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Editor's Comments

Earlier this year, a book was published titled *The Broken Compass*, along with a pair of pieces in the mainstream press about the book with the provocative and unfortunate titles, "Don't Help Your Kids With Their Homework" and "Parental Involvement Is Overrated." These naturally triggered a lot of buzz in the parent involvement/family engagement field. Several very good replies have been posted in various venues (a big thanks to Larry Ferlazzo who has catalogued most of them on his blog: http://engagingparentsinschool.edublogs.org/2014/04/18/the-best-commentaries-on-the-broken-compass-parent-involvement-book/). After some discussion, the editors of the *School Community Journal* felt a scholarly response would also be appropriate and invited parent engagement and homework researcher Dr. Lee Shumow to write an editorial. Her excellent analysis of the book can be found in this issue, as can her latest research article, co-authored by Jennifer Schmidt. With Shumow, we call for more rigorous, thoughtfully conceived, and well-executed research in this field.

Also in this issue, Dunst, Bruder, and Espe-Sherwindt find that early intervention practitioners could increase their family capacity-building. Tracey, Hornery, Seaton, Craven, and Yeung describe the benefits reported by corporate volunteers engaged as mentors in schools in Australia. Next, Hands looks at community collaboration in education from a new perspective—that of the students directly affected by partnerships.

We also have a number of articles looking at immigrant youth and families from a variety of places and perspectives. Gonzalez, Eades, and Supple examine how family, school, and peer contexts affect ethnic identity development in immigrant youth. Poza, Brooks, and Valdés report on immigrant parents' strategies for involvement, which align with expectations but often in ways not visible to school staff. Quiñones and Kiyama studied Latino fathers' perspectives on engagement, while Beauregard, Petrakos, and Dupont analyzed practices of immigrant parents from three regions (Latin America, Maghreb/Northwest Africa, Central Africa) who had relocated to Quebec. Finally, O'Donnell and Kirkner look at levels of Latino family involvement and children's progress after participation in a YMCA Family Involvement Project, finding some promising outcomes. Happy reading!

Lori G. Thomas
June 2014

Editorial Review Board

Is the Compass Broken or Did the Navigators Err?

Lee Shumow

Keith Robinson and Angel L. Harris recently published a book titled *The Broken Compass* in which they allegedly demonstrate that parent involvement rarely helps and more often hinders students' achievement in school. As identified in this editorial, basic conceptual, methodological, and analytical flaws in their study severely limit any conclusions that can be drawn about the role of parent involvement in education. In this brief essay, I will highlight some of the problems with their work. Time and space do not allow a complete point-by-point rebuttal. Counterexamples illustrate broader criticisms and are only a few of many possible examples.

Analyses from four large, publicly available data sets were presented and interpreted in the book. The first data set utilized was the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS88), which began following students in eighth grade. In the analyses presented in the book, parent involvement and achievement control variables came from wave 1 (Grade 8) and outcomes from wave 3 (Grade 12). They also used the more recent Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS, N = 15,362), which began following students in 10th grade. Their third source was the Child Development Supplement (CDS) to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (CDS Wave 1 = 3,563 & CDS Wave 2 = 2,908 families). Wave 1 focused on children between 0 and 12 years of age, so a considerable number of preschool children were included; Wave 2 follow-up achievement data were collected five years later. Finally, they used the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study which followed 1,407 Black and White students residing on the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S. from middle school entry to beyond high school.

Parent Involvement as a Major Focus of Educational Policy?

In the introduction to the book, Robinson and Harris argue that enormous policy efforts and resources have been expended on parent involvement in an attempt to solve our nation's educational underachievement problems. Their evidence consists of politicians' speeches (see pp. 3–4) and both the Improve America's Schools Act (IASA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB; see p. 18). In fact, policy initiatives to promote parent involvement in education have been modest at best. IASA and NCLB have mandated parent involvement in schools attended by low-income students through Title I, which requires schools receiving more than half a million dollars in federal Title I funds to spend at least one percent of their Part A allocation on parent involvement (including any funds expended on family literacy and basic parenting initiatives). With 99% of Title I funds directed elsewhere, and given that not all schools receive Title I funds, this hardly constitutes substantial policy-driven effort or resources for parent involvement. Thus, despite political rhetoric about the importance of parent involvement, substantial federal educational policy efforts and resources have not been showered upon promoting parent involvement in schooling.

Failure to Review Relevant Literature

A deeply troubling aspect of the book is the failure of the authors to adequately review the extensive interdisciplinary literature on parent involvement. Had they done so, they might have planned, conducted, and interpreted their study differently. Scholars from multiple disciplines are interested in why, how, and to what effect parents are involved in their children's education, and these multiple perspectives are critical in understanding how parent involvement matters to students' school success. Robinson and Harris's contention that little is known and/or that there are widely conflicting results in the existing literature is simply not correct. Google scholar returns 1,200 results for the search terms "NELS 88" and "parent involvement." Some of those papers are consistent with the findings they present in the book as novel (e.g., high expectations are positively associated with student outcomes, associations differ by SES and race/ethnicity, and homework help is negatively associated with achievement) while others contradict them, probably because those studies tied parent involvement to outcomes in the same school year (see analytical concerns below for possible reasons).

The authors' failure to adequately review the literature results in a poorly conceptualized study. One example pertains to their analyses of parent involvement with homework, about which there is a sizable literature. Several

important studies about parent involvement with homework were overlooked. One was that of Harris Cooper and his colleagues, experts on homework, whose meta-analysis (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008) indicated that the impact of parent involvement with homework depends on a number of factors including students' grade level (with different results found between elementary, middle, and high school), the academic subject of the homework (with different results for mathematics homework and verbal subject homework), and the type of help provided. These factors are not reflected in the analyses conducted by Robinson and Harris, who lump 6th–12th grade students together and fail to distinguish between the academic subjects of the homework or whether there was a program in place to support parents.

Another example comes from their decision to exclude specific types of parenting from consideration, arguing that they "focus only on activities that require parents to directly communicate the importance of schooling to their child" (p. 21). They explicitly and intentionally leave out parenting styles. In so doing, they miss a critically important aspect of parenting by which parents are known to influence their children's school success, especially during adolescence (the preponderance of their sample). Laurence Steinberg and his colleagues (and others) have demonstrated that, across most ecological niches, parenting styles are strongly associated with adolescents' school success. A critically important insight from his series of studies was that the expression and meaning of parent involvement practices differs depending on the context created by those parenting styles. The findings were so compelling that Steinberg wrote a trade book with his colleagues (1996) to inform parents about them. Somewhat inexplicably, after having rejected it as irrelevant in the introduction, Robinson and Harris do return to the idea of parenting style as a response to poor achievement in Chapter 9. Importantly, given the extensive prior literature on this topic, they never consider whether the impact of parental behavioral involvement on student outcomes was moderated by parenting style.

Correlation vs Causation

It is striking how thoroughly Robinson and Harris seem to have forgotten a fundamental principle: Correlation is not causation. Although they often describe findings as associations, they repeatedly slip into causal language when discussing implications of their results, such as on page 60 where they write that "some forms of involvement that parents can employ outside of school might actually *lead to* (italics added) declines in achievement." Forms of parent involvement they trumpet as decreasing student achievement include help with homework (Grades 1-12), reading to the child (Grades 6-12), and con-

ferences with the principal or meetings with the counselor (Grades 1-12). In each of these cases, the direction of effects can, and likely do, operate in the other direction—a fact they do not acknowledge. For example, common sense and evidence both suggest that parents help more with homework when the child is struggling (Shumow & Miller, 2001). Similarly, parents who are reading to children past the primary grades are likely doing so because the student has a serious reading problem. As well, most educators will readily notice that parents most often meet with a school principal or counselor because there is a serious problem.

Robinson and Harris conclude that parents are apparently ineffective at helping their children with homework and suggest that "parents need guidance on how to be more effective and thus avoid compromising achievement." But that is nothing new. Researchers have addressed the question of whether interventions help parents supervise and help with homework. Some evidence of the impact of such intervention comes from ex post facto and meta-analytic studies. An evaluation of practices within schools in the National Network of Partnership Schools founded by Dr. Joyce Epstein indicated that how well schools implemented an interactive homework program was related to mathematics achievement test scores (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Meta-analyses of the effectiveness of parent involvement practices (Nye, Turner, & Schwartz, 2006) found that interventions to help parents guide homework ranked among the best practices for increasing student achievement, although that impact is tempered during middle school (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

The gold standard in educational research, and the only means by which we can attribute causation, is experimental design. Numerous small, carefully designed quasi-experimental studies have, in fact, demonstrated that theoretically and/or empirically grounded interventions that utilize family and community funds of knowledge or that provide parents with the information and resources they need to be involved in effective ways do result in more effective involvement and better student outcomes. An example comes from the interactive homework Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork program designed by Epstein and her colleagues. Middle school students participating in the TIPS program achieved more in writing and science (but not math) than students who did not participate (see Epstein & VanVoorhis, 2001, p. 188; Van Voorhis, 2003). Another comes from my 1998 study that tested two interventions that focused on parents of second graders and mathematics homework.

Measurement of Parent Involvement

Many of the measures of parent involvement utilized by Robinson and Harris are so general as to be riddled with error. For instance, the sole measure of

homework help is a single item (see pp. 260, 261), and the vast majority of parent involvement variables are measured on a two-point response scale: yes/no, none/more than once, not often/often. This would be akin to a study of the impact of 8th grade teachers on student achievement in 12th grade which asked the teacher, "How often did you help a given student with their work?" with a possible response of either "none" or "more than once." What could we possibly learn about improving teaching or long-term student achievement from that without knowing how, when, why, what kind of work, for how long, and under what conditions? To be fair, the authors do say that their results point to the need for a more careful examination of what happens, but that need has been previuosly recognized. Well-designed studies, preferably with control groups and homework observations, are indeed needed to understand how to support parents in helping their children. One reason we lack large-scale studies of this kind is that federal research funding priorities (IES, NSF, NICHD) have not targeted parent involvement.

Analytical Issues

Robinson and Harris rely upon standard regression models as their analytical method. It is important to describe the components of those equations because few people seem to understand what specifically they did. Focusing on the analyses by social class in Chapters 2–4, the impact of parent involvement on achievement is tested as follows. A single item of a very complex process variable (the parent involvement indicator) is used to explain another very complex outcome variable (reading or mathematics achievement) *years later*, with no measure of parent involvement concurrently or in the interim. For example, whether or not a parent belonged to the PTA (or talked about school experiences or helped with homework) when their child was *in 8th grade* was used to predict achievement test scores *in 12th grade*, controlling for achievement in eighth grade and a socioeconomic status (SES) covariate (see p. 249). Separate equations were estimated for each indicator of the nearly 20 kinds of parent involvement. As such, the results are about how parent involvement in 8th grade alone predicts 12th grade achievement. In the case of analyses predicting achievement in Grades 1–5, reading to the child, homework help, discussing school activities, discussing school experiences, and discussing school studies five years previously (when almost the entire sample was not yet in formal school and some were infants and toddlers) were used as predictors in separate regression equations. It is difficult to understand how these findings are meaningful or how widespread implications for policy or practice in schools can be based on them.

Moderators

In his seminal theoretical work, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) wrote, "In ecological research, the principal main effects are likely to be interactions" (p. 38). The central questions in this study and questions that should have been asked—but were not—pertain to moderation (do results differ by group or by circumstance) and, as such, need to have been tested with interaction terms. For instance, the interaction between parent education and students' simultaneous achievement could have been used to predict parent involvement. It is difficult to understand why separate equations were estimated for each level of parent education or income without first testing the interaction term. Second, rather than simply controlling for prior achievement in examining the effect of a particular form of parent involvement on achievement, the interactions between parent education, prior achievement, and parent involvement would tell us much more than those presented.

Mediators: Direct vs Indirect Effects

In order for the educational community to understand parent involvement in a way that will help us to design partnerships with parents that benefit children, it is essential to understand how context and process operate to influence one another and student outcomes. Indeed, many scholars have been building and testing models in an attempt to understand these paths. Kathy Hoover-Dempsey is a notable example (see, e.g., Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Yet, Robinson and Harris chose to focus only on direct effects and, in so doing, missed an opportunity to advance our understanding. To illustrate: Robinson and Harris find, as have many others (Fan, 2001; Jeynes, 2010; NELS88; Seginer, 1983), that parents' educational expectations are associated with school success. But what does this tell us? Perhaps parent expectations result from messages the parent has received about their child from the school. In that case, expectations are predicted by rather than predictive of student success. Maybe parental expectations drive the choices parents make about time use, resource allocation, and involvement (in ways not captured by dichotomous variables). Or perhaps parents communicate their expectations in a way that influence students' beliefs, values, motivation, and goal structures resulting in deeper student engagement and effort in school which, in turn, drive academic success. Maybe these processes operate jointly or differently across contexts. The extent to which these conjectures are correct matter in terms of what parents and schools can do with that knowledge. Further, these conjectures can and have been tested through various forms of path analysis. Given previous theoretical and empirical work to build upon, data sets that support path modeling, and

potential contributions of results to decisions about educational practice, it is unclear why the authors chose their simplistic and ultimately unilluminating approach.

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Parent Engagement in Science With Ninth Graders and With Students in Higher Grades

Lee Shumow and Jennifer A. Schmidt

Abstract

By high school, parent engagement is likely to differ not only by grade, but by subject. This study surveyed students enrolled in high school science classes and found that parents of freshmen (9th graders) are more involved at home, less involved at school, and equally involved in educational planning compared to parents of high school students in higher grades. There were some differences in which background factors predicted parent engagement with freshmen and with older high school students. Overall, parent engagement contributed to students' motivation and performance in science. Controlling for background characteristics, parent engagement at home contributed to students' perceptions of their skill and their academic grades differently for ninth graders than for students in higher grades. Parent engagement at school contributed to ninth graders' valuing of what they were learning in science class but did not impact students in higher grades.

Key Words: parents, engagement, science, ninth grade transition, freshmen, high school students, home, schools, motivation, achievement, family

Introduction

Little comparative work has been done by grade level about how parents are engaged with school and with what consequences. For high school students, parental engagement is likely to be very important during the freshman

year because 9th grade is a critical juncture in education. Parent engagement is likely to differ not only by grade, but by subject. Our prior study established that parent engagement was an important factor in predicting high school students' adjustment in their science classes and differed by type of engagement (Shumow, Lyutykh, & Schmidt, 2011). This study focuses on students enrolled in high school science classes and extends the prior study to answer several research questions. The first question was: Are parents of freshmen engaged to the same extent as parents of older high school students in three specific dimensions of parent engagement (at home, at school, and educational planning)? The second question was: What background characteristics predict parent engagement with freshmen and with older high school students? The final question addressed was: Controlling for background characteristics, does parent engagement contribute to academic adjustment differently for freshmen than for older high school students?

The Ninth Grade Transition

The transition to high school is particularly difficult for students (Barber & Olsen, 2004). More students fail and are held back in ninth grade than in any other grade—as many as 40% in some districts (Wheelock & Miao, 2005). Ninth grade is associated with declines in school engagement (Seidman, Aber, Allen, & French, 1996), grades (Benner & Graham, 2009), orientation to school (Benner & Graham, 2009; Isakson & Jarvis, 1999), and psychological well-being (Newman et al., 2007). In recent research in science classrooms, ninth graders reported lower engagement, lower skill, and lower self-esteem in class compared with older high school students (Schmidt & Shumow, 2011). Students who struggle during the high school transition are at risk for continuing academic difficulties (EPE Research Center, 2006; Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993).

There are many possible ways to address the problems students often encounter in ninth grade in order to improve student outcomes. Although practitioner-oriented guides for improving the transition often suggest that educators engage parents in supporting their children's transition to high school, that advice is rarely predicated on research and tends to be vague advice about involving parents without enough detail to be very useful. Parents are also aware of and concerned about their children's transition and adjustment to ninth grade (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Our goal is to provide empirical information about parent engagement during high school that will help educators and parents make decisions about when and where they might best concentrate their partnership efforts to support students' success.

Parent Engagement

Drawing on ecological systems and stage environment fit theories (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Eccles, 2007), we expect that parent engagement will be particularly important for freshmen. Parent engagement is a widely recognized contributor to adolescent school success (Eccles, 2007). Yet, there is little information about parent engagement during ninth grade and whether and how it might differ between ninth and older grades. A previous study (Shumow et al., 2011) suggested that parents of freshmen are more engaged at home but less engaged at school. This study investigates and directly compares engagement among parents of freshmen and older high school students. We examine student reports of their parents' engagement at home, at school, and in educational planning, with an eye towards identifying what types of involvement might be targeted to improve particular student outcomes at different points in high school.

Parent Engagement at Home

Parent engagement at home includes help with and monitoring of homework as well as establishing rules and routines conducive to school success. Generally, homework expectations increase in ninth grade. Parents of freshmen likely respond to those increased expectations with greater involvement but may then withdraw somewhat as students move to higher grades.

Parent Engagement at School

Engagement at school includes interaction with teachers, volunteering, and attending events (Hill & Craft, 2003). At-school parent engagement tends to decrease across students' educational careers, which is a concern because it is highly related to student grades (Jeynes, 2005; Shumow & Miller, 2001). Because the high school is typically large and bureaucratic and thus trickier to navigate than elementary or middle schools, parents of freshmen might not come to the high school as often as parents who have had time to "learn the ropes." On the other hand, parents may be more likely to come to school when their children are freshmen than after they have acclimated to high school.

Parent Engagement in Educational Planning

Some parents provide their children with help and advice in choosing their high school classes and career planning (Lareau & Weininger, 2008). Unfortunately, those students who do not receive such help from parents are not likely to receive help at school, either (Dounay, 2006). In this study, we investigate whether parents of ninth graders are involved in educational planning to the same extent as the parents of older high school students. Parents of ninth graders might be more involved, on average, than parents of older students because

they are aware of and attentive to the significant changes represented by high school as compared to middle school. Alternately, greater parent engagement in educational planning might occur as students move forward in high school because postsecondary choices become more proximal.

Influences on Parent Engagement During Ninth and Higher Grades

It is important to identify characteristics that predict parent engagement for scholarly and practical reasons. Understanding predictors of such engagement increases knowledge, identifies groups and dispositions to target in efforts to increase parent engagement, and identifies background differences that should be controlled in analyses associating outcomes with parent engagement. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory posits that demographic and psychological characteristics will predict parent engagement. We test predictors among parents of both freshmen and students in the older grades to ascertain whether there are similar patterns in the two groups of parents.

Parental Demographic Characteristics

In this study, parental education, minority group membership, and immigrant status are considered as predictors of parent engagement. Previous studies have found that parents with higher education are more efficacious about being involved at school (Shumow et al., 2011) and are better prepared to assist directly with schoolwork at home (Patrikakou, 2004). The advantages conferred by education might be especially important during the ninth grade transitional period because, although all parents *want* their child to succeed, parents who themselves attained more education are more likely to *act* during difficult times than parents who attained less (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Lareau & Weininger, 2007). Several studies indicate that college-educated parents are more likely than other parents to steer their children, regardless of prior academic performance, to more advantageous circumstances in high school through careful planning when they enter high school (Heredia & Hiatt-Michael, 2009; Lareau & Weininger, 2008; Mickelson & Cousins, 2011).

According to Hill and Taylor (2004), minority and majority families have different patterns of involvement with school. The tendency of minorities to be more involved at home than at school or in planning may be especially true for immigrants whose primary language is not English (Garcia Coll et al., 2002). Native-born parents are likely to have greater knowledge of how the U.S. school system works, so they may be better able to navigate at-school engagement and educational planning and thus be more engaged in those activities when their children start high school. Evidence that many immigrant parents of high school students have high expectations (Goldenberg, Gallier, Reese, & Garnier, 2001) and are deeply involved in encouraging academic

success (Strickland & Shumow, 2008) might predict that they will be especially involved at home during ninth grade.

Psychological Characteristics

Parental expectations for the student's educational attainment, the student's interest in science, and the student's difficulty in learning science are considered as predictors of the various types of engagement. Parents with high expectations are more likely to be involved with high school students than those with low expectations (Shumow et al., 2011); expectations might be of particular importance during the freshman year. Students who are interested in a subject are more likely to instigate parent engagement than students who are not (Shumow et al., 2011; Hoover Dempsey et al., 2005); students might be more likely to seek their parents' engagement during ninth grade because of the challenges or less likely because they are overwhelmed. Rogoff (1990) has noted how difficult it is for parents to watch their children struggle, so student difficulty might precipitate involvement. Parents of middle school students react to student struggle by more involvement at home, but parents of high school students tend to withdraw when their children struggle (Shumow & Miller, 2001; Shumow et al., 2011). It is not clear whether parents of freshmen will be more like middle or high school parents in how they react to their children's struggles.

Outcomes and Parent Engagement

Studies with middle and high school students find parent engagement at school to be associated with better grades in science and parent engagement at home to be associated with lower grades but greater school orientation and motivation in science class (Shumow et al., 2011). A correlation between parent engagement in educational planning and student outcomes is expected on theoretical grounds, but there is little evidence upon which to base predictions. We test the association between types of engagement and grade point average, time spent doing science homework, and student adjustment as measured by students' reports of perceived skill, interest, self-esteem, and belief that what they are learning in science is valuable, examining whether the types of parent involvement interact with freshman status in predicting those outcomes.

Method and Data Source

Context and Participants

Data were collected in 12 science classrooms in a single comprehensive high school serving students from a diverse community located on the fringe of a

large metropolitan area. Thirty-three percent of students in the school were considered "low income" based on free and reduced lunch data. The school serves 9th–12th graders and had an enrollment of approximately 3,300 in 2009. The average class size was 23.6 students, and teachers in the school district had an average of 11.5 years of experience. The graduation rate was 74%.

The SciMo Study (see http://scienceinthemoment.cedu.niu.edu/scienceinthemoment for extensive detail) was designed to oversample students in the 9th grade: 43% were in the 9th grade, 21% in the 10th grade, 34% in the 11th grade, and 2% in the 12th grade. Students came from three general science, three biology, three chemistry, and three physics classrooms (n = 244 students; some, n = 12, did not complete the school year). These classes were drawn from the "average" or regular track. The overall student participation rate across all classrooms was 91%, with half of the classrooms studied having complete (100%) participation. The sample was 53% male and 47% female. The student sample was 42% White, 37% Latino, 12% African American, 2% Asian, 1% Native American, and 6% multiracial. According to school records, 43% of students in the sample received free or reduced lunch.

Procedure

Researchers visited each classroom for 5 consecutive days in both fall 2008 and spring 2009. This study used data from surveys, the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), and school records.

Student Surveys

Students completed one-time surveys during both the fall and spring data collection periods pertaining to student characteristics (grade, age, gender, ethnicity); family background; educational background as well as students' future academic aspirations; science beliefs and learning; homework completion; and parental involvement in science education.

Experience Sampling Method

During two waves of data collection, students' subjective experience in each science classroom was measured repeatedly over a period of 5 consecutive school days using a variant of the Experience Sampling Method (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987). Participants wore a vibrating pager which was used to signal them unobtrusively using a remote transmitter at 2 randomly selected time points during each day's science class. To minimize the disruption to class flow and maximize the variety of classroom activities recorded, the pool of participants in each classroom was divided in half, with each half following a different signal schedule. In response to each signal, students completed an Experience Sampling Form (ESF) in which they briefly recorded their activities

and thoughts at the time of the signal, as well as various dimensions of their subjective experience. Each ESF took approximately 1-2 minutes to complete.

Using Likert scales, students used the ESF to report on multiple dimensions of their subjective experience. By the completion of the study, each participant had reported on multiple aspects of subjective experience on as many as 20 separate occasions. In total, 4,136 such responses were collected. In the fall semester, 2,139 responses were collected, for an average of 9.2 responses per participant (92% signal response rate). In the spring semester, 1,997 responses were collected, for an average of 9.1 responses per participant (91% signal response rate). Participant non-response was nearly entirely attributable to school absence.

This method has a high degree of external or "ecological" validity, capturing participants' responses in everyday life. There are indications that the internal validity of the ESM is stronger than one-time questionnaires as well. Zuzanek (1999) has shown that the immediacy of the questions reduces the potential for failure of recall and the tendency to choose responses on the basis of social desirability (see Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987, and Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007, for reviews of validity studies).

School Records

School records were obtained by the researchers. A school employee with access to student's individual records provided a file with students' science grades, grade point average (GPA), and "free lunch" status.

Measures

Parent Engagement

The student survey included 14 items pertaining to parents' involvement with participants' schooling and their science education. Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation indicated that there were four factors which accounted for 59% of the variance. One of the factors had four dichotomous items pertaining to *parent engagement at school* during the school year (Cronbach's alpha = .77): attending school events, coming to school to watch them perform, talking to their science teacher at school, and knowing their science teacher. Another factor was comprised of four items pertaining to *parent engagement at home* during the school year (Cronbach's alpha = .75): checking science homework, helping with the science homework, finding someone to help with science homework, and limiting the amount of time the student watches TV or plays video games. Students reported the extent of parent involvement at home on a four point scale from 0 = never to 3 = often. *Parent engagement in educational planning* was measured with two items (Cronbach's

alpha = .64): discusses courses and program selection, and discusses career planning, measured on a three point scale from 0 = never to 3 = often. The other factor, *parent–student discussion about science topics* (four items) is not included in the present study.

Predictors of Parent Engagement

Parent education *(Pared)* was the highest level of education of either parent. *White* indicated that the student was not a member of a racial or ethnic minority group. Those who reported being born outside the United States (U.S.) and/or having one or both parents born outside the U.S. were considered *immigrants*. *Academic expectations* were assessed by asking the students how far in school their mother wants them to go. Two variables: *student finds science fun and interesting,* and *student reports difficulty with science* were measured by asking students to respond on a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. *First quarter grade in science* was used as an indicator of initial academic performance in science.

Academic Adjustment

There were multiple indicators of student's school adjustment. First were student reports of how they felt about themselves and their activities at the moment they were signaled. On a 4-point scale (0 = not at all, 1 = a little, 2 = somewhat, 3 = very much), students indicated "how skilled you felt at what you were doing" *(skill),* "how important that activity was to you" *(imp you)*, "how interesting the activity was to you" *(interest),* and "how good you felt about yourself" *(self-esteem)*. *Total homework hours* is the number of hours students reported doing science homework per week on an in-class survey completed during spring. *Grades* were obtained from school records with a mean of 2.4 (SD = .86).

Results

Grade Level Comparison by Type of Parent Engagement

Overall, the level of parent engagement was low. Freshmen reported greater parent engagement at home and lower parent engagement at school relative to students in the higher grades. The two groups did not differ with respect to parent engagement with educational planning (see Table 1).

