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Rural School District

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Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

Barriers to Hispanic Parent Involvement in a
Rural School District

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As the Hispanic student population continues to increase at a rapid rate, schools in the United States are tasked with closing the achievement gap between Hispanic students and their white counterparts. Federal education policy and researchers alike call for schools to increase the involvement of Hispanic parents in their children's education as one way to close the achievement gap. This study focused on the involvement activities and barriers to involvement among a group of Hispanic parents in a rural school district in the state of Idaho.

This study uses a qualitative approach to gather and analyze information from parents of 20 Hispanic families through semi-structured interviews. Interview questions covered participants' own educational experiences as children, their experiences with involvement in their children's schools, and barriers they perceived to involvement in their children's education. Findings from this study suggest that these parents' involvement activities are limited, with one exception being attendance at parent-teacher conferences.

An unexpected finding of this study is the limited social networks among these Hispanic parents. Parents report having few relatives or friends with whom they associate or rely on for support. A second barrier to parent involvement identified in this study is the language barrier. Parents report difficulty communicating with schools when interpreters are not made available and communication with their children's teachers are limited to notes home and at parent-teacher conferences. Other barriers to involvement include these Hispanic parents' limited education in Mexico, differences between involvement activities in Mexico and the United States, and parents' current life circumstances such as lack of transportation and working jobs that do not allow time off for involvement at the school during the school day.

Overall, findings suggest that Hispanic parents in rural school settings face unique barriers to involvement in their children's education. Implications for schools are proposed such as creating opportunities for parents to interact with one another and with teachers and also making interpreters available at the school for times when Spanish-speaking parents visit the school.

Keywords: parent involvement, Hispanic, academic achievement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DESCRIPTION OF DISSERTATION CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

This manuscript is presented in the format of the hybrid dissertation which is one of several formats supported in BYU's David O. McKay School of Education. Unlike a traditional five-chapter format, the hybrid dissertation focuses on producing a journal-ready manuscript, which is considered by the dissertation committee to be ready for submission. Consequently, the final dissertation product has fewer chapters than the traditional format, and focuses on the presentation of the scholarly manuscript as the centerpiece. This hybrid dissertation also includes other necessary supporting documentation following the manuscript chapter as appendices. Appendix A includes an extended literature review, and Appendix B includes a methodological section sufficient for the requirements of an institutional review board (IRB; e.g., use of human subjects review, or requirements of the dissertation committee). Appendix C includes evidence of IRB approval. The hybrid dissertation format contains two reference lists. The first reference list contains references for citations included in the journal-ready article. The second reference list contains references for citations used in the appendices (see Appendix D).

The targeted journal for this dissertation article is *Multicultural Education*. *Multicultural Education* is a peer reviewed journal that seeks to publish articles that contribute to the current dialogue and offers unique perspectives on multicultural issues. The target audience for *Multicultural Education* is educators in a variety of settings.

Introduction

The United States has experienced tremendous growth in the Hispanic[1] population in recent years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2014), from 2003 to 2013, the percentage of Hispanic students in U.S. schools increased from 19% to 25% of the total student population in grades pre-kindergarten through 12th, which constituted the largest increase among all racial/ethnic groups. At the same time, Hispanic students continually perform poorly compared to their white counterparts on national measures of academic achievement. For example, results from the National Academic Educational Placement (NAEP) test taken in 2017 by students across the U.S. indicate that only 19% of Hispanic fourth grade students read at a proficient level while 34% of white fourth grade students read proficiently (Nation's Report Card, 2017a). Results are similarly discrepant between the two groups on the math portion of the NAEP (Nation's Report Card, 2017b).

Parent involvement has long been touted by policy makers and researchers alike as linked to student achievement for students in general (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Powell, Son, File, & San Juan, 2010; Tan & Goldberg, 2009) and specifically for Hispanic students (Altschul, 2011; Durand, 2011). Educational policy makers appear to have taken note. Indeed, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) contains strict mandates for schools to increase the involvement of minority parents in order to close the achievement gap between minority students and students from the majority. Unfortunately, research suggests that Hispanic

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[1] The term "Hispanic" will be utilized for the current study given that this was how participants referred to themselves during interviews. The term "white" refers to the majority group in the U.S. and was chosen to be consistent with terminology used in the extant literature on parent involvement.

parents in the U.S. tend to be less involved than white parents (Klugman, Lee, & Nelson, 2012; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006).

Barriers to Hispanic Parent Involvement

Research suggests several barriers that Hispanic parents may face regarding parent involvement in their children's education. Such barriers include lack of transportation, limited available childcare, and the inability to take time off of work (Ariza, 2000; Peña, 2000; Ramirez, 2003). Still, other research suggests that a major barrier is the difference in culture between Hispanic parents and the schools, particularly regarding language differences and expectations regarding the involvement of parents (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Mapp, 2003; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001).

Language barrier. In their work on barriers to Hispanic parent involvement, Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) suggest that the language difference between English-speaking school staff and Spanish-speaking parents serves as a major barrier to involvement for many Hispanic parents. Across U.S. schools, the vast majority of teachers only speak English (Durand, 2011). For many Hispanic parents, who only speak Spanish, the inability to communicate with their children's teachers and other school staff limits their involvement (Durand, 2011; Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Ramirez, 2003; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). When meetings at the school are conducted solely in English, it discourages Spanish-speaking parents from attending or participating (Peña, 2000).

Cultural expectations regarding parent involvement. Due to their limited exposure to the U.S. school system, many Hispanic parents simply are unaware of the schools' expectations regarding their involvement. Peña (2000) explains that parent involvement expectations are vastly different in Hispanic parents' home countries. For example, many Hispanic parents share

the belief that formal education should be left to the teacher (Peña, 2000; Ramirez, 2003; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001) and that it is not their role to question the teacher (Ramirez, 2003). Ramirez (2003) adds that many Hispanic parents do not feel the need to go to the school unless there is a problem or they are specifically invited by the teacher. Research also suggests that even when Hispanic parents want to be involved, some find it difficult because of the limited education they received in their home country (Peña, 2000). According to Peña (2000), limited background knowledge and skills preclude certain types of involvement activities, particularly as children get older.

When parents and school staff do not share similar cultural backgrounds with respect to education, Lareau (1987) argues that the parents have limited cultural capital with which to broker effective involvement interactions with their children's schools. Parents with limited cultural capital in relation to their children's schools frequently do not have the knowledge or skills necessary to be involved in those ways typically expected by the schools (Lareau, 1987). As Ferrara (2009) points out, schools and their staff tend to have narrow expectations regarding parent involvement activities, viewing parents' role in their child's education as limited to activities such as volunteering in the classroom, supporting the school through participation in the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO), or helping children with homework.

Models of Parent Involvement

Traditional model of parent involvement. The types of parent involvement activities typically expected by the schools fall within a traditional model of parent involvement according to Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008). The traditional model of parent involvement is characterized by a focus on specific involvement activities engaged in by the school and parents. Epstein's (1995) oft-cited parent involvement framework is one example of a traditional model.

In her framework, Epstein (1995) suggests six types of activities in which parents can be involved: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision making, and (f) community collaboration.

Lareau (1987) explains that parents whose cultural backgrounds more closely resemble that of the teachers within the school are able to more easily fulfill teacher requests and traditional expectations for parent involvement made by the teachers, in part, because they are able to communicate more easily with teachers and are knowledgeable about the school's expectation regarding parent involvement. Unfortunately, many Hispanic parents lack this type of cultural capital and therefore their involvement in traditional ways is often limited. When Hispanic parents are unable to meet traditional involvement expectations commonly held by teachers, some teachers mistakenly conclude that the reason the Hispanic parents are not involved is because they do not place priority on their children's education (Auerbach, 2007; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; López &Vázquez, 2006; Nakagawa, 2000). Delgado-Gaitan (1991) argues that this is deficit thinking on the part of schools, which is characterized by "depict(ing) inactive parents in the schools as incompetent and unable to help their children because they have a different language, work long hours away from home, belong to different ethnic groups or are just not interested" (p. 22).

Non-traditional model of parent involvement. Contrary to deficit thinking, research suggests that Hispanic parents care a great deal about their children's education (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006) and do want to be involved (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). However, as Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) suggest, schools may need to take a more non-traditional approach to parent involvement in order to take advantage of involvement on the part of Hispanic parents. Non-traditional models of parent involvement focus on creating

collaborative relationships with parents who are then empowered to choose how they can be involved rather than focusing on traditional involvement activities (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Regarding non-traditional models of parent involvement, López, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha (2001) suggest that schools are not limited "by a commitment to a specific set of tasks, but rather by a commitment to a group of people" (p. 281). Non-traditional models of parent involvement are similar to Freire's (1993) advocacy for "cooperation" (p. 148) between dominant and oppressed groups through "dialogue" (p. 69). As Freire (1993) argued, only through this type of relationship can the two groups work together to overcome barriers faced by the oppressed group in their efforts to better their situation.

The relationship proposed by non-traditional models of parent involvement suggests more than simple communication between home and school as in Epstein's (1995) model. As Cassity and Harris (2000) argue, schools are tasked with getting to know parents and understanding their unique obstacles to involvement. In doing so, they are able to work collaboratively with parents as they seek to overcome the obstacles they face to their involvement (López et al., 2001). As argued by Anderson (1998), the success rate for positive educational outcomes for students increases as schools and parents take a collaborative approach to education.

The non-traditional approach to parent involvement helps to make sense of the mechanisms through which parent involvement is linked to student achievement. When parents are involved, research suggests that it provides them the opportunity to have a voice in the education of their children (Hill & Torres, 2010; Jasis & Ordòñez-Jasis, 2004). Research also suggests that with this voice, parents are able to be advocates for their children (Gordon & Nocon, 2008; Hill & Torres, 2010; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). Students who witness

the involvement of their parents in their education tend to feel greater self-efficacy as it relates to their ability to do well (Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, & Simpkins, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Also, as parents are involved, they form social connections with other parents from whom they can learn and share important information regarding the education of their children (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Sheldon, 2002). Strong social networks can play a key part in the successful advocacy for children by parents as evidenced by several studies in which Hispanic parents banded together, thereby increasing their social capital, and were able to work collaboratively with the schools, which resulted in increased academic achievement for their children (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Jasis and Ordòñez-Jasis, 2004; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012).

This is not to say that only non-traditional parent involvement activities are worthwhile for schools to explore. For example, Durand (2011) argues that students view school as more important when they observe their parents at the school (e.g., volunteering in their child's classroom). Perhaps, as Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) contend, both traditional and non-traditional models can be effective. It can be argued that an approach which combines the two models is most appropriate. Indeed, as López et al. (2001) suggest, when Hispanic parents feel their input is valued, as is the focus of the non-traditional model, these same parents are more likely to be involved in more traditional ways.

Summary of the Problem

The number of Hispanic students is growing at a rapid rate in the U.S. At the same time, a clear achievement gap exists between Hispanic students and their white counterparts. Research suggests that increased parent involvement among Hispanic parents is one way to improve the academic performance of Hispanic students. If, as most researchers assert, parent involvement in education helps close the achievement gap, then the challenge is to find ways to increase the involvement of Hispanic parents, who, according to research, tend to be less involved than white parents due to unique barriers faced by the Hispanic parents.

