factors that create an atmosphere in which they have been marginalized or misunderstood. Reflexivity is an essential tool for myself and other researchers, to always be as objective as possible. It was important that although I have worked exclusively in the Hispanic community for the

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last decade, I objectively code the data and also see *their* perspective so that *their* suggestions could be recorded, as well as communicating what schools are doing well so that other schools might see the value in the strategies and policies.

### **Recommendations For Future Research**

The welcome center in one of the school districts studied was very well received by parents. This center was staffed by two Spanish bilingual supports by the district and was open during all school hours. The staff in the center also provided interpretation assistance to the schools in the district and translating for any school communication. This central location made it accessible and open to any parents. Future research should focus on this resource and whether this support is correlated to increasing Hispanic student enrollment in the district and whether this support increases Hispanic parental support.

In addition to examining the interrelationships among parents' perceptions of involvement, future research to examine the possibility that different administrative approaches to parental involvement and how it might also influence parents would be beneficial. As mandated by the federal guidelines, parental involvement should be a focus for every school. How this is interpreted and instituted on each building level and by individual school districts makes a difference. Professional development on populations would benefit staff and teachers and could be included in a teacher preparation program. It is imperative that schools and staff understand what parents need and then follow through with providing it instead of relying on parents to communicate what they need to feel more connected or in involved with the school. It is essential to not assume that what we currently do is enough.

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Interviewing parents of students who are not successful would be beneficial. Even interviewing parents of students who drop out of school and understanding their lack of connection with the school might yield suggestions for future practice. The group of parents who never communicated with the school may have information that is lacking in this study of interviewing relatively involved parents. Building on what can be learned from unsuccessful parents would contribute to the overall perception of parental involvement.

School leaders should recognize the importance of parent involvement and not assume what we currently do is enough. Schools need more involvement to make parents partners to schools and shape the future of the students. Future research that focuses on how staff and schools may not do enough to facilitate involvement and improve upon services that educate and support would provide a robust body of knowledge about parental involvement.

Lastly, future research to determine whether the findings can be replicated when other measures are used would be beneficial. Asking parents to complete a survey about parent involvement might be beneficial in that it would lend quantifiable results to the question of involvement. There is also not enough long-term research because of the limits of funding for such work and this study has a small sample, and on relies self-reports rather than independent verification.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the study was to analyze the perceptions of parents told by Hispanic parents about what it was like to be involved in educational lives of their children and the perspective of the staff from the schools in which the students attended.

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This study used the qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry to collect their answers to questions and analyze them in an effort to answer the research questions. This study reiterates the need for continued investigation into parent involvement in low-income, urban schools. Though important, it is not enough to know what parents do to be involved; we must expand our knowledge to include understandings of how parents come to be involved, what encourages them to stay involved, and what schools can do to recognize the ways that parents may be involved in addition to being physically in the schools. What we do know from this study, and numerous others, is that Hispanic parents do care about their children academically and emotionally. These parents want their children to achieve and do well.

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# HISPANIC PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

## APPENDIX A

### International Review Board Exemption Letter

Principal Investigator: Tiffany Castleman

Department: Business Management

Your Exempt Application to project entitled Hispanic Parental Involvement in School: Perspectives of Parents and Educators was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number 2005595

IRB Review Number 215254 I

Initial Application Approval Date March 13, 2017

IRB Expiration Date March 13, 2018

Level of Review Exempt Project Status Active - Open to Enrollment Exempt Categories 45 CFR

46.101b(2) 45 CFR 46.101b(4) Risk Level Minimal Risk Internal Funding Personal funds The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study.

The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval: 1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date. 2. All unanticipated problems and deviations must be reported to the IRB within 5 business days. 3. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce immediate risk. 4. All recruitment materials and methods must be approved by the IRB prior to being used. 5. The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date. If the study is complete, the Completion/Withdrawal Form may be submitted in lieu of the Annual Exempt Form. 6. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date. If you have any questions, please contact the IRB at 573-882-3181 or [irb@missouri.edu](mailto:irb@missouri.edu). Thank you, MU Institutional Review Board

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APPENDIX B

Interpreter and Translator Confidentiality Agreement

This agreement is made \_\_\_\_\_, by and between EJ Vandegrift (interpreter/translator) and Tiffany Castleman(researcher).

This agreement is made with the understanding that interpreting/translation services are being secured by Tiffany Castleman via EJ Vandegrift. All interactions between Tiffany Castleman, EJ Vandegrift, and any research participants are confidential. Therefore Ms. Vandegrift agrees:

- Not to discuss any information obtained in the context of this research study with any third party.
- To safeguard any written records or recorded information obtained in the context of this study to ensure that it is not available to any third party.
- Not to use the information obtained within the context of this study for any purpose outside of the context of the study.
- That this confidentiality agreement does not have an expiration date with regard to the information obtained in this study.