Table 1. Types of Parent Engagement With 9th Graders Compared to Students in Higher Grades

Type of Involvement	Mean (SD)		*t*
	9th Graders	10th–12th	
At home	1.07 (.82)	0.85 (.75)	-2.1*
At school	0.40 (.37)	0.49 (.39)	1.8*
Educational Planning	1.15 (.60)	1.21 (.59)	0.82 (ns)

Note. *p < .05, ns = not significant.

Predictors of Parent Engagement

OLS regression was used to test whether models containing background characteristics predicted each of the three types of parent involvement for freshmen. Separate models were estimated for students attending higher grades. Table 2 presents the results of those analyses.

Table 2. Predictors of Types of Parent Engagement With Ninth Graders and Students in Higher Grades

	At Home		At School		Planning	
	9th	10th–12th	9th	10th–12th	9th	10th–12th
Parent Ed	.11	.03	.20	.34**	-.09	.01
White	-.12	.09	.11	.27*	.10	.22*
Immigrant	-.12	.14	-.36**	-.05	-.13	.04
Academic Expect	.19	.19^	.30**	.19*	.17	.30**
Science Interest	.29*	.35**	.16	.15	.41**	.08
Science Difficult	-.01	.02	-.13	-.02	.10	.02
1st Quarter Grades	-.03	-.27*	.08	-.15	.19	-.06
R^2	.14 ns	.21**	.36***	.35***	.23*	.15*

Note. ^p <.10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001, ns = not significant. Standardized betas are displayed.

The model including background characteristics did not predict parent engagement at home for 9th grade students but did explain a significant amount of variance in parent engagement at home for students in higher grades. First quarter grades were negatively associated with parent engagement at home among students in the higher grades. In other words, if students did well early in the school year, parents appeared to step back from homework supervision, involvement, and rule-setting. If students were doing poorly early in the school year, however, parents responded by helping with homework or setting rules. Students' expressed interest in science early in the school year positively predicted parent engagement at home.

Parent engagement at school was predicted by the model containing background characteristics for both 9th graders and students in the higher grades.

With the exception of parents' academic expectations for the student, which predicted parent engagement at school for both groups of students, the other particular characteristics which predicted parents' engagement at school did differ by students' grade level. Immigrant parents of freshmen were less involved at school than native-born parents, but being an immigrant was not predictive of at-school involvement for students in higher grades. Having more years of education and being White were significant predictors of parent engagement at school for students in the higher grades but not for freshmen.

Parent engagement in educational planning was explained by the models containing background characteristics for both 9th graders and students in higher grades. The characteristics that predicted parent engagement in educational planning did differ by grade level. For 9th graders, only students' expressed interest in science was associated with parents being engaged in educational planning with them. For the students in the higher grades, parents who were White and who had high academic expectations were more likely to be involved in this way.

Parent Engagement and Academic Adjustment

As can be seen in Table 3, results of this study show that students in this sample encountered difficulties in 9th grade. Being a freshman in high school was associated with feeling less skilled and interested during science class, having lower self-esteem, and obtaining lower grades than students in higher grades. These outcomes were evident despite the fact that freshmen reported feeling both that class work was equally important to them and that they did an amount of homework equivalent to amounts reported by students in higher grades.

Overall, parent engagement at home was associated positively with students' engagement (perception that class was interesting and important) but negatively with GPA. Parent engagement at school was associated positively with sense of skillfulness and GPA but negatively with time spent doing homework. Parent engagement in planning was not associated with the outcomes examined in this study.

A central purpose of this study was to determine whether parent engagement had a differential impact for 9th graders than it did for students in the higher grades when controlling for background characteristics. Several interaction terms were significant, indicating that the relationship between parent engagement and outcomes differed for freshmen compared to older students. For the purpose of displaying those interactions visually, the parent engagement variables were split at the mean to create dichotomous variables indicating less than average and more than average parent engagement.

Table 3. OLS Regressions Predicting Student Outcomes for Freshmen and Students in Higher Grades by Type of Parent Involvement Controlling for Background Characteristics

	In-Class Motivational Indicators from ESM				Academic Adjustment	
	Feel Skillful	Import to You	Interest	Self-Esteem	GPA	Hours HW
Parent Ed	-.10	-.19*	-.11	-.14^	.11	-.01
White	-.07	-.11	.01	.09	.18*	-.01
Immigrant	.01	-.07	.04	.04	.13	-.07
Academic Exp. Mom	.04	.02	.13^	.01	.06	.10
Sci Interest	.28**	.44***	.28***	.33***	-.01	.06
Sci Difficult	-.13^	.01	-.06	-.14^	-.20***	-.01
Freshmen	-.63***	-.14	-.23*	-.37**	-.42*	-.11
PE Home	-.09	.19^	.21*	.05	-.30**	.16
PE School	.22*	-.02	-.16	.05	.22*	-.42**
PE Plan	-.09	.04	.14	.02	.08	.18
Interaction 9X PE-Home	.30*	.19^	.01	-.07	.39*	-.04
Interaction 9X PE-School	.06	.28*	.21^	.24^	-.05	.22
Interaction 9X PE-Plan	.26	-.12	.00	.01	.25	-.28
R^2	.30***	.30***	.28***	.26***	.26***	.15*
Adj R^2	.24***	.24***	.21***	.19***	.20***	.07*

Note. ^p <.10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Standardized betas are displayed.

Ninth grade students whose parents were more engaged at home felt considerably more skillful during science class than students whose parents were less involved, whereas there was little difference in how skillful students in older grades felt relative to their parents' engagement at home (see Figure 1). In terms of grades, Figure 2 shows that 9th graders earned better grades if their parents were more involved at home; the exact opposite pattern can be seen for students in the higher grades. There was a marginally significant interaction between parent engagement at home and grade level in predicting how much students thought that what they were learning in class was important (valuable) to them. Examination of the interaction shows that when parents were more involved at home, students in the higher grades reported much greater valuing of their learning than 9th graders did when their parents were more involved. When parents were less involved at home, students did not differ in how much they valued what they were learning.

Figure 1 . Interaction between PE At-Home and Grade Level for Skill

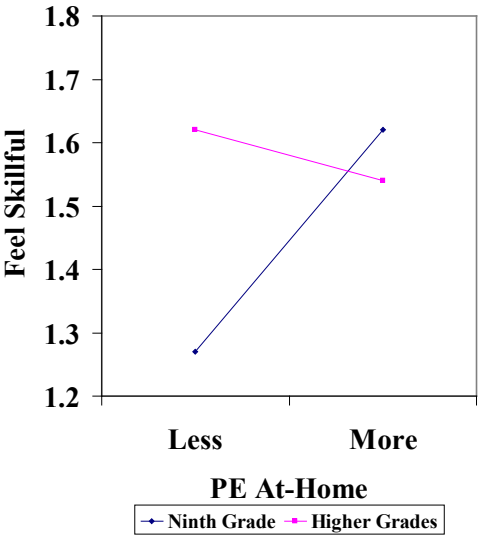
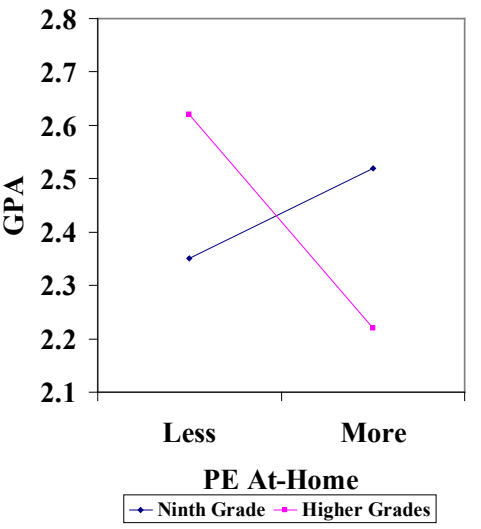
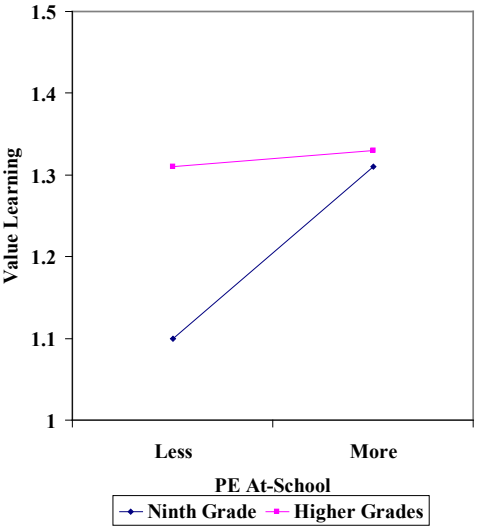


Figure 2. Interaction between PE At-Home and Grade Level for GPA



Grade level interacted with parent engagement at school in predicting students' ratings of the importance to them (value) of what they were learning in class. As can be seen in Figure 3, freshmen valued what they were learning in class significantly more when their parents were relatively more engaged at school than when they were relatively less engaged; the ratings for students in higher grades did not differ in relation to parent engagement at school. The interactions between grade level and parent engagement at school for predicting student interest and self-esteem during class were marginally significant. In both cases, students in higher grades had very similar ratings whether their parents were more or less engaged at school, but freshmen were much more interested and felt much better about themselves during class if their parents were relatively more engaged at school than if they were not.

Figure 3. Interaction between PE At-School and Grade Level for Value



Discussion

Before discussing the findings related to parent engagement by grade level, it is important to emphasize the limited school-focused engagement of parents with their high school students overall. Clearly, there remains much room for growth in school-related engagement among parents of high school students.

Comparison of Parents' Engagement with Ninth Graders and With Students in Higher Grades

The first purpose of this study was to compare the extent to which parents of 9th graders and parents of high school students in higher grades were engaged with their child's schooling at home, at school, and through educational planning. Parents of 9th graders were involved more at home and less at school than were parents of students in higher grades, but engagement in educational planning did not differ between student grade levels.

The greater at-home involvement of 9th graders' parents might be driven by the parents' desire to get their children off to a good start in high school. It is important to note that the parent involvement at home scale consisted of variables related to homework and to rules about behavior that would impact homework and academic performance. High school students are generally expected to do more homework than middle school students, and parents of 9th graders might be responding to that fact by engaging more at home. Both the time students spend doing homework and parental monitoring of homework have been associated with students' academic motivation and performance in high school (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Shumow et al., 2011), underscoring the relevance of considering homework as a form of at-home involvement, even though more subtle forms of engagement at home are especially powerful, especially among urban families (Jeynes, 2010).

As has been noted by other researchers, some parents provide more help and advice about choosing high school classes and about career paths than other parents (Dounay, 2006; Lareau & Weininger, 2008). In this study, no differences were found between parents of 9th graders and parents of students in higher grades in terms of their engagement with educational planning.

Parents of 9th graders were less likely to be engaged at school. That could be because the parents were unfamiliar with the school or felt unwelcome or overwhelmed by the increased complexity of a high school, or it could indicate that their children had not yet become engaged in the activities that tend to draw parents into schools. The parent engagement at school scale included questions about whether parents knew the science teacher and had talked with

the science teacher. This is a very minimal indicator of engagement, yet many parents did not know or had never talked to the science teacher. It would be interesting to determine whether this situation is the same for all subject areas or whether parents are especially alienated from science teachers. Our data does not allow us to examine that issue, but it would be important information for educators to have. A future study could investigate that question.

Predictors of Parent Engagement

The second purpose of the study was to investigate possible predictors of each type of parent engagement. In terms of engagement at home, demographic and psychological characteristics were not predictive for the parents of 9th graders but were predictive for the parents of the students in higher grades. This is important information for educators. The findings suggest that a wide spectrum of parents might be responsive to invitations to be engaged at home during the freshman year when so many students struggle. The 9th grade transition is a critical time to establish a partnership with parents to support the development of skills to succeed in high school. Many students enter high schools lacking the skills to succeed (Herlihy, 2007). Parents are aware that the 9th grade is difficult, and they are anxious about it (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Yet, they are too often overlooked by schools as partners who can be enlisted and welcomed in endeavors to help. A considerable amount of evidence shows that students can develop skills, complete homework, and succeed academically with some adult guidance (Cleary, Platten, & Nelson, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Slavin, Lake, & Groff, 2009), and parents need that information from schools.

The at-home engagement of parents in the higher grades was predicted by the model. Unique predictors that emerged were the students' interest in science, which was positively associated with parent engagement at home, and first quarter grades, which were negatively associated with parent engagement at home. It appears that parents were responsive to their children by increasing their involvement with homework when the child was either interested or when they were struggling. Nearly all parents want their child to succeed (Lareau & Weininger, 2007), but there are few programs for parents of high school students about helping and supporting their child academically. Parents of students who are especially interested in science could be alerted via electronic media about special programs available to extend students' interest in science. For example, they could be informed about science camps, STEM cafes, and special exhibits sponsored by nearby museums, laboratories, environmental centers, and colleges. Schools also might set up a procedure so that parents participate in an early warning system when students are struggling—parents need

to know who to tell when they notice that their child is struggling, and they need to be told when an educator notices that there might be problems. The warning system could be followed up by problem solving and strategy implementation to help the student persist and improve. Of course, such programs need to be evaluated after implementation to ascertain their effectiveness.

Educators also might want to increase at-school involvement by inviting more parents of 9th graders to come to school events to both meet and communicate with their child's teachers. Invitations from teachers are the most effective way to promote parent engagement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Extracurricular activities are very important in developing a sense of belonging within the high school, and parents exert a strong influence on activity participation, so parents could be recruited as partners in encouraging their 9th graders to participate in activities and in supporting the students as spectators (Zarret & Eccles, 2009).

The results of the analyses predicting parent engagement at school further highlight the potential importance of identifying predictors of different types of parent engagement. For example, notwithstanding the importance of having schools reach out to and invite all parents of freshmen, the 9th grade results suggest that it is especially important to invite and encourage immigrants to participate in school events and to meet and communicate with the teacher at this important transitional point. Our data do not provide insight into *why* immigrants are less likely to be engaged at school during 9th grade. Future studies could seek to explain their reticence, which does not appear when students are in the higher grades.

The results for students in the older grades tell a familiar story—parents with relatively more social capital in terms of education and majority status are more likely to engage at school and with the teacher. As was previously noted, the vast majority of parents want their children to do well. An at-school program, *Families in Schools* (n.d.) of Los Angeles, is an example of a program focused on helping parents (particularly underserved parents) understand more about navigating the school in order to foster their children's success. Program participants were better able to read their children's academic records, understood more about how to talk with teachers, and gained knowledge about postsecondary programs. More programs that engage all parents of high school students in the higher grades need to be designed, implemented, and studied.

Contributions of Parent Engagement to Academic Adjustment

The final purpose of this study was to test whether specific types of parent engagement contribute to academic adjustment differently for freshmen than older high school students. Before discussing those differential effects, it

is important to emphasize that, despite the limited amount of parent engagement, relatively more parent engagement predicted student outcomes. Both at-school and at-home engagement were associated with indicators of student motivation and success. It is also important to note that our finding that parent engagement in planning was not associated with these outcomes should not be interpreted to mean that planning is not an important type of engagement. Our measure of parent engagement in educational planning was limited. It is also possible that outcomes not examined, like students' academic expectations or career goals, might be influenced by this form of engagement.

Several parent engagement processes did operate differently in predicting outcomes by grade level. Parent engagement at home did not seem to have much of an influence on how skillful students in the higher grades felt in science class, but it had a positive influence on 9th graders in science class. How skillful students feel in class is a very important motivator which impacts students' willingness to persist and which is typically problematic for 9th graders (Schmidt & Shumow, 2011). Our data show that when 9th grade students' parents are more engaged in monitoring homework, the students feel more skillful in class. The interaction between parent engagement at home and grade level for students' GPA shows that involvement is associated with higher grades for 9th graders and lower grades for students in the upper grades. Parent engagement with homework generally declines during adolescence in part because adolescents' sense of autonomy generally leads them to resist parent involvement in their homework. Consequently, parents tend to back off unless their children are failing which is reflected in a negative association between parent involvement and grades (Shumow, 2010; Shumow et al., 2011). That interpretation does not match what appears to be happening for 9th graders in this study, however. Perhaps the pervasive challenges associated with the 9th grade transitional period lead a broader range of students to accept their parents' involvement.

Parent engagement at school did not have much impact on how valuable students in the higher grades rated what they were learning in science class, but it did matter to 9th graders. Perhaps this finding indicates that 9th graders are especially sensitive to whether their parents know and communicate with the teacher. This finding should be replicated, and interviews could be conducted with students to reveal more about the meaningfulness to them of their parents' engagement at school.

Limitations and Conclusions

There are several limitations to this study. First, and most importantly, the study is cross-sectional. Longitudinal data is needed to show what happens to

individual students as they transition to high school and move on to the higher grades. Second, the study was conducted in one school district. The district is very diverse, and the school was chosen to be representative of the population in a large state, but aspects of the context could impact the findings. Third, parent engagement was measured in only one way (student report). Although that has been a common way of measuring parent engagement with adolescents, it would be ideal to have multiple sources of data. Finally, our measure of at-home engagement focused on homework. Jeynes (2010) has found through meta-analyses that subtle aspects of parenting at home, such as parenting styles (which describe socialization practices), parental expectations, and communication practices exert greater influence on children's academic outcomes than involvement in homework or rule setting.

Overall, however, the results support the importance of parent engagement during high school. Findings accentuate the observation made by Herlihy (2007) that parents are critical partners during 9th grade and bolster recommendations that educators should invite and facilitate parent engagement at home and at school when students enter high school. While there are numerous ways for schools to engage parents during the critical transition to 9th grade, few high schools have well-developed programs to do so. Programs need to be designed, implemented, and studied to identify which features of such programs are successful.

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Family Capacity-Building in Early Childhood Intervention: Do Context and Setting Matter?

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Abstract

Findings from a study investigating the effects of early intervention settings on the extent of parent involvement in IDEA Part C Infant and Toddler Programs are reported. Participants were 124 parents and other primary caregivers of children receiving early intervention in 22 states who completed an investigator-developed scale measuring different ways in which early childhood practitioners involved parents in their children's early intervention. Results showed that provision of early intervention entirely or partially outside a family's home were associated with minimal parent involvement and that more than 50% of the parents, regardless of setting or context, were not involved in their children's early intervention in a manner consistent with the IDEA Part C family capacity-building provision. The need for better preparation of early intervention practitioners is described.

Key words: family capacity-building, parental involvement, early intervention settings, home visiting, infants, babies, toddlers, parents, developmental delays, disabilities, IDEA, special needs, engagement, context, centers, prevention

Introduction

Early childhood intervention for infants and toddlers who are at-risk for poor developmental outcomes is now a generally acceptable approach for preventing poor outcomes associated with environmental or biological risk factors (Feldman, 2004). Parent involvement in early childhood intervention is also

viewed as an essential component of these programs for promoting child learning and development (e.g., Kahn, Stemler, & Berchin-Weiss, 2009).

Many of the different models and approaches for involving parents in their children's early childhood intervention do so as part of home visiting by professionals or paraprofessionals who provide parents support and guidance for interacting with and providing development-enhancing learning opportunities for their children (Korfmacher et al., 2008). A primary goal of parent participation during home visits is to strengthen family capacity to continue to provide their children with learning experiences and opportunities at times other than during home visits (Peterson, Luze, Eshbaugh, Jeon, & Kantz, 2007).

Family capacity-building is a central feature of early childhood intervention for infants and toddlers with identified disabilities or developmental delays as part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) Part C Infant and Toddler Program (IDEA of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647, 2004). As stated in the Act, the purpose of early intervention is "to enhance the development of infants and toddlers, to minimize the potential for developmental delay" (Sec. 631) (a) (1) by "enhanc[ing] the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers" (Sec. 631) (a) (4). The typical settings in which this occurs are families' homes, although about 15% to 25% of infants and toddlers receive Part C early intervention in settings other than in the child's home (Hebbeler et al., 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

There have been a number of studies that have focused on the manner in which early childhood intervention practitioners involve parents of young children with disabilities in their IDEA Part C early intervention programs (e.g., Klein & Chen, 2008; Korfmacher et al., 2008; McBride & Peterson, 1997; Peterson et al., 2007; Roggman, Boyce, & Innocenti, 2010). Korfmacher et al. (2008), as part of a review of early childhood home visiting studies, noted that the extent of parent involvement is influenced by a number of personal (e.g., practitioner backgrounds) and contextual (e.g., program philosophy) variables that are related to variations in parent participation and engagement. The studies included in the Korfmacher et al. (2008) review, however, were investigations of parent involvement only when early intervention was provided in children's homes. Therefore, a determination of whether intervention setting or context was a factor influencing the extent of parent involvement could not be discerned.

The purposes of analyses described in this brief report were to determine (a) if the settings and contexts in which early childhood practitioners worked with infants and toddlers with disabilities or delays and their families influenced the manner in which the practitioners involved parents in their children's early

intervention, and (b) the extent to which parent participation in early intervention was characterized by features consistent with the intent of the IDEA Part C Infant and Toddler Program family capacity-building provision. Capacity-building, family-centered practices refer to the methods and procedures used by practitioners to create parenting opportunities and experiences to reinforce existing and promote the development of new parenting abilities in a manner that enhances and strengthens parenting self-efficacy beliefs (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Dunst & Trivette, 2011; MacPhee & Miller-Heyl, 2003). Parenting self-efficacy beliefs refer to a sense of competence and confidence that one's parenting behavior will have expected effects or outcomes. Findings from a number of meta-analyses of studies of family-centered practices indicate that self-efficacy beliefs mediate the relationships between how practitioners work with parents, how those practices influence parenting efficacy appraisals, and how efficacy appraisals in turn are related to parenting behaviors and practices (Dunst & Trivette, 2009; Dunst, Trivette, & Hamby, 2008; Trivette, Dunst, & Hamby, 2010).

Based on the findings from meta-analyses of family-centered helping practices where there were differences in early childhood practitioner use of family-centered practices with parents and their children in home-based or center-based programs (Dunst & Trivette, 2005; Dunst, Trivette, & Hamby, 2006), we hypothesized that the ways in which early childhood practitioners involved parents would differ as a function of setting, favoring the provision of early intervention in the children's and families' homes. More specifically, the provision of early intervention in the children's homes was expected to be associated with more parent involvement in a family capacity-building manner.

Method

Participants

The participants were 124 parents and other primary caregivers of infants and toddlers receiving Part C early intervention in 22 states. Chairpersons of the Part C State Interagency Coordinating Councils in all the states and the District of Columbia were contacted and asked to notify parents about the study. The Directors of all U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Program regional, state, and community-based parent centers were also contacted and asked to notify parents about the study. These contacts were made by email, mail, or fax, and included an introductory letter and a flyer describing the purpose of the study and the procedures for parents to follow to either complete a survey online using SurveyMonkey® or to request a paper-and-pencil version of the survey.

Nearly all the participants were the children's mothers (97%). The participants ranged in age from 18 to 44 years. Two-thirds of the participants (66%) had college degrees, and all the participants except one had at least a high school education. The median income of the participants' families was approximately $50,000 per year (Range = less than $20,000 to more than $150,000).

The children ranged between 3 and 35 months of age (Mean = 23, SD = 9). Fifty-nine percent of the children were male. The majority of children were eligible for early intervention because of identified disabilities (66%) or developmental delays (32%). A small percentage of the children (2%) were eligible for other reasons.

The practitioners providing early intervention to the children were from the particular disciplines (special education/special instruction, speech and language pathology, occupational therapy, physical therapy) who most often work directly with Part C program participants (Hebbeler et al., 2007). The practitioners included 45 special educators/special instructors, 36 physical therapists, 22 speech and language pathologists, and 21 occupational therapists.

Early Intervention Settings

Early intervention was provided to the children in their families' homes ($N = 76$), center-based locations other than the families' homes ($N = 14$), or a combination of home and center-based locations ($N = 34$). The distribution of the settings in which early intervention was provided was very similar to that found in other studies (Hebbeler et al., 2007) and reported in other documents (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Parent Involvement in Early Intervention

An investigator-developed measure was used to determine the manner in which early intervention practitioners involved the study participants in their children's early intervention. The parents were asked to indicate which of five responses "best describes how you are involved with your child's primary service provider" (interventionist, teacher, or therapist). The five response categories were: (1) I am not present when my child receives early intervention services; (2) I only observe the service provider working with my child; (3) the service provider explains what he or she is doing with my child; (4) the service provider shows me or demonstrates how to do the interventions with my child; and (5) the service provider involves me in a way where I can continue to do the interventions without the provider's ongoing assistance. For purposes of the analyses described in this paper, responses 4 and 5 were used as the operationally defined criterion for the type of parent involvement in early intervention that was consistent with the family capacity-building provision of the IDEA Part C Infant and Toddler Program.

Methods of Analysis

A three-way between-settings (Home vs. Home/Center vs. Center) ANOVA was used to determine if the extent of parent involvement varied as a function of intervention setting or context. The dependent measure was the parent involvement scores for each participant. Cohen's *d* effect sizes for between settings contrasts were used for substantive interpretation of the study results. A 3 Between Setting Chi-Square analysis was used to determine the percent of parents who reported different levels of involvement to discern if the response patterns were consistent with the use of family capacity-building practices.

Results

The between-settings ANOVA with the parent involvement scores as the dependent measure was statistically significant, $F(2, 121) = 6.47$, $p = .0021$. The parent involvement scores for the three different early intervention settings are shown in Figure 1. The effect sizes for the between setting contrasts were $d = 0.17$ for the home vs. home/center comparison, $t(121) = 0.84$, $p = .40$; $d = 1.07$ for the home vs. center comparison, $t(121) = 3.60$, $p = .0005$; and $d = .84$ for the home/center vs. center comparison, $t(121) = 2.75$, $p = .0070$. Results showed that the mean parent involvement scores were significantly and substantially lower when practitioners worked with children and their parents entirely outside their homes.

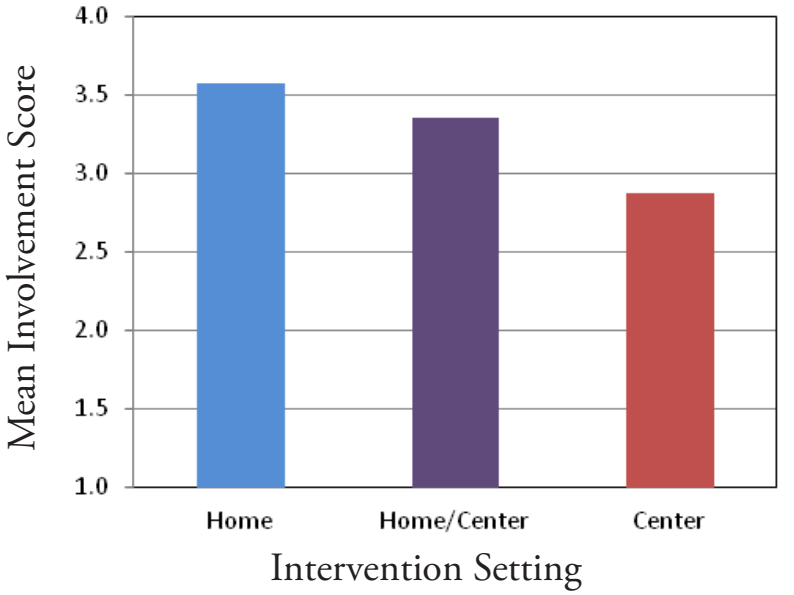

Figure 1. Mean parent involvement scores for the provision of early intervention in different settings and contexts.