Research Questions

In order to enhance the educational attainment of Hispanic students, this study intends to describe the perceptions of involvement of a group of Hispanic parents from a small, rural school district in the state of Idaho. The following questions will guide the study:

1. What are the types of involvement activities engaged in by this group of Hispanic parents?

2. What unique barriers, if any, do these parents perceive to being involved in their children's education at the research site schools?

Methods

This study used a qualitative approach to gather and analyze information. Research participants for this study were chosen from among Hispanic parents whose children attend Lincoln Elementary and Roosevelt Elementary schools in the Washington County School District in Idaho (pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the schools, district, and participants). Washington County School District is classified by the state of Idaho as a rural school district due to having fewer than 20 enrolled students per square mile within the county.

Washington County School District encompasses several small communities. Lincoln Elementary is the only school located in the small community of Jefferson. It is the smallest elementary school in the district with only one or two classes per grade and houses grades kindergarten through fifth. Of the 147 students who attend Lincoln, 67 (46%) are Hispanic. Roosevelt Elementary is located approximately 15 miles from Lincoln Elementary and is in Adams City, which is the county seat of Washington County. Roosevelt Elementary is approximately twice the size of Lincoln Elementary with 327 students but has a smaller percentage of Hispanic students (17%, 54 students) than Lincoln Elementary. Similar to Lincoln, Roosevelt Elementary houses students grades kindergarten through fifth.

Sampling

Purposive sampling (Merriam, 2009) was used for selection of participants. Two specific types of purposive sampling procedures were utilized: Criterion Sampling (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) and Snowballing (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). For this study, participants needed to meet several criteria in order to be included in the sample. Criteria for selection included being the parent of a child at Lincoln or Roosevelt Elementary, being a Hispanic parent, and being a first or second-generation immigrant to the United States.

Hispanic parents were identified with the assistance of the school district's migrant family liaison. The family liaison is herself an immigrant from Mexico and works closely with many of the Hispanic families in the school district. Potential participants were contacted by phone or in person by the family liaison to gain verbal consent for participation in the study and to schedule an interview. The final sample consisted of parents from approximately 20 different households. Written consent was obtained from all participants in either Spanish or English at

the beginning of each interview (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Finally, all participants were given a $10 gift card to a local grocery store in gratitude for their participation.

Participants

Participants consisted of parents from 20 Hispanic families. Among the participants, 18 were the mother of a child who attended one of the target schools and two were grandmothers who were serving as their grandchild's guardian. Three fathers were also present with their wife during the duration of the interview. The average age of participants was 37 years old, with the youngest being 28 years, and the oldest 63 years old. All but one of the participants was originally from Mexico. The lone participant from the United States was a second-generation immigrant who spoke Spanish as her first language, but was fluent in English and was born and raised in Idaho.

All participants spoke Spanish as their primary language; however, four of the participants were able to complete part to all of the interview in English. All but two of the participants attended school solely in Mexico. Of those participants who solely attended school in Mexico, only one graduated from high school, and she earned a university degree in teaching. The remaining two participants graduated from high school in the United States. One of these participants started school in Mexico, but moved to the U.S. and completed high school. The other participant attended school solely in the United States and earned an associate degree.

Data Collection

Researcher background. Yin (2011) explains that the researcher takes on the role of "research instrument" during the data collection process of a qualitative research study. Therefore, the researcher must describe the lens through which he or she interprets the collected data, and this can be accomplished by reporting the researcher's background (Yin, 2011). For the

current study, the primary researcher is an English-speaking, white male, who previously worked as a school psychologist at both of the target schools for several years. He is proficient in speaking Spanish, having lived in Spain for nearly two years. In his capacity as a school psychologist working with students with learning difficulties, he observed that interactions between the school and English-speaking, white parents seemed more frequent and meaningful than the schools' interactions with Spanish-speaking, Hispanic parents. In his role as a student advocate, he was a proponent for increased involvement of Spanish-speaking, Hispanic parents in the educational programming of their children.

Instruments. The primary method of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews with participants. Each interview included the collection of demographic information from the participants. Demographic information requested from the participants included their age, country of origin, their occupation and the occupation of their spouse, where they had attended school, the grade level they had completed, the grade level of their child who attended either of the two target schools, and their relationship to the child. Several interview questions were adapted from the work of Sheldon and Epstein (2007). Questions focused on the participants' experiences with involvement at their child's school including the types of involvement activities in which they had participated, how welcome they felt at the school, and any barriers they perceived to involvement. Parents were specifically asked about their involvement in the PTO and at parent-teacher conferences. Questions were asked of participants chosen from a bank of available, scripted questions with follow-up questions asked by the primary researcher based on the participant's answers to the scripted questions. All interviews were conducted jointly by the primary researcher and the migrant family liaison. Interviews were

recorded using audio recording devices. The average time for interviews was approximately 22 minutes.

All but two of the interviews took place in the participants' homes. The remaining two took place at Lincoln Elementary. Of the 20 participant interviews, 16 were conducted entirely in Spanish. The remaining four interviews were conducted at least partially in English, with two interviews being conducted entirely in English. The English interview participants differed from the Spanish interview participants in their ability to communicate in English and Spanish, but also in their educational background (i.e., three of the four having graduated from high school and two attending college compared to no high school graduates among the Spanish interview participants). It was determined that the background for these two groups was discrepant enough that data from the four English interviews were not included when figuring percentages for common themes from participants' responses. However, these participants provided a unique perspective into the involvement of Hispanic parents, and although they represent a sample size of only four, some of the information they shared will be included (this information will be designated as coming from an English-speaking participant). A similar consideration was whether to differentiate between Spanish-speaking participants from the two different schools. It was determined that there were not substantial differences between the two groups with regard to demographics or experiences, therefore, information provided by parents from both schools was analyzed as one group.

Data Analysis

Interview data was analyzed in order to determine common themes among participants' responses that addressed the research questions. Specifically, analysis sought to illuminate common experiences and perceptions of participants as they relate to their involvement activities

in their children's education. The audio recordings of each interview were transcribed by the primary investigator using computer software and saved as Word documents. Portions of each Spanish transcription were reviewed for accuracy by the migrant family liaison. Transcriptions were uploaded into the NVIVO 11 software program. Open-coding and axial-coding were conducted in order to analyze the data for categories or themes of related concepts contained within the transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 2009). Information provided by participants was determined to be thematic if at least half of the participants discussed the same concept. The resulting themes were used to explain the experiences and perceptions of the participants as they related to the purpose and questions of the research (Merriam, 2009).

The researcher kept a research journal during the process of interviewing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data (Yin, 2011). The research journal was used as a way to make meaning from the researcher's observations during the research process (Yin, 2011). The research journal is a useful tool that can help the researcher in recognizing researcher bias that can unintentionally enter into the interpretation of the data.

Limitations

Given that this research is qualitative in nature and is focused on two rural elementary schools in Idaho, results may not be generalizable to other situations or environments (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). However, the information provided might still prove useful to other schools or school districts as they seek to increase the involvement of their Hispanic parents (as cited in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Regarding the data collection process, it is possible that parents were somewhat reluctant to share negative perceptions they had regarding the school given that the primary researcher was a former school district employee and was accompanied by

a current school district employee. Similarly, the information shared by the Hispanic parents might have been richer if the primary researcher had shared the same culture and primary language with the parents.

Findings

Regarding the types of involvement activities engaged in by these parents, the data indicate that their involvement was limited from both a traditional and non-traditional perspective. Regarding barriers to involvement, the data suggest parents' unique life circumstances (i.e., lack of transportation, limited time, and lack of childcare) served as barriers as did apparent cultural differences between home and school reflected by language differences and expectations regarding involvement. Further, a surprising theme that emerged was that parents consistently reported knowing few parents from their child's school or having relatives nearby with whom they associated.

Types of Involvement

All but one of the parents reported regularly attending parent-teacher conferences at the school. However, parents shared that this was typically the only interaction that they had with their child's teacher. As such, communication with the school was mostly limited to notes sent home from the teacher. The few parents who mentioned having other interactions with school staff shared that these were limited conversations with the schools' secretaries, neither of whom spoke Spanish.

Parents reported few other instances of involvement. Parents shared that they tried to ensure that their children's homework was completed and turned in on time, however, their ability to help with homework was limited due to not speaking English. Regarding volunteering at the school, none of the Spanish-speaking parents had ever volunteered. When asked if they

participated in the schools' PTO, none had participated, and in fact, only one parent knew the purpose of the PTO.

Barriers to Involvement

      Limited social networks. When asked if they associated with other parents at their child's school, nearly all of the parents reported that they knew very few other Hispanic parents, which suggests very limited social networking among these parents. This represented a surprising finding at the outset of the research given several researchers' assertions about the strong social networks among Hispanic parents (Ayón, 2011; Gamoran, Turley, Turner, & Fish, 2012; Schweizer, Schnegg, & Berzbonn, 1998). Although one mother did share that she and a neighbor would let each the other know about information sent home from the school, this appeared to be an isolated case among participants. Most parents seemed to be somewhat isolated socially from other Hispanic families, without friends or family nearby.

      Limited communication with the school due to language. Interviews with the Spanish-speaking parents revealed a pattern of limited communication between them and their children's teachers. Although many of these parents did not have the time or the means to visit their child's school during the school day, the few parents who were able to visit the school during the day shared that interpreters were rarely available at the school and communication was often limited to interactions with the school secretaries, neither of whom spoke Spanish.

      Some parents indicated that the only school personnel who spoke Spanish at the school were the English Language Learner (ELL) teacher and one or two teachers from the Spanish Immersion Program. A few parents expressed that the ELL teacher was very helpful to act as an interpreter, but that he was not always at the school when they visited (the ELL teacher was shared among more than one school). Similarly, although the Spanish Immersion teachers were

always at the school, they were often busy teaching their classes and were unavailable if a parent were to stop by the school during the day.

When asked how things would be different at the school if everyone there spoke Spanish, one mother shared, "Better. Because when I have a meeting with the principal for something for the kids or something… if I ask to speak with her and there is nobody to interpret, I leave… until there is someone." Another mother felt that if everyone spoke Spanish at the school, the staff would "probably be able to better explain what a person can do (to be involved)." One mother spoke of how she wouldn't have to use her cell phone to help translate, which she shared was not always reliable because, as she stated, "sometimes my cell phone does not translate the words well."

Several of the parents indicated that they used their own children to help with interpretation. Children were utilized as interpreters during the school day and sometimes at scheduled parent-teacher conferences. As one mother pointed out, it was convenient to use her older daughter as an interpreter at the conferences because they were held in the evenings when her daughter was home from school. However, as one of the English-speaking parents shared, children might not serve as reliable interpreters:

> So, yeah, they have to go or sometimes they bring the little kids but it's not the same, the little kid translating for the parents...then I was with one time with that and he was like, and I told the lady, "No, uh uh, he's not saying that. Make sure he tells you the truth." So, and then the kids are just looking at me and I'm like, "Don't give me that look. Tell the truth to your mom so that way she can help you know."