This agreement is being signed on \_\_\_\_\_, by the following parties:

Tiffany Castleman, researcher

\_\_\_\_\_

EJ Vandegrift, Interpreter/Translator

\_\_\_\_\_

# HISPANIC PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

## APPENDIX C-INFORMED CONSENT FORM-INTERVIEW

### Barriers to Hispanic Parental Involvement Study

**What is the study about?** You are invited to participate in a study being conducted for a dissertation at the University of Missouri-Columbia. You are being asked for your thoughts and opinions about parental involvement from the perspective of Hispanic parents. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have a high-school aged child(ren) and because you are of Hispanic origins.

**What will be asked of me?** You will be asked to answer some questions about parental involvement to the best of your ability. You will be interviewed about how you help your child with school. The interview will last approximately one hour.

**Who is involved?** The following people are involved in this research project and may be contacted at any time:

Tiffany Castleman, Researcher- (816)799-8236  
Dr. Sandy Hutchison, Advisor, University of Central Missouri (816)

**Are there any risks?** There are no known risks in this study. However, you may consider some of the questions to be personal since they ask about your relationship with your child's school and how you help your child at home. You may stop the study at any time if you become uncomfortable. Ms. Vandegrift will help with interpretation in Spanish and keep all interpreted/translated answers confidential.

**What are the benefits?** There are no direct benefits to you for completing this study. No incentives are offered. However, the study may help school administrators better understand how Hispanic parent's support their child's learning and the dissertation research may aid other researchers in the field.

**Is this study confidential?** The data collected in the study is confidential. Your name and personal information will not be revealed to school staff or others, and pseudonyms will be used. Only the researcher and translator will see the data and the translator will keep the data confidential. No one will have access to the data after the interview besides the principal researcher. Audio recordings will be uploaded to a secure cloud for transcribing and then destroyed after sharing of conclusions for accuracy. Results may be reported in journals or publications without any identifying details.

**Can I stop participating in the study?** You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You may also withdraw from the study at any time.

**What if I have questions about my rights as a research participant, or if I have a complaint?** If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, complaints about your participation in the research study, or any problems that occurred in the study, please contact the researcher, Tiffany Castleman, or her supervisor Dr. Hutchinson, at the

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numbers listed above. Alternatively, if you prefer to speak with someone outside the study, you can communicate with the Instructional Board of Review of the University of Missouri in Columbia at <http://research.missouri.edu/> or 1 (573) 882-9500.

If you have further questions, you may contact Tiffany Castleman at (816)799-8236 or Dr. Sandy Hutchison at (816) 405-9306.

### Signatures

I have read the above information about the parental involvement study. I know what the study is about and what is being asked of me. My signature shows that I agree to participate in the study.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Researcher: Tiffany  
Castleman

APPENDIX D-(SPANISH) INFORMED CONSENT FORM-INTERVIEW

**Barriers to Hispanic Parental Involvement Study**

**¿De que se trata este estudio?** Usted está invitado a participar en un estudio llevado a cabo para una disertación de la Universidad de Missouri en Columbia, Missouri. Se le preguntara lo que usted piense y opine acerca de la participación de los padres desde su perspectiva siendo padres hispanos. Se le ha pedido que participe en este estudio porque usted tiene niños de edad escolar y porque usted es de origen hispano.

**¿Que se me preguntara?** Se le harán algunas preguntas acerca de la participación de padres. Usted circular el numero que diga si usted está de acuerdo o no está de acuerdo con la versión. Tomará aproximadamente 30 minutos para completar las preguntas.

**¿Quién estará involucrado?** Las siguientes personas estarán involucradas en este Proyecto de investigación y se puede comunicar con ellos en cualquier momento:

Tiffany Castleman, Investigador principal (816)799-8236  
Sandy Hutchinson, Universidad de Central Missouri (816) 405-9306

**¿Hay algun riesgo?** No hay riesgos para usted al completar este estudio. Sin embargo, usted puede considerar algunas preguntas muy personales porque le preguntaremos como usted ayuda a su hijo con el trabajo de la escuela. Sin embargo, usted puede parar este estudio en cualquier momento usted se sienta incómodo.

**¿Cuales son los beneficios?** No hay beneficios para usted por completar este estudio. No se ofrecerán incentivos. Sin embargo, este estudio puede ayudar a los líderes escolares a entender mejor cómo los padres Hispanos apoyan el aprendizaje de sus hijos.

**¿Este estudio es confidencial?** Los datos colectados en este estudio son confidenciales. Su nombre e información personal no será revelado. Solamente las personas que realizan el estudio y el traductor miraran la información. El traductor mantendrá los datos confidenciales.