Inspection of Figure 1 shows a discernible downward trend in the parent involvement scores when early intervention was provided partly or entirely outside the families' homes. This was confirmed by a significant linear trend, $F(1, 122) = 12.93$, $p = .0005$. The effect size for the downward slope in the parent involvement scores was $d = .65$. Results showed that when early intervention was increasingly provided outside a family's home, the more attenuated were the mean parent involvement scores.

Table 1 shows the patterns of parent involvement in terms of the percent of participants who reported different levels of involvement according to where early intervention was provided. There was a statistically significant difference in the patterns of parent involvement as a function of intervention setting, $\chi^2 = 25.38$, $d = 8$, $p = .0013$. Parents were more likely to be involved in their children's early intervention when services were provided entirely or partly in the families' homes. In contrast, parents were less likely to be involved in a capacity-building manner when their children's early intervention was provided entirely outside the families' homes.

Table 1. Percentage of Participants Reporting Different Ways in Which Practitioners Involved Parents in Their Children's Early Intervention

	Setting/Context		
Parent Involvement Categories[a]	Home	Home/Center	Center
Non Capacity-Building			
Not Present	1	15	36
Watch Only	24	9	21
Provider Explains	21	24	21
Capacity-Building			
Provider Demonstrates	25	32	21
Competence Enhancement	29	20	1

[a] See the text for a description of each category of parent involvement.

Notwithstanding the setting effect from the chi-square analysis, large percentages of participants were not involved in their children's early intervention in a manner consistent with the intent of the IDEA Part C Infant and Toddler Program family capacity-building provision, regardless of setting. Only 22% of parents were involved in their children's early intervention in a capacity-building manner when services were provided outside the home, and just over half of the parents were involved in their children's early intervention in a capacity-building manner when services were provided entirely (54%) or partly (52%) in the families' homes.

Discussion

Results showed that early intervention setting and context were related to differences in the manner in which practitioners involved parents in their children's early intervention. Furthermore, results indicated that the extent of parent involvement in Part C early intervention, regardless of setting or context, was not consistent with the intent of the IDEA Infant and Toddler Program family capacity-building provision for large percentages of the parents in the study. The results indicate that many parents whose children are involved in Part C early intervention programs do not participate in a manner that is likely to have capacity-building characteristics and consequences. Other investigators have reported similar results (e.g., Klein & Chen, 2008; Luze, Peterson, & Wu, 2002; Roggman et al., 2010).

The findings of the current study add to the knowledge base by demonstrating that *where* early intervention is provided is a contextual factor influencing the likelihood that parents will or will not be involved in a family capacity-building manner. This raises questions about whether early intervention should be provided in settings where contextual factors are likely to impede parent involvement in a capacity-building manner when there is no justifiable reason for not working with children and their parents in the families' homes. The results also indicate a need for further research to determine which aspects of different settings and contexts promote or impede capacity-building parent involvement in IDEA Part C early intervention.

Findings from studies of parents' involvement in their children's preschool, elementary, and secondary education indicate that the ways in which parents are involved in their children's education is associated with differences in parents' beliefs about their abilities to influence child learning and development (e.g., Ames, De Stefano, Watkins, & Sheldon, 1995; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; MacPhee & Miller-Heyl, 2003). Research also indicates that parents' beliefs mediate the relationship between parents' involvement in early childhood intervention and child and parent outcomes (Dunst et al., 2008). The more parents are involved in their children's early intervention in a capacity-building manner, the more positive are both parent and child outcomes. It is therefore plausible to assume that for nearly half of the parents in our study, optimal benefits would not be expected as a result of practitioners not involving them in their children's early intervention in a family capacity-building manner.

Researchers have identified a number of factors that are associated with variations in parents' involvement in early childhood intervention (e.g., Daro, McCurdy, Falconnier, & Stojanovic, 2003; Gill, Greenberg, Moon, & Margraf,

2007; Korfmacher et al., 2008; Mapp, 2003), one of which is a lack of the professional preparation of early intervention practitioners in terms of engaging parents in their children's early intervention (Bruder & Dunst, 2005). Bruder et al. (2013), for example, found that only 30% of early intervention providers reported being adequately trained to work with parents and families. Fortunately, findings from a number of studies indicate that both preservice and inservice training can positively influence early intervention practitioners' confidence and competence in working with families (e.g., Campbell & Sawyer, 2009; Katz & Bauch, 1999; Swanson, Raab, & Dunst, 2011). Results reported in this paper echo other research indicating that, at least for a number of early childhood practitioners, additional training in how to adopt and use capacity-building, family-centered practices is indicated and warranted (Bruder, 2000; Espe-Sherwindt, 2008; Gregg, Rugg, & Souto-Manning, 2011), especially training that promotes practitioners' use of strength-based capacity-building practices (Dunst et al., 2008) that places primary emphasis on active parent engagement in early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities or delays (Wagner, Spiker, Linn, Gerlach-Downie, & Hernandez, 2003).

The results from our study have a number of implications for practice. Findings indicate that where early intervention is conducted influences the ways in which practitioners involve parents in interventions and that working with families in their homes bolsters the likelihood that practitioners will involve parents in a capacity-building manner. The findings, in light of other research evidence (see, e.g., Wilson, 2005), suggest that adopting and using capacity-building, family-centered practices as part of home-based interventions will likely have value added effects on parenting competence and confidence. Additionally, the results indicate that if the family capacity-building provision of the IDEA Part C Infant and Toddler Program is to become a reality, early intervention managers and supervisors need to provide the types of supports and training to staff to build the capacity of practitioners to engage parents more effectively.

As is almost always the case with any investigation, there are limitations of our study that need to be mentioned. One limitation was the lack of information about the early intervention practitioners for whom parents made judgments of their involvement in their children's early intervention. Another limitation was the lack of information about the programs or organizations for which the practitioners worked or were employed. It could be the case that these personal and organizational factors, in addition to intervention setting, might have contributed to parents' ratings of their involvement in their children's early intervention.

We conclude by noting that our study, as well as other studies that have included different measures of the extent of parent involvement in early childhood intervention programs (e.g., Korfmacher et al., 2008), are currently the focus of a meta-analysis that we are in the process of completing to identify the various ways in which practitioners involve parents in their children's early childhood intervention (Dunst, Espe-Sherwindt, & Bruder, 2014). The results should shed light on both the extent of parent involvement in different early childhood intervention programs and the conditions under which parents are likely to be involved in a capacity-building manner.

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Volunteers Supporting Children With Reading Difficulties in Schools: Motives and Rewards

Danielle Tracey, Samantha Hornery, Marjorie Seaton, Rhonda G. Craven, and Alexander Seeshing Yeung

Abstract

Research on volunteer mentor programs has demonstrated mostly positive outcomes for mentees. As a result, many schools seek to attract and retain volunteers to assist children in need of support. The researchers interviewed 26 adult volunteers (from Australian companies) who help children with reading difficulties and examined intervention effects on the *mentors* as well as their motives for participating.The researchers found three significant factors that motivated corporate volunteers to engage in mentoring activities: values, understanding, and enhancement. In working individually with children in need of help, the mentors recognized the significance of their mentor role (values). For successful implementation of the program, mentors needed to learn new skills and use them with the mentees (understanding). The interaction between the adult and the child facilitated growth and development for both mentor and mentee (enhancement). To benefit both mentors and mentees, these critical factors should be considered by schools to successfully attract and engage volunteers in mentor programs with a specific educational focus.

Keywords: volunteers, mentors, reading, intervention, literacy, Australia

Introduction

The origins of mentoring can be traced as far back as 800 BC (Appelbaum, Ritchie, & Shapiro, 1994; Dondero, 1997; Garvey & Alred, 2003), when in

Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus was leaving for the Trojan War and entrusted the care and advising of his son, Telemachus, to his friend, Mentor (Dondero, 1997; Grassinger, Porath, & Ziegler, 2010; Hegstad, 1999). However, it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that interest in the process of mentoring began to blossom (Allen, Eby, O'Brien, & Lentz, 2008; Colley, 2001; Garvey & Alred, 2003; Grassinger et al., 2010), and this interest has grown exponentially since the 1970s (Rhodes, Liang, & Spencer, 2009; Wilson, 2001). Although there is considerable debate about what constitutes mentoring (Gibb, 1994), due in part to the different contexts in which mentoring occurs (e.g., organizational, educational), a particularly salient definition for the present investigation was proposed by Grassinger et al. (2010). Drawing from business and educational literatures, these authors identified the elements common to all definitions and so characterized mentoring as a:

> …relatively chronologically stable dyadic relationship between an experienced mentor and a less experienced…mentee, characterized by mutual trust and benevolence, with the purpose of promoting learning, development, and ultimately progress in the mentee. (Grassinger et al., 2010, p. 30)

Initially used in large organizations to support the development of junior staff and transmit organizational culture (Chao, 2009), mentoring has been increasingly adopted in the educational system, where it has become understood as a panacea for a variety of educational challenges (Meijers, 2008). There is a substantial and diverse body of literature concerning mentoring that spans a wide range of disciplines, including psychology, organizational behavior, education, sociology, and social work (Black, Suarez, & Medina, 2004; Eby & Allen, 2008; Wilson, 2001). Mentoring programs are popular in the USA, the UK, and Australia, particularly programs that involve volunteering by members of businesses and organizations. Corporate volunteers have been particularly active in mentoring programs for children and youth struggling within the educational system. For example, in Australia, a well-known multinational corporation has established a foundation to enhance the literacy skills of children at risk of failing to read (Slator & Goddard, 2012). However, while there has been much research that has examined the educational outcomes for children in these mentoring relationships, there has been a paucity of research particularly focusing on the perspectives of adult volunteers in schools and especially corporate volunteer mentors (e.g., Caldarella, Gomm, Shatzer, & Wall, 2010). This is unfortunate, as information gleaned from these corporate volunteers in educational settings could prove useful for the focus of future mentoring relationships and could also build the capacity of schools to attract and retain such valuable volunteers. Consequently, the researchers of the current study aimed

to address this gap in the literature by exploring the motivations of corporate volunteers and the benefits they perceived their mentoring of children brought to themselves, their workplace, the schools, and the mentees.

Motivation to Volunteer in Schools: Theory and Research

Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy (2010) noted that there are multiple theories of volunteerism and suggested that this was because of a general lack of agreement among researchers concerning what constitutes volunteerism. However, these authors observed that researchers do agree that people's motivations to volunteer center around altruistic and self-interested reasons. Using a functional approach to investigating why people volunteer, Clary et al. (1998) proposed a model that incorporates both of these elements. The model is comprised of six functions. All six functions can be understood as motivations to volunteer and benefits associated with volunteering:

1. Values: volunteering allows people to express personal values of an altruistic or humanitarian concern for others;
2. Understanding: being able to learn new skills or to use existing skills that may otherwise go unused;
3. Career: benefits related to one's career development;
4. Social: allowing socialization with others;
5. Protective: reducing negative feelings such as guilt about being prosperous; and
6. Enhancement: benefits related to personal growth and development.

In subsequent work, Clary and Snyder (1999) found that the strongest motivations to volunteer were those of values, understanding, and enhancement. This finding has been partially supported in a recent study in which the most important motivations to volunteer were found to be related to values and understanding (Caldarella et al., 2010).

Benefits of Mentoring Programs to Stakeholders

Benefits to Children

In educational settings, participation in mentoring programs has been shown to yield positive effects for young participants. Positive outcomes for mentees include: higher school achievement (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008), gains in reading scores (Hornery, 2011), increased social competence and emotional adjustment (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002), and a more positive self-image (DuBois et al., 2002). In a recent meta-analysis, Ritter, Barnett, Denny, and Albin (2009) found that adult volunteers had a positive but moderate impact on students' academic outcomes. Effect

sizes increased when volunteers concentrated on specific skills, such as reading letters and words. Hence, mentoring programs that have a specific focus are more likely to benefit children receiving mentoring.

Benefits to Mentors

The positive effects of mentoring programs extend also to the mentor (Eby & Allen, 2008; Wilson, 2001). In organizational settings, the benefits of programs to mentors include an increase in: visibility, respect, organizational power and performance, career rejuvenation, and increased opportunities for networking (Casto, Caldwell, & Salazar, 2005; Chao, 2009), thereby enhancing professional identity and self-respect (Hegstad, 1999). In addition, in a school-based setting, Caldarella et al. (2010) found that volunteers experienced benefits associated with feeling useful, growing personally, and sharing with friends in an activity that is highly valued by others, along with reduced negative emotions. These reported benefits correspond with Clary et al.'s (1998) functions of enhancement, social and protective, respectively. Therefore, for individuals, mentoring programs benefit both mentors and mentees.

Benefits to Organizations

For organizations, the benefits of mentoring programs to individual employees also contribute to organizational wellness and advancement. Mentoring has been recognized as a useful human resource development strategy (Hegstad, 1999; Peterson, 2004a; Rieg, 2006). Indeed, mentorship benefits organizations by contributing to improved employee motivation, performance, commitment and retention, and by building both individual skills and teamwork (Chao, 2009; DeLong, Gabarro, & Lees, 2008; Phillips, 2000; Rieg, 2006).

The Need for Corporate Volunteers in Schools

Traditionally, parents have been used as volunteer mentors, particularly in education systems (Rhodes, Bogat, Roffman, Edelman, & Galasso, 2002), and parental involvement in schools has been associated with positive outcomes for students including increased student achievement (Hirsto, 2010; Taylor & Pearson, 2004), increased self-esteem and sense of belonging (Worthy & Hoffman, 1999), and increased literacy (Neuman, 1995). However, because of changes to the economy (Anderson, 1994; Wyeth & Thomson, 1995) and to families, communities, and schools, particularly in urban areas (Rhodes et al., 2002), it has become increasingly difficult to enlist parent volunteers. It is particularly difficult for parents of lower socioeconomic status and parents from non-English speaking backgrounds living in English-speaking countries to mentor students (Kroeger, 2005; Neuman, 1995; Rhodes et al., 2002; Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011). Consequently, other sources for volunteers have had to be explored.

Increasingly common sources of volunteer mentors are large corporate organizations. According to Peterson (2004a), a corporate volunteer program is "any formal organized company support for employees and their families who wish to volunteer their time and skills in service to the community" (p. 615). Because of the benefits provided by corporate volunteer programs to the community as well as to the organization and its public image (Muthuri, Matten, & Moon, 2009; Peterson, 2004a, 2004b; Rieg, 2006), an increasing number of national and international firms in the USA (Peterson, 2004a, 2004b), Canada (Fuller, 1993), Australia (Cavallaro, 2007), and the UK (Colley, 2003; Gibb, 1994) are in the process of developing and expanding their participation in corporate volunteer programs (Miller, 1999; Peterson, 2004a). In particular, many organizations are partnering with schools (Phillips, 2000) as ways to involve the community in the development of children and adolescents (Miller, 1999) and to encourage schools to become effective and cosmopolitan learning communities (Ranson, Arnott, McKeown, Martin, & Smith, 2005).

In the USA, the matching of schools with private sector companies has increased since 1983. Indeed, in 2011, school-based mentoring accounted for nearly half of all youth mentoring programs in the USA (Schwartz, Rhodes, Chan, & Herrera, 2011), and in the UK, by 2002, one in three schools was using corporate volunteers in a systematic way (Colley, 2003). Initially, corporate mentoring programs in schools focused on the development of social and work-related skills in young people (Miller, 1999), but more recently, such programs have focused on supporting children and adolescents in the attainment of key skills such as reading (e.g., Burr & Tartarian, 1997; DeMoulin & Sawka, 1998) and the growth of positive attitudes toward life-long learning (e.g., Miller, 1999).

The Present Research

Despite the increase in corporate volunteer programs across western industrialized nations over the last decade, researchers have focused on the outcomes of participation for the students being mentored (e.g., Burr & Tartarian, 1997; DeMoulin & Sawka, 1998) or for the organizations sponsoring the volunteers (Cavallaro, 2007; Muthuri et al., 2009), particularly in terms of implications for the organization's human resource development and reputation-building strategies (Muthuri et al., 2009). There is a paucity of empirical research to date that has explored the motives and gains of the volunteers engaged in these corporate mentoring programs within schools. This line of enquiry is critical if we are to continue to attract individuals to provide this valuable support within schools. In the present study, we aimed to address this deficit in the research literature. Consequently, two research questions (RQs) were posed:

RQ1. What motivates corporate employees to volunteer as mentors to assist struggling children in local schools?
RQ2. How do corporate volunteers perceive the impact of their mentoring on themselves, their workplace, the schools, and mentees?

Method

Participants

Twenty-six volunteers (22 females and 4 males) serving as mentor reading buddies participated in our current study. The mentors participated in the program as part of a workplace-initiated community engagement activity and were drawn from one multinational company and one law firm. Seven of the mentors occupied a factory line role, while the other 19 occupied office-based positions. The mentors were involved in a reading buddy program in two local New South Wales Department of Education and Communities schools in two distinct geographical and cultural contexts in Sydney, Australia. The children being mentored in the buddy program were aged 5–10 and enrolled in primary school. The mentors' involvement in the program included attending an initial three-hour training session; a one-hour orientation session at the school; 15 weekly 45-minute sessions in the school with their mentee one-on-one; a midway one-hour additional training session; and attendance at a celebration party at the end of the program.

Procedure

Potential participants were briefed about the nature of the research and assured confidentiality and anonymity prior to the commencement of the study. All participants provided informed written consent. Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with approximately three to five participants in each group (with a total of six groups). These interviews were held at the culmination of the mentoring program when the mentors came together with the children to celebrate the end of the mentoring program.

The focus group interviews were conducted face-to-face, and the format comprised unstructured and mostly open-ended questions with the intention of eliciting views, opinions, and experiences of the participants. The data collection and analyses are consistent with phenomenology as the researchers asked open-ended questions in order to understand the experience of the participants (Creswell, 2009). The focus group interviews were audiotaped and transcribed to facilitate interpretation.

Data analysis was conducted consistent with Creswell's (2009) eight-step approach whereby the researchers engaged in a systematic process of analyzing

textual data moving from raw data to coding, interrelating of themes, and interpreting the meaning of themes. The purpose was to identify common themes but also present negative or discrepant information. This process was facilitated with QSR NVivo 9 software.

In order to promote qualitative reliability, inter-coder agreement (Creswell, 2009) was measured whereby a research assistant who was not involved in the project was asked to follow the same eight-step procedure to construct themes independently without knowledge of the code established by the researcher. This initial cross-checking generated an 80% agreement in themes identified. The themes were then reviewed based on this process to incorporate a reconciled position.

Results

Motives to Volunteer in Schools (RQ1)

Mentors identified two primary motives for volunteering within the school. These were categorized as the desire to provide direct assistance to a child in need and to make a contribution to their community. This is consistent with the Clary et al. (1998) emphasis on "values" as one of the major motivations for volunteering, which include providing direct help to children in need and contributing to the local community.

Help a Child Directly

A consistent theme throughout the focus group interviews was the desire to help a child improve their situation. Several of the volunteers identified that they were drawn to the program because they could help the local community in a direct, hands-on manner, and this was more appealing than other avenues like simply donating money:

> I guess I wanted to make a difference in a kid's life and help them read.
>
> Just basically giving a kid a better start in life, 'cause actually they do need it. With my little child…he does need as much encouragement as possible.
>
> I think doing something in the local community that's face-to-face. It's not…handing money over and you not be able to do so [interact]; like [the company does] match dollar for dollar a lot of things, but I find this type of thing a lot more rewarding because it is face-to-face.

For many of the mentors, they spoke about wanting to help children to improve their reading so that the children can experience the joy of reading. This goal was built on the love that the mentors had for reading and books:

> I think what I set out to achieve was basically make reading enjoyable for another individual, because I love reading, and I'd like to share that experience with someone else.
>
> Because I think it is so important for a child to be able to read, and I've instilled that in my own children. To me there is nothing greater than if you've got some quiet time, just to sit somewhere and disappear into a book, and I want to share that with other people.

Give Back to the Community

When asked about the motives for volunteering in the local school, many of the mentors responded with a similar coined phrase around "giving back to the community." This appeared to be an overarching goal with the additional attraction of helping children:

> I think it's also, we get so caught up in, sometimes, such things that don't really matter, and then you know, to see that you are making a difference, I think, is really important.
>
> Just giving back to the community, that's what it is, that's my little help.
>
> It was more doing a community thing, and I feel like I need to do my bit for the community.

Benefits to the Mentors (RQ2)

Reflections about the rewards of serving as mentors resulted in three main clusters of responses. These included the realization that the mentors themselves had grown personally, developed personal insight, and experienced a sense of satisfaction through their mentoring role.

Personal Development

Mentors reported that through their experience in the program they developed personally. These areas of development included: learning to work with children; learning patience; improved confidence in themselves; and improved communication skills:

> Learning the tools to teach them how to read. I think that's a plus to help—for me—it would be grandchildren, great-grandchildren.
>
> You learn a lot of patience, but you learn to enjoy yourself as well. You learn not to take everything completely seriously.
>
> I think you find a sense of confidence in yourself in being able to teach these kids.
>
> I think everybody that has walked away has learnt something from it, something about themselves.

> I was just slightly anxious that I wouldn't be able to be patient and explain things and be interested, and I think all of those things have all improved, and I think that will have an effect just more generally in my life, not just with the reading.

Personal Insight

A few of the mentors reflected on their experience as adding more to their lives than simply skill development. Some described personal insight:

> I've never really had much of a problem with reading…everything came easy for me in my life, school, university, even this job. To see how someone else struggles and the hassles they face, it has changed the way I view everything, every client who comes to see me, I now have a different perspective, and I would never have had that experience.

> Just to be able to…forget about yourself for one minute and actually completely focus on someone else. I think in today's world, we're all so busy, caught up in our lives, etcetera, sometimes we don't do that enough, and I think it was just, it was able to kind of take me to a completely different area and just say, you know what, I don't care. I'm going to miss that…meeting today…because I've committed to this child.

Satisfaction

The most dominant theme communicated by the mentors was their sense of satisfaction with volunteering in the program. This satisfaction stemmed primarily out of watching the children make gains in their skills and enjoying the relationship each mentor built with the child:

> You get so much back from it, and seeing someone else improve in their reading is a really good experience.

> I feel like I've achieved something, and especially towards the end when I started to see results. It's lovely.

> To see them then get through a book without stopping, after you've had to help them with every second word the first time, to see them progress and into more difficult books and into reading more fluently, you just go, wow, that's really cool.

> I just got a lot of personal satisfaction knowing that I've done something to help.

These perceived benefits are consistent with Clary and Snyder (1999) who found "understanding" as a major motivation for volunteering. Apart from this, there also seemed to be other important factors described by Clary et al. (1998), including benefits related to career, personal, and social development.

Impact on the Workplace (RQ2)

The mentors reported that their role as a volunteer mentor had a significant impact on their workplace in a range of ways. For the most part, this impact was positive. Seven of the 26 mentors, however, occupied factory-based roles where their shifts required them to be on the factory line. In contrast to the employees based in an office, these mentors generally found that their mentoring role had a negative impact on their workplace because of the nature of their role in the company.

Positive Perceptions

The central position communicated by the mentors was that as employees, they came to view the company in a more favorable manner. Mentors expressed that as a result of the program they perceived the company as generous and committed to social justice. They experienced pride in working with the company and received positive responses from others when they divulged about the workplace-initiated program:

> The fact that I can participate in a program like this makes me think more highly of the company, that they're giving something back to the community, and I know as an employee it's certainly something that I have enjoyed every week, and it sort of makes it seem like a better place to be.

> It makes me feel proud to work for a company that's willing to do that and places that importance on children's development. I tell everyone I know, and I just feel so proud to actually be involved.

Strengthening Relationships

One of the byproducts of the employees' involvement in the program was that they were able to connect with other employees within the business:

> One of the benefits is connecting with other people. Just walking to and from the school, and the connection you have with people that you don't normally connect with.

Managerial Support

The majority of the mentors felt that their managers were very supportive of their volunteering. A few of the mentors mentioned that they felt that their direct managers were unhappy about them leaving to volunteer in the schools. As a result, some of them elected to volunteer on their own time to alleviate this pressure in the workplace. Interestingly, this was only reported by employees working within factory roles. It is likely that these roles offer less flexibility than office-based roles:

> Well, my boss wasn't very happy if I had to leave from work…my teammates on the floor were quite happy to cover me for that hour I was gone…he [the boss] didn't really like it. But usually I left from home, I changed my day, and I, like I'd do it either Tuesday or Wednesday, and so it didn't impact on him at all.

When these employees leave the factory floor to complete their role as a volunteer, another employee must replace them, therefore placing stress on both managers and, potentially, other employees. This theme appears to be unique to volunteers originating from factory roles in the study.

> I actually heard it from other readers, because they got a bit of a hard time not just from their direct manager or shift manager, from actual people that were working on the floor with them.

Benefits to Participating Schools (RQ2)

Mentors were unanimous that schools benefited from their involvement in the program. Two main themes were evident: Mentors identified that the program provided assistance to schools where resources are limited and that the volunteers gathered a unique appreciation of the teacher's role through their involvement. None of the mentors reported any negative experiences for the participating school. If the perspective of the school staff had been considered, divergent themes may have been identified. This, however, was not the focus of the current study.

Assistance for Resource-Limited Schools

Several mentors recognized that schools have limited resources to assist students who may be struggling with the activities and environment of the classroom. For them, the most significant asset that the mentoring program offered to the schools was the additional "pair of hands" to provide one-on-one attention to these children:

> I've always thought that kids just needed more one-on-one time, and a program like this gives it. Sometimes there's nothing that schools can do about it, 'cause they're stretched.

> One thing that I find when you're working with a child one on one, I think the child benefits a lot, because they can't get that level of attention in the classroom…the school system just doesn't have enough money to do it.

Appreciation of Teachers' Role

Mentors demonstrated a new appreciation of the role of a teacher:

> I take my hat off to these teachers, I really do. I only had one child, and he was an absolute nightmare, and I'm thinking, if I was a teacher and I had six of these students, I'd resign. I'd be out of there, so I really take my hat off to them; they're God-sent as far as I'm concerned.