Although interpreters were rarely available during the school day, parents shared that interpreters were almost always available at the parent-teacher conferences. Interpreters at

parent-teacher conferences included a Spanish-speaking teacher at the school, students from the nearby university (volunteers as part of a course), or another mother of students at the school who spoke both English and Spanish. Although most parents felt that the information that was shared during these conferences was useful, the information they were able to obtain might not have been as accurate as if it came directly from the teacher. As one mother shared her experience using a university student as an interpreter, "She didn't know Spanish very well…She didn't understand a lot."

Although most parents reported that notes home from school were frequently in Spanish, there were times when notes came home only in English. When notes were sent home in English, some parents reported that they had their children or other family members translate the notes for them. One mother stated that one reason for visiting the school was to try to find help translating a note that was sent home in English.

Despite the lack of persons available to interpret during the school day, nearly all the participants shared that they felt welcome at the school when they visited. Most parents shared that the personnel at the school were very friendly despite limited communication. Several parents related that the school secretaries were very friendly and helpful. However, despite the warm welcome these parents seemed to experience, several parents expressed that the inability to communicate with school staff limited their participation at the school. One mother stated her desire to help, but expressed fear of being at the school and not being able to understand what was being said if someone spoke to her. One mother shared that she was afraid to try and speak English because she didn't want to be teased. Another parent shared her regret that she couldn't volunteer at the school, "It attacks me that I say no (to help at school), but they are not going to understand." Another shared a similar sentiment when she stated, "Yes (the language is a barrier)

because what happens if someone asks me something and then what?" One parent chose not to help with a field trip, even when asked directly to help, because of the language. She shared,

> That's my worry [the language]. I say he told me about going on the bus with them. They have invited me, but it makes me afraid. And later they are going to ask me something and I don't know what to say.

Cultural differences for parent involvement. As the Hispanic participants talked about the involvement activities of their own parents in Mexico, it seemed that although most participants recalled that their parents were involved in their education, the manner in which they were involved was significantly different than teachers' typical expectations for parent involvement in the United States. For example, several participants shared that their own parents' involvement activities included the upkeep of the school. Parents in Mexico were reported to help with painting, planting trees, and cleaning at the school. None of the participants mentioned their own parents in Mexico having ever volunteered at the school or having ever helped in the classroom in some way. Such background experiences likely influence the attitude of Hispanic parents who, according to one English-speaking mother, tend to view their responsibility for involvement differently than what is typically expected in the United States. When speaking of how Mexican parents viewed helping teachers at the school, she stated, "That's their (the teachers) job and that's what they're getting paid for. That's the mentality from there (Mexico)."

When asked if they wanted to be more involved in their child's education, most parents indicated they would like to be more involved, but when asked how they would like to be involved, most were unable to think of specific examples and gave vague responses about helping in any way that they were asked. When parents were asked specifically how they were

involved in their children's education, responses included taking children to swimming lessons, checking their child's backpack for homework, sending their child to school on time, going to the library, and monitoring homework. Although these activities suggest parent involvement on the part of these parents, they provide little evidence for a collaborative relationship with their child's teachers. Further, there seems to be a significant contrast between the level of interaction with the school of parents educated in Mexico and the two parents who were educated in the United States. For example, when one of the U.S. educated mothers discovered that her daughter was falling behind in reading, she shared:

> She is down here and need to be up here, and so I actually contacted the college and said I need a tutor for the summer. So the summer beginning third grade, I had a tutor come to our home two or three times a week to get her up to where she needed to.

> This same mother also reported being in constant contact through email with her

daughter's teacher. Similarly, she and the other U.S. educated mother reported that they were constantly monitoring their children's grades. None of the immigrant parents who had been educated in Mexico mentioned monitoring grades, including two who spoke English. This despite the fact that the school provides parents with an internet-based program which parents can use to monitor their children's school performance as often as they choose.

Limited education. All of the Spanish-speaking parents were educated solely in Mexico and most had not attended school past the sixth grade. Some parents were sent to work in the field instead of going to school. One mother shared a story of how when she was a child, she was dressed up as an old lady so that she could get a ride to work in the fields instead of attending school. Even accounting for the language barrier, many of these parents may not have had the academic skills necessary to help children with their school work. Parents frequently mentioned

that their involvement with homework was limited to making sure it was completed and turned in. Only a few parents indicated that they actually helped with the homework.

Life circumstances. Several parents shared that it was difficult to visit their child's school, even if they wanted to, because of logistical reasons. Several mothers did not have a driver's license and did not have access to transportation. Many of these mothers had young children in the home who were not old enough to attend school. If these mothers wanted to visit the school during the school day, for example to volunteer in the classroom, they would need dependable childcare. Unfortunately, as stated above, these mothers had few close friends or family members living nearby whom they trusted to watch their children. Similarly, working mothers reported that they just did not have the time to be more involved. Most worked at one of the local potato factories or farms and spent long, hard days performing manual labor. One mother shared that her work wasn't ugly, it was just very hard. The types of jobs that most of the working mothers held did not allow time off during the day for things such as volunteering at their child's school. As one mother shared, even events in the evening were difficult to attend because she would have to run from work.

Discussion

Hispanic students continue to perform poorly on measures of academic achievement compared their white peers even as the number of Hispanic students in U.S. schools increases at a higher rate than any other ethnic/racial group. Increased parent involvement is linked to better academic outcomes, but Hispanic parents tend to be less involved than their white counterparts. The objective of this research study was to explore the types of involvement activities engaged in by Hispanic parents in a small, rural school district in Idaho and also explore any barriers to their involvement. The results indicate that Hispanic parents had limited involvement, either

traditional or non-traditional, the one exception being attendance at parent-teacher conferences, which nearly all parents frequently attended. Barriers to involvement included language differences, cultural differences regarding involvement expectations, and logistical barriers such as lack of transportation, time off work, or limited access to childcare. One unexpected finding was that these parents had limited social networks within the Hispanic community from which they might gain valuable information and support regarding involvement.

Patterns of Involvement

Results from the current study suggest little evidence of non-traditional involvement, which is characterized by meaningful relationships between parents and their children's teacher or other school staff. These findings are consistent with work done by Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001), which suggests that Hispanic parents tend to have only superficial interactions with their children's teachers, often limited to notes sent home by the teacher. If schools hope to increase the involvement of their Hispanic parents, then they need to place greater emphasis on dialogue between school and home (Freire, 1993). The relationships created through increased dialogue between school and home serves dual purposes: (a) schools gain greater understanding about the unique barriers that parents face to involvement and can work collaboratively with parents toward overcoming barriers (Tan & Goldberg, 2009); and (b) Hispanic parents are able to learn about the school's expectations regarding their involvement (Hill & Torres, 2010). As findings from this study suggest, immigrant parents from Mexico had a very different understanding of parent involvement compared to what is typically expected by schools, due to their own experiences attending school in Mexico.

The one exception to limited interactions between parents and teachers from the current study was that nearly all parents reported regular attendance at parent-teacher conferences. This

finding suggests that when parents' culture is validated by the schools, in this case the parents' language, parents respond by being more involved (Jasis & Marriott, 2010). By providing interpreters at parent-teacher conferences, the schools demonstrated cultural sensitivity and parents, for their part, made the effort to attend the parent-teacher conferences. This finding demonstrates the importance for both schools and parents to do their part to make parent involvement a reality (Jasis & Ordòñez-Jasis, 2012).

Barriers to Involvement

  Lack of interpreters. Unfortunately for parents, our findings indicated that interpreters were not made available during the school day, which resulted in Spanish-speaking parents having very little communication with their child's teacher or other school staff outside of parent-teacher conferences. The lack of interpreters at the school during the school day appeared to discourage Spanish-speaking parents from involvement as most shared that it was the language barrier that kept them from involvement at the school. This finding is consistent with Mapp's (2003) work, which suggests that schools sometimes put forth only minimal effort to welcome parents to the school during the school day, which hinders the creation of a dialogical, collaborative relationship between schools and parents necessary for increased parent involvement.

  Limited communication. Not only did the lack of interpreters serve as a barrier to involvement, but so too did the lack of communication about the schools' expectations regarding involvement. When discussing parent involvement in Mexico, parents painted a very different picture of what was expected of parents in Mexico versus what is typically expected in the U.S. As Hill and Torres (2010) argue, the differences in cultural expectation for parent involvement that tends to exist between schools and immigrant Hispanic parents can limit the effective

involvement of the Hispanic parents. Despite sharing that they wanted to be more involved, most parents from the current study did not know what they could do to be involved. The schools' expectations for involvement had not been communicated to them. The only communication regarding involvement were generic notes home asking for parent volunteers for field trips and other similar activities. This finding intimates at how deficit thinking can arise when schools neglect to communicate effectively with parents who are then stigmatized as uncaring about education, when the fact is that they want to be involved, but are ignorant to the schools' expectations for involvement (Valencia & Black, 2002). These findings support Valencia and Black's (2002) argument that deficit thinking of Hispanic parents is often based in myth and is unfounded because, as these parents demonstrated, Hispanic parents indeed care a great deal about their children's education, but are restricted in their involvement due to limited dialogue between the school and home regarding barriers to their involvement.

Limited social networks. Research suggests that one way for parents to overcome barriers to involvement is by banding together and approaching the school as a unified group (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Jasis & Ordòñez -Jasis, 2004; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012). When Hispanic parents have strong social networks, they are able to access the social capital available to the group and utilize it to give voice to their input regarding the education of their children (Lareau, 1987). A key finding from the current study is that Hispanic parents had limited social networks among other Hispanic parents at their children's schools. Such limited social networks likely played a part in these parents limited involvement (Durand, 2011; Martinez & Ulanoff, 2013). Research suggest that large social networks are particularly important for minority groups because parents gain strength in numbers and access to more information as they seek to advocate for their children (Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003). As

research also suggests, having large social networks can be particularly important for minority groups because they often lack the cultural background and capital that white parents are able to utilize in their interactions with the schools (Lareau, 1987).

That these parents had weak social networks among other Hispanic parents was somewhat unexpected given research by others on the strong social networks common among Hispanics (Ayón, 2011; Gamoran et al., 2012; Schweizer et al., 1998). For some parents, the fact that they lived on farms far from neighbors and other Hispanic families, and the fact that several mothers indicated that they could not drive, likely hindered social interactions. However, most parents lived in neighborhoods, close to other Hispanic families, and these parents also reported weak social networks.

Although not fully explored in this study, one possible explanation for the limited interaction among Hispanics might be related to their legal status to be in the country. One immigrant couple discussed this during their interview. At one point during the interview, the father mentioned that he possessed legal documentation to be living in the United States, but that his wife did not. As we discussed the effect this had on their lives, they shared that they felt afraid every time the wife had to leave the house. They spoke of the apprehension they felt for her to drive for fear that she would be pulled over by the police. These fears likely limited her opportunities to interact with others. This is an area that might be further explored in future research.

Another possible reason for the weak social networks was shared by two mothers. One Spanish-speaking mother shared that she didn't associate with other Hispanic people because there were too many problems within the Hispanic community. One English-speaking mother suggested that one problem was that there was a lot of envy within the Hispanic community:

Well, it's like our community has a big problem. It really does. It's like if you see

somebody having a better job, they don't like that, and then you will agree with me with

that they don't like that. It has a little envy, is that what you call it? Okay, that's our

community. How it is. So, if they see somebody, "Oh, I'm better than you. I will have a

better car. I will have better these, better that." They can focus on a lot of stuff and I don't

like to be involved in that stuff. I don't care what car you're driving. I don't care you

have a better job than me. I just do stuff for me and for my family.