**¿Puedo dejar de participar en este estudio?** Usted puede no contestar las preguntas que no desee contestar. También usted puede salirse de este estudio en cualquier momento.

Estaremos muy contentos de contestar cualquier pregunta que usted tenga acerca de este estudio. Si tiene preguntas comuníquese con Tiffany Castleman al (816)799-8236 o Dr. Sandy Hutchinson al (816)405-9306.

**¿Que pasa si tengo preguntas sobre mis derechos como participante en una investigacion o si tengo una queja?** Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante en una investigación, quejas sobre su participación en el estudio de investigación, o cualquier problema que se produjeron en el studio, por favor póngase en contacto con el investigador, Tiffany Castleman, su supervisor Dr. Hutchinson, a los

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números indicados anteriormente. Alternativamente, si prefiere hablar con alguien fuera del estudio, se puede comunicarse con la Junta de Revision Instrucional de la Universidad de Missouri en Columbia en <http://research.missouri.edu/> o 1(573) 882-9500.

### *Firmas*

He leído la descripción arriba del estudio de la participación de los padres, desde la perspectiva de los padres Hispanos. Sé lo que se trata el estudio y que se piden de mí. Mi firma muestra que estoy de acuerdo de participar en este estudio.

Nombre del participante: \_\_\_\_\_ Nombre de la  
investigadora: Tiffany Castleman

Firma del participante: \_\_\_\_\_ Firma de la  
investigadora:

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS PARENTS (20)

	RQ1. From the Hispanic parent’s perspective, what do parents understand their role to be in supporting their children’s education?	RQ2. How do primary stakeholders describe their relationship with parents and the school?	RQ3. How do stakeholders perceive methods designed to promote effective parent/school relationships?	RQ4: What obstacles exist that impact Hispanic parental involvement?	RQ5. What do stakeholders perceive the characteristics to be of schools that have effective home/school relationships with Hispanic families?
<b>Tell me a little about yourself and your family?</b>					
<b>How long have you been in the country?</b>		Speaks to this question			
<b>How long have you been in this school district?</b>		Speaks to this question			
<b>What opportunities do you have to be involved with your child’s school?</b>	Speaks to this question	Speaks to this question			
<b>What do you think parent involvement means?</b>	Speaks to this question				
<b>In your opinion, what is the most important thing that you can do to help your child academically?</b>	Speaks to this question				
<b>Have you visited your child’s school this year? Why?</b>		Speaks to this question			
<b>How have you helped your child with school this school year?</b>	Speaks to this question				

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<b>What does the school keep you informed?</b>			Speaks to this question		
	RQ1. From the Hispanic parent's perspective, what do parents understand their role to be in supporting their children's education?	RQ2. How do primary stakeholders describe their relationship with parents and the school?	RQ3. How do stakeholders perceive methods designed to promote effective parent/school relationships?	RQ4: What obstacles exist that impact Hispanic parental involvement?	RQ5: What do stakeholders perceive the characteristics to be of schools that have effective home/school relationships with Hispanic families?
<b>Would you like to make more decisions at school?</b>			Speaks to this question		Speaks to this question
<b>How do you know your child's grades? Is there a parent portal?</b>	Speaks to this question				
<b>Do you feel that you have equal partnership as other parents in the school?</b>				Speaks to this question	Speaks to this question
<b>What factors influence your involvement in your child's education (i.e., education, upbringing, etc.)?</b>	Speaks to this question			Speaks to this question	
<b>What does your child's school do well to serve your child?</b>					Speaks to this question
<b>What could the school do to make you feel more connected?</b>					Speaks to this question
<b>What is the parent's responsibility versus the school's responsibility about</b>	Speaks to this question				

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<b>education?</b>					
	RQ1. From the Hispanic parent's perspective, what do parents understand their role to be in supporting their children's education?	RQ2: How do primary stakeholders describe their relationship with parents and the school?	RQ3: How do stakeholders perceive methods designed to promote effective parent/school relationships?	RQ4: What obstacles exist that impact Hispanic parental involvement?	RQ5: What do stakeholders perceive the characteristics to be of schools that have effective home/school relationships with Hispanic families?
<b>Are there any factors that exist that prevent you from feeling connected to your child's school?</b>				Speaks to this question	
<b>Do you feel that the school is warm and inviting to you?</b>			Speaks to this question		
<b>What do you like about your school?</b>					Speaks to this question
<b>What would you like to see improved in your school?</b>				Speaks to this question	
<b>Is there anything else you would like to share?</b>					

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APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS STAFF (15)