Perceived Impact on the Mentees (RQ2)

Throughout the interviews, the issue that received the most attention was the perceived changes that occurred for the children with whom the mentors were working. The majority of mentors believed that the children made significant improvements in their reading skills, confidence, and enjoyment in the task. They also identified that the children benefited from having the individual attention that their mentoring relationship offered. Some mentors, however, voiced the concern that over the duration of the program they did not directly witness improvements in their buddy's reading skills within the sessions.

Enhanced Reading Skills

Most of the volunteers reported a marked improvement in the child's ability to read and apply the strategies that were being practiced:

> It's just fabulous to see when they're reading, and they stop or pause, and they're stuck; suddenly their little brains are ticking over, and you hear them, they're pointing, they're looking, they're sounding [it out], and you think, they listened; they actually listened, and that's just, I think, that's wonderful that those little triggers that we've been able to give them, that they're actually putting them to use.

> I've just noticed a massive improvement in—from start to finish—in all the other games that we played. That was really, really good with the sight words, oh, just flew through them in the end…a big improvement.

> I mean, I thought a child would improve, I didn't think that it would be as dramatic as what I've seen…previously, he was reading below the standard level for the class, and when we went to get a book from the classroom the other day, he was actually picking out of the extension bucket, so clearly he has surpassed what his classmates are doing.

However, a few questioned whether any progress was made by the child and felt that improved reading ability was not evident. One of the most prominent barriers cited was the behavior of the child, such as his or her inability to focus, high distractibility, and off task behavior:

> I think I got the naughty child of the whole group, and he just didn't want to do it….I was quite disappointed, because I actually wanted to be there and try and teach a child, so basically I've come out of it thinking I failed…to me, he has not improved at all.

Gain in Confidence

A key theme was that the program resulted in an increase in the confidence level of the children with reading and in general. The mentors reported that the children appeared more confident in their reading ability, more likely to attempt tasks, and more confident in communicating to the mentors in the sessions:

> Going in, I thought it was more about the reading, but for my child, it was more self-esteem and confidence, and it was just lovely watching him transform because he really is different; he's just come such a long way.

Increased Interest and Enjoyment

An increase in the children's enjoyment and interest in reading was clearly witnessed by many of the mentors:

> I think the attitudes change. I think it becomes not a task anymore, rather something that's fun and can be enjoyable when they see the positive things in reading.

Feeling Special

Mentors described how the children appeared to value the one-on-one time with their mentor and felt special by being involved in the program and building a unique relationship with their mentor. Mentors recognized that this outcome occurred because of the developmental stage of the child and the context of the children where they may not have a chance to receive individualized time or feel special:

> Every time I turn up, you never ceased to be amazed by the expressions on their face when you pick them up from the classroom…they are just so overwhelmed and so excited to see you every week.

> Just to know that they've got 45 minutes of your undivided attention is a wonderful thing.

> I think it's the fact that these children are made to feel special, so they're taken out of class by a grownup, and that probably won't work in later years, but at this age they seem to be almost envied.

Although these volunteers' perceptions of their influence on the development of children may be taken as replications of positive effects of mentor programs on mentees found in previous research, it is important to note that our focus is placed on the mentors' perceptions. In particular, the illustration of their perceptions in terms of three major factors as described by Clary and Snyder (1999)—value, understanding, and enhancement—is particularly valuable

in highlighting what may attract the volunteers to continue to serve as mentors in school settings.

Discussion

Mentor programs are becoming popular internationally with companies providing opportunities for their employees to volunteer in the community. This trend is encouraging as schools have the potential to benefit from harnessing this additional resource to support the development of their students. In order to attract corporate volunteers, school personnel need to understand what motivates volunteers to serve within a school and what is likely to retain their involvement within the school. The present authors sought to address the limited research examining the perspectives and experiences of the actual volunteers after participating in mentor programs so that schools might become better equipped to forge such partnerships. In this study, adult volunteers worked with children in a school setting using a reading buddy program (see Hornery, 2011). Consistent with Grassinger et al.'s (2010) definition of mentoring, the relationship between the students and their mentors led to gains in children's reading skills, interest, and sense of competence (see Hornery, 2011).

Mentors in the present study volunteered to participate in the reading buddy program predominantly to make a difference in the lives of children and to give back to the community. Mentors were attracted to the direct, hands-on involvement with children in the reading buddy program, believing this to be a more worthwhile opportunity than traditional donations of financial aid. These findings support the trends of altruistic and self-interest motivations reported in previous research (Caldarella et al., 2010; Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Hustinx et al., 2010). Mentors held beliefs around wanting to help children and contribute to the community, and the reading buddy program provided them with an opportunity to act on these values.

The motivations to volunteer described by the participants in the present study provided support for three of the six motivations proposed by Clary et al. (1998). The most common motivations expressed by the mentors in the present study were to help children directly (values), to learn and use new skills in helping children with their reading (understanding), and to participate in something that would be a positive experience for them personally (enhancement). Mentors wanted to help children read and instill in them a love of reading so that they could achieve more in their lives. Mentors also expressed a desire to learn new skills, have an opportunity to develop patience, and take time out of their busy schedules to give back to the community. These

three functions have also been suggested by Clary and Snyder (1999) in subsequent work to be the strongest of the motivations for volunteers. As such, the findings of the present study add further support to the model of volunteer motivations suggested by Clary et al. (1998). Although the individual motivations for a group of volunteers may vary, commonalities in relation to helping others, learning new skills, and participating in a personal journey are clearly identified. Future volunteering opportunities should consider these motivations when developing and engaging interest for new programs.

In addition to understanding the motivations for mentors to volunteer, the present researchers also investigated the perceptions of the mentors in relation to the outcomes of their involvement in the reading buddy program on themselves, their workplace, the schools, and mentees. The mentors reported that their mentees made gains in reading and acknowledged the role of their involvement in facilitating such gains. They also identified outcomes for schools as a consequence of their involvement and described the depth of their personal satisfaction and growth. The experience of participating in the reading buddy program was positive for the mentors.

Mentors identified the progress the children made as the most enjoyable aspect of participating in the reading buddy program. Mentors observed the progress their students made throughout the program and described this with pride throughout the focus group interviews. These findings are consistent with the large body of research describing positive outcomes for the participants of mentor programs (e.g., Burr & Tartarian, 1997; DeMoulin & Sawka, 1998). Our findings show that the outcomes of the children significantly contributed to each mentor's overall perception of the experience. That is, mentors experienced the most reinforcement for their efforts when they could observe a tangible change in the children with whom they worked. This is supported not only by the mentors' positive experiences of gains, but also by the comments from one mentor whose child had not made significant gains in the program. Further research should seek to identify the correlation between the outcomes of the beneficiaries of mentor programs and how this may affect the satisfaction levels of the mentors. Understanding this relationship further may guide the planning of future volunteering programs to include more information for mentors about their contributions.

Mentors gained perspective on the reality of school environments and expressed the belief that their involvement in this program assisted schools and communities in caring for children. Mentors were conscious of the impact the individual attention they gave a child might have on the greater community. These comments suggest that the altruistic motivation to initially volunteer (Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Hustinx et al., 2010) is also an

outcome experienced by the mentors. In the present study, mentors wanted to give back to the community, and their perceptions of their involvement confirmed for them that they have achieved this. Mentors reported that the experience has been successful in helping individuals and schools.

Mentors reported that they learned new skills in teaching and supporting reading skill development in children. The experience also taught mentors in the present study about the reading process for children and the impact of disruptions on children learning to read. By working closely with a child experiencing reading difficulties, mentors saw firsthand the emotional impact of this reading failure. The mentors' new skills were evidenced by their specific language (e.g., "sight words") used in the descriptions of children's progress. One mentor described how these new skills would help many generations of her own family. Thus, understanding was a motivation prompting mentors to volunteer in the reading buddy program, also noted by Clary et al. (1998) as an observable outcome for mentors. In essence, the mentors expressed pride in their abilities to implement their new skills of teaching reading and working with children.

Mentors in our study were also proud of their involvement and shared their participation with others in their lives. They were grateful that their company allowed them to participate. These views are consistent with the body of research identifying human resource gains for the companies who provide volunteering opportunities (Hegstad, 1999; Peterson, 2004a; Rieg, 2006). Mentors in the present study expressed positive feelings towards their employer as a result of having been provided with this opportunity. Companies are able to benefit internally from establishing volunteering programs. The present researchers have also identified some issues for companies to consider when establishing and managing volunteer programs. Equity for mentor participation was an issue that arose during the focus group interviews, with some of the factory workers reporting that they did not always have the support or flexibility awarded to them to participate. The mentors who had to fulfill a production aspect of their company and had to take time out of the process to participate in the reading buddy program were not always shown support from their direct line manager. The difficulties faced by the mentors in being available for the reading buddy program is a serious concern not only for corporations, but for schools. If employees do not receive full support to volunteer within schools while in a work-related program, then their capacity to participate and to feel a sense of belonging within the school community will be threatened.

Conclusion

The implementation of corporate volunteer programs in school settings is rapidly increasing in Australia and internationally (Colley, 2003; Schwartz et al., 2001). The reading buddy program in the present study is consistent with these international trends. Researchers have spent considerable time evaluating the impact of these mentor programs from the perspectives of the direct beneficiaries (mentees) and the companies who provide these opportunities. The findings are consistently positive. In relation to school-based mentor programs, the children improve in the desired skills and in a range of psychosocial variables (i.e., confidence, self-esteem; DuBois et al., 2002; Eby et al., 2008; Hornery, 2011). Companies also benefit from providing these opportunities to their employees, with reported gains in the areas of human resources and public relations (Casto et al., 2005; Chao, 2009; Rieg, 2006). To date, the experiences of the mentors in such programs have been underrepresented in the research literature. The present researchers have provided a voice to the mentors of a reading buddy program to understand their motivations for volunteering and their perceptions of the outcomes of this program.

It is critical that these voices are heard by school personnel. When school–community partnerships are formed, they are typically initiated by the local educators in the school (e.g., Beabout, 2010; Hands, 2005). Therefore, educators who understand the perspectives of their prospective partners are more likely to be successful in establishing productive school–community alliances. It is envisaged that school personnel can now examine and leverage the key findings of this study to successfully recruit and retain corporate volunteers to partner with them to assist children in need of extra support, creating and sustaining effective school communities which embrace members of the community at large. When schools have a solid understanding of the forces driving and sustaining corporate volunteering in schools, they can then promote and structure partnerships effectively. As a result, children, schools, and corporate volunteers themselves will reap the potential benefits.

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Youth Perspectives on Community Collaboration in Education: Are Students Innovative Developers, Active Participants, or Passive Observers of Collaborative Activities?

Catherine M. Hands

Abstract

This study builds on existing research on school–community partnerships in middle and secondary schools by examining the roles of the students and the impact of social influences on their school–community liaising practices. Documents, observations, and 20 interviews with students, school leaders, teachers, and support staff from one urban, southern Californian, K–12 school were analyzed for themes. Students valued school–community partnerships and identified collaborative activities they would like developed based on school and community needs. The research highlights the perspectives and contexts that must be considered to establish school–community collaboration that meets students' academic, social, physical, and emotional needs.

Key Words: school–community partnerships, students, perspectives, collaboration, middle, high, secondary, schools, adolescents

Introduction

"Education is too important to be left solely to the educators" (Keppel, as cited in Bolander, 1987, p. 91).

At first glance, this quotation from Francis Keppel appears to put down those dedicated to the education of others. As an educator himself, a former dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Education, and a supporter of educational innovation, Keppel's words take on a potentially different meaning. Cast another way, it is an observation that education is everyone's responsibility and not solely the purview of teachers (Hands, 2005a). For some time, the education literature has echoed the same sentiment, and educational researchers have been touting the benefits of partnerships among schools, families, and communities as a means for supporting student achievement and well-being (see, e.g., Epstein, 1995, 2001; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Schools are finding it increasingly difficult to create educational programs to address the diverse needs of the students (Merz & Furman, 1997) with the finances and the resources available to them. School–community collaboration is one possible means for schools to garner financial and material resources, as well as social support and educational experiences, to supplement students' in-school learning opportunities (Hands, 2005a).

Initiating Community Involvement, and Students' Voice in the Process

The onus for the establishment of school–community collaboration falls to the schools (Davies, 2002; Epstein, 1995, 2001; Henderson et al., 2007; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Some scholars have noted the need for both principals and teachers to reach out to parents and communities (Epstein, 1995, 2001; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Sheldon, 2005). By extension, existing research typically addresses the educators' interpretation of their students' needs, and it is this interpretation that drives the partnership development (see, e.g., Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Yet, scholars outline the importance of having all stakeholders at the table (Davies, 2002; Epstein, 1995, 2001) to maximize buy-in and the likelihood that all parties will benefit from the partnerships (Hands, 2005a). There is the potential for resistance among stakeholders who are not involved in decision-making capacities (Datnow, 2000; Fullan, 1991; Gitlin & Margonis, 1995). For students, this may mean disengagement from education and the very activities that were developed with them in mind (Mitra, 2007, 2009; Smyth, 2007). The question then arises: If the partnerships are based on student needs, and students should be included in their development, what role do students play in determining the nature of the partnership activities, developing the partnerships, or even determining the existence of partnerships at their school?

There are few studies involving students' perspectives within educational contexts (Seidman, 1998, as cited in McMahon, 2012). While there is a

growing body of research on student agency in taking leadership roles in school reform (see, e.g., Mitra, 2007; Pekrul & Levin, 2006), literature on student involvement in school–community relationship development is limited. Large-scale, national studies of school–community partnerships have been conducted (see, e.g., Epstein, 2001; Sanders, 1999, 2001); however, partnership research is often carried out from the perspectives of school personnel and does not examine the nature of the relationships among individuals in the partnerships. In some of the projects conducted on a smaller scale, the community partners' viewpoints are solicited (see, e.g., Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Shea, 2001), but as in the larger research studies, students' viewpoints are not present. Hence, community involvement research from the students' perspectives, specifically examining their views on school–community relationships as well as their partnering practices, is needed.

This research contributes to the community involvement literature by examining the collaborative experience from the students' perspectives to determine how they view their involvement with community members and to gain insight into their partnering practices and the social contexts that necessitate collaboration. The experiences of the students contribute to academic and practitioner understanding of the school–community collaborative process.

In order to examine students' perceptions and involvement in collaborative relationships, the following question guided the research: *What is the nature of the interaction between students and community members in the development of partnerships?* The following subquestions were addressed to further clarify the students' perceptions of school–community partnerships:

1. How do adolescent students understand the role of school–community partnerships in education?
2. What conditions influence students' interest and involvement in school–community partnerships?
3. In what ways are students involved in school–community partnerships?

An overview of the literature is followed by a discussion of the research methodology prior to the presentation of the findings that address these research questions.

Literature Review

Several bodies of literature inform the study of students' involvement with school–community partnerships. In the first section, the nature of school–community collaboration is described, and the article outlines the sociocultural contexts that influence partnerships. The parties involved and the rationale for

their participation in reform initiatives such as partnership establishment are discussed in the second section, and issues of student voice come to the fore.

School–Community Relations

Partnering relationships are characterized by the efforts of all involved parties toward mutually desirable goals that are unattainable in the absence of cooperation (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Keith, 1999). The nature of these relationships can be described as the "connections between schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to promote students' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development" (Sanders, 2001, p. 20) through a bidirectional "flow of information and products across mutual boundaries" (Campbell, Steenbarger, Smith, & Stucky, 1980, p. 2). Noting the vagueness of the term *partnership*, the variability in the extent of the collaboration, and potential power differentials among participants (Auerbach, 2011), terms such as *community involvement*, *collaborative activities*, *liaisons,* and *interactions* may be used instead of *partnerships* to acknowledge the variability across school–community relations while still observing that these interactions are based on relationships among individuals. Similarly, the notion of community is complex (Beck, 1999; Merz & Furman, 1997); however, *community* can be characterized by the social interactions and the geographic distance between populations (Steiner, 2002). As such, community encompasses social processes within a geographic region. These relationships, therefore, may include individuals in organizations such as educational institutions, businesses, government and military organizations, cultural organizations, and recreational facilities (see Epstein, 1995; Sanders, 2001; Wohlstetter, Malloy, Smith, & Hentschke, 2003).

School and Community Contexts That Influence Collaboration

The research on school and community contexts highlights the importance of and possibilities for possessing and sharing resources through collaboration. The concepts of social capital and Lin's (1999) network theory are useful to examine the reasons for developing school–community collaboration and the potential benefits to be gained. Social capital is developed when individuals cultivate social relations which give them access to other individuals and resources or help them preserve the resources they already have (Lin, 1999).

In his model, Lin (1999) combines the elements of social capital delineated by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and other scholars. Lin identifies three components of social capital: collective or group assets such as trust and norms; accessible social resources; and the mobilization of resources through the use of contacts in the network and the contacts' resources. For the purposes of this

paper, group assets like trust and norms are best illustrated in the partnership literature at the school community level. These assets—school characteristics or resources—set the stage for the creation and facilitation of collaborative activities. In Sanders and Harvey's (2002) study, the school's commitment to promoting an academically challenging and supportive learning environment for the students was one of the main factors that influenced the community partners to become involved with the school. Toward this end, a principal's support for community involvement enables the establishment of collaboration and assists in maintaining it, and his/her ability to build capacity among school personnel to develop collaborative activities (Hands, 2005a) and maintain these relationships (Sanders & Harvey, 2002) is important. Here, the school's openness and receptivity to community involvement is crucial to the success of partnerships with families (Davies, 2002) and with community members (Sanders & Harvey, 2002). From the perspective of the community partners, collaborating with schools is severely impaired and often impossible without this kind of support for community involvement (Hands, 2005a), and ongoing, two-way communication is a key to articulating a welcoming environment (Hiatt-Michael, 2010) and determining what the school and potential community partners need and are able to offer (Auerbach, 2011; Hands, 2005a; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). These features of school communities illustrate the importance of school context on community involvement, making collaboration possible.

The remaining two social capital components—accessible resources and resource mobilization—can be linked with the actual partnership process (see Hands, 2005b). Features of the school community and surrounding geographic community influence resource accessibility and mobilization. Acknowledging that individuals have unequal access to the resources in the network (Bourdieu, 1986; Burt, 1992), Lin (1999) proposes that both structural and positional variations among individuals account for the disparity, in accordance with existing sociological literature. In terms of structural variations characterizing different collectives or geographic locales, features such as cultural diversity, level of education, amount of physical and natural resources present, and level of industrialization and technology (Lin, 1999) are considered.

In a school community, the features and resources are assessed first to see if they meet the students' and school's programming needs and, if not, collaboration with the broader community is sought (Hands, 2005b). Further, resources specific to community involvement need to be in place within the school. Sanders (1999) highlights the five most important ingredients or structures in the successful development of partnerships: The establishment of a team to actively coordinate and support the partnerships (Epstein, 1995), appropriate

funding, time to develop the partnerships, guidance, and leadership are considered important components or resources for successful school–community collaboration (Sanders, 1999).

While school contexts can impact whether collaborative activities can be developed as well as the types needed, community contexts can influence the nature and quantity of the school–community relationships that are possible to develop. As Lin (1999) notes, every community is different. The social, cultural, and economic resources available in the geographic community influence not only the students', families', and community members' needs and educational goals, but what community members can and will contribute to school–community collaborative activities (Hands, 2005a). The relationships in existence and the ones sought by the schools differ depending on the communities in which they are located (Bascia, 1996). What the students and community members require of the school and what they contribute in terms of resources can shape the types of partnerships developed (Hands, 2005a).

Within the geographic community, individuals occupy different social, cultural, political, and economic positions (Lin, 1999) that affect their ability to access resources. Individuals are able to access social capital by using their network contacts to acquire the resources. The returns, or manifestations of the social capital, are reflected in gains in wealth, power, or reputation (instrumental action), or the maintenance of existing capital such as physical and mental health and life satisfaction (expressive action; Lin, 1999). Principals and teachers use their networks and those of their colleagues and friends to develop school–community relations that enable them to build the reputation of their school and to gain access to resources such as money, transportation for students, expertise in curriculum content, and out-of-school experiences for their students (Hands, 2005b). Through this process, they have the opportunity to build their networks for increased access to community resources (Hands, 2005b). The same could be true for students. Opportunities to develop collaborative activities may serve to increase their social capital based on what they want and need, beyond what is made available by their teachers and schools. What role, then, do students play in collaborative activity development?

Who Is Involved in Developing School–Community Relationships?

Having everyone who might become involved in the potential relationships contributing to the establishment of collaborative activities is necessary (Davies, 2002; Epstein, 1995). The parent and community involvement literature highlights the principals' (Hands, 2005a; Sanders & Harvey, 2002) and teachers' responsibility for establishing collaborative activities with parents (Davies, Burch, & Johnson, 1992; Epstein, 1995) and community members (Hands,

2005a). Other literature in the area calls for authentic partnerships in which parents participate in fundamental ways, such as educational decision-making and teaching and learning with educators in schools (cf., Jeynes, 2005; Pushor, 2007). Yet, participation needs to extend beyond the adults who are involved.

Possibilities for Student Voice and Educational Engagement

Prior to discussing student roles in the partnership process, it is helpful to examine the notion of student voice and opportunities for students' involvement in their education. Armstrong and McMahon (2004) note that *voice* entails a discourse that includes thoughts, beliefs, values, speech, actions, and attitudes. For students, voice may include identifying conditions or issues that impact their academic achievement and well-being and that of their peers, sharing their opinions about education-related problems and possible solutions, or contributing to decision-making processes and reform at the implementation level of the school or at a policymaking level (Bland & Alweh, 2007; Cervone, 2010; Mitra, 2007; Yonezawa & Jones, 2011). McMahon (2012) notes the legitimized voices are typically those of individuals with formal power (e.g., principals and teachers). Similar to Mitra (2007) and Yonezawa and Jones (2011), McMahon states that school leaders should provide space and opportunity for student voice in important educational issues related to curriculum, policies, and school procedures that impact students. In order to cultivate student voice, support needs to be in place to facilitate a "whole range of daily opportunities in which young people can listen and be listened to, make decisions and take a shared responsibility for both the here-and-now of daily encounter and for the creation of a better future" (Fielding, 2012, p. 15).

The importance of involvement in decision-making is highlighted here. Scholars note that students have unique knowledge and perspectives that can enhance school improvement initiatives, and since they are the producers of the initiative outcomes, their participation is essential to the success of any initiative (Mitra, 2007; Pekrul & Levin, 2006; Yonezawa & Jones, 2011). If the collaborative activities are cultivated primarily with students' needs and interests as the focus (Epstein, 1995, 2001; Hands, 2005a; Sanders, 2001), and if their active participation in collaborative activities is required, it seems prudent if not essential to involve students in the partnership development process from the beginning of the relationship.

Participating in decision-making around issues that directly affect students and their peers can provide opportunities for them to engage—and in some cases re-engage—in the school community (Pekrul & Levin, 2006; Mitra, 2007, 2009). For example, high school students who perceive that their school experiences are meaningful and worthwhile are engaged in school and remain

so regardless of school program demands (Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Gaydos, 2009). As a consequence, there are calls to examine how school personnel are helping to prepare students to meet their goals (Gaydos, 2009). Collaborative activity development is one way of soliciting the perspectives of students and making space for their voice, co-constructing their educational experiences to meet their needs, and involving them in decision-making.

Currently, there is some evidence that students are involved in their schools' partnering practices in only a superficial manner. In a previous study, the students' role in partnerships was primarily as a participant with limited influence on the partnership activities (Hands, 2005a). At two secondary school sites with a reputation for numerous and strong partnerships, students were consulted to ensure that they were in favor of the partnership activities in which they would be engaged in only three out of approximately 150 to 160 partnerships. The students had a more influential role in only one of those partnerships; they actively shaped the activities that defined it, although they did not initiate the relationship (Hands, 2005a). That said, these are the findings of one comparative case study. While compelling, the findings are not broadly generalizable, and the research examined the partnering process from the perspectives of school personnel and community members but not the students involved in the activities. More research in this area of investigation is needed to examine the extent of students' participation in the development of partnerships at their school. With this theoretical foundation laid, I begin with an overview of the study I conducted. I then discuss the findings in light of the existing research.

Methodology

In order to investigate how community involvement is perceived by students and the nature of their involvement in these relationships, it is necessary to uncover and describe the experiences and perspectives of those individuals (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) who are involved. Noting the importance of context and setting on partnership establishment and the need for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences of the phenomenon, the research questions were exploratory and descriptive; consequently, a qualitative mode of enquiry was used for the research (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Rothe, 2000).

Sample

As with most qualitative studies, the sample selection was nonrandom, purposeful, and small (Merriam, 1998). One school was sought to allow for a thorough examination of students' perspectives on school–community collaboration. School districts and charter schools in a southern Californian county

were canvassed for schools with a reputation for being supportive of school–community partnerships through conversations with current and former principals and superintendents associated with a university principal preparation program, discussions with university faculty members with contacts in local school districts, and reviews of district and school websites. When potential schools were identified, their administrators were contacted to ascertain their school's suitability for the study and their interest in participating.

The school that was selected was a K–12 magnet school with a focus on global citizenship in the largest of the county's school districts. Once the school was selected, the principal and a member of the leadership team (the magnet school coordinator[1]) were asked to participate in a focus group in order to gather information on the aspects of school culture that were conducive to community involvement and to ascertain the general breadth of collaborative practices at the school. At that time, the names of teachers and support staff who had a reputation for developing school–community relationships or working with students in collaborative activities were solicited, as were the names of any students involved in establishing liaisons. Using this snowball technique (Merriam, 1998), teacher participants were selected and asked to participate in an individual or focus group interview. During this interview, the teachers were asked for the names of any students who helped to develop school–community partnerships.

Parent consent and student assent forms were distributed to 246 families of the 333 students enrolled at the school, and consent forms were delivered to the teachers. Reminder notices were sent following the submission deadline to ensure the maximum number of participants for the study. The completed forms were collected at the site by the magnet coordinator and returned to the researcher. Interviews were then arranged through the magnet coordinator for 51 students in Grades 2–12, three support staff (the school nurse, the school counselor, and an administrative assistant), the principal, and seven teachers. In total, 10 individual interviews—with the support staff, the high school History and Science teachers, a Grade 4 teacher, the librarian, and three students in Grades 2, 4, and 8—and 10 focus group interviews with the students, teachers, and the leadership team were conducted to accommodate the schedules and availability of these school community members.