Future research might explore this and other problems that hinder the formation of strong social

networks within the Hispanic community.

Implications for Schools

Although public policy, backed by research, mandates increased parent involvement,

many schools struggle to increase the involvement of minority parents (Tan & Goldberg, 2009).

This study suggests that in order for schools to increase the involvement of Hispanic parents,

efforts must be made that are uniquely designed to assist Hispanic parents overcome barriers

they face to involvement. Based on findings from the current study, there is likely a link between

limited Hispanic parent involvement and a lack of meaningful communication between home

and school. Schools hoping to increase Hispanic parent involvement can make it a priority to

cultivate meaningful communication opportunities with Hispanic parents.

One step toward meaningful communication might be to provide interpretation services

at the school throughout the school day. The fact that nearly all the parents reported regularly

attending parent-teacher conferences, where interpreters were made available, provides strong

evidence for increasing interpretation services. Unfortunately, these parents also reported having

very limited communication at other times when they visited the school. The schools might be

well-served to provide interpretation services for Spanish-speaking parents anytime they call or visit the school. Similarly, the schools might also consider providing interpreters at other parent meetings such as PTO meetings.

Meaningful communication creates the opportunity for schools and parents to discuss their respective expectations regarding involvement. Schools can invite parents through face-to-face interactions, in direct communication, rather than relying on simply sending notes home with students, asking for parent involvement. As one example from the current study, many parents were not aware of the parent meetings held several times per year at Roosevelt Elementary, which were sponsored by the migrant family liaison, conducted almost entirely in Spanish, and were designed to provide parents with useful information regarding their children's education. Attendance at these meetings was sparse despite the fact that notes were sent home in Spanish. A specific invitation from a teacher or principal would likely increase participation at these meetings (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Further, as Cassity and Harris (2000) suggest, face-to-face communication need not always occur at the school, but may have excellent results when school staff take the time to visit Hispanic families in their homes.

While working to improve communication between home and school, schools may find valuable resources in parents who speak both English and Spanish who can serve as boundary-spanners (Bolman & Deal, 2008) between the school and Spanish-speaking, Hispanic families. Findings from this study suggest that English-speaking, Hispanic parents tend to have more frequent and meaningful interactions compared to Spanish-speaking, Hispanic parents. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) argue that parents tend to be more involved when they observe the involvement activities of other parents from similar backgrounds. School might focus preliminary efforts at increasing involvement of English-speaking, Hispanic parents who can

then assist other Hispanic parents in their efforts at involvement. One example of the effectiveness of boundary-spanning parents helping other parents to be more involved was shared by one Spanish-speaking mother, who had recently moved to the area. She shared that at her child's previous school, she had a friend who spoke both English and Spanish. This friend would take her to school events, including volunteer opportunities. Lacking such a friend at the new school, this same mother, who had been very involved before, had not participated in similar involvement activities at her child's new school.

Schools may find willing partners in Hispanic parents who speak English. Indeed, as one English-speaking mother from our study shared:

> You know, and maybe it takes somebody like another parent like me where they can see, you know, "what if she can do it, if she does it for [her daughter], if she does it for her child, I can do it." You know, maybe I can ask her or maybe I should be better on communicating with them, you know. Saying, "This is coming up." Um, like today. I'm like the only, oh there was one other one, there was one other Hispanic mom that went and there was about eight or nine parents and they were all white; and I'm like, I hope that especially where there's so many little Hispanic students with her and then just to have two show up.

As this mother's comments suggest, there are Hispanic parents who recognize the need for more involvement and are willing to help their peers' efforts at increased involvement. It is up to the schools to recognize this and utilize this untapped resource.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Hispanic parents in a rural school district are involved in their children's education and identify barriers, if any, to their

involvement. Consistent with prior research, findings suggest that Hispanic parents had limited involvement in their children's education, from both a traditional and non-traditional perspective. One exception was that nearly all parents reported regularly attending parent-teacher conferences, in large part due to the availability of interpreters during conferences. Unfortunately, interpretation services were not available at the school during other times, creating a language barrier, which parents stated was a major obstacle to communication with school staff. Findings indicate that other barriers to involvement included differences between Hispanic parents' involvement expectations due to their cultural background and those expectations typically held by the schools, lack of transportation, limited access to childcare, and sufficient time. Such findings are consistent with much of the extant literature on barriers to Hispanic parent involvement. However, the finding from the current study that Hispanic parents had weak social networks with other Hispanic parents from their children's school was unexpected given several studies that report strong social networks among Hispanics. Future research might investigate instances of weak social networks among Hispanic parents and the underlying reasons for the weak networks.

As this study, and other research suggests, Hispanic parents face unique barriers to their involvement. Schools are encouraged to dialogue with Hispanic parents and work collaboratively in order to overcome barriers to involvement. It is only through the collective efforts of both schools and Hispanic parents that Hispanic students will close the achievement gap with their white peers.

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APPENDIX A

Extended Literature Review

The United States has experienced tremendous growth in the Hispanic population in recent years. At the most recent U.S. Census, statistics indicated that the total Hispanic population residing in the United States was 50.5 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). This was an increase of 43% from the year 2000, which equates to 15.2 million more people of Hispanic origin living in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The largest population of Hispanics lives in the western U.S. (41% of the total Hispanic population) where they make up 29% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). In the state of Idaho, recent statistics provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2017) indicate that the years from 2000 to 2015 saw a similarly large increase in the percentage of Hispanic students among public schools. The percentage of Hispanic students increased from 10.7% to 17.7% of the student population while the percentage of white students dropped from 86% to 76% (NCES, 2017).

Such growth among the Hispanic population has brought with it significant challenges as it relates to the education of Hispanic students. Although U.S. schools have attempted to respond to the challenges, the educational outcomes for Hispanic students continue to be poor compared to their white peers, with the achievement gap becoming evident in the elementary grades. For example, on measures of reading and math, white students consistently outperform Hispanic students in elementary school. Results of the National Academic Educational Placement (NAEP) test taken in 2017 by students across the U.S. indicate that only 19% of Hispanic fourth grade students read at a proficient level while 34% of white fourth grade students read proficiently (Nation's Report Card, 2017a). Results on the NAEP math assessment also indicated a large gap

between white and Hispanic students. For example, 40% of white students scored as proficient, while only 23% of Hispanic students were proficient (Nation's Report Card, 2017b).

In the state of Idaho, results are similar to those found across the country. On NAEP measures of reading, only 19% of Hispanic students read at proficiency while 33% of white students scored as proficient readers (Nation's Report Card, 2017c). Perhaps more telling, 49% of Hispanic students were reading at a below basic level (Nation's Report Card, 2017c). Results are similar on NAEP measures of math. While only 16% of Hispanic students scored proficient, 38% of white students scored proficient (Nation's Report Card, 2017c).

Parent Involvement

Among the different theories on ways to increase the educational performance of students, many researchers have explored parent involvement in education and its relationship to improved educational outcomes for students. Such research has explored parent involvement at all levels of pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, but because the focus of this study is elementary school, the review of the literature will primarily be limited to research from elementary schools. Research on parent involvement in elementary schools suggests a positive relationship between parent involvement and educational outcomes. Select findings from the research that demonstrates the relationship between several types of involvement and varied academic measures will be presented below.

Among a group of pre-kindergarten children, Powell, Son, File, and San Juan (2010) found that the children of parents who had higher rates of involvement at their children's school in activities such as volunteering in class, attending parent-teacher conferences, and helping with fundraising events had better social skills, fewer problem behaviors, and higher math skills than children whose parents were not as involved. In their study of involvement among parents with

elementary school aged children, Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, and Weiss (2006) defined involvement as attending parent-teacher conferences, visiting their child's classroom, volunteering in the classroom, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) participation, attending open houses, social events, school performances, and field trips. They found that increases in parent involvement from kindergarten to fifth grade had corresponding increases in children's literacy skills. Miedel and Reynolds (1999) found similar results for parents from a low-income sample from Chicago. In their study, parents who volunteered in their child's kindergarten class had children with higher reading achievement.

In another sample of elementary school children, Tan and Goldberg (2009) studied the effects of different types of parent involvement activities on children's grades, school enjoyment, and anxiety. They found that when parents helped their children with their homework, their children experienced less anxiety as it related to school. Children also seemed to enjoy school more when their parents interacted with them on a personal level, when their mothers were involved in their homework, and when their fathers were directly involved at school. Results such as these suggest that parent involvement activities such as involvement at school and helping with homework are not only related to purely academic outcomes such as grades, but are beneficial to children's emotional well-being as well.

Parent involvement that occurs while children are in lower grades has also been found to benefit children later on in their academic careers. For example, Miedel and Reynolds (1999) found that the number of school activities in which parents participated when their child was in kindergarten was related to their child's eighth grade reading achievement. Specifically, the reading levels of eighth grade students whose parents participated in several school activities such as volunteering in the classroom, attending parent-teacher conferences, and attending

school meetings when their children were in kindergarten were nearly a grade level above (i.e., seven months) the reading level of their peers whose parents had not participated in as many activities (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). In a study from a sample of low-income, African American families from Chicago, Barnard (2004) found that parent involvement at school while their children were in elementary school was related to fewer dropout rates later on. Dropout rates were lower for students whose teachers rated the involvement of their parents as average or better in grades one through six than for students whose teachers rated their parents' involvement as poor or fair (Barnard, 2004).

Benefits of Parent Involvement for Hispanics

The research presented above suggests that parent involvement is indeed positively related to children's academic achievement. For the purpose of this research, however, the question remains as to whether or not similar results are found among the Hispanic population. Although the research on Hispanic parent involvement is not as extensive, several studies suggest that Hispanic children do benefit from involvement by parents.

Several different types of involvement practices of Hispanic parents have been found to be beneficial to their children's academic achievement. Activities such as enrolling children in extracurricular activities (e.g., dance) and providing educational resources at home (e.g., books) have been found to be related to a child's educational achievement (Altschul, 2011). Parent participation in PTO (Desimone, 1999) and parent-child discussions about school (Altschul, 2011; Desimone, 1999) have also been found to predict achievement for Hispanic children.

Durand (2011) fount that parent involvement was beneficial for Hispanic children as young as kindergarten age. Hispanic kindergarten children whose parents were more involved at school and home showed greater increases in their literacy skills. Parent involvement activities at

school included PTO participation, volunteering, and attending parent-teacher conferences. Home involvement activities included reading with children and telling stories (Durand, 2011).

Levels of Hispanic Parent Involvement

Although research on Hispanic parent involvement suggests it is beneficial to children's academic achievement, research also suggests that Hispanic parents are frequently not as involved as their white counterparts. Turney and Kao (2009) studied a nationally representative sample of families with kindergarten students. They found that Hispanic parents were less involved than white parents at their children's schools, particularly if the Hispanic parents were immigrants to the United States. Involvement activities were operationalized primarily as involvement at the school (e.g., attending parent-teacher conferences, participating in the PTO, or volunteering at the school). In a comparison between groups of parents from different ethnic groups in Texas, Wong and Hughes (2006) found that Hispanic parents were less likely to communicate with the school and have partnership-like relationships with teachers than other ethnic groups. Such involvement activities were found to be especially low among Hispanic parents who reported Spanish as their dominant language. Lee and Bowen (2006) found similar results in their study that compared the involvement practices among white, African American, and Hispanic parents. They found that Hispanic parents were less involved than white parents when it came to at-school involvement activities (i.e., attending their child's parent-teacher conference, volunteering at the school or in class, and attending other social events sponsored by the school).