	RQ1: From the parent’s perspective, what do parents understand their role to be in supporting their children’s education?	RQ2: How do Hispanic parents describe their relationship with the school?	RQ3: What are schools doing to support parents to create strong parent-school relations among the Hispanic population?	RQ4: What obstacles exist that deter Hispanic parental involvement?	RQ5: What do Hispanic parents perceive the characteristics to be of schools that serve Hispanic students well?
<b>What is your role in the school district and how long have you been in the role? With the district?</b>					
<b>How does your school reach out to parents?</b>			Speaks to this question		
<b>What does your school do really well?</b>					Speaks to this question
<b>What activities does your school have for parents to be involved in?</b>			Speaks to this question		
<b>From your school’s perspective, what do you understand the parent’s role to be for supporting their child’s education?</b>	Speaks to this question				
<b>How do you involve Hispanic parents?</b>			Speaks to this question		
<b>Do all parents have the same opportunity to be involved?</b>				Speaks to this question	

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	RQ1: From the parent's perspective, what do parents understand their role to be in supporting their children's education?	RQ2: How do Hispanic parents describe their relationship with the school?	RQ3: What are schools doing to support parents to create strong parent-school relations among the Hispanic population?	RQ4: What obstacles exist that deter Hispanic parental involvement?	RQ5: What do Hispanic parents perceive the characteristics to be of schools that serve Hispanic students well?
<b>What characteristics do really involved parents have?</b>	Speaks to this question				
<b>Do you give parent surveys? If so, how do your parents feel about the school?</b>			Speaks to this question	Speaks to this question	

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Dear

I would like to request your permission to invite educators and Hispanic parents in your school to participate in a research study entitled: *Hispanic Parental Involvement Through a Critical Race Theory: Parent's Perspective*. I am examining the participation of Hispanic parents in their high school child's education and the perspective of the administration. The information gathered should be beneficial to school districts in the region with Hispanic students. This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

For the study, 4 schools were selected to participate through their percentage of Hispanic students currently attending. A staff person who works directly with parents would be involved and up to 4 parents from your school. I am seeking your permission as an administrator of the North Kansas City School District to contact the principal and applicable faculty in your district for the purpose of inviting them and enlisting their assistance in asking parents to participate.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. The participants may withdraw from participation at any time they wish without penalty, including in the middle of or after completion of the interview. Participants' answers and the building's identity will remain confidential, anonymous, and separate from any identifying information. The researcher will not list any names of participants, or their corresponding institutions, in her dissertation or any future publications of this study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about participation either by phone at (816) 799-8236 or by electronic mail at [tcastleman@altavistacharterschool.org](mailto:tcastleman@altavistacharterschool.org). In addition, you are also welcome to contact the dissertation advisor for this research study, Dr. Sandy Hutchinson, who can be reached at (816) 405-9306 or by email at [hutchinson@ucmo.edu](mailto:hutchinson@ucmo.edu).

If you choose to allow me to contact educators and speak with a small number of parents in your district regarding participation in this study, please complete the attached permission form. A copy of this letter and your written consent should be retained by you for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Tiffany Castleman  
Doctoral Candidate

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APPENDIX H: Administrative Permission for Educator Participation

I, \_\_\_\_\_, grant permission for school buildings in my district to be contacted to identify and contact educators and Hispanic parents to participate in the study *Hispanic Parental Involvement Through a Critical Race Theory: Parent's Perspective* conducted by Tiffany Castleman, doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

By signing this permission form, I understand that the following safeguards are in place to protect faculty and parents choosing to participate:

- All participation is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any point before culmination of the study.
- All responses will be used for dissertation research and for potential future journal publications.
- All identities and affiliations will be kept confidential in all phases of the research.
- An on-site researcher will conduct the interview with an interpreter present and it will take approximately 1- 1 1/2 hour to complete.

Please keep the consent letter and a copy of the signed consent form for your records. If you choose to grant permission for staff and parents to participate in your school district, please complete this Administrative Permission for Educator and Parent Participation Form, sealed it in the enclosed envelope, and return to Tiffany Castleman as soon as possible.

I have read the material above, and any questions that I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I grant permission in my district to be contacted and invited to participate in this study.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Position:

\_\_\_\_\_

School

District: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please return to: Tiffany Castleman, 4906 NW Barry Road, Kansas City, MO 64154  
Phone: (816) 799-8236 Email: tcastleman@altavistacharterschool.org**

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### VITA

Tiffany Castleman is currently in her ninth year of teaching at Alta Vista Charter High School, Kansas City, MO, where she directs the mental health and counseling services for the district. She has worked in the Hispanic population for the last decade, particularly with students and families. She has provided individual counseling, group counseling, and parenting classes for the district, in addition to college and career counseling.