Research Methods

Interviewing, observation, and document analysis were used as the techniques of data collection. Each interview was approximately 45 minutes in length. The interview protocols were semi-structured with open-ended questions. They addressed the participants' understanding of and views on

partnering, partnership selection criteria, and techniques for creating collaborative relationships, in accordance with the research questions outlined in the introduction. Noting the developmental differences among the participants, different protocols were created for the youths and adults. As an experienced classroom teacher, I ensured that I used age-appropriate language with opportunities for the participants to share their ideas in the absence of leading questions or praise for responses, which might influence the students in particular to respond for approval. My background as a classroom teacher also enabled me to develop a rapport prior to and during the interviews with the teachers, support staff, and administration as we compared experiences teaching and working with children. I digitally audiorecorded the interviews, which were transcribed verbatim, and took notes during the sessions. The transcripts were then made available to participants to review for content accuracy.

I conducted observations and took fieldnotes on the school's grounds during school events, parent drop-in sessions, and community events, as well as during visits to classrooms. I obtained descriptive background on the school and documented my observations and reflections from seven site visits (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Kirby & McKenna, 1989). This enabled me to question my beliefs and identify assumptions as well as to establish role distance (Woods, 1986). I was also able to establish a rapport with students, educators, support staff, and parents during observations. For instance, I had opportunities to socialize with students and faculty members during lunch periods and during assemblies. Participation in informal parent socials for coffee and conversation during the school day and a weekend open house—which featured a community garden tour, art show, and school displays on the school grounds—also enabled me to get to know the administration, faculty, parents, and students socially prior to engaging in interviews.

I also collected archival data, such as the school mission statement and school handbook, as well as documentation such as school plans for continuous improvement. At the time of the research, a district-level template for formal partnerships was viewed; however, there was no available documentation for the school's informal partnerships. I accessed the school's web site to obtain further demographic information and background details of the school's history, as well as community and national organizations' websites to collect information on the partnerships in which the students participated.

The collection of data from different sources was intended to enhance construct validity and reliability of the case study and yielded findings that could be corroborated through converging lines of inquiry, the process of triangulation (Merriam, 1998; Rothe, 2000; Yin, 1994). The corroborating evidence from interviews with different members of the school community, diverse types of

data, and multiple strategies for data collection enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell, 2012).

Analysis

In my study, the collected data were analyzed based on the concepts delineated in the literature review and conceptual framework (Merriam, 1998). After reading through each transcript and accompanying fieldnotes, observations, and archival data, I coded all of the data in terms of text that specifically addressed the subquestions in the research. For instance, codes included "shared goals" and "collaborative activities" for the first subquestion, "school resources" and "community networks" for the second, and "observer," "participant," and "initiator" for the third. Also, I coded all of the spontaneous categories (e.g., "impact of school renovations") that emerged from the data and the content of what the participants said (e.g., opinions, observations, views) in terms of the categories to enable me to extract themes.

I then generated a listing of all of the categories and themes and made notes regarding which participants' interview transcripts addressed these issues. This gave me an overview of the prevalence of the issues, as well as a master list of the transcripts that contributed to the various categories and themes. This master list was then used to sort the data. After I coded all of the data, I sorted it on the computer according to the codes using a word processing package. I included complete quotes from the interviews and referenced them to the participants. In this way, I could compare specific participants' views in each category or theme.

Findings and Discussion

The Global Village K–12 Magnet School,[2] with its focus on global citizenship and internationalization, was chosen for this research. At the time of the study, Global Village teachers and students had established relationships with school communities in other nations and were engaged in online curricular and social activities with students from around the world. The students were involved in civic initiatives such as recycling programs, local beach clean-up, cancer treatment center fundraising, and community events at a university's school of peace studies. They also actively sought out information on current events in the world and shared it with their peers at assemblies, and they engaged in international community development activities with their teachers. For instance, the school community was raising awareness of Ugandan children's search for safety during civil war through GuluWalk participation and raising money for families and organizations in countries such as Uganda

as well as for student travel abroad to assist in international community development initiatives. Because of the school's focus, all of the students had an awareness of communities beyond their own. As the principal noted, "We need to be knowledgeable, and we need to know what's going on in the world if we're going to understand it." A teacher observed that "by understanding ourselves, our students can place themselves better in the world" to participate and contribute to their society.

As a magnet school since 2003 in the southern Californian county's largest school district, the school's student population was drawn proportionally from most of the county. Located in a primarily working- and middle-class neighborhood in the north end of the county's large, urban center, the school itself was a sprawling campus with classrooms and office space spread across a collection of separate buildings. The grounds were well cared for with attractive floral landscaping that earned the school a position as a destination for a county garden society tour in the spring of 2009. Prior to its current designation, Global Village had been an elementary school. Once the school began accommodating students in Kindergarten through Grade 12, Global Village required refurbishing to meet the needs of the high school in particular. At the time of the research, Global Village's buildings were still under construction, and the campus had a new resource center and library, as well as new computer facilities and classrooms.

Regardless of the ongoing construction, the school had a welcoming and open ethos. The administrative assistants and the principal in the main office greeted visitors in a friendly manner, and the students and faculty were courteous to the visitors and members of the school community alike. At any given time of day, students of all ages could be seen walking from building to building, from class to class, and congregating outdoors in the common areas, talking enthusiastically among themselves and with their teachers. Close relationships among teachers and their students were evident. During lunch hours, some high school students and teachers could be found playing popular music together outside a classroom or talking about current issues while eating together in a classroom, for example.

In addition to fostering a socially supportive environment for the students, Global Village was enhancing student achievement, and the school had earned California Distinguished Schools status for its high school as a result. Becoming a Paideia school[3] connected school personnel with a network of other Paideia schools (Paideia, n.d.). Opportunities for the teachers and administration to visit other schools and to share pedagogical knowledge with other educators contributed to the school's success. These feedback relationships created across the educators enabled them to evaluate their practices and make any needed

adjustments (Beabout, 2010). Global Village enjoyed a good reputation in the county, and the students and their families chose Global Village because of its focus and academic programming.

In the sections that follow, I address how the students interpreted the role of community involvement in education, the school and community contexts that influenced students' interest and involvement in the partnerships, and the extent to which they were involved in the development of the partnerships. To do so, I focus primarily on the data from the middle and secondary school students, as well as that of the educators and support staff.

Partnerships: What's the Point?

The students recognized the possibilities for the mutually beneficial sharing of resources across school–community borders (cf., Campbell et al., 1980). All of the students interviewed had a clear understanding that partnerships involved individuals or groups of people in organizations and that all parties benefited. For one 7th grade student, "associates working together to get a goal, the same kind of goal" encapsulated the partnership concept. One group of 9th grade students, in particular, noted that partnering enabled the people involved "to achieve something more than individuals can." Collaborative activities make it possible to satisfy the needs of the participants that would not otherwise be met (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Keith, 1996).

The reasons given by the students for participating in school–community collaborative activities were varied. The 8th and 9th grade students noted that sometimes it was mandatory to get involved in school–community activities, and they stated that rewards were often given. For the most part, though, the rationale given for participation in these interactions was intrinsically motivated. Personal enrichment was gained through participation. The students reported that it made them feel good to help other people, and it was fun to be with their friends. Students in the middle school observed that partnership activities involving community members helped students learn. It was important for students to learn from others, and they felt that they did better in school as a result of the partnerships because it was "exciting to learn different things from different people" and a good idea to learn about their own school, the geographic community, partner schools, and different countries.

The relationships were beneficial for others as well. The 10th and 12th grade students noted that it was important to reach out and give back to the community, as other people need assistance. These students were looking beyond their needs and those of their school and could see that they could and should make a positive contribution to other individuals and the community as a whole. Just as individuals and circumstances in the community can impact the school,

individuals at the school have an effect on the environments beyond the walls of the school as active agents (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002).

School and Community Contextual Influences on Collaboration

The notion of a network of associations outlined in Lin's (1999) network theory offers an explanation of the school- and community-level conditions or factors that impacted students' positive views of partnerships and the specific ways in which community members could become involved with them and their school. The material, human, social, and financial resources in a collective such as a school or geographic community influence the amount of social capital available (Lin, 1999), and the number of partnerships and the types of partnerships needed and available to be developed are functions of sociocultural context (Hands, 2005a).

School-Level Conditions as Opportunities for Instrumental Action, Enhancing the Curriculum With Community Involvement

Global Village K–12 Magnet School was a small school with 21 faculty members and a student body of 333 students from Kindergarten through Grade 12. Due to the construction to accommodate the students' age range, Global Village did not have playing fields, and the students noted that the available space on the grounds did not have sod laid. Moreover, most of the students were bused in from all over the county to a primarily residential area. These factors were major influences on the school's needs as perceived by the students and the types of partnerships desired by the students in the middle and high school divisions. Students felt that the school's size combined with district budget cuts during the national economic recession resulted in the elimination or lack of programs and threatened to impact the students' transportation to the school. The possible cancellation of buses was a major concern for many of the students who participated in the research, as many of them would not be able to attend Global Village without busing. At the very least, a lack of funding and transportation and the school's location and facilities limited the resources available to them on campus and their ability to participate in activities. Consequently, students wanted to mobilize resources from the broader community in response to a perceived lack of accessible resources in the school community, and the way to do that was through collaboration with a network of community members (cf., Hands, 2005b; Lin, 1999). Beabout (2010) calls this type of collaboration a technical support relationship, in which community individuals or organizations support and enhance the school's curriculum and extracurricular activities with material and human resources.

Some collaboration ideas entailed community members' involvement in teaching or participation in curricular activities on campus. Several Grade 9 students suggested that community members could develop and participate in a music program for middle and high school students involving instruments. At the time of the interview, there was no music program in place, nor many opportunities at the school for students to learn how to play instruments. For other subjects such as science and math, the Grade 7 students suggested that community members could come into the school and talk about the occupations or pastimes available to students through studies in various disciplines.

The creation of a sports program that entailed school–community collaboration would also be an avenue for student engagement and was identified as a need by all middle and secondary student participants. There were a number of limitations of which the students were aware. While they stated that the school's small size meant that there were not many students to make up the teams and transportation would be needed for games with other schools, the students felt that it was important to develop a program with any sports that could be accommodated at the school given the construction. They observed that money from the community would help get the program off the ground and community members could participate in coaching the students on the teams, noting that the teachers may not want or be able to do so.

Collaboration with more organizations outside the immediate neighborhood was also suggested. With few businesses and organizations in walking distance, the students noted that a partnership with the local planetarium would be valuable and might involve more trips there, depending on the curriculum being studied. The development of a drama program in conjunction with a local professional theatre was another suggestion.

Here, students suggested collaborative activities with organizations that had a relationship to social capital acquisition through a direct curricular link. This is in keeping with calls in the literature for partnerships to be based on the schools' and students' needs (see, e.g., Epstein, 1995, 2001). Yet, the opportunities for partnerships are shaped by resource accessibility: resources and community collaborators, and the availability and nature of their resources (Dika & Singh, 2002; Hands, 2005a, 2005b; Lin, 1999; Portes, 1998). Regardless, the students did not feel that they would have difficulty accessing social capital in the community in the form of money and citizens' time and expertise because their school community possessed social capital as well: a strong reputation in the community for academic excellence and community involvement—all examples of instrumental action (cf., Lin, 1999). The school community's social capital would pave the way for community members' interest in collaborating (cf., Sanders & Harvey, 2002).

The Promotion of Expressive Action: Community Involvement and Its Influence on Students' Well-Being

In addition to collaborative activities involving the curriculum, the students saw the potential social impact of partnerships. The students' families were representative of all areas of the county. As such, there was a full range in terms of family socioeconomic status. Some students reported that their parents were unemployed as a result of the recent and ongoing economic recession and were living with relatives. Other students' families were employed in several jobs and living in modest accommodations within neighborhoods characterized by poverty to make ends meet, and still other students' families were living and working in affluent neighborhoods. In order to promote an awareness of others in the community, an 8th grade student made the following observations:

> I think it would be good for the younger kids and older ones as well to allow, like maybe sometime during the week, while we have PE, to maybe go with a coach out and walk around the community and help pick up trash, and at the same time, maybe say "hi" to the neighbors and ask them what they do for a living and stuff, and see what people in our community do and how they are dealing with the economy. I think that would be sort of an eye-opening situation for us kids.
>
> Interviewer: You have mentioned the economy a few times. Is this a real concern for you?
>
> Student: Yes, it is. My mom is a single parent, and it is me, my brother, and my sister. We are currently living with my grandma in her house. With the economy,…and having to pay so much in taxes and everything, it is hard to get everything that we need….It is devastating to families that aren't as well off as we are. If it's hard for us, it has to be much more difficult for them….I think it is so much harder for everybody, especially single parents. It was hard before, supporting us as a single parent, and now it's even harder with everything that's going on. There's so much pressure on everybody to do well and to get jobs, and everybody is being laid off….It seems like some of the communities are unaware that there is this stress. I think if maybe there were more meetings with community members where they could talk about what the community could do together to raise the money that they need, I think that would help so much—everybody in that one community….It is just a start, and it is up to the individual to do what they do.

This student highlighted the influence of the community context on the desire to collaborate and the importance of cultivating social relations in the community for physical and mental well-being. Other middle school students

noted that they needed to learn life skills like cooking. Their families could not necessarily teach them these life skills because they had jobs and numerous responsibilities. Therefore, the students wanted community members to teach some of the skills traditionally taught at home. In this way, they could gain practical knowledge and skills through their relationships with adult volunteers (social capital) in order to promote their physical health and life satisfaction (expressive action; cf., Lin, 1999). As noted by Lin (1999), individuals have unequal access to resources. Social relationships create networks that enable individuals to claim resources possessed by a collectivity such as a community or an organization (Dika & Singh, 2002; Portes, 2000).

Some students acknowledged the pressures of school work and other responsibilities as impediments and to their efforts and their education. The 10th and 12th grade students noted that their peers needed assistance from the community both at the school and in the geographic community to keep students engaged in school. The following exchange highlights both the experiences of the students and the contexts in which they were living:

> Student 1: If you're overwhelmed and struggling and you think you can't make it, you will get like, "maybe I should drop out."
>
> Student 2: Because school—if you tell the truth, it is not that encouraging to keep going to school.
>
> Interviewer: How so? Tell me about that.
>
> Student 2: It really isn't. It is so easy to drop out. My circumstance is that I am pregnant. I hate to leave this school, so it easy for me [to stay]. I could just be like, "I'm not going to finish school." That would be the rest of my future. Some of us choose to stay, and we need a little bit of encouragement to stay, because it gets hard, and some of [the students] don't want to do it anymore.
>
> Interviewer: Do you have support?
>
> Student 2: Yes, of course, this school is all about support. All of the teachers want you to continue on with school.
>
> Interviewer: What could community do for you? How could they help you in general?
>
> Student 2: I think the community could come into the school and talk, have seminars. [They] can come to the school and talk to the kids about what they do. Different people from the community to come in and tell kids, "Stay committed in school." And [let us know] what the community is doing to help out with everything, because it is not just in school, it is out-of-school things, too.

Interviewer: Like what?

Student 2: You know. There is gang involvement. There is just not wanting to come to school anymore. There is, "I can't pay rent, so how do you stay in school?" It is how every community struggles and we struggle….

Student 1: Employment and everything.

Student 2: Yes, that could very well keep you from school, too. Some of us have to work.

The students suggested that counseling teams made up of community members were needed at the school and in the broader community to work with students. They noted that students needed "a strong mind and a straight head." Consequently, social support was also more broadly needed by youth, in these students' opinions. They recommended technical support relationships to supplement the school's counseling services and to provide additional support to the students (cf., Beabout, 2010). Community members could play a key role in providing that support and fostering a sense of hope for the students' futures (cf., Hands, 2005a). Thus, collaborating could help students mobilize resources to maintain their social capital—both their mental well-being and life satisfaction (cf., Lin, 1999).

The participants highlighted the value of students hearing about the importance of school, of exerting effort in their studies, and of staying in school from multiple sources such as parents, school personnel, and community members (cf., Epstein, 1995). Indeed, a lack of attention and support from the adults around them and the absence of consistent discipline and continuous focus on their education-related activities are considered by educators, community mentors, and students alike to be the most important barriers to educational success (Shapiro, Ginsberg, & Brown, 2002). This kind of verbal support may promote students' engagement and minimize disengagement from educational pursuits (see, e.g., Cervone, 2010; Gaydos, 2009; Mitra, 2007, 2009).

Of interest, most of the students' suggestions for community involvement were one-sided, although they realized that partnerships benefited all of the parties involved. The ideas for collaborative activities at this point represented the first stage of the partnership process (Hands, 2005a), for they were based on the students' and school's program needs and goals (cf., Epstein, 1995, 2001). The students understood their school's curricular and extracurricular challenges and articulated ways in which they could be addressed. As their ideas were in the beginning phases, they had not yet identified potential partners nor determined the possible benefits for the community citizens of partnering with them and Global Village (Hands, 2005a). At the time of the study, there was no evidence of the relationship-building, two-way communication, and power

sharing necessary to establish authentic partnerships (cf., Auerbach, 2011) from the students' perspectives. As such, the students were sharing their ideas for community involvement, not for school–community partnerships.

Regardless, the findings highlight that human, social, and material resources in a geographic community influence the amount of social capital available (Lin, 1999); that is, the number of school–community liaisons and the types of collaboration needed, the available resources, and individuals' ability to access the resources are functions of sociocultural context (Hands, 2005a; Dika & Singh, 2002; Portes, 1998).

Limitations to School Community Resources That Support Partnerships

The students were realistic with their suggestions for collaborative activities. They recognized they needed transportation for sporting events and some club activities, and they knew they needed to generate money for the transportation as well as provisions such as musical instruments, turf for the playing fields, and materials for some clubs. This is consistent with existing literature. Sanders (1999) found that sufficient funding was an essential component of successful partnership programs. A lack of funding influenced the need to develop collaborative activities and motivated school personnel to reach out to community members; however, financial shortfalls could also impede the developers' ability to create the relationships (Hands, 2005a). Without financial support for collaborative activities, they were unlikely to be developed or sustained over time.

Further, the students noted the importance of time to participate in collaborative activities. As one 8th grade student pointed out, there is a "John Muir saying that a walk in the mountains is worth a mountain of books. Like, I believe we're looking at the mountain of books, but we're not getting the walk in the mountains." The students felt they would learn more if they participated in activities including those with community members. Currently, the students' daily schedules made participation difficult. As one student stated, "I have to get out of the house at 6:30. I am on the bus, and we get here at 8:30, and then we have a couple of minutes to eat breakfast; we have to run to our class." Projects and homework took up the students' time after school, and many of them were faced with a lengthy bus ride back home at the end of the day. Because most of the students were bused, there were not many extracurricular activities offered. Nevertheless, the students recommended the creation of more clubs. Time was also an issue that arose with the faculty and school administration. There was no time set aside to develop school–community partnerships, and according to the principal, "everyone here wears many hats." The realities of the students' schooling and the educators' schedules highlight not only

the importance of making the time needed to develop partnerships (Sanders, 1999), but also time to engage in collaborative activities during the school day.

The guidance necessary to develop partnerships (cf., Sanders, 1999) also played a role in the students' potential for developing activities. The students frequently identified the teachers as the initiators of the partnerships. The magnet coordinator, the 9th grade teacher, the science teacher, the librarian, and the school counselor were most commonly named as the teachers and support staff who created the partnerships and the activities for all of the grades. They were also cited as the ones who helped to get the students interested in collaborative activities by building awareness of the issues being addressed by the partnerships. Therefore, the main role of the students was as participant rather than as developer. This is consistent with previous research, which found that teachers were most often the partnership initiators, and collaborative activities were developed based on their understanding of their students' and program's needs (Hands, 2005a). Further, Mitra's work (2007, 2009) stresses the importance of adult mentors at the school and in the community via strong affiliations with community partner organizations to develop and sustain student voice. Yet as McMahon (2012) observes, those with a voice in educational institutions are often individuals in respected positions of power. Student voice, then, seems contingent on adults' support of it, at least to some degree.

Apart from student voice, attributions of responsibility played a role in student involvement. The students considered partnership development the responsibility of the aforementioned teachers or principal, rather than a student role. That said, there was a greater awareness of the potential role of students in partnership development in the upper grades than in the elementary grades. When asked who should develop a partnership, one 7th grade student asked the researcher, "Can students do this?" It had not occurred to her or her peers in the focus group that she or the other students could organize the activities. Another student in the focus group offered, "Well, the ASB [student council], kind of...but also they can't do it alone…some staff members should also help because the ASB can only do so much, and they have classes and [activities]." One 9th grade student observed that "anyone who's willing and dedicated can start partnerships up." After some discussion in their focus groups, the middle and high school participants noted that students, teachers, and anyone who wished to do so could create collaborative activities. Regardless, student participation in school–community relationship development was not an activity that the school personnel talked about with them. This was not intentional; rather, it stemmed from a shared understanding that partnership development was within the purview of school personnel, not that of students. Consequently, the teachers and principal established collaborative activities with their

potential community partners without student input. The principal and the magnet coordinator considered this study's research process itself as the way to solicit students' opinions about community involvement; it had not been previously done.

Global Village promoted community engagement *for* students; however, it was implemented within the top-down hierarchical structure characteristic of the broader education system (Anyon, 2005; Hands & Hubbard, 2011) that privileges traditional roles and responsibilities. This created a tension that had not been resolved at the time of the study, and community engagement *with* students was an untapped strategy. There was no school community norm to assist students in accessing and mobilizing resources (cf., Lin, 1999), such as encouragement from the principal or teachers to participate in school–community collaboration development. There were also no resources such as guidance to assist students (or the educators) in developing school–community relationships (cf., Sanders, 1999). At most, students had limited voice in terms of the quantity and type of community involvement at Global Village as well as in their role in collaboration. Once the students were aware that they could participate in developing collaborative activities, they expressed an interest in creating school–community partnerships.

The students were aware of the challenges facing the school, they were hopeful that their school would meet those challenges, and they did not feel precluded from expressing their opinions. Yet, students' suggested school–community liaisons had not been developed, nor had they been considered by school administration and teachers. An environment where their inclusion in decision-making is not sought could put them at risk of disengagement. Students who feel the school is not responsive to their needs and who perceive that they have no voice and cannot impact their education may become disengaged (Cervone, 2010; Gaydos, 2009). This highlights the importance of revisiting traditional school community norms that limit the input of constituents such as parents, community members, and students (Auerbach, 2011; Hubbard & Hands, 2011; Pushor, 2007; Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005). School-level resources to support any efforts, as well as the solicitation of students' input in meaningful ways would encourage them that they can influence change (Mitra, 2007; Yonezawa & Jones, 2011) in their school through partnership development. At the least, students' involvement in creating collaborative activities among the school and the broader community puts them in a position where they build their networks, more resources are accessible to them, and they are better able to mobilize the resources they need and want (cf., Lin, 1999).

Implications and Conclusions

In this study, I examined how students interpret the purpose of school–community relationships and what types of community involvement the students perceived to be important or relevant to them. I looked at the school- and community-level conditions or factors that motivated the students to partner and enabled or impeded students' participation in collaborative activities. I also investigated how students were engaged with partnership establishment.

The characteristics of the school and geographic community shaped students' awareness and interest in partnering and working with people in the community surrounding the school as well as a more broadly determined community: the world. Students understood they were global citizens and were open to community involvement, and many had a desire to engage in collaborative activities as a result. In all cases, the students who were interviewed could see the value in school–community partnerships. The middle and secondary school students in particular readily identified collaborative activities they would like to see developed at Global Village K-12 Magnet School, and they articulated specific benefits for themselves and other students as well as for the school. Suggestions for community involvement arose from students' perceptions of challenges or limitations to the resources in the school community and beyond. The sociocultural issues in the geographic community influenced the needs of the community members including the students themselves and the collaborative activities they identified as needed and important (cf., Hands, 2005a).

Challenges to Student Development of School–Community Activities

Global Village had an environment that was conducive to developing an interest in school–community collaboration and partnership development, but it lacked resources to support school–community partnerships (cf., Sanders, 1999). Teachers developed the collaborative activities on their own, with no steering committee to identify potential partners and guide the partnership development process (cf., Hands, 2005a; Sanders, 1999). There was no money or time allocated in the school plan for partnership development and participation (cf., Sanders, 1999). The school had partners due to the teachers' initiative and interest in liaising. This not only impacted the number and nature of the collaborative activities, but students' participation. Many students were constricted in their participation due to their daily schedules and limited time. Time in the school schedule set aside for partnership development and participation, as well as resources such as money and guidance dedicated to

operationalizing collaborative activities, might facilitate more engagement in partnering.

Overall, the students participated in collaborative activities that were developed by others. There were no resources in place to support student-initiated community involvement, and they had no evident voice in developing the relationships. That said, although creating school–community collaborative activities was not within their understanding of their role as students, there was a desire to do so after they came to understand that they could establish their own, and they readily articulated possibilities for them. It is possible that their interpretation of student roles played a part in their motivation to become involved in this capacity.

Accessible resources such as time, money, and guidance in the school community set the stage for collaboration (cf., Sanders, 1999); they influence whether community involvement will be sought and what types of collaborative activities will be pursued, as well as whether they have a chance of actually being developed and sustained. Without guidance, in particular, it seems unlikely that students will be involved in the process. Authentic partnerships are "respectful alliances among educators, families, and community groups" (Auerbach, 2011, p. 5), especially needed in economically and culturally diverse communities (Auerbach, 2010, 2011) such as Global Village and its surrounding area. This description might be elaborated to specifically include students' roles in the process. It was not evident at the time of the study that inclusive conversations based on shared power were taking place (cf., Munns, 2012) with regard to partnering. There were no partnerships, authentic or otherwise, developed by the students or including their voices.

It is noted that Global Village was a school with a reputation for being supportive of community involvement in education. This is not the case for all schools, and it is likely that the challenges documented in this study are underestimated. This highlights the critical importance of confronting the traditional school community norms at Global Village and at many other institutions (cf., McMahon, 2012) that preclude students' involvement in collaborative activity development. There are increasing opportunities for learning to occur anywhere and anytime through initiatives such as service learning, community-based education (Hands, 2005a), and other school–community partnerships (Sanders, 1999, 2001; Wohlstetter et al., 2003). Moreover,

> what is needed for sustained improvement are external relationships that foster the trust and professional collaboration which are requisite to improving classroom teaching, too often deemed a private affair in many American schools (Cuban, 1993; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Tye, 2000). (Beabout, 2010, p. 22)

Currently, school personnel need to initiate efforts to enhance parent and community involvement (Davies, 2002; Epstein, 1995, 2001; Sheldon, 2005). While they were not opposed to students' participation, the educators in this study did not view partnership development as part of the students' responsibility; rather, students were considered participants in the collaborative activities. This is potentially problematic. Smyth (2007) cautions that if students are treated as passive recipients of education, the activities designed by school personnel—regardless of their purpose and intent—may reinforce students' alienation and lack of agency and disengagement from their education. In this study, the students could see challenging issues for the school community and where partnerships could support them and the school. If school personnel choose to ignore their voices, it could lead to their disengagement. As with parent engagement in education (cf., Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005), it is likely that school personnel need to foster an understanding among students—and possibly their colleagues—that students can and should be involved in partnership development at their schools.