Federal Policy

In order to increase the involvement of Hispanic parents and other minority parents in education, federal policy makers include mandates for increased involvement for these groups in

the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015). ESSA contains unequivocal language as to the local school districts' responsibility to increase the involvement of parents. Indeed, an entire section (Sec. 1116) of ESSA is entitled *Parent and Family Engagement* (p. 67). Mandates within Sec. 1116 call for increased parent involvement aimed at populations considered at-risk, including parents from socioeconomic disadvantaged, limited English proficiency, and racial/ethnic minority backgrounds. ESSA requires schools to ensure that parents are integral partners throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of parent involvement programs in their schools:

> Each school served under this part shall jointly develop with parents for all children
> served under this part a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire
> school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic
> achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a
> partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards. (p. 70-71)

As Hill and Torres (2010) point out, schools must meet regularly with parents in order to monitor the effectiveness of such programs within their school district.

One criticism of mandates such as ESSA, however, is that they provide little by way of guidance to schools regarding best practices for increasing parent involvement (Price-Mitchell, 2009). For example, schools are left to determine those types of involvement practices that are most effective for their unique setting and population of parents. Indeed, there are myriad ways in which parents can be involved in their children's education, and to complicate matters, some research suggests that not all types of parent involvement practices are positively related to educational outcomes. For example, Hill and Tyson (2009) found a negative relationship between academic outcomes and parents helping their children with homework. Similarly, El

Nokali, Bachman, and Votruba-Drzal (2010) found that parent and teacher ratings of the frequency of parent involvement at home and school were negatively related to children's performance on a standardized academic test while in elementary school. Despite these findings, the vast majority of research points to the positive relationship found between parent involvement and their children's academic achievement. The research also provides models that schools can follow as they seek to increase the involvement of their Hispanic parents.

Models of Parent Involvement

Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) suggest that there are essentially two types of models to guide parent involvement activities. The two types of models can be considered traditional and non-traditional. As an example of a traditional model of parent involvement, they cite the model created by Epstein (1995). Indeed, Epstein's (1995) parent involvement model is widely cited throughout the research literature on parent involvement. The framework includes six specific categories of parent involvement: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision making, and (f) community collaboration. Each of the parent involvement types will be briefly discussed and examples of each will be provided.

The first of the six types of parent involvement, parenting, is described by Epstein (1995) as a partnership between the family and the school in creating an environment at home in which children can focus on their education and being good students. Schools can help parents and families through such activities as adult education, helping families meet basic needs such as having enough food and adequate shelter, and/or providing parenting classes (Epstein, 1995). Communicating, the second of Epstein's parent involvement types, focuses on communication originating from the school to home and vice versa. Communication between school and home should be frequent, clearly understandable, and in the language of the family. Epstein (1995)

suggests that this can be accomplished through such avenues as parent-teacher conferences, phone calls, and notes home.

Volunteering, Epstein's (1995) third type of involvement, refers to parents giving of their time and talents to help staff in the school environment. This can include activities such as helping in the classroom or helping at school activities. The fourth type of parent involvement, learning at home, requires that the school teach parents how they can best help their children at home with their schoolwork. Home learning activities can include schools making parents aware of homework policies, informing parents of the skills that their children are learning in school so that they can practice at home, or inviting families to participate in academic activities at the school.

Decision making is the fifth type of parent involvement as proposed by Epstein (1995). Epstein (1995) suggests that parents can be active in the local PTO, select parent leaders to work with the school in making educational decisions, and set up networks of parent support. Finally, Epstein (1995) suggests that the sixth type of parent involvement is the creation of partnerships between parents, school, and the greater community to which they belong. Community collaboration is comprised of learning about and accessing resources provided by the community that are beneficial to families and the school (Epstein, 1995).

Epstein's (1995) framework of parent involvement is widely cited in the research literature on parent involvement. Auerbach (2007) argues that the model has proven effective as a means for researchers and schools alike to organize parent involvement practices. However, one criticism of the model, according to Auerbach (2007), is that it tends to ignore the unique challenges faced by some parents regarding involvement. As such, other types of involvement models have been proposed throughout the research literature.

Non-Traditional Model

According to Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008), non-traditional models of parent involvement proposed in the research are characterized by increased communication between home and school along with increased parent empowerment. One example of a non-traditional model for parent involvement comes from the work of Paulo Freire. Freire's (1993) work with the underprivileged and uneducated classes highlights the importance of collaboration between the oppressed and the oppressors when the goal is to raise the status of the oppressed group, in this case, collaboration between Hispanic parents and the schools in order to increase the educational opportunity for Hispanic students. According to Freire (1993), the key is for the two groups to come together in "dialogue" (p. 69). The type of dialogue proposed by Freire is more than superficial conversation, but rather the focus of the dialogue is to change the negative circumstances faced by the oppressed group with the goal of both the oppressed and oppressors working together in a relationship defined by "cooperation" (p. 149).

Several pieces of research from the literature on parent involvement support the importance of cooperation between the school and home when it comes to increasing the involvement of parents. Mapp (2003) suggests that parents' levels of involvement are directly related to the efforts of schools to treat them as partners in the education of their children. Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2007) argue that schools need to be willing to listen to parents' input, not just provide parents with information, in order to create a welcoming environment for parents at the school. Similarly, López, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha (2001) suggest that when schools create an atmosphere at the school that is welcoming to Hispanic parents and when Hispanic parents are made to feel important and that their participation is important, then the parents are more likely to fulfill the school's expectations regarding

involvement. Indeed, Wong and Hughes (2006) found that when schools and Hispanic parents engage in communication, the parents tend to be more involved. As Hill and Torres (2010) point out, communication between school and home is critical for parents who may not understand the expectations of the schools regarding their involvement, particularly for parents who did not attend school in the United States.

López (2001) provides still another unique example of a non-traditional way for Hispanic parents to be involved in their children's education. Neither parent from the immigrant family being studied had graduated from high school, but both believed in the importance of education. Although not involved in their children's education in stereotypical ways (e.g., volunteering at the school) they sought to teach their children to work hard at their studies. They did this by having their children work with them in their strenuous, manual labor jobs and counseling with their children that they had a choice to make. They could either work hard in the fields or work hard on their studies. López (2001) reported that all five children chose to work hard on their studies and all five children graduated from high school among the top students of their respective classes.

Definition of Parent Involvement

Given work by those such as Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008), Auerbach (2007), and López et al. (2001), this study seeks to take a global approach regarding the definition of parent involvement. As such, for the purpose of this study, parent involvement is defined not only by those traditional types of activities, as proposed by Epstein (1995), but also by those instances when parents and schools work collaboratively from positions of shared power and input as they seek to provide children with appropriate educational opportunities (Jasis & Ordòñez-Jasis, 2004). This definition of parent involvement focuses on the relationship between home and

school, while at the same time, recognizing the value of those specific activities typically considered by educators as representative of parent involvement. Indeed, as López et al. (2001) argue, when parents feel like their contributions are valued by the school and when relationships are forged with school personnel, the result is that Hispanic parents are more apt to be involved in those typical ways as defined in Epstein's (1995) model. When this occurs, the result is what Knopf and Swick (2008) identified as "meaningful parent involvement" (p. 419).

Mechanisms

When parent involvement is defined not only by the specific activities of involvement, but also as a collaborative relationship between home and school, the mechanisms through which increased parent involvement of Hispanics creates greater educational opportunity for their children are more clear. This is important, because as Hill and Torres (2010) point out, it can be somewhat confusing to understand the correlation between some aspects of parent involvement and the educational outcomes they are purported to affect. For example, one might question how a parent volunteering at the school to decorate for a party or volunteering to chaperone a field trip is related to their child achieving better grades.

Durand (2011) found that when parents are involved at the school, children embrace the belief that school is important simply by seeing their parents in the school. Similarly, Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, and Simpkins (2004) found that students whose parents were involved had positive attitudes toward reading. As parents become more involved, they tend to have higher expectations about their children's educational outcomes, which in turn, has been found to be related to improved academic achievement for their children (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004). Also, research suggests that parents who are involved have greater access to information about the school (Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012). For example,

information about teachers can help parents choose the best teachers for their children or gain access about educational opportunities offered by the school.

Perhaps the primary mechanism through with parent involvement affects educational outcomes is that parents feel empowered (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Indeed, Jasis and Ordòñez-Jasis (2004) argue that the goal of any parent involvement program should be to give power and a voice to parents regarding the education of their children. Parents who feel empowered and witness the underperformance of their children in school or the lack of certain educational opportunities are more willing to approach the school and advocate for their children (Gordon & Nocon, 2008; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). For example, Lawson and Alameda-Lawson (2012) found that a group of Hispanic parents recognized the need for a tutoring and mentoring program for their children at the school and were able to collaborate with the school in its creation. Through involvement with the school, these parents were able to recognize a need and had confidence in their ability to make a meaningful contribution to the education of their children (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012).

Barriers to Hispanic Parent Involvement

Research on Hispanic parent involvement suggests that Hispanic parents face many barriers as they relate to being involved in their children's education. For this review of the literature, the barriers have been organized into four separate categories. The categories are language differences, discriminatory practices on the part of schools and public policy, background characteristics of Hispanic families, and insufficient training for educators. Each of these categories of barrier will be discussed next.

Language differences. Within schools in the United States, the majority of teachers speak only English (Durand, 2011). When Hispanic parents speak only Spanish, this difference

in language can result in a communication barrier, which many Hispanic parents cite as a major barrier to their involvement at their children's schools (Durand, 2011; Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Ramirez, 2003; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). To illustrate the effects of language barriers, Wong and Hughes (2006) studied differences in the parent involvement activities of English-speaking Hispanic parents and Spanish-speaking Hispanic parents. They found that English-speaking Hispanic parents report more involvement with the schools than do Spanish-speaking Hispanic parents. However, Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008) found that even when Hispanic parents do speak some English, some report that they do not feel comfortable conversing in English with school staff. As Rodríguez (2006) points out, language is the foundation of most social interactions and when schools and parents do not share a common language, meaningful communication can be difficult.

One solution for the language barrier is for schools to provide interpreters at school and other school sponsored events. However, Ramirez (2003) found that interpreters were rarely available when Spanish-speaking parents stop in or call to talk with a teacher or administrator at their child's school. Perhaps more telling is that interpreters were not provided at regularly scheduled school meetings such as board meetings or open houses (Ramirez, 2003). The lack of interpreters can hinder communication between school staff and Hispanic parents who only speak Spanish or limited English (Hill & Torres, 2010). Hill and Torres (2010) report that

> [t]he lack of sufficient translators or bilingual staff is more than an inconvenience for Hispanic parents. It undermines the ability of basic acts of parental engagement (e.g., parent-teacher conferences) to foster relations between parents and teachers and communicate key information. (p. 99)

This can make it difficult for Hispanic parents who might only speak Spanish to have meaningful conversations about their child's progress in school. The lack of interpreters can lead schools to use the children of Spanish-speaking parents to serve as interpreters for their parents and school staff (Smith et al., 2008). One unintended consequence of this can be a role reversal between parents and their children, which can result in the parents losing the place of respect and power as they relate to their children (Orozco, 2008).