School leaders, faculty, and support staff can broaden students' roles beyond that of participant by engaging students in the collaboration development phase and involving them in decisions around the relationships to be developed. This might also serve to enhance buy-in among the students who the participants noted were not involved and did not want to be, thus increasing engagement in school–community partnerships among all of the students. It is possible that Global Village would meet with greater success in developing the partnerships that faculty, administration, students, and their families need with the active participation of diverse members of the school community. Toward that end, it would be advisable to create a committee, similar to an action team (Epstein, 1995, 2001; Sanders, 1999), that includes students in a decision-making capacity as well as faculty, parents, or community members (cf., Hands, 2005a). The school currently has a student council with representatives from 7th through 12th grades. It may be prudent to initially include several council members in decision-making capacities beyond the typical fundraising or planning for special celebrations, dances, and other social events (McMahon, 2012). The committee could then be extended to include members of the student body, beyond those on the student council, who are interested in participating in partnership development.

This is not likely to come to pass while educators at Global Village view decision-making and partnership development as solely their responsibility. For school–community collaboration involving all constituents to take place, it is necessary for the educators to have a pedagogical philosophy that education is

everyone's responsibility—not just the teachers' (Hands, 2005a). It is hoped that this study provides some insight to the Global Village educators in this area. The educators were interested in collaboration and issues of inclusion and were willing to engage with diverse groups of people both nationally and internationally. It is anticipated that including students in the formative stages of partnership development could become a reality once considered a possibility. In collaboration, the adults and youth would work alongside one another in making decisions for their school around partnership development (cf., Hands, 2005a; Mitra, 2005, 2007).

Future education leaders would benefit from a research investigation of how to develop the students' understanding of their roles as active agents in the development of partnerships. Space needs to be made for students to develop their abilities in this area, and guidance from school leaders and staff to do so is essential. Investigations of how schools that are successful in engaging students in partnership development build students' capacity in this area would be valuable. Students' conceptions of themselves as active agents, not only participating in collaborative activities but developing ones that are meaningful to them and to others, may serve to assist them in building social capital. This is a substantial benefit of partnering; however, the consequences of enabling students to develop partnerships may carry additional value. Involvement with community in ways that shape their destinies and those of others has the potential to empower youth to productively engage in both the community and the broader society as citizens. Isn't that the essential purpose of education? Education is indeed too important to be left entirely in the hands of educators in schools.

Endnotes

[1]The magnet school coordinator was a teacher with the responsibility of liaising with the school board. She was also responsible for implementing programs for the staff and students that were consistent with the school's focus.

[2]Any school and participant names contained in the manuscript are pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities.

[3]Paideia schools are characterized by a pedagogical approach that includes didactic teaching of subject content, coaching students to develop their learning skills, and Socratic questioning during seminar discussions (Paideia, n.d.).

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School Community Engaging With Immigrant Youth: Incorporating Personal/Social Development and Ethnic Identity Development

Laura M. Gonzalez, Mark P. Eades, and Andrew J. Supple

Abstract

It has been projected that 33% of all school children will be from immigrant households by the year 2040 (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). For school personnel (e.g., administrators, counselors, teachers) working with immigrant youth and adolescents, understanding ethnic identity development is an essential cultural competency. In this essay, the authors outline how the family, peer, and school contexts can influence a student's ethnic identity, along with suggested activities that utilize ethnic identity development to enhance student personal/social development. Greater personal/social development of individual students and greater integration of marginalized ethnic groups can contribute to a healthier school community. Informal methods of evaluating outcomes are also identified.

Key Words: immigrants, youth, ethnic identity development, ethnicity, personal, social, cultural competency, family, parents, peers, schools, students

Introduction

School staff members in all areas of the U.S. are now more likely to work with students from immigrant families. There were 13,716,000 children (age 17 and under) of immigrant parents in the U.S. in 2008–2009 (Urban Institute, 2012). From 1970 to 1997, the percentage of children of immigrants

in U.S. school systems rose from 6.3% to nearly 20% (Ruiz de Velasco & Fix, 2000), and it is projected that one third of all children will be from immigrant households by 2040 (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2007 almost 69% of Latino and 64% of Asian-origin school age students (or 7.2 million students across the country) used a language other than English with their families at home (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). Traditional settlement areas like New York and Los Angeles will continue to receive newcomers to the U.S., while newer immigrant communities are emerging in less urban areas from North Carolina to Nevada (Hakimzadeh & Cohn, 2007).

Thus, adults employed at schools (i.e., administrators, counselors, teachers, staff) will need to be familiar with the characteristics and concerns of these students, whether the receiving schools and communities are accustomed to working with immigrant families or are relatively new to the process. Williams and Butler (2003) listed concerns of immigrant students when arriving in U.S. schools, including typical adolescent developmental concerns, learning English, finding social support or networks of acceptance, confronting U.S. norms for racial labeling, acquiring new styles of learning, coping with posttraumatic stress, and understanding different cultural scripts. These stressors have implications for academic persistence (Perreira, Harris, & Lee, 2006; Rumberger, 1995; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010) and social and interpersonal adaptation, as well (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Support for these tasks is essential for building a healthy school environment where students can feel accepted and appreciated in all aspects of their identity and can put their energy and focus on academic and personal growth.

However, some school personnel may not have acquired expertise with immigrant families in their training programs or prior work experiences (Williams & Butler, 2003). Multicultural courses in counselor, teacher, and administrator preparation may not address issues specific to immigrants, such as the acculturation process or ethnic identity development of children and adolescents. In addition, student personal/social outcomes may be emphasized to different degrees in counselor, teacher, and administrator training programs. Conscientious school staff members may be seeking new ways to improve their effectiveness in integrating students from immigrant families into the school community at large.

The purpose of this essay is to help the school community improve its ability to work with students from immigrant families to enhance students' personal/social outcomes. We will refer to personal/social outcomes identified by the counseling profession, as individual development and wellness are central concepts in the field (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2004).

These ASCA outcomes will serve as a practical framework for organizing the essay and for directing interventions in the school community. We acknowledge that counselors are more effective in promoting a healthy school community when working in concert with teachers and administrators; everyone in the system has a role to play. The school community is understood to be "found in the relationships among the people intimately attached to a school…[who] constantly seek better ways to insure that each child meets standards of learning" (Redding, cited in Thomas, 2011, p. 7). Specifically, we will use this essay to describe how ethnic identity can be a positive resource for immigrant students, address contexts where ethnic identity develops, and suggest ways that school personnel can work toward positive personal/social development of immigrant students by facilitating ethnic identity development. We hope to provide a practical set of tools and activities that can be used by counselors, administrators, and teachers to promote community within a school. We offer activities that can be implemented as classroom modules, as part of responsive services from the counseling office, or as part of the administrative structure. Whether the activities would be implemented once as an assessment or several times in an effort to promote and sustain ethnic identity development would depend on the goals of the particular school.

Defining Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity has been defined in various ways, depending on the academic discipline represented (Phinney, 1990). An individual view focuses on the values, behaviors, traditions, and cultural knowledge that a person holds and how that changes over time as part of identity. A social view of ethnic identity focuses on the conscious reactions, attitudes, and feelings individuals have regarding their group membership, with implications for social harmony or conflict within the school community. Ethnic identity is also viewed as a developmental process, with adolescence being an important time for moving from an unexamined ethnic identity to an active search and exploration process (Phinney, 1993). Exploration includes talking to others in one's cultural group, learning about the group's history and customs, and thinking about what ethnic group membership means in one's life. Commitment to ethnic identity includes feelings of attachment and pride in one's group as well as affirmation of cultural behaviors or traditions.

Ethnic identity has also been defined in terms of ethnic centrality, private regard, and public regard (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Ethnic centrality reflects how important ethnic group membership is to one's sense of identity. Private regard shows how positively individuals view their own group's attributes, while public regard describes one's perceptions of how

others view one's ethnic group, including both negative biases and positive attributions. If immigrant students value their cultural traditions and feel pride in their family and their group, but simultaneously recognize that the group is disparaged in other social contexts, cognitive dissonance could arise (Hughes, Way, & Rivas-Drake, 2011). Reflecting on the work of both Phinney (1993) and Sellers et al. (1998), school counselors and teachers could assist immigrant students in exploring and affirming their individual identity, determining how central that identity is for them, and identifying conflicts between their view of self and feedback from others. Evaluating public regard, in particular, could be useful in a school community where several ethnic/racial groups coexist and may not have fully accurate perceptions of each other. In this way, ethnic identity development can raise awareness as well and be valuable for both the disenfranchised groups (e.g., immigrants, students of color) and for the socially empowered groups (e.g., U.S. citizens, White students).

Most studies of ethnic identity have been conducted with nonimmigrant participants, so there is a gap in the literature. Researchers view ethnic identity as a significant developmental outcome for ethnic minority adolescents, one that has been linked with other positive outcomes such as improved coping skills, self-esteem, academic adaptation, and school adjustment (Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005; Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, Witkow, & Fuligni, 2006; Umana-Taylor, Diversi, & Fine, 2002). Ethnic identity commitment also has been related to decreased drug use (Kulis, Napoli, & Marsiglia, 2002), greater emotional and social adjustment (Yasui, Dorham, & Dishion, 2004), and fewer aggressive behaviors (McMahon & Watts, 2002) among various ethnic groups. The more positive outcomes would be likely to contribute to a constructive sense of community among students in the school. Moreover, researchers found that teachers rated Latino students scoring high in ethnic identity as more cooperative and doing better work (Supple, Ghazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, & Sands, 2006). Conversely, ethnic discrimination may decrease students' ability to succeed in school (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Stone & Han, 2005). However, support from peers, parents, and teachers (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006) as well as a highly positive ethnic orientation (Pahl & Way, 2006) could diminish the effects of this discrimination. School counselors, teachers, and administrators need to consider how this cultural variable may be operating in the lives of both immigrant and nonimmigrant youth due to the important implications ethnic identity development has for academic and personal/social outcomes. Ethnic identity may have a protective function for minority group members who are under stress, but it also may be a positive aspect of self-concept for majority group members who can benefit from greater self-understanding and awareness of other cultural groups.

Ethnic identity is related to but distinct from acculturation, which describes the multidimensional changes that can occur when two or more cultural groups come into contact (Berry et al., 2006). Many immigrant youth feel that they have one foot in the culture represented by family and home and another foot in the culture represented by peers and school. This could result in students feeling comfortable in each of those worlds (bicultural) or feeling some degree of isolation from each of those worlds. Being bicultural can be a tremendous strength as it allows for cognitive flexibility and expanded cultural competence and well being (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). However, the possibility of bicultural stress also exists when students feel too "Americanized" to be fully accepted by their home culture, yet too "foreign" to be accepted by their peers at school (Romero & Roberts, 2003).

Park-Taylor, Walsh, and Ventura (2007) noted that school counselors could serve as cultural brokers in order to promote adjustment of immigrant youth to their school context. Their theoretical lens was developmental systems theory, and their recommendations were to work with the systems in the schools in order to support developmental tasks. Thus, Park-Taylor et al. focused more on helping immigrant students acculturate to the school and less on the process of exploring an ethnic identity that could help bridge the school and family worlds. The current article will fill a gap by addressing ethnic identity development as a resource for enhancing the personal/social development of individual students from immigrant families. Holcomb-McCoy (2005) offered an excellent overview of Phinney's (1993) ethnic identity research with recommendations for middle school counselors. However, her work did not address immigrant youth, did not suggest roles for other members of the school community, and did not include the perspective of Sellers et al. (1998), which helps to illuminate intergroup perceptions. The Sellers model of ethnic identity has been applied to immigrants in other studies addressing psychological well being, academic adjustment, and self-esteem (Fuligni et al., 2005; Kiang, Perreira, & Fuligni, 2011; Kiang et al., 2006). Therefore, we extend the conversation by including Sellers' model and focusing on promoting ethnic identity for immigrant students within the school community.

Contextual Influences on Ethnic Identity

Adolescence is an important time for identity development, and ethnic identity is likely to be relevant for immigrant youth who are navigating two or more cultural contexts (Rumbaut, 1994). Exploration and formation of ethnic identity is influenced by contextual factors (Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009; Supple et al., 2006). School staff members working with immigrant

youth should be aware of the family, peer, and school contexts, even if they can only exert direct influence on the school system. Table 1 integrates these three contexts with goals for facilitating personal/social development related to ethnic identity (ASCA, 2004), which will be discussed throughout the remainder of the article. Each section will include a description of the context, goals for addressing students' personal/social development via ethnic identity development, and suggestions for activities and informal evaluation tools related to those goals.

Table 1. Integrating Goals for Personal/Social Development With Ethnic Identity Development

Context for Ethnic Identity	ASCA (2004) Personal/ Social Competencies	Counselor Goals for Ethnic Identity Development	Evaluation of Outcomes
Family Context	PS.A1.1 PS.A1.10 PS.A1.11 PS.A1.12 PS.A2.5 PS.C1.11	1. Help students develop positive self-perceptions and identify personal strengths related to family immigrant history and ethnic identity 2. Help students identify culture-specific coping strategies related to changing family and personal/social roles	1. Class poster and presentation on cultural strengths 2. Small group processing via List of Coping Resources or discussion of images
Peer Context	A.A3.1 C.C2.2 PS.A1.5 PS.A2.3 PS.B1.7 PS.C1.10	1. Help students cultivate an accepting and respectful attitude toward the ethnic peer groups that coexist 2. Help students manage stress and conflict caused by ethnic group misunderstandings by expressing feelings and taking responsibility	1. Book discussion or optical illusion 2. Three question exit slip 3. Teacher reported student behaviors after implementing peer mediation
School Context	A.A2.3 PS.A2.4 PS.A2.6 PS.C1.6	1. With student input, create a schoolwide structure that allows for appreciation of ethnic groups and improved communication among them 2. Identify key resource people who can serve as cultural brokers for ethnic groups present in school	1. Counselor-created behavioral questionnaires 2. Online pre- and post- teacher training survey

Family Context

The cultural socialization that occurs in the family is a key contributor to ethnic identity (Hughes et al., 2008). Familial ethnic socialization (FES) includes exposing children to their culture of origin through the reading of books, talking about the family's native country, and decorating the house with cultural objects (Rumbaut, 1994). When immigrant parents provide this kind of cultural exposure and teaching, it can promote increased knowledge and positive attitudes about the home culture in their children (Quintana & Vera, 1999). However, there are also limits to what family can accomplish. Supple et al. (2006) found a relationship between FES and ethnic exploration, but not between FES and ethnic affirmation, suggesting that parents may be able to impart information about their family's culture to their children but not necessarily impact the child's internalized positive sense of self. Rivas-Drake et al. (2009) demonstrated that adolescents could experience simultaneous positive effects of FES on ethnic identity and negative effects of ethnic discrimination from peers and adults at school. Thus, the immigrant family is an important influence on an adolescent's ethnic centrality and early exploration of ethnic identity but may be working against influences from the peer and school contexts at times.

Goals for Personal/Social and Ethnic Identity Development

Although school staff members are not a part of the home environment, they can impact ethnic identity development by helping immigrant students improve their personal and social skills via self-knowledge and exploration of the home context. As stated in Table 1, one goal is to help students build positive self-perceptions and identify personal strengths related to family immigrant history and ethnic identity. This goal incorporates ASCA standards for student competencies (2004) related to developing positive attitudes toward the self (PS. A1.1), identifying personal strengths (PS. A1.10), and recognizing unique family experiences and configurations (PS.A2.5). A second goal is to help students identify culture-specific coping strategies (PS.C1.11) related to changing family roles (PS.A1.12) and personal/social roles (PS.A1.11). These goals incorporate the importance of family and culture as a foundation for the students' identity and strengths and also acknowledge that both normal development and the immigrant acculturation process will mean changes in the students' roles. School community members can build a culturally appropriate view of the students' development and promote coping and success strategies that draw on those strengths.

Suggested Activities

In terms of activities to help achieve the first goal (i.e., building positive self-perceptions and identifying personal strengths), school counselors and teachers at any level could collaborate on a classroom guidance unit encouraging all students to research their cultural traditions and norms and make presentations to their peers. The research phase of this activity could include input from families, as students would be encouraged to interview their parents and relatives about what is most important in their culture to be presented to the class. In this way, students are not just completing a class assignment; they are actively engaging with family around the idea of ethnicity and learning how those cultural strengths are present in themselves as well. Every child has an ethnic heritage, so nonimmigrant students could also gain valuable insight into their cultural background. Allowing students the opportunity to talk directly to their classmates about their culture could provide knowledge that is essential to understanding, accepting, and respecting ethnically diverse communities. Counselors and teachers could also utilize the information that emerges in these presentations to create strengths-based brief reports on the ethnic groups that are present in the school which subsequently could be shared with administrators and staff.

As a means of testing the effectiveness of this project, school counselors and teachers can ask students to create a poster of what they learned about their ethnic and cultural traditions that is positive and distinctive. These posters can be presented to the class as part of the assignment and then could be hung in the classroom as a reminder of what the students accomplished. These posters therefore serve the dual purposes of being both a tangible representation of what the students achieved and also a constant reminder of the diversity and personal strengths of the students present in the class. Majority students may be less familiar with the traditions of the immigrant families, so the posters provide a space to honor those cultures equally.

Coping with changing roles may be a concern for many immigrant children, as they are adjusting to a new community and balancing differing expectations from school and home. The ability to cope effectively with those life contexts is at the center of the second goal (see Table 1). Both home and school environments have a significant impact on how children connect to their ethnicity (Orozco, 2008; Quintana et al., 2006). Receiving competing messages from home and school may make identifying with one culture stressful for a student who is in the ethnic exploration stage (Phinney, 1990). For example, a student could hear about the importance of homework from teachers, then return home and be expected to defer homework in order to take care of family chores. This is a reality for many immigrant students who are in the ethnic

exploration stage; they feel that no matter how they choose to behave or which roles they adopt, important people in their lives will be disappointed (Romero & Roberts, 2003).

School counselors can help to validate these feelings for the students within a small counseling group. It can be helpful for students to know that adults in the school recognize the push and pull of home and school cultures, and it could be equally helpful to share these feelings with other students in a small group setting. School counselors facilitating these groups would help immigrant students find a way of coping and thriving within both the school and home cultures (Phinney et al., 2001). Topics for the counseling group could vary, including cultural traditions at home or at school around managing stress, strategies for working through conflict with peers and adults, and differences in expectations or social roles in school and at home or in the family's home country. Creating a network for sharing concerns and culturally congruent coping skills could mean the difference between students successfully navigating the U.S. school system or struggling to engage.

The effectiveness of the group could be evaluated in several ways. Counselors could complete a brief inventory such as the 9-item List of Coping Responses (Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987) after each group, note what types of coping strategies were mentioned by group members, and compare these to previous sessions. Such a list could also give counselors ideas of coping responses to teach or encourage in the students, bearing in mind that individualist cultural traditions often approach or cope with problems in a way that differs from collective cultural traditions (Kuo, 2013; Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2011). Alternatively, students could be asked to draw two circles on a piece of paper, one representing the world of home and the other the world of school. Depending on how students felt about their home and school roles, the circles could be overlapping (to indicate congruence and connection between the two sets of roles and expectations) or distinct (to represent distance or conflict between the two sets of roles). This activity would give the facilitator information about the effectiveness of the group in minimizing inter-role conflict.

Peer Context

Another facet of immigrant adolescent ethnic socialization lies with peers. Although some researchers have focused on discriminatory attitudes expressed by peers and their negative impact on ethnic identity (e.g., Rivas-Drake et al., 2009), others have examined the frequency of social contact with ethnically similar peers (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). The availability of similar peers in the school, presence of peer discrimination, and makeup of the local community could be tremendously important for the ethnic identity

development of immigrant students. In a recent study (Perreira, Fuligni, & Potochnick, 2010), Latino students in an emerging immigrant community in the southeast were more likely to perceive and be concerned about discrimination than a similar group in Los Angeles. However, the same students also reported positive interactions with other peers and adults in their schools that helped them maintain a positive sense of school attachment. Portes and Zhou (1993) posited that immigrant students who build ties to peers outside of their ethnic groups while simultaneously maintaining a strong sense of ethnic identity and cultural connection (e.g., bicultural) often have the best academic outcomes. Kiang, Peterson, and Thompson (2011) described the ethnic peer affiliations of Asian heritage immigrant students, with choices of in-group or out-group friendships being influenced by English language fluency, ethnic centrality, and experiences with discrimination. These studies point toward peers as being factors in ethnic identity development, whether positive or negative.

Goals for Personal/Social and Ethnic Identity Development

Even though school staff cannot be aware of every peer interaction, carefully planned interventions can help to build skills among all students to improve future interactions with classmates. One goal for counselors and teachers could be to promote a classroom climate of acceptance among peers and help all students celebrate their cultural differences (see Table 1). This goal incorporates ASCA student competencies (2004) related to recognizing, accepting, respecting, and appreciating individual difference (PS.A2.3), demonstrating a respect and appreciation for individual and cultural differences (PS.B1.7), and identifying and expressing feelings (PS.A1.5) associated with positive and negative classroom climates. Again, both immigrant and nonimmigrant students will benefit from these lessons of cultural acceptance. A second goal could be to help students learn techniques and skills for managing conflict with peers (C.C2.2, PS.C1.10) and to take responsibility for their actions in peer relationships (A.A3.1). These goals acknowledge the influence of peers within the school and also encourage students to understand how they can change a school climate through their own actions. School counselors and teachers can guide students through this personal/social developmental process by using targeted interventions, eventually empowering both immigrant and nonimmigrant students to contribute to the creation of their school environment. Supportive school personnel can help to offset negative peer interactions, if present (Demaray & Malecki, 2002).

Suggested Activities

There are many ways school personnel could achieve goals related to appreciating ethnic or cultural differences and managing conflict. Classroom lessons,

facilitated either by the counselor or the teacher, could reflect the exploration stage of ethnic identity by focusing on overall themes of peer acceptance and celebration of differences as seen in a book. For example, *Crow Boy* (Yashima, 1983) tells the story of a student who is an outcast when he first arrives at his new school. At the end of the school year, he demonstrates his ability to mimic the sounds of a crow and wins over his classmates, receiving a new nickname. Discussion of the book could center on how the new student must have felt while being ostracized by his peers, as well as talking about how differences are valuable parts of any classroom. Depending on the level of book chosen, this discussion gives students of any age the chance to think about how they act toward peers who may be culturally different from themselves.

A parallel lesson could be salient for middle and high school students who are more likely to be in the ethnic exploration stage of ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1993). Students at this stage tend to be aware of themes associated with their ethnicity (for better or worse) but may not be sure how to make sense of them. For this age group, guidance lessons that focus on acknowledging and accepting peer differences may help students sort through their own thoughts and attitudes towards ethnicity. A classroom activity might begin with the counselor or teacher showing an image that is an optical illusion, such as the classic drawing that includes both the old woman and the young girl. Students quickly learn that their view of the image is not the only one; they may even struggle to see what others are describing. Essentially, this activity touches on knowledge (everyone has a distinct worldview) and awareness (no worldview is right or wrong). The facilitator can then encourage students to take a more critical look as to how this exercise parallels other differences in worldview, emphasizing that being different from one another is normal and even valuable.

A quick way to test the effectiveness of these activities would be to pass out "exit slips" to students as the discussion is concluding. With ten minutes left in class, the counselor or teacher could pass out a small sheet of paper to each student and ask them to write down three things that stood out for them from the activity (book discussion or optical illusion). Once the students have filled out their papers, they hand it in as they exit the room, leaving evidence of what the students learned.

The second goal in the peer context is to help students manage stress and conflict. To address this goal, administrators and counselors could implement a diverse peer mediation program. Selecting and training peer mediators from all ethnic groups present in the school is a strategy that allows students to learn basic conflict resolution skills and trains students who can see peer conflicts through a cultural lens. A fight between two immigrant boys might look like a simple playground game that escalated, but a peer mediator from the same ethnic group might be able to sense a larger within-group conflict that requires attention. A mediator who was at the commitment stage of ethnic identity could describe to others his or her own struggle with the ethnic identity process, thus acting as a role model. Having a peer leader who could normalize ethnic identity development could help to relieve pressure surrounding the process and could connect students to others who have similar life experiences and could offer guidance. Having peer mediators trained by or in communication with the administrative team also gives them legitimacy and improves the flow of information to the school leadership.

Measuring the outcome efficacy of peer mediators is commonly done through the use of teacher reports. Peer mediation is likely to be implemented when there is an identified maladaptive incident or pattern taking place in class; hence, teacher-identified behaviors would be an obvious target to determine if the methods are working. The counselor may want to schedule a weekly meeting with the classroom teacher to see if the teacher is noticing any differences in behaviors in his or her class. If the teacher reports that problem behaviors are decreasing between students, then this could be an indication that peer mediation is successful.

School Context

For many children with immigrant parents, adults at the school become critical figures in their process of cultural socialization to U.S. academic expectations, social norms, and career and educational planning (Park-Taylor et al., 2007). When parents have less fluency in English than their children or less exposure to U.S. educational systems, they rely even more on school counselors and teachers to show their children ways to succeed in school (Gonzalez, Stein, & Huq, 2013; Villalba, Akos, Keeter, & Ames, 2007). Researchers have noted that caring relationships with adults in the school community have the potential to buffer against emotional stressors, affirm competence and self-worth, and provide critical information for Latino students so they can stay engaged with school and move forward successfully (Green, Rhodes, Hirsch, Suárez-Orozco, & Camic, 2008). Unfortunately, immigrant students often have difficulty accessing these supportive relationships, whether due to language barriers, scarce

resources at their schools, or stereotypes about their educational motivation. This lack of support impacts ethnic identity when school practices reinforce biased views of a cultural group, causing members and others to doubt their capabilities. The role of school administrators is critical in this regard, to set expectations that counselors and teachers will be culturally appropriate and respectful in their interactions with all student populations and that they will dedicate the time to establish channels of communication with immigrant students and families (Aydın, Bryan, & Duys, 2012).

Goals for Personal/Social and Ethnic Identity Development

Creating positive public regard for diverse groups in the school has the potential to offset stereotypes and foster a sense of cohesion and connectedness between students and staff. One goal for increasing student competencies (ASCA, 2004; see Table 1) is to help students identify and learn how to use effective communication with other individuals and groups in the school (PS. A2.6) and learn to use communication skills to ask for help when needed (A.A2.3). Improved communication among all groups present in the schools will promote a schoolwide atmosphere that respects and appreciates different cultures, languages, and traditions (PS.A2.4). The second goal for the school context is focused on identifying cultural brokers who can improve understanding and communication schoolwide (PS.C1.6). Cultural brokers are individuals who are familiar with both the U.S. culture and the ethnic culture of origin of the immigrant students. Cultural brokers may be ESL teachers, translators/interpreters, parents who are active and take leadership roles, community or religious leaders, and so on. For example, if counselors and teachers learn to work with cultural brokers as resource people in the school and community, their ability to perform their own functions will improve.