Smith et al. (2008) found that even when interpreters are available, some Hispanic parents may hesitate to talk with the principal at school when their child is having a problem because using an interpreter can be difficult. Such barriers to communication sometimes lead to interactions between minority parents and the schools that are often not meaningful and are somewhat superficial (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) found that not only is communication sometimes difficult between school staff and Hispanic parents, but that school staff frequently take the position of directing the parents rather than partnering with the parents. Ramirez (2003) found that some Hispanic parents report that they feel as though educators talk down to them.

Language discrimination. Language differences can affect more than just the ability to communicate. Language differences can serve as a disconnect between white Americans who are part of the dominant, English-speaking majority and Hispanics who are part of the Spanish-speaking minority (Cobas & Feagin, 2008). Becerra (2012) found that people who speak a language other than that spoken by the majority are frequently exposed to discrimination based on language. Some white Americans have been found to be distrustful of Spanish-speaking persons, due in part to negative stereotypes that they hold about Spanish speakers (Cobas & Feagin, 2008). Some white Americans also view the increased amount of Spanish being spoken

in the United States as an intrusion into American culture, which can result in calls for English-only policies at school (Cobas & Feagin, 2008). In one example provided by Peña (2000), although the majority of the staff at one school spoke Spanish as well as English, all PTO meetings were held in English. By requiring that only English be spoken at school events, many Hispanic parents are excluded from public participation (Rodríguez, 2006). The result can be that some Hispanic parents feel that the school does not respect them or even want to listen to their ideas (Good et al., 2010).

Deficit view of Hispanic parents. As Ferrara (2009) points out, schools and their staff tend to have narrow expectations regarding parent involvement activities, viewing parents' role in their child's education as limited to activities such as volunteering in the classroom, supporting the school through participation in the PTO, or helping children with homework. When Hispanic parents are unable or unaware of how to fill school expectations for involvement, the result can be strained relationships based on misunderstandings between the two groups (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). For instance, Auerbach (2007) reports that a widely held belief among many school administrators and teachers is that Hispanic parents are not involved in their children's education because they do not place a priority on education. Dotson-Blake (2010) argues that when school staff assumes Hispanic parents do not care about the education of their children, they tend to view the Hispanic parents as deficient.

López and Vázquez (2006) suggest that educators' deficit view of Hispanic parents can explain the difference in the ways Hispanic parents are sometimes treated by educators compared to white parents. A deficit view of parents tends to blame the parents for the challenges they face at involvement, often due to background differences between home and school such as language differences (López & Vázquez, 2006). As Lightfoot (2004) points out, even the language used by

educators when referring to Hispanic parents as at-risk can contribute to a deficit view. Lightfoot (2004) explains that when certain groups are labeled as at-risk the tendency is to view members from the at-risk group as lacking sufficient skills or resources to benefit their children (i.e., a deficit view of parents). Conversely, members who are not part of the at-risk group (i.e., white, middle-class parents) are viewed as full of resources.

Freire's (1993) work with educating the poor classes illustrate how a deficit view of parents serves as a barrier to meaningful parent involvement. Freire (1993) explains that the dominant group (i.e., the schools) frequently treats the oppressed group (i.e., Hispanic parents) in a paternalistic manner, not trusting that the oppressed group is capable of acting on its own. The dominant group sees its role as imparting its knowledge to the oppressed, making deposits of knowledge much as one would deposit money in a bank. One problem with this type of interaction, according to Freire (1993), is that the dominant group tends to objectify the oppressed group and ignores the oppressed group's part in the decision-making process. The resulting relationship is far from the collaborative relationship that is the hallmark of meaningful parent involvement. One result, pointed out by Dotson-Blake (2010), is that even when Hispanic parents try to be involved in some fashion, school staff tends to view their attempts as not useful.

Public policy. Research on parent involvement practices of Hispanic parents suggests that the deficit view of Hispanic parents can sometimes by reinforced by public policy. Indeed, public policies have been found to decrease the involvement of Hispanic parents. Such policies include those aimed at immigration and language usage in the schools.

A study by Filindra, Blanding, and Coll (2011) compared states' policies on immigration with graduation rates of minority, immigrant children. They found that immigrant graduation rates were highest in those states that had inclusive rather than punitive types of policies

regarding immigrants. State policies were considered inclusive based on the amount of access immigrant families had to welfare programs such as food stamps. They reasoned that immigrants in the states with inclusive policies feel a higher sense of belonging and trust, and therefore "set roots" in the community (p. 429). Belonging is an important ingredient for increased parent involvement because parents who feel welcome at their child's school tend to be more involved than parents who do not feel welcome (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). These findings are important for this research because, according to Passel (2011), Idaho policies on immigrants are some of the least inclusive in the United States. For example, Idaho is one of only six states in the U.S. that does not allow resident immigrants access to social welfare programs such as food assistance or supplemental security income (as cited in Passel, 2011).

Contrast inclusive policies with those recently enacted by the state of Alabama. The Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act of 2011 requires all elementary and secondary schools to report the number of undocumented immigrant students in their school to the State Board of Education (Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act, 2011). Lawmakers argued the need for the law because of the heavy burden placed on taxpayers to educate the children of undocumented immigrants. As Forer (2011) argues, the danger of such laws is that it can feed the perception among many Hispanics that schools are not safe. Indeed, a significant increase in absences among Hispanic students was reported in one Alabama school district after the passage of House Bill 56 and continued at a higher than normal rate even after many assurances that the law was meant only to gather information (Forer, 2011).

The fear experienced by some Hispanic families appears to be justified. Patel (2013) found that after a U.S. Immigration and Customs (ICE) raid on a factory in Massachusetts that resulted in several Hispanic women being detained, many of the children went into hiding and

did not return to school. Patel (2013) reported this was even after "they had been assured that the school would be safe place from raids and the aftermath of this raid" (p. 313). As Patel (2013) argues, it is difficult to convince Hispanic families that schools are safe when laws such as ICE's Immigration and Nationality Act of 2012 allows schools to collaborate with ICE officials.

Although creating fear of deportation among Hispanic parents and their children was perhaps an unintended consequence to the Alabama law and ICE raids in Massachusetts, the results were likely detrimental to the schools' capability to build trust and create welcoming environments for Hispanic parents at their schools, which can have a significant impact on the involvement activities of parents. This is especially true among parents who do not have documentation to be in the United States. In a study on the influences of parent involvement among a group of Mexican American parents in an elementary school in Texas, parents reported that they were afraid to go to the school because of their undocumented status (Peña, 2000). Hispanic parents without documentation reported being afraid that they would be reported to the authorities. Some Hispanic parents report a fear of reprisal from the school and possible deportation if they were to voice a complaint toward the school (Ramirez, 2003).

Proposition 227 from California provides further evidence that policies can have unintended and undesirable consequences on parent involvement. Proposition 227 significantly decreases the extent to which bilingual education programs are offered in California (California Department of Education, 2003, as cited in Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003). Trumbull et al. (2003) reported that teachers in their study saw a significant decrease in the amount of parent involvement at school by parents who spoke a language other than English after the passage of Proposition 227. Trumbull et al. (2003) suggest that such unintended results can come to pass because many policy makers and educational administrators do not understand

the backgrounds and situations of the families they serve. Other research suggests that a policy such as Proposition 227 does little to assuage negative perceptions of people who speak a language other than English (Cutri & Ferrin, 1998).

Background Characteristics

One challenge that many Hispanic parents face to creating relationships with educators is that they do not share the same culture as the white, middle-class, dominant group in the United States (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; De Gaetano, 2007). Comer (1984) explains that differences in cultures between schools and minority parents can sometimes be difficult to reconcile:

> Because schools reflect the culture of the larger society-expectations, attitudes, values, and ways-and many young people bring to it a primary social network cultures that vary from slightly to greatly different from those of the school, the school has great potential for conflict. (p. 326)

People who share the same culture as the dominant group in society are said to have more cultural capital, which assists them in their interactions with others from the dominant culture (Lareau, 1987). A person's culture encompasses a wide range of background characteristics, but one area of culture that has received a great deal of attention in the research is a person's socio-economic status (SES). Unfortunately, poverty and low SES is widespread among the Hispanic population with 21% of Hispanic families living in poverty (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Work by Lareau (1987) illustrates the difficulties faced by parents from low SES in their attempts at involvement and the barriers they face due to differences in culture between the schools and themselves. For example, Lareau (1987) examined two schools, one with mostly working-class parents, the majority of whom were high school graduates or high school dropouts. The other school consisted of mostly upper middle-class families where most parents

had college degrees, many with advanced degrees. Lareau (1987) found that the number of invitations to parents for involvement did not differ between the two schools. However, the parents from the upper middle-class school participated at much higher levels than parents from the working-class school.

Lareau (1987) explains that this is due to the differences in the cultural capital of the parents at the two schools. Although parents from both schools had similar academic aspirations for their children, the culture of the upper middle-class parents more closely resembled that of the teachers within the school. One result was that they were able to more easily fulfill the requests of participation from the teachers. They had work schedules that were more flexible, they were able to speak more easily with teachers at events such as open houses and parent-teacher conferences, and they viewed the teachers as equals.

Conversely, in the lower SES school, many parents had difficulty finding time off work to attend school events, communication with teachers was often short and uncomfortable, and many parents left their children's education solely to the teachers because they viewed the teachers as experts in learning. Lareau (1987) argued that parents from the lower SES school were not able to spend as much time volunteering in their children's classrooms as their higher SES counterparts; they had less access to information about the curriculum, their children's academic progress, and information about teachers at the school.

There are still other background characteristics, apart from SES, of many Hispanic parents that can serve as barriers to involvement. For example, many Hispanic parents work at jobs that do not provide flexible schedules for parents to volunteer during the school day (Ariza, 2000; Peña, 2000). Also, many Hispanic parents lack transportation (Ariza, 2000; Peña, 2000) or child care (Ariza, 2000; Peña, 2000; Ramirez, 2003) needed in order to volunteer at the school.

Finally, given that many Hispanic parents were not educated in the United States, Peña (2000) argues that they simply are unaware of the manner in which schools expect their involvement.

Lack of Training for School Staff

Training and professional development for school staff about the barriers that many Hispanic parents face regarding involvement in their children's education is one step toward breaking down some of the barriers. For example, school staff can be informed that some Hispanic parents are unable to read the information that is sent home in English or in Spanish (Peña, 2000). Unfortunately, research suggests that schools as organizations sometimes do not do an adequate job at educating staff on multicultural issues (De Gaetano, 2007; Hein, 2003; Marschall, 2006). Good et al. (2010) found that problems can result when teachers are not sufficiently trained in multicultural issues, particularly how to support immigrant parents facing a new culture. Unfortunately, as Anderson (1998) suggests, schools frequently lack the knowledge of how to effectively increase parental involvement of lower SES families, despite the best intentions.

Similar to teachers, administrative training for principals often lacks training on how to involve parents in their children's education (Hein, 2003). As Hein (2003) argues, the lack of training is detrimental because principals have an important role in establishing an environment at the schools that not only welcomes, but encourages parental participation. Trumbull et al. (2003) propose that schools will likely not be successful in their efforts to increase the involvement of Hispanic parents until school staff has a better understanding of the culture of their Hispanic parents.

López et al. (2001) suggest that one way for school personnel to let Hispanic parents know that their input is important is to visit with them in their homes. López et al. (2001) further

suggest that if schools want to increase parent involvement of Hispanic families, staff need to seek out the families, get to know them and their unique life circumstances, and not wait for them to approach the school. Other research suggests that schools have success involving Hispanic parents when they reach out to the Hispanic parents and make the effort to understand the unique challenges faced by these parents as they try to help their children in school (De Gaetano, 2007; Marschall, 2006). López et al. (2001) found that in order for schools to increase parental involvement of Hispanic parents, the "schools felt they first needed to address the social, economic, and physical needs of migrant families" (p. 261). Schools that are successful at increasing the involvement of Hispanic parents do more than recognize that these parents face unique problems; they also seek out ways to help parents resolve their problems (López et al. 2001).

De Gaetano (2007) found that parent involvement also increases when school staff is culturally aware. School staff can become more culturally aware by involving Hispanic families at school (De Gaetano, 2007). In other words, if the school wants to understand Hispanic culture, the best way to do so is to interact with the Hispanic families whose children attend the school. Trumbull et al. (2003) suggest that educators can become learners as they try to familiarize themselves with the culture of their Hispanic students and families.

Increasing Hispanic Parent Involvement

To this point in the review of literature, several barriers to Hispanic parent involvement have been proposed, including language differences, discrimination, backgrounds of Hispanic parents, and a lack of training for school staff. This final section of the literature review will review research that demonstrates successful ways in which schools and Hispanic parents have overcome such barriers and created authentic partnerships.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) propose a model that seeks to explain the motivations for parents' choices regarding involvement in their children's education. The model is meant to assist educational leaders to focus their efforts on those things that they can affect regarding parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). As Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) explain,

> We have chosen to focus on specific variables that 1) are likely to be most salient to the parental involvement process from parents' perspectives and 2) are potentially subject to specific intervention and change as school personnel and others work to improve parent involvement and related student outcomes. (p. 312)

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) original model suggests that parent motivations for involvement are best understood using three separate constructs.

The first construct from the model surrounds parents' beliefs about their role in their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Parental role beliefs include such beliefs as whether or not the parent feels it is their role to volunteer in the class, participate in decision making, or simply ensure that their child completes homework. The second construct relates to parents' beliefs about their self-efficacy. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), self-efficacy refers to the parent's belief that their actions will impact their child's outcomes in school in a positive way. Parents can increase their feelings of self-efficacy when they experience success in their attempts to be involved, other people tell them that they are capable, they witness other people who are similar to themselves experience success, and/or they are ardently devoted to the situation (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

The third construct suggests that parents' motivation for involvement in their children's education is influenced by their perceptions of invitations of involvement from others (Hoover-

Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Invitations for involvement can come from school personnel (particularly teachers) and/or from their own children. It also encompasses a general atmosphere of a warm and welcoming environment at the school. For example, do parents feel comfortable entering the school and interacting with staff or do they feel that their presence in the school is unwelcome or discouraged?

Examples of Successful Parent Involvement

Research on successful instances of increased Hispanic parent involvement from the literature is presented below. These examples demonstrate how Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) concepts of parents' role beliefs, self-efficacy, and invitations for involvement can be implemented in order to increase Hispanic parent involvement. Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011) studied the effects of the Parent School Partnership Program (PSP) of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) on the parent participation of Hispanic parents from two elementary schools in Los Angeles. Both schools had large populations of Hispanic students from low income backgrounds. The focus of the PSP program was to share information with Hispanic parents about the school system and their role as parents in that system. The sessions were overseen by an instructor provided by MALDEF but included speakers from the school district and community. Sessions were once per week for twelve weeks and were conducted in Spanish.

Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011) found several areas in which the program had a positive effect on parents. Participants gained trust in one another although they knew very little of each other before the program began. Similarly, they were able to learn to work together as a group in order for their voices to be heard. Along with this, they learned of the protocol for interacting with school officials such as board members and teachers. Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011)

concluded that Hispanic parents provided with information (i.e., intellectual capital) and who work as a group (i.e., social capital) have the capability to form meaningful partnerships with schools.

Jasis and Ordòñez-Jasis (2004) reported on the success of the La Familia Initiative at a middle school in San Francisco. La Familia Initiative was created by a handful of Hispanic parents who were concerned with the performance of Hispanic students at their middle school. Hispanic students constituted about 20% of the student population at the school and most were immigrants and low income. La Familia Initiative quickly grew to include five schools in the Bay Area with more than one hundred participating parents. Rapid growth was due to efforts by the parents to share information about the group with their neighbors and also the enlistment of an outside, non-profit agency with experience in parent organization.

Meetings were led by parents separate from the school and conducted in Spanish. One of the first things La Familia accomplished was to meet with the school principal to discuss suggestions they had for the school. Jasis and Ordòñez-Jasis (2004) report that through addressing the principal in a unified, but cordial manner, most of their suggestions were made into policy at the next school staff meeting. From there, parents from La Familia Initiative met with math and science teachers to discuss their ideas for increasing the number of Hispanic students in the advanced class for math and science. One positive outcome of La Familia Initiative's work was that three Hispanic students made the Honor Roll, which had not happened previously.

Jasis and Ordòñez-Jasis (2004) suggest that La Familia Initiative was effective at creating "meaningful educational partnerships" through "equal dialogue" (p. 40) with the school because of the bond they created amongst themselves as Hispanic parents. By working together, they

were able to demonstrate to the school that they did in fact care about their children's education. This was reinforced by their eventual participation at many of the school district's policy making meetings.

Lawson and Alameda-Lawson (2012) studied the Community Action Network (CAN), which was a collaboration among a community-based organization, a local university, the local school district, and Hispanic parents. Although several groups were involved in CAN, parents were ultimately in charge of the overall program. Parents were from a predominantly Hispanic and low-income community.

According to Lawson and Alameda-Lawson (2012), CAN was successful at increasing the presence of parents in school activities. Before the project began, none of the Hispanic parents were attending the local PTO meetings. Upon implementation of CAN, Hispanic parents not only participated in PTO meetings, but also ensured that an interpreter was made available at parent-teacher conferences. Such changes were brought about primarily through dialogue between parents at group meetings. During the CAN meetings, parents would discuss the barriers they faced and then conducted workshops on ways to overcome barriers. Through such dialogue, Hispanic parents who had felt socially isolated were able to forge connections with parents from similar backgrounds (e.g., undocumented immigrants). Lawson and Alameda-Lawson (2012) found that, "As parents jointly discover and employ their strengths and assets through collective activity, they appear to translate their perceptions of confidence, trust, and efficacy into individual and collective senses of competence" (p. 671). The authors used the Spanish term of "confianza" (p. 670) or confidence to define this change in Hispanic parents from fear to competence. As participants grew more in "confianza", they were observed to move from passive, withdrawn members of the group into leaders of the group.

Summary of Literature

The Hispanic population has increased at a rapid rate in the United States. Public policy has tasked schools with closing the achievement gap between Hispanic students and their white peers. At the same time, public policy, backed by extensive research, suggests that one way for schools to close the achievement gap is to increase the involvement of Hispanic parents in their children's education. Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) suggest that schools can follow a traditional model of parent involvement that focuses on the specific activities in which schools can engage, such as the model provided by Epstein (1995), and/or non-traditional models characterized by collaboration between Hispanic parents and the schools.

Research suggests that Hispanic parents face several barriers to their involvement in their children's education. A major barrier reported in the literature is the difference in language between Spanish-speaking parents and school staff. A second barrier is discrimination due to language, deficit views of Hispanic parents, and unintended consequences of certain public policies. Other barriers include the background characteristics of the Hispanic parents such as low SES, and a lack of training for school staff. To assist schools in their efforts to better understand parents' motivations for being involved, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) provide a framework that suggests parents are more involved when they feel that it is part of their role as a parent to be involved, they feel self-efficacious in their ability to be involved, and they are invited to be involved. Finally, the literature review summarized three situations in which Hispanic parents were able to effectively be involved in their children's education.

APPENDIX B

Detailed Methods

Mandates to increase the parent involvement in education of minority parents and research on Hispanic parent involvement suggest the importance of parent involvement in the educational success of Hispanic children. Research on Hispanic parent involvement also suggests that there are many barriers to involvement for Hispanic parents. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Hispanic parents are involved and identify those barriers, if any, to their involvement in order to assist a rural school district in Idaho in its efforts to increase the academic achievement of their Hispanic students. The information gathered from the current study may also serve to guide educational policy makers, local administration, teachers, and other school staff as they seek to increase involvement of Hispanic parents. In order to fulfill this purpose, the research will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types of involvement activities engaged in by this group of Hispanic parents?

2. What unique barriers, if any, do these parents perceive to being involved in their children's education at the research site schools?

This section will begin with a description of the sites for the research study, the research participants, and the manner in which participants were chosen for the study. The next section will include a discussion on the appropriateness of choosing a qualitative research design for the current study. This will be followed by the methods used for data collection. Ethical considerations regarding research participants will be discussed next. Finally, limitations of the research study will be presented.

Research Participants and Site

Participants were Hispanic parents whose children attended either Lincoln Elementary or Roosevelt Elementary (all names are changed in order to protect the identity of the schools and parent participants). Lincoln and Roosevelt Elementary schools are two of six elementary schools in the Washington County School District. Washington County School District is a rural school district in Idaho that encompasses several small communities and includes a middle school, high school, and alternative high school in addition to the six elementary schools. Lincoln Elementary and Roosevelt Elementary are separated by approximately 15 miles of mostly farmland.

Lincoln Elementary is located in the small, rural community of Jefferson, which had a total population of 580 in 2010 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Of this, 304 (52.4%) of residents were Hispanic with 281 from Mexico. Of the remaining residents, 260 (44.8%) were considered white alone.

Lincoln Elementary is a small elementary school (each grade typically consists of only one class) and houses grades kindergarten through fifth. A large portion of the students at Lincoln elementary are Hispanic (38%). This represents the largest percentage of Hispanic students among the elementary schools within the district. Lincoln is situated on the northern edge of the town and is within walking distance of those who live within city limits. However, many families live scattered along country roads several miles from town, separated by large expanses of farm fields. The SES of students ranges from the very poor to fairly wealthy, with a large portion of students receiving free and reduced lunches due to low income. U.S. Census estimates suggest that 52.3% of families with children under the age of 18 live below the poverty line. The town of Jefferson itself has only a few places of business including two restaurants and

a small, Hispanic market. Given this, most of the Hispanic parents are employed in manual labor type jobs (e.g., agriculture or construction). A large percentage of the Hispanic residents (66.9%) were estimated to less than a high school education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

Roosevelt Elementary is located in the center of the town of Adams. Adams is the county seat of Washington County with a population of 3,945 according to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau. Of the total population, 11.8% are of Hispanic origin with 88.2% reported as white alone. The high school graduation rate for Hispanics was estimated to be 56.6% in the year 2017 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Of families with children under the age of 18 in the home, 18.8% were estimate to live below the poverty line in 2017. Roosevelt Elementary is approximately twice the size of Lincoln Elementary with 327 students, but has a much smaller percentage of Hispanic students (17%, 54 students) than Lincoln Elementary. Most families whose children attend Roosevelt Elementary live within city limits and live within walking distance or a short drive of the school.