Suggested Activities

Goal one relates to schoolwide communication and systemic access to resources. Newly immigrated students may feel isolated in school, afraid to share their experiences with others, and unsure of how to ask for help (Williams & Butler, 2003). These individuals may benefit from being in small groups with other adolescents of the same ethnicity or others at the same stage of ethnic identification to talk about their struggles and learn from each other in a safe environment (Malott, Paone, Humphreys, & Martinez, 2010). Such a group could be beneficial both to the students within the group and also to the school counselor, who could learn about factors that might be impeding communication in the school. For example, if immigrant students in such a group all shared that they felt embarrassed to read out loud in class, the school counselor could work with teachers to find a new way of conducting class assignments

so that all children felt respected while still being engaged in the lesson. In this way, school counselors could help immigrant students improve their private regard for their ethnic group, while working with teachers to make the school environment welcoming for all, promoting positive public regard among cultural groups (Sellers et al., 1998).

Measuring the effectiveness of this small group could be done with the use of simple Likert-scale questionnaires. Counselors could use preestablished questionnaires or could easily create their own and then track the progress of students who are in the group. A simple behavioral questionnaire could contain items such as "I asked a question in class this week"; "I asked for help from my teacher when I needed it"; "I turned in my homework on time this week"; and "I studied for my tests/quizzes." Consistently tracking these behaviors can give concrete proof to the school counselor that students are changing the way they interact in class after being placed in the small group. This evidence can be used as a basis for why this small group is beneficial to student engagement and therefore needs to continue through future years.

Another example related to promoting positive schoolwide communication calls for the counselor or administrator to utilize consultation. Enlisting the services of cultural brokers (as described previously) can improve the school's relationship and communication with the ethnic community, increase the counselor's and administrator's awareness of the ethnic group's values and traditions, and help counselors consult with teachers and administrators in a more skilled manner. For example, school counselors could collaborate with a chosen cultural broker and conduct an in-service for teachers centered on promoting cultural understanding.

Teacher classroom behaviors set the tone for establishing positive or negative public regard for the immigrant groups that are present (Green et al., 2008; Stone & Han, 2005). Counselors could provide an in-service for teachers about variations in cultural norms and correct any misperceptions regarding the ethnic groups present in the class. For example, some collectivist cultures promote harmony over individual accomplishment, so it would be helpful for teachers to recognize that when some students do not actively ask for help in class, it may be due to their cultural values and not an act of defiance (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005). This provides a learning opportunity where the teacher could explain to the student how to communicate his or her needs and also listen for the student's preferred style of interacting rather than developing a negative perception about students from that ethnic group.

To test the effectiveness of this in-service presentation, school counselors could use survey-creating software (such as surveymonkey.com) to create a pre- and post-test of what teachers are aware of in terms of the culture of their

students. Surveymonkey.com is an especially useful website because it allows users to create surveys with true/false, Likert scale, and open ended questions, and using the software for small scale projects is typically free. Teachers could be asked to take a survey prior to the in-service training provided by the counselor and then asked to take the same survey again after the conclusion of the training. The differences between pre- and post-training responses could provide the counselor with evidence for why the in-service is useful in shaping the attitudes of teachers towards students and their ethnic groups.

Summary

Adult members of the school community are in a powerful position to create programs within the school that can positively affect the development of ethnic identity in immigrant students. Using the ASCA-based activities described in this article, administrators, counselors, and teachers could promote positive ethnic identity development and personal/social skills for immigrant and nonimmigrant youth alike. This is particularly important for immigrant youth as they face multiple adjustments when their families arrive in the U.S., and their parents may not be in a position to aid them in all of their transitions. If the school community environment encourages cultural competence among the school staff, integrates cultural perspectives from the families, and supports cultural exploration and acceptance among peers, the process of ethnic identity development can proceed. We have suggested activities that can encourage both individual exploration of culture and intergroup exchanges, so that positive regard between ethnic groups can be encouraged. The types of positive outcomes described in the literature review (e.g., improved adjustment, coping, self-regard) are helpful for students in their social, personal, and academic tasks, and thus worth the time and effort it might take school staff to adopt these practices. Space did not permit full exploration of how ethnic identity could also support movement toward academic and career development of students, but this would be an important next step (ASCA, 2004).

It is worth mentioning some common strategies that school communities may already be using to promote acceptance of ethnic groups. For example, students can share how they celebrate holidays that may be different from the majority culture. American students are familiar with Halloween, but some students may not be familiar with the Mexican celebration of Dia de los Muertos, for example. Talking about holidays gives the entire school community a window into both "surface-level culture," which includes food, music, or celebration, and "deep-level culture," or what people from a certain culture believe to be polite, respectful, and honorable (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005). Being

able to involve all three key contexts (i.e., family, peers, and school) in programmatic efforts could increase the chances of positive impact. Future research and practice can examine which activities have the most impact on ethnic exploration and commitment or which provide a school environment where private and public ethnic regard for all groups is promoted. While school counselors may initiate or lead several of the activities described in this article, the intent was to describe ways that all adults employed in the school could contribute toward a healthy personal/social environment that would connect children from immigrant families with the other students in the school community.

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Entre Familia: Immigrant Parents' Strategies for Involvement in Children's Schooling

Luis Poza, Maneka Deanna Brooks, and Guadalupe Valdés

Abstract

Teachers and administrators in schools with large, working-class Latino populations often complain of parents' indifference or lack of involvement in children's schooling because of their low visibility at school events and relatively little face-to-face communication with teachers and school administration. In a series of semi-structured interviews with Latino immigrant parents, this study finds that, despite different educational experiences than those of their children in the United States, these parents engage in many of the parent involvement strategies observed by previous research to be most beneficial, though often through avenues bypassing the school itself. This finding presses schools and districts to recognize both the ways in which immigrant parents actually do the many things for which they never receive credit and the value of the other forms of involvement in which parents are active. We classify these reported behaviors into categories of **asking questions** about school and school processes, **attending** events at school or outside of school that parents deem supportive of children's learning, and **altering/augmenting** children's educational trajectories to improve outcomes. The study also reports on obstacles that interviewed parents faced in their efforts to interact with schools in conventional ways.

Key Words: Latino immigrants, parents, family, involvement, schools, learning, obstacles, communication, immigrating, education, schooling

Introduction

A popular lament among teachers and administrators in schools with many Latino students is a lack of parent involvement, based on a narrow definition of the term. Justification for these claims is offered in the form of relatively low parent attendance at conferences or meetings, parents' deference to teachers on academic matters, relative scarcity of books in the home, and divergent practices from those of the classroom with respect to literacy (Olivos, 2006; Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011). At their most well-intentioned, these arguments cite cultural differences and divergences between parents' own schooling experiences and those expected by U.S. schools and suggest that schools take action to remedy this "mismatch" by acculturating parents to the school's expectations. At their most insidious, however, these claims exemplify and reproduce deficit philosophies that not only attribute different experiences to parents, but also propagate beliefs about parent apathy and dismissive attitudes towards children's education, as well as assumptions about parents' lacking education and literacy. Despite such characterizations of Latino immigrant parents, this study finds among those interviewed numerous alignments with the parent involvement strategies that prior research (e.g., Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007) describes as most beneficial. Specifically, we have identified three particular behaviors that immigrant parents undertake: asking questions about schooling and education, altering or augmenting children's schooling experience, and attending events related to children's education, albeit often through organizations and social networks outside the school—thus not receiving recognition from teachers or administrators for their efforts. While this does not negate the presence of less beneficial strategies, it relocates the locus of responsibility on schools and districts to first and foremost recognize the ways in which immigrant parents actually do the many things for which they never receive credit and, secondly, to recognize value in the other forms of involvement in which parents are active beyond the narrow expectations laid out by some teachers (e.g., see Lareau, 2000) and the ways in which schools and society inadvertently deter the very involvement they seek.

Review of Prior Research

Our analysis of parent involvement first requires defining the term, given that many scholars and organizations use this phrase differently. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) offer a useful understanding of the concept by stating, "Parent involvement, in our framework, is the dedication of resources by the parent to the child within a given domain. Such a definition recognizes that there is a difference between parents' overall involvement with the child and the child's

education" (p. 238). The authors then distinguish the educational domain from others in which parents may allocate time or materials for their children, such as social activities and athletics. For the parents in our study, however, the educational domain is not as easily isolated from others such as family, religion, and social activities. Despite this difference, the operating definition of parent involvement as an investment of resources towards an educational goal is instrumental for our present analysis.

Drawing on this definition of parent involvement, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) distinguish three dimensions of involvement: behavioral, personal, and cognitive/intellectual. Behavioral involvement consists of parents manifesting their involvement through attendance and participation in school events such as open houses and PTA meetings. Personal involvement refers to the affective experience of children understanding that their parent(s) care about school, for example, as a result of conversations around schooling and education which instill a positive feeling toward school. The cognitive/intellectual dimension consists of exposing children to cognitively stimulating materials and experiences, such as books and visits to libraries, academic summer camps, or museums. In similar fashion, Epstein (2001) provides an oft-cited framework that outlines six distinct forms of parent involvement, summarized in Table 1. Working with these six types, Epstein offers examples of programmatic implementation of different elements and the subsequent results. She notes that schools must choose particular types of involvement best suited to meet parents' and students' needs and provides helpful suggestions for schools to foster parent involvement accordingly.

Table 1. Parent Involvement Behaviors (Epstein, 2001)

Type	Description
Parenting	Child-rearing skills and establishing home conditions that support children as students
Communicating	Bidirectional communication between schools and families regarding school programs and student progress
Volunteering	Parents serve as volunteers, audiences, or assistants in schools or other locations in support of students and school programs
Learning at home	Homework and other learning activities in the home linked to formal school curriculum
Decision making	Parents participate as advocates or in school governance and decision-making through formal channels such as school councils or parent organizations
Collaborating with the community	School provides service to the community and coordinates resources and services for families, students, and schools themselves with community organizations and businesses

Beyond types of parent involvement itself, Pomerantz et al. (2007) note that the manner in which parents participate and their reasons for doing so are also influential in children's schooling. The authors distinguish between involvement that takes place at school and in the home as well as the mechanisms by which such involvement helps children. The authors argue that parent involvement fosters skill development—the refinement of abilities directly related to school such as phonological awareness and metacognitive abilities such as planning and monitoring—as well as motivational development, which refers to children's engagement in school and is reflected in positive attitudes towards school and academic achievement or a sense of control in academic performance, for instance. The extent to which these mechanisms, skill development or motivational development, show effect relates to the motivations and manners of parent involvement.

Exploring the characteristics of parent involvement behaviors, Pomerantz et al. (2007) establish four principal dimensions of difference. First, they distinguish between controlling and autonomy-supportive styles. Controlling involves parents pressuring children towards particular outcomes, while autonomy-supportive consists of children freely exploring their own environment and solving their own problems. Pomerantz et al., citing extensive prior research, note that autonomy-supportive styles enhance motivational development as children's sense of competency and self-efficacy are enriched by successful problem-solving. A second distinction the authors delineate is between process-focused and person-focused involvement. Process-focused involvement stresses the importance of pleasure and effort in learning, whereas a person-focused approach emphasizes supposedly stable attributes such as intelligence (but see Dweck, 2006, for evidence that intelligence is itself malleable), or outcomes, such as performance on a task. The authors thirdly distinguish parent involvement characterized by positive or negative affect. In this condition, parents' interactions with children regarding education are either enjoyable, loving, and supportive, or marked by irritation, annoyance, hostility, or criticism. Finally, the authors outline parent involvement differentiated by parents' positive or negative beliefs about children's abilities. They find that optimizing the benefits of parent involvement relies on participation that is autonomy-supportive, process-focused, and marked with positive affect and positive beliefs about student's abilities. Pomerantz et al.'s findings are based on their own extensive research, albeit mostly with European American families, and a thorough review of literature in each of the four delineations. While such comprehensive analysis offers valuable considerations for the many forms and approaches of parent involvement, it still implicitly frames parent involvement as a set of prescribed behaviors and activities in which parents do

or do not engage, whether at the school or in the home, and whether because of intrinsic attitudes and beliefs or extrinsic impediments.

In perhaps the most thorough review of the recent literature, Ferguson (2008) considers 31 studies selected for their sound methodology, strong theoretical grounding, and consideration of diverse communities and contexts, and divides the selected research into six principal areas of inquiry. The first set of studies analyzes the sense of welcome that schools create to invite families to interact with staff. Within this sphere, studies note parent characteristics that facilitate or present barriers to interaction such as their own education levels and experiences, beliefs about children's abilities, the school's or children's overt invitations, and language differences. Ferguson's second category of parent involvement research explores resource allocation with respect to family participation, taking into account resources put forth by schools as well as by families or community organizations. Such work typically considers the investment of resources toward school outreach, training of stakeholders and leaders toward fostering mutual understanding, and procedures to solicit family and community input. Another aspect distinguished in the review is research around program structure. Specifically, these studies explore policies, procedures, and patterns of resource use that encourage family participation.

The other three categories that Ferguson's 2008 review notes are likely the source of most deficit thinking with regard to Latino immigrant families and are therefore of particular concern for the present study. One facet of the recent literature explores stakeholders' misconceptions about one another with regard to family–school interactions, noting that "misconception links to mistrust" (Ferguson, 2008, p. 11). In these studies, researchers consider factors such as racial bias, lack of staff preparation to address stereotypes and other such misconceptions, or erroneous beliefs that families and schools have about each other's motivations and practices. The review also distinguishes studies investigating the role of those involved in school–family connections which inquire into how the beliefs, prior experiences, perceived abilities, and knowledge which families rely upon shape the opportunities they create and act upon toward schools. Finally, Ferguson's review categorizes together those studies that explore the home context and student performance, specifically inquiring as to the effect of particular home cultures, parenting practices, home crises, or significant events on student achievement. Needless to say, from these three categories of research emerges a picture of a wide gulf between schools and immigrant Latino families that must be bridged through some combination of enhancing school personnel's understanding of the cultural practices and parenting styles in which families engage and training parents to adopt particular behaviors or beliefs in line with those of the school. Such a portrayal is overly

simplistic and does not account for the dynamic nature of culture (Duranti, 1997; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006) and, moreover, leaves room for interpretation into deficit-based assumptions, even when these are not intrinsic to the research itself.

A more critical perspective recognizes and values the means by which Latino immigrant families participate in children's education while acknowledging the obstacles they face in connecting with school and other such institutions in their recipient communities. Literature in this vein is certainly established as well. In frequently cited publications, Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) and Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) report working with classroom teachers to help them conduct ethnographic research of the home life of their students and students' families. As collaborators in the research and through careful qualitative data collection, teachers and researchers alike recognize numerous fields of experience and strengths within households that they term "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). These funds of knowledge not only help families successfully navigate migration and day-to-day living, but also serve as a powerful addition to classroom practice when students' lives and their families' experiences are incorporated into lessons. Similarly, Valdés (1996) conducts thorough ethnographic research with recently immigrated families and finds that they often rely on a "collective wisdom" (Valdés, 1996, p. 94) consisting of the shared knowledge acquired by relatives and others in the social network in the recipient society to navigate institutions and the challenges of new experiences and contexts. Furthermore, Valdés observes that teaching in the home of, for instance, household tasks like washing dishes, relies less on parents instructing children explicitly and more on children's cumulative learning through attempts at the task and observation of older siblings or relatives, a highly constructivist approach that differs with how schools often teach children or expect parents to support schooling in the home. Villegas and Lucas (2002) build on the lessons of such ethnographic work in Latino communities by proposing direct applications into teacher training. They argue that some level of anthropological training for teachers will help them develop a better understanding of the nature of culture, precluding assumptions of homogeneity in parenting styles or certain deficit perspectives as teachers gain a better understanding of the communities in which students and their parents live. Olivos (2006) and Olivos et al. (2011) suggest a more dialogic relationship between parents and schools. The authors envision a model of parent involvement that they label the "Transformative Education Context Model" (Olivos, 2006, p. 110), in which "parent involvement is seen as a process of transformation in which social literacy and critical consciousness is achieved by all the participants for the benefit of student literacy, academic achievement, and

school and social transformation" (p. 111). The paradigm consists of a cyclical process of problem-posing, dialogic reflection and conceptualization of solutions, and praxis in which teachers and parents are equals striving for better schools and communities.

The present work corresponds and builds upon this critical approach to parent involvement. While certainly it too acknowledges and finds value in the different practices among immigrant Latino families versus those idealized by schools, it also demonstrates how these superficially distinct practices sometimes reiterate the intentions and outcomes of more conventional parent–school interactions. Through operation outside school channels—or alternative modes of participation within these channels—our work finds that immigrant Latino parents strive to augment or alter children's educational experiences, ask questions and obtain information about schooling and education, and attend events or meetings that align with these goals, even if they are not in the school or with the child's teacher.

Theoretical Framework

Underlying the deficit perspectives that schools or teachers may hold of Latino immigrant parents with regard to their involvement in children's schooling is an understanding of culture as static and monolithic. These families are viewed homogeneously as apathetic and incapable at worst or uninformed and unprepared at best towards the ways in which they should take part in school interactions and household supports for education (Ramirez, 1999, 2001). A substantial body of research, nevertheless, demonstrates that Latino immigrant families highly value their children's education and undertake extensive efforts to support it, including collaborating with teachers and schools when they make the effort to involve families (Moll et al., 1992; Olivos, 2006; Olivos et al., 2011; Valdés, 1996). In the present work, we offer a framework for understanding parent involvement as a series of practices aligned with the goals described by authors such as Epstein (2001) and Pomerantz et al. (2007) but very much adapted to the constraints and opportunities of the community to which the families have immigrated. Thus, we argue that attributions of cultural homogeneity to these parent involvement practices ignore the agency parents demonstrate in responding to challenges such as language barriers, racism, immigration status, and economic hardships that hinder participation in the manners that schools most desire. We contend that while there are indeed similarities across the families in how they conceptualize their roles vis-à-vis schools and their children, there are also vast differences and notable influences of other contextual factors, suggesting that what gets labeled a "cultural" style is a negation of parents' resourcefulness and dedication.

Instrumental to our analysis of the parent involvement practices of the families in this study is the understanding of culture as a dynamic set of practices with which individuals' identification and participation vary over time and contexts. Ana María Villegas and Tamara Lucas (2002) articulate the concept well in their proposed approach to adequately training teachers of culturally diverse students, in which they state,

> We have suggested already that a pragmatic view of culture—one that defines it as the way life is organized in a community, including prevalent ways of using language, interacting, and approaching learning—is valuable to teachers. It allows them to identify subtle aspects of the students' home and community experiences that are relevant to instruction but are usually overlooked. These courses can also reinforce the fact that, while discernible patterns for cultural groups exist, at the same time culture is dynamic and constantly evolving, it varies among individual members within a cultural group, and it varies across communities within a larger cultural group. (p. 88)

Similarly, Kris Gutiérrez and Barbara Rogoff (2003) argue that a consideration of individuals' or groups' historical participation in cultural practices elucidates the variable nature of what are frequently treated to be static traits rooted in ethnicity, race, linguistic background, or other such factors. This cultural–historical approach acknowledges that identification with a particular group indeed implies some shared experiences, understandings, or practices, but that within these commonalities individuals differ in their degrees of participation in particular practices, noting,

> A cultural–historical approach assumes that individual development and disposition must be understood in (not separate from) cultural and historical context. In other words, we talk about patterns of people's approaches to given situations without reducing the explanation to a claim that they do what they do *because* they are migrant farm workers or English language learners. We attend to individuals' linguistic and cultural–historical repertoires as well as to their contributions to practices that connect with other activities in which they commonly engage. (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 22, emphasis in original)

Such an understanding of culture renders attempts to make group-wide generalizations about particular practices problematic, to say the least. Nevertheless, it provides the framework through which we can approach investigations of such practices and appreciate the differences and similarities in such practices among members of the same group. This, in turn, sheds light on other factors that may inform individual's specific means of engaging said

practices. Among the parents interviewed in this study, factors such as time spent living in the U.S., place of work, affiliation to particular networks of information, personal experiences with U.S. schools, number of children in U.S. schools, availability of information in Spanish, and the presence of bilingual staff at a child's school all shaped the manner in which parents involved themselves in children's schooling.

Methods and Procedures

In the San Francisco Bay Area suburb in which this study was conducted, Latinos comprise nearly 65% of the population. The goal of this study was to seek out a sample that had immigrated to the U.S. (as opposed to second or third generation Latinos) and had children of varying ages and levels of experience in U.S. schools to ascertain the processes by which immigrant parents negotiated a role for themselves vis-à-vis schools and children's schooling. Given that the study hoped to capture and describe a variety of such possible processes, there was no need for a statistically representative sample from which findings could be directly extrapolated to generalizations; rather, priority was given to gathering a sample that elucidated the networks and pathways of social knowledge while differing on key independent variables as suggested by Trost (1986), who proposes a framework of selectivity in snowball sampling described as nonrepresentative stratification.

The process of snowball, or chain referral, sampling relied on the research team approaching several key gatekeepers in the community. These individuals worked at organizations that provided support to recent immigrants and were chosen based on one researcher's prior familiarity with the community as a former classroom teacher and from the past research of other members of the interview team. Specifically, we approached personnel at a school, an afterschool program affiliated with a Catholic church, an evangelical church, a nonprofit organization that supports immigrant parents, and a public library. Approaching a variety of gatekeepers allowed researchers to capture a series of social networks, all located within the same community, but possibly with different orientations towards schools and parent participation in schooling. As Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) note, chain referral sampling does not consist of a simple, self-sustaining process of participant referrals. Indeed, the research team repeatedly met to determine which particular chains warranted further exploration based on participant characteristics and the willingness of participants to in turn become research assistants by referring acquaintances. Moreover, the information obtained through particular social networks warranted broadening of the participant base to include not only recent immigrants arriving in

the prior five years (one original independent variable of participant selection) but also those with longer time spans in the U.S.

This adaptive nature of the chain referral sampling method exemplifies its numerous advantages for particular qualitative inquiry. As the project originally aimed to describe the experiences and knowledge of recent immigrants, and given the contentious and harrowing experience that immigration and adaptation to a new community can be, especially for those of undocumented status, a sampling method suited to accessing relatively hidden populations (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Noy, 2008) was necessary. Nevertheless, the process of incorporating participants as research assistants revealed unforeseen sources of aid and information for recent immigrants, as well as means of participating in children's schooling that compelled the broadening of the participant base. Such reflection with the aim of capturing the particular processes through which these parents made sense of schools' expectations of them and their own expectations of schools highlights the ability of chain referral sampling to confirm the social nature of knowledge and spur the interactional quality of social knowledge (Noy, 2008). While participant social networks thus strongly informed the data, mindfulness of particular independent variables was maintained. The participants were all immigrants from Latin America, but they notably differed on their time in the U.S., their primary source of information about schools in the U.S., and their own prior formal schooling experiences. For analytical purposes the time in the U.S. variable was divided into three categories: those in the U.S. under five years, or less than the time that a U.S.-born child would usually take to reach school age; those in the U.S. for 5–24 years (although certainly not all immigrants in this time frame were the direct result of the 1986 IRCA legislation, its mention in the legalization of informants' relatives who later sponsored their migration made it a reasonable demarcation); and those in the U.S. over 24 years.

Ultimately, 24 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Three of these interviews were carried out with husband–wife pairs, while the rest were with individuals. Summary characteristics of participants are provided in Table 2. Two interviews were not considered for this project as the respondents did not have children in American schools but were nevertheless important members of one particular referral chain. The interviews, of which key questions related to schooling are provided in Figure 1, probed participation in children's schooling with questions addressing communication with teachers, presence at the school, and helping children with homework, but other aspects of life were discussed as well, including information sources about schools and other services in the receiving community, family and social networks in the area, and philosophies on parenting, among others. It is important to note that as the

interviews were semi-structured and carried out as conversations in Spanish, participants were allowed and at times encouraged to elaborate on responses and to explore tangents that, nevertheless, revealed insights into their participation patterns or attitudes towards schooling, while in other situations certain topics received less discussion.

Table 2. Participant Characteristics as Percentage of Informant Total

Time in U.S. (to date of interview in 2010) (*N* = 24)	
• Under 5 years	25%
• 5–24 years	50%
• Over 24 years (predating 1986 amnesty)	25%
General Age of Children in U.S. Schools (*N* = 24)	
• Preschool age (0–4)	17%
• Elementary age	33%
• Middle school age	29%
• High school age	42%
• College, vocational school, or working adult age	25%
Informant's Highest Completed Level of Formal Schooling (*N* = 21)	
• Less than primary in home country	23.8%
• Primary in home country	23.8%
• Secondary in home country	23.8%
• Post-secondary in home country	9.5%
• Primary in U.S.	0.0%
• Secondary in U.S.	19.0%
• Post-secondary in U.S.	0.0%

Note. To protect confidentiality, only summary characteristics provided. Participants with children in multiple grade level groups counted for both categories

A note here is warranted with respect to the researchers' positions vis-a-vis the community and the research participants. Giampapa (2011) discusses the importance of considering dynamic power relationships between researcher and participants, as well as how elements of these identities are contested or upheld in interactions. With established connections to the community as a former teacher and local resident, and as researchers with extensive participatory roles in local churches and schools, we benefited from notable familiarity with the gatekeeper organizations and some of the personnel. In turn, the solid relationships the staff at these organizations had with eventual research participants allowed a considerable level of trust and reliability. Additionally, the ability to conduct interviews in Spanish also afforded a degree of confidence and comfort among research participants. Of course, our affiliation with

a nearby university, as well as dynamics of class and gender differences that could emerge during interviews were a factor in considering the reliability of interview data (particularly when a young male researcher interviewed women of comparable age, which the team found to produce greater guardedness at the outset of interviews). Gauging the depth and length of responses at different points in the interview as well as the internal consistency of participants' responses (that is, ensuring that statements were not contradictory across the interview) assuaged concerns.