Sample

Research participants for this study were chosen from among Hispanic parents whose children attended either Lincoln or Roosevelt Elementary. Purposive sampling (Merriam, 2009) was used for selection of participants. Purposive sampling is appropriate for this study because purposive sampling assists the researcher in gathering in-depth information from participants from the same environment regarding a specific topic (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Yin, 2011). Given that the purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions and experiences of research participants at two elementary schools regarding their experience with parent involvement, purposive sampling procedures are appropriate.

Two specific types of purposive sampling procedures were utilized: Criterion Sampling (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) and Snowballing (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Criteria for participant selection are pre-specified when using criterion sampling (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). For this study, participants met several criteria in order to be included in the sample. Criteria for selection included being the parent of a child who attended either Lincoln or Roosevelt Elementary, being a Hispanic parent, and being a first or second-generation immigrant to the United States.

Hispanic parents who met these criteria were identified through school records and with the assistance of the school district's migrant family liaison. The family liaison is herself an immigrant from Mexico and works closely with many of the Hispanic families in the school district. Potential participants were contacted by phone or in person by the family liaison to gain verbal consent for participation in the study and an interview was scheduled at the participants' convenience. During the interview process, many participants were asked to refer a friend or family member that would likely be willing to participate in the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The final research sample consisted of parents from 20 different households.

Written consent was obtained from all participants at the beginning of each interview (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Consent forms were available in both English and Spanish. Consent indicated that all information would be kept confidential and no identifying information would be used regarding participants' identity (all names are changed in the report; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Consent was also obtained to record the participant interviews (Yin, 2011). Finally, all participants were offered a $10 gift card to a local grocery store in gratitude for their participation.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach to gather and analyze information. Qualitative research methods are often used to gather in-depth information about people's experiences (Merriam, 2009) and the meaning they ascribe to those experiences (Yin, 2011). Qualitative research is used to understand "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because part of the purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of Hispanic parents and their involvement in their children's schools. Participants in the study were provided the opportunity to share their voice about their experiences, which in turn provided greater clarity to the unique trials and successes of their attempts to partner with schools (Putney, Green, Dixon, & Kelly, 1999).

The underlying philosophy that guided the research is social constructivism. Social constructivism, as a philosophy, says that people's understanding of the world around them is guided by their social interactions (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, each person holds a unique "truth" about the world around them based on their past experiences and interactions with other people. Regarding this study, the hope was to describe participants' "truth" about their involvement in their children's education. Each participant has had a unique experience as they have interacted with school leaders, their children's teachers, and other school staff.

Not only does qualitative research and its methods provide voice for participants, but it provides practical and comprehensive information for educators and educational policy makers (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Such information is best gathered through qualitative methods (e.g., participant interviews) in the environment occupied by research participants themselves

(Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This is important for this research study as it is intended to provide information for educators and leaders at the local school district where the study takes place.

Interviewing as a data collection method allows the researcher to "depict a complex social world from a participant's perspective" (Yin, 2011, p. 135). During interviews, the researcher is able to explore participants' responses in greater depth in order to better understand their lived experiences. In order for this to occur, however, the researcher approaches the interview with a "mental framework" of the types of questions that need to be answered in order to meet the purposes of the research study rather than a pre-specified list of questions from which the research does not deviate (Yin, 2011, p. 134). Given this, interviews were conducted with participants using open-ended questions, which provided the researcher with opportunities to ask follow-up questions that occurred through the natural conversation of the interview (Yin, 2011).

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews. Several interview questions were adapted from the work of Sheldon and Epstein (2007). All but two of the interviews took place in the participants' homes. Conducting interviews in the participants' home was convenient for parents and was thought to increase the likelihood of participation, as parents likely felt more comfortable in their own home, rather than at the school, and hopefully were more open and candid with their responses as they discussed involvement in their child's education.

Of the 20 interviews, 16 were conducted entirely in Spanish, two in a mix of Spanish and English, and two entirely in English. Interviews were conducted by the primary researcher and the family liaison. The primary researcher is a native English speaker, but is proficient in speaking and reading Spanish, having lived in Spain for nearly two years. The family liaison is a

first-generation immigrant from Mexico and is a native Spanish speaker. The assistance of the family liaison served two purposes: (a) The migrant family liaison has established relationships of trust with many of the participating families, which helped them to feel more comfortable sharing their experiences during the interview (Yin, 2011) and (b) the migrant family liaison is a native Spanish-speaker and assisted in translation when necessary. The interviews were recorded using audio recording devices (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Each interview included the collection of demographic information from the participants. Demographic information requested from the participant included the age, sex, marital status, and education level of the parents. Parents were also asked to provide information regarding their employment status, and the country of origin of their family. Demographic information was also gathered about the child who attended Lincoln or Roosevelt Elementary including age, sex, grade, how long the student had attended school at Lincoln or Roosevelt Elementary, and if the student had attended school outside of the United States.

Additionally, the primary researcher attended the school district's Parental Advisory Committee Meetings (PAC) as a participant observer. Although this information was not coded or included in the creation of themes regarding findings, it assisted the investigator in creating relationships with some parents and observing the interactions among and between parents and with school staff. The PAC consists of migrant Hispanic parents and is directed by the school district's migrant family liaison and is conducted primarily in Spanish. PAC meetings are held as part of the Migrant Education Program (MEP). As the mission of the MEP is to ensure that all migrant students graduate from high school while also gaining the necessary skills to be productive in post-high school life (Idaho State Department of Education, 2016), topics of discussion focus on educating parents about the local school system (e.g., the number of credits

needed to graduate from high school). The researcher had previously attended several PAC

meetings before the commencement of this study and discussed the proposed research topic with

several parents in attendance. For the current research, the researcher attended two of the PAC

meetings, observed, and kept a journal of his observations.

By attending the PAC meetings, the researcher was able to document the number of

Hispanic parents that attended the meetings. Similarly, the number of school staff in attendance

was also observed, along with which staff members attended (e.g., teachers, principals, etc.). The

researcher was also able to observe the type of information that was shared with Hispanic parents

and how it related to increasing their involvement. Finally, the researcher was able to witness

first-hand the interactions between Hispanic parents and school staff.

Data Analysis

Interview data was analyzed in order to determine common themes among participants'

responses that address the research questions. Specifically, analysis sought to illuminate common

experiences and perceptions of participants as they relate to their involvement activities in their

children's education. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the digital recording of the

interview into a Word document. Portions of most transcriptions were reviewed with the migrant

family liaison for accuracy.

The first step in analyzing the data was to code participants' responses collected during

interviews (Yin, 2011). Merriam describes open-coding as the process of analyzing the data and

assigning codes to pieces of information that might be used to answer the research questions

(Merriam, 2009). Open-coding consists of reading and analyzing the data and assigning codes to

key words and phrases contained within the transcriptions of the surveys and semi-structured

interviews (Merriam, 2009).

After completion of open-coding, axial coding is the process of forming categories or themes of related key words, phrases, or concepts (Merriam, 2009). The resulting themes are used to explain the experiences and perceptions of the participants as they relate to the purpose and questions of the research (Merriam, 2009). Microsoft Word and the NVivo software program were used to code and categorize patterns in the responses of participants.

The researcher kept a research journal during the process of interviewing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data (Yin, 2011). The research journal contained the notes the researcher took during the interviews and the ideas that occurred to the researcher during the data collection and analysis phases of the research study (Yin, 2011). The research journal was a useful tool that helped the researcher in recognizing researcher bias that can unintentionally enter into the interpretation of the data (Yin, 2011).

Ethical Considerations

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) warn researchers that they are "morally bound to conduct our research in a manner that minimized potential harm to those involved in the study" (p. 111). In order to comply with this statement and to ensure the safety of research participants, several steps were undertaken. First, the research proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Brigham Young University. Further, the research proposal was submitted to the superintendent of the school district for consent to conduct the study.

Limitations

Given that this research is qualitative in nature and is focused on two rural elementary schools in Idaho, results may not be generalizable to other situations or environments (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). However, the information provided might still prove useful to other schools or school districts as they seek to increase the involvement of their Hispanic parents (as

cited in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Regarding the data collection process, one limitation was the possible reluctance of some Hispanic parents to share any negative perceptions they had regarding the school. Although there may be several reasons for this, one reason might have been that the primary researcher does not share the same culture with the Hispanic participants and is not a native Spanish-speaker. Evidence for this explanation is provided in an earlier interaction the researcher had with the PAC. At an earlier PAC meeting held before the study began, the researcher gave a brief presentation on the research and asked if any parents had experienced barriers to involvement at their child's school. The responses of those in attendance were minimal until another employee of the district, who is also a Mexican immigrant and sister to the migrant family liaison, spoke up and encouraged the group to share. After this, it appeared to the investigator that the parents were more willing to share their true perceptions of their experiences and even shared some negative sentiments regarding their involvement at their child's school. In order to reduce the influence of this limitation, the migrant family liaison, who has built excellent rapport with many of the Hispanic families in the school district, accompanied the researcher during all interviews (Yin, 2011, p. 141).

Summary

This research study used qualitative methods in order to answer the research questions: (a) What are the types of involvement activities engaged in by this group of Hispanic parents?, and (b) What unique barriers, if any, do these parents perceive to being involved in their children's education at the research site schools? Research participants were Hispanic parents whose children were enrolled in one of two small, rural, elementary schools in the state of Idaho. All participants were either first or second-generation immigrants. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Participants provided consent for participation and were informed

that their participation and the information they shared was to assist in the completion of the

investigator's doctoral dissertation.

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval

__Memorandum__

To: Josh Beattie
Department: EDLF
College: EDUC
From: Sandee Aina, MPA, IRB Administrator
      Bob Ridge, PhD, IRB Chair
Date: March 13, 2018
IRB#: X16065
               Title: *"Co-International Education: Barriers to Hispanic Parent Involvement in Their Children's Education"*

Brigham Young University's IRB has renewed its approval of the research study referenced in the subject heading. The approval period is from **March 13, 2018 to March 27, 2019**. All conditions for continued approval during the prior approval period remain in effect. These include, but are not necessarily limited to the following requirements:

    1.   A copy of the consent forms are attached to this email. No other forms should be used. Each research subject must sign the form prior to initiation of any protocol procedures. In addition, each subject must be given a copy of the signed consent form.
    2.   Any modifications to the approved protocol must be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the IRB before modifications are incorporated in the study.

    3.   In addition, serious adverse events must be reported to the IRB immediately, with a written report by the PI within 24 hours of the PI's becoming aware of the event. Serious adverse events are (1) death of a research participant; or (2) serious injury to a research participant.
    4.   All other non-serious unanticipated problems should be reported to the IRB within 2 weeks of the first awareness of the problem by the PI. Prompt reporting is important, as unanticipated problems often require some modification of study procedures, protocols, and/or informed consent processes. Such modifications require the review and approval of the IRB.

IRB Secretary
A 285 ASB
Brigham Young University
(801)422-3606

APPENDIX D

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