Prior experiences and migration:

1. Can you tell me about where you're from and what life was like there?
    a. Where did you live?
    b. What was your occupation?
    c. What was your quality of life like?
    d. Were your children born there?
2. What does it mean to be a good parent where you're from? What things does a good parent do?
3. Can you tell me about the schools in your home community?
4. Can you tell me about when you came to the United States and why you came? Tell me about your migration experience. (How long have you been here? Did you arrive directly in this community? How many relatives came with you or were here before you? Who helped you get situated? What opportunities and costs were there to migrating? How's your English?
5. What does it mean to be a good parent here in this community?
6. Can you tell me about the experiences you've had with your children's schools here?
    a. How did you learn about your children's current schools?
    b. What is the work like that children bring home?
    c. How are you involved with your children's homework?
    d. Do you ever go to the school? What is it like visiting the school?
    e. Do you join the school or teachers in activities or meetings? How have these experiences been?
7. How well do schools provide information to parents? Can you elaborate on what would help you get more or better information?
8. What advice would you give to other immigrant parents who have recently arrived?

Figure 1. Key Question Stems From Semi-Structured Interviews Regarding Schools and Parenting

Interviews were transcribed and then coded through various iterations. Initial codes sought mentions of parents' schooling experiences in the home country and in the U.S., children's schooling experiences, sources of information regarding schools, interactions with children's schools in the U.S. and in the home country, comparisons between schools in the home country and the U.S., parenting behaviors connected to children's learning, and questions

or misunderstandings regarding schools. From these initial codes we observed that a number of practices parents mentioned for gathering information or supporting children's schooling were situated outside the school, and thus refined the codes to highlight specific behaviors in and out of schools intended to bolster learning. This refinement yielded principal involvement categories of information gathering (*asking*), attendance and participation (*attending*), and seeking additional or alternative educational resources (*altering/augmenting*).

Findings

Besides the well-documented resilience and adaptability of immigrant families, our interviews revealed a remarkable concern on the part of parents for their children's learning and academic success. In its own right, this finding contradicts oft-held beliefs of parental apathy and academic negligence. Further, our interviews revealed a great deal of parent participation in precisely the ways that schools often prescribe—attendance at conferences and meetings, reading with children at home, helping with homework, and the like. Most importantly, however, informants repeatedly mentioned forms of involvement that they deemed valuable to children's learning that are not always considered as such by teachers or schools. While certainly some strategies bear more direct benefits on conventional measures of academic achievement than others (e.g., reading to children at home bears greater association with reading comprehension than church attendance), the priority for our analysis was the meaning that the participants themselves attached to the practice. Schooling, as seen by many of our participants, is but one way in which children learn and only provides a fraction of the skills, values, and traits that parents hope children will develop to become contributors to society in adulthood. Indeed, some of these other involvement strategies were intended to develop character or escape harmful peer influence, which parents in turn presumed would support classroom learning. Also of note, interviews revealed that even for those very familiar with the receiving community and its schools, structural obstacles and information gaps hindered their involvement or ability to otherwise support children's academic pursuits.

Taking into account both the commonly touted and less frequently articulated forms of parent involvement, we categorized parents' participatory behaviors under three labels: **asking questions, attending,** and **altering/augmenting. Asking questions** refers to parents approaching teachers or other school personnel about children's progress in school or how to support learning, a behavior well in line with schools' conventional requests of parents. In addition, however, the label applies to inquiries made to family and friends

with more experience in the community about how to navigate school systems (such as enrolling students) or even questions that might be perceived as confrontational by school staff. Another instance of asking occurs when parents consult acquaintances in the culture of power, such as employers, church authorities, or staff of nonprofit organizations about their rights as parents or processes by which they could better support their children when they fear that approaching schools directly with these matters would cause trouble.

Attending behaviors refer to parents being present at particular events or locations. Certainly this captures a great deal of conventional participation such as going to parent–teacher conferences, school assemblies, or field trips. Nevertheless, the label also encompasses a series of additional behaviors, such as attending workshops and informational sessions hosted by nonprofit organizations and the public library about, for instance, how to better support children in their learning or how to finance college, and regular church attendance, which parents thought indispensible to children's moral upbringing and an indirect scholastic support by shaping resistance to negative peer influence. Finally, several informants mentioned attending some form of adult education, whether to complete a GED, obtain some sort of professional certification, or improve their English proficiency, which they believed would not only allow them to provide better material support for children's learning but also to exemplify the importance of education to younger generations.

The third category, **altering/augmenting**, refers to parents' efforts to enhance children's benefit from schooling. In some cases, this consisted of enrolling students in afterschool programs or summer programs to extend the learning of the school day and to provide help with homework or English language development that working parents could not. Likewise, this category captures parents' work to obtain greater services for children within their current school, such as special education provisions or additional support in particular subjects. With regard to the altering aspect of this category, this often took the form of parents vying for new teachers, new schools, or new instructional programs within the school. Additionally, parents sometimes framed the very act of migration as one of augmenting children's academic opportunity. Table 3 presents these three categories and some of their corresponding behaviors along with the percentage of participants who reported engaging in said practices.

Table 3 demonstrates the widespread engagement in asking, attending, and altering/augmenting strategies on the part of the parents interviewed, with 88% of participants mentioning some form of asking participation, and 100% attending some form of educationally supportive event as well as making efforts to alter or augment their children's educational trajectory. Moreover, since the interviews did not specifically inquire into these behaviors, it is possible

that they are even more prevalent than our analysis reports. For instance, while a notable majority of participants attend church regularly, only 25% specifically mentioned the role of church in children's educational formation (most frequently as a way to protect children from the temptations of drugs, gangs, or sex, thus allowing them to devote themselves to their studies). Similarly, while all participants were immigrants and many noted the higher quality of American schools in terms of teachers' treatment of students and schools' provision of services as compared to schools in the home country, only those who expressly mentioned schooling as a motivating factor in the decision to migrate were counted for this intervention as a form of altering/augmenting a child's educational opportunities. Certainly within these umbrella categories particular behaviors were more prevalent. Very few parents lobbied to change their child's teacher within a school or to address a teacher's specific behaviors (8.3%), while a large portion of the sample sought to augment children's schooling with afterschool programs, summer school, tutoring, or special services such as speech therapy (71%).

Table 3. Percentage of Participants Reporting Asking, Attending, and Altering/Augmenting Involvement Strategies ($N = 24$)

Strategies Reported	%
Asking questions:	88%
• Asking teachers/staff	75%
• Asking family/friends: registration, materials, processes	58%
• Asking acquaintances in culture of power—employers, church authorities, nonprofits—about rights, processes	46%
Attending:	100%
• School events, meetings	83%
• Church	25%
• Parenting/leadership workshops	25%
• Adult education	38%
Altering/Augmenting:	100%
• Vying for new teachers or new teacher behaviors	8%
• Vying for new schools	58%
• Vying for new programs/services	71%
• Citing children's education as a motivating factor in migration	25%

In addition, distinctions can clearly be made among groups based on participant characteristics. A common form of altering/augmenting children's

educational trajectories within our sample was to apply for a program that enrolled children in the affluent school system of the neighboring city, also part of a different county. While this strategy recurred within one particular network of our referral chain that included individuals who had been in the U.S. for the longest periods among our participants, it did not occur once outside of it, and it is fair to say that the frequency of children successfully enrolling in this transfer program was overrepresented in our data. Nevertheless, this overrepresentation provides important insight into the information immigrants gain by virtue of social connections among those with more years and experience in American schools as well as the challenges of diffusing this information beyond such proximate networks. With this in mind, however, no chain of referral in the sample is large enough to allow generalizable claims about particular participant characteristics that correspond with (let alone predict) any single involvement strategy, and it is instead instructive to delve deeper into the interviews to appreciate the processes by which the observed involvement strategies arise and are engaged within participants' given circumstances.

Asking

A common argument in the deficit perspective of Latino immigrant parents is that they are less inclined to engage teachers or school personnel with questions beyond matters of behavior. While in our sample this argument does not widely apply, as 75% of participants reported asking teachers or other school officials questions, we cannot claim representativeness for our sample. What we can observe, however, is that beyond simply approaching school staff with questions, immigrant parents consult myriad other sources of information regarding children's schooling, especially when questions can be construed as contentious. Some sources—such as relatives, friends, members of the same church congregation, or neighbors with more experience with American schools—are hardly unusual and cannot be said to be exclusive to Latino immigrants seeking information, but others demonstrate the resourcefulness and commitment of these particular parents to their children's education.

One rather surprising source that families consulted applied to those who worked in the homes or offices of other families residing in the affluent adjacent county. Several mothers in our sample worked as nannies or housekeepers for families with more familiarity with American schools. Characterizing her willingness to seek information from such connections, one participant offered:

> *Y yo, ha ayudado mucho que he trabajado mucho con familias abogadas. Yo les pregunto. Si los padres. Llevo 14 años trabajando en esto de nannies y me han tocado puros abogados. Y cuando tengo una pregunta, yo les digo, "¿Qué*

> *se puede hacer aquí?"* [And I, it's helped that I've worked a lot with lawyer families. I ask them. The parents. I've been working as a nanny for 14 years and always for lawyers. And when I have a question, I ask them, "What can be done here?"] (Note: All translations are our own.)

Similarly, another participant offered a specific instance of consulting the family that employed her about procuring an evaluation for special education for her child despite the school's insistence that one was not necessary, and even recruiting the family as advocates for her child:

> *Pues, él tenía problemas porque iba muy bajo en calificaciones pero pedimos que le hicieran una, como se llama, evaluación. Y como que no la necesitaba. Y luego, yo trabajo para una americana y trabajo en su casa y yo le comentaba a ella. Que yo miraba que el niño tenía problemas con aprendizaje y ella habló con el director de la escuela y ella pidió una evaluación—porque yo la había pedido, pero como que no me hicieron caso.* [Well, he had problems because his grades were very low, and we asked for a, what's it called, evaluation. And [the school said] that he didn't need it. And then, I work for an American woman in her home, and I spoke to her about it, that I could see the boy had problems learning, and she spoke to the school principal and asked for an evaluation—because I had asked, but they didn't pay me any mind.]

A second important and infrequently acknowledged recourse for information in this community is the host of public and civil sector organizations aimed at helping parents support children's education. A number of parents mentioned consulting the public library for specific questions about additional support for children in their English language development, help with homework, accessing services such as medical care or immunizations necessary to enroll in school, or choices of schools within the area. Similarly, several participants mentioned coming across nonprofit organizations that support immigrant families and resorting to these as sources of comparable advice or knowledge. One father, for example, approached a staff member at one such organization seeking help when his daughter's grades were low (Note: all names of participants, organizations, and schools have been changed to protect participant confidentiality and anonymity):

> *Entonces empecé a buscar manera, y volví a hablar con la misma persona, y me dijo "¿Sabes qué? Tienes que ir a las reuniones. Tienen reuniones mensuales." Entonces me dijo ella que yo tenía que ir a hablar, "¿Ya conoces a la directora de la escuela? Tienes que buscar a la directora, pide ayuda, pide programas después de escuela, pero ve y escucha lo que dicen." Ya teníamos a Susana en programa después de escuela que era con El Hogar, y El Hogar*

> *sí le pone a uno, presionan a uno para estar allí presente. De esa manera yo empecé a ver que sí era la necesidad que yo asistiera y me involucrara en la educación de mis hijos.* [Then I started looking for a solution, and I spoke to the same person, and she said, "You know what? You have to go to the meetings. They have monthly meetings." Then she told me I had to go there and speak to them. "Do you know the principal? You need to go find the principal, ask for help, ask for afterschool programs, and go hear what they have to say." We already had Susana in the afterschool program at El Hogar, and there at El Hogar they pressure you to be present. In that way I began to realize the need for me to attend events and become involved in my children's education.]

This instance proves especially interesting because it simultaneously demonstrates the value of consulting sources outside the school for specific information while also demonstrating the way such organizations attempt to educate parents about behaviors that American schools expect and respond to from parents.

In brief, asking for information or assistance emerges as a widespread involvement strategy on the part of the parents in our sample. While in some cases it may be hidden from teachers and schools, this is not the result of apathy or ignorance but rather of parents' resourcefulness and willingness to approach others. Obviously, such involvement interventions are highly dependent on circumstances, including access to informed or empowered individuals and networks or the availability of alternate information sources such as nonprofit organizations and public libraries. Unfortunately, while these alternative information sources often provided essential support, they could also perpetuate misinformation. For a number of participants, asking within the referral chain for educational advice resulted in enrolling children in a transitional program through which children forego their senior year of high school and instead begin college coursework early at a local community college. While such a path accelerates professionalization and precludes one year of college tuition, it also denies students the opportunity to take honors level courses at the high school level that would be necessary to apply for highly selective colleges and universities. Thus, while asking questions is a frequent involvement strategy, bypassing schools in the process can provide two notable problems. First, it can provide information or advice that school personnel such as teachers and counselors may not recommend, and secondly, it might perpetuate among school staff the illusion that parents are uninterested.

Attending

As important as it is for parents to ask questions and obtain information or advice through inquiry, much is made of their mere presence at school, or

lack thereof, in the parent involvement discourse. As with asking questions, our interviews revealed that not only do parents make themselves present at school, but they also attend a series of other events and programs that they see as supportive of their children's education. As with asking questions, parents' engagement with these practices is contextually dependent on their own prior education, experiences with schools, and access to information about such opportunities, but the fact that every single participant in the sample mentioned attending—in one form or another—suggests a high degree of investment and effort on the part of parents regarding their children's learning.

Certainly the most commonly regarded form of attendance with respect to parents is their presence in the school, especially for parent–teacher conferences and similar events. The vast majority of our participants, 83%, mentioned attending meetings or conferences with teachers, volunteering in the classroom, working in some capacity at the school site, or otherwise being involved through attendance. One very typical example is offered by a mother of two elementary-aged children. Having lived in the U.S. for 15 years and with a vast information network through her church congregation, she explains her participation as a school volunteer and attendance at meetings, noting the importance of being seen:

> *Con el open house o en la primera junta del salón, nos explican en qué puede uno ayudar, para ser voluntario…y a mí me gusta. Los niños ven el interés de uno. Y cuando uno ayuda, les muestras a los niños que te preocupan y que estás enterado, y para el futuro que papá y mamá están siempre ahí.* [With the open house or at the first class meeting, they explain how one can help, to volunteer…and I like it. The children see one's interest. And when one helps, you show the children that you care about them and that you're aware and, for the future, that dad and mom are always there.]

Other parents, meanwhile, described the target of their attendance at school less in terms of children's perceptions but rather those of the teachers. Echoing a commonly held view among participants, one father of children in middle school and elementary school noted that teachers were more mindful of one's children if they saw the parent frequently at the school:

> *Es que a los maestros si uno no les pone presión, no trabajan con sus niños. Entonces, como que necesitan que el padre….Creo que eso es lo que ellos quieren, que los padres estén involucrados en el sistema educativo.* [It's that teachers don't work with your children unless you put pressure on them. So it's like they need the parent….I think that's what they want, for parents to be involved in the school system.]

Similarly, a woman who has spent 20 years in the U.S., a mother of two high school-aged sons, acknowledged teachers as the main focus of her attendance at school events. She recognized the opportunity to volunteer in the classroom as a chance to observe the teacher and the school and to ensure her children were receiving the necessary supports, ultimately acting on this information to seek a different school for her sons:

> *Pedí permiso que me dejaran ir con mi hijo de voluntaria porque yo quería que él se habituara a las escuelas. Pero dentro de mí lo que yo quería era conocer las escuelas. Hablé con la maestra—una semana, nada más una semana. Ella me dio permiso; yo le ayudaba y mi hijo ahí sentadito.…Pero yo podía observar, y vi que era muy deficiente*. [I asked permission for them to let me go with my son as a volunteer so that he could get accustomed to the schools. But inside, I wanted to get to know the schools. I talked to the teacher—one week, just one week. She gave me permission; I helped her out, and my son sat there.…But I could observe, and I saw that it was very deficient.]

Thus, attendance at school meetings or events is an acknowledged strategy of parent involvement within our sample, but by no means the only one. Just as when seeking information, parents often consulted sources outside the school. A number of parents attended workshops offered by community organizations that instructed them in approaching schools or supporting children's learning at home. For instance, the organization El Hogar (that answered the aforementioned father's question about improving his daughter's grades by making his presence felt at school) provides workshops and meetings through a parent-led council that demystifies this process for recently immigrated families. Other organizations provide workshops about the college application process, including academic requirements and information about financing a college education for one's children.

Less conventional invocations of attending strategies also arose in the interviews, particularly attending church services. While attending church services seems to hold no direct bearing on children's schooling, the explanations offered by the participants who made such a connection clearly demonstrate its correspondence to the affective involvement practices described by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) wherein a positive light and sense of importance are cast upon schooling. Wary of negative peer influences in the school or community, parents engaging this strategy describe church participation as a means by which to protect children from such influences and, more importantly, channel a student's focus towards higher priorities of education and a religion-based morality. One such parent, a mother of six whose children had all completed high school in the U.S., nicely captures the sentiment:

En ese tiempo también yo conocí el evangelio y también eso influenció mucho porque te abre los ojos, puedes mirar otras cosas que no mirabas, actitudes, muchas cosas. Entonces pasaron dos eventos a la misma vez que eso nos abrió el camino. Por eso fue que quizás yo pude mirar la diferencia que tenían mis hijos, porque a lo mejor si tenía esa misma visión, pues quizás no hubiera podido mirar nada. Entonces eso me ayudó a mirar que mis hijos estaban rodeados de un círculo que no les iba a ayudar, iban a quedar atrapados en medio de ese círculo, aunque yo estaba tratando de inducirlos a otra cosa. [In that time, I also came to know the gospel and that had a great influence, because it opens your eyes, you can see things you couldn't see before, attitudes, many things. Then there were two events at the same time that cleared the path. That's why I was able to see the difference for my children, because maybe if I had that same old vision I wouldn't have been able to see. Then that helped me see that my children were surrounded by a circle that wouldn't help them, they were going to stay stuck in the middle of that circle, even though I was trying to lead them to something else.]

Finally, a number of participants reported taking part in adult education programs, whether to improve their English, acquire computing skills, or earn certifications for becoming teaching assistants, early childhood educators, or completing the GED. While certainly participants noted the economic benefits of such education, several directly linked it to children's schooling, noting that it improved their ability to communicate with school staff, helped them understand and assist children with their homework, or taught them useful skills to support learning in the home. One mother with three sons in an elementary school in the adjacent county, for example, noted the importance of a computing class, because many school-related communications among parents occurred by email at her children's school:

Sí, porque muchos, por ejemplo el email. Que dijera uno, ¿qué tal que nos comunicamos por email? Y eso era, yo al principio que veía que todos los padres se comunicaban por email y yo no sabía, ni tenía idea. Y ni siquiera le tomaba atención. [Yes, because many, for example email—one would say, "How about we get in touch by email?" and that was, in the beginning, I saw all the parents communicating by email, and I didn't know, I had no idea. So I didn't even pay attention.]

In short, while the vast majority of parents participating in our interviews stressed the importance of attending events at the school as an involvement strategy, they also diverted time and energy from such endeavors to attend other meetings that they deemed helpful to children's schooling. By attending

workshops and meetings organized by community organizations, they gained information on how to approach schools and more proactively engage with them. Likewise, some parents gained specific insights into the requirements of different colleges and the steps necessary to apply for and finance a college education. Attending other gatherings such as church services or adult education classes, in the view of some of our participants, helped communicate that schooling and learning were priorities for the household not to be derailed by peer pressure or a lack of language or technical skills. Nevertheless, participants mentioned numerous obstacles (discussed below) that impeded attending strategies.

Altering/Augmenting

Taking measures to alter or augment a child's educational trajectory manifested as a wide range of practices and motivations. In some cases (mentioned by 8% of participants), concerns with a specific teacher or curriculum necessitated efforts to switch the child's program, classroom, or course schedule within the same school, while in others, parents sought to enroll their children in completely different schools or school districts. Under both circumstances, parents demonstrated extensive knowledge and investment in their children's initial learning environment and tremendous agency in seeking alternatives. In one example of the former, a mother with one son in high school and two others enrolled at community colleges recalled taking issue with a perceived bias on the part of one her sons' teachers:

> *Por la mayoría yo creo que en grade school sí fueron imparciales, por la mayoría. Tuvo mi hijo una maestra que sí estuvo bastante parcial. Lo bueno es que ya fue el último año en esa escuela y ya estaba listo para salirse. Y él me contaba algunas cosas que hacía la maestra y no lo pude creer, y yo muy asustada, no, y yo vi que sin trabajo [inaudible] que él había llevado a clase, la maestra lo tenía al revés. Y, no, que '¿qué pasa?' Y que me fajo y me pongo con el director*. [For the most part I think that in grade school they were impartial, for the most part. My son had a teacher who was very partial. The good thing is that it was his last year at the school, and he was ready to leave. He would tell me some of the things the teacher did, and I couldn't believe it, and I got scared; I saw him without the work [inaudible] that he had taken to class, the teacher had it backwards. And so, like, "What's wrong?" and I got upset and went to the principal.]

Such dramatic interventions, while demonstrative of parents' awareness and investment in children's schooling, were nevertheless rare. Rather, most requests to change teachers, classrooms, or academic programs within a school related

to accelerating the transition from English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to a mainstream track, switching into a bilingual program so children could continue to develop their Spanish language skills, or conversely, switching into ESL or out of bilingual programs to focus on English language development.

In our interviews, a more commonly reported strategy for parents to alter their children's schooling paths was to at least attempt to enroll them at a different school (usually by entering an admissions lottery for a charter school or by applying for scholarships for a private school) or school district (through the aforementioned transfer program) in response to perceived negative conditions in the neighborhood schools. One mother facing such a decision explained her displeasure with local schools' lack of material resources:

> *Yo miraba que hacían falta recursos para que los niños pudieran interactuar más entre ellos. Faltaban y como yo agarraba mi idea de que si se les diese un poco más de apoyo económico a esa escuela pudiera la escuela brindarles una mejor educación a los niños. Entonces eso vi*. [I could see that there was a lack of resources so children could interact more among themselves. There wasn't enough, and so I got the idea that if the school got more economic support, it could offer the children a better education. That's what I saw.]

Another mother, reflecting a common concern, described the social environment she perceived at the first school in which she enrolled her children, noting that the potential of negative peer influence drove her to seek alternatives for her children:

> *Porque aquí vi y no me gustaban cómo eran las escuelas, me daban miedo. No los quería meter. Vamos a ponerlos en un Christian school. Íbamos a la escuela y puras malas palabras y como nosotros veníamos a la iglesia desde que yo era joven, y yo no quería que mis hijos aprendieran malas palabras o que andaran peleando y decidí, investigué cómo ponerlos allí*. [Because here, I looked and didn't like what the schools were like; they scared me. I didn't want to enroll them. We're going to put them in a Christian school. We would go to the {public} school and hear lots of bad words, and since we'd gone to church since I was young, I didn't want my children learning bad words or going around fighting, and I decided, I investigated how to enroll them there.]

Similarly, another mother commented on her decision to enroll her children in the transfer program with the adjacent county:

> *De otra manera creo yo sinceramente que si no los hubiera yo sacado, no creo que hubieran terminado la high school y el grupo de amigos que estaba alrededor de ellos terminó en pandillas, en drogas, matándose. Definitivamente*

creo que si no hubiera sido eso, pues mis hijos no. [Otherwise, I sincerely think that, had I not withdrawn them, I don't think they would have finished high school, and the group of friends that was around them ended up in gangs, on drugs, killing themselves. I definitely think that were it not for that, well, not for my children.]

A final and less frequent—although rather drastic—form of altering a child's academic trajectory was to migrate. While obviously all the participants in the sample are immigrants, only a handful mentioned the choice to migrate as, at least in part, motivated by the educational opportunities that such a change would provide. One mother described moving back to Mexico for a year at the behest of the children's father who feared his children would forget their Spanish. However, disappointed with the conditions of the schools there, she moved the family back to the U.S.:

Bueno, mala experiencia es. No están bien preparadas las escuelas. Los edificios están muy descuidados, los baños un desastre completamente…porque no me gustaba, no me gustaba el sistema, no me gustaba como mis hijos estaban yendo a la escuela…entonces insistí hasta que nos regresamos para acá. [Well, it's a bad experience. The schools aren't well prepared. The buildings are in disrepair, the restrooms are a complete disaster…because I didn't like it, I didn't like the system, I didn't like how my children were getting to school…so I insisted until we came back here.]

Besides major alterations such as school enrollment or program adjustment, parents also intervened in children's schooling trajectories by supplementing with additional instruction or supports. Many parents enrolled their children in afterschool programs that helped them with their homework or targeted English language development. Others sought special education supports for children with speech delays or poor grades, sometimes despite initial resistance from the school.

The extensive efforts of parents to alter or augment their children's educational opportunities reflect a clear investment and agentive role in the schooling process. More important than the scope of strategies employed or the number of parents engaging the strategies, however, are the circumstances that make them necessary, which often coincide with the reasons for which Latino immigrant parents receive little credit for these and other forms of active participation. Indeed, despite great interest and agency, many parents mentioned in the interviews a host of obstacles to their involvement with schools or children's education in general.

Obstacles to Involvement

From teachers' and schools' perspective, the most visible obstacles that immigrant Latino parents encounter in their efforts to participate are language barriers, time constraints, and a lack of financial resources (Hamayan & Freeman, 2006; Olivos, 2006; Ramirez, 2003). Certainly, all three of these emerged as challenges for a number of the parents in our interviews. As prior research has noted (Orellana, 2008), some parents mentioned the need for children to translate at parent–teacher conferences or with pieces of correspondence from the school or school district. Likewise, a number of parents expressed regret at not being able to attend meetings or conferences because of conflicts with work schedules or the challenges of finding childcare during the designated time. One husband and wife pair, for instance, noted that despite a satisfactory level of information and resources, their schedules made it difficult to capitalize on all the opportunities:

> *Allí hay información…a veces uno no tiene tiempo para asistir o una cosa o a veces ya está cansado. A lo mejor esa es una de las desventajas. Porque los adultos tenemos que trabajar, entonces se hace un poco difícil tomar los programas*. [There's information…sometimes one doesn't have time to attend or something, or sometimes one's already tired. Perhaps that's one of the disadvantages. Because we adults have to work, so it's difficult to take part in the programs.]

Less frequently acknowledged challenges are captured in several of the studies reviewed by Ferguson (2008), notably the sense of welcome fostered by the school (or lack thereof), perceptions of bias, or misconceptions among stakeholders. Various participants mentioned feeling uncomfortable or unwelcome at school events, a sentiment captured well by a mother of four who recounted her husband's reluctance to attend any further school meetings:

> *Mi esposo decía que puro güero. Decía, "Yo no, allí pura gente mayor y güero." Y yo tenía 21 años. Yo me casé a los 18, 19. A los 21 – y pura gente mayor, y güeros. Yo iba de todas maneras a los meetings, pero mi esposo fue una vez y dijo, "No. A mí no me gusta. Ver pura gente güera y puro inglés."* [My husband said it was all White people. He said, "Not me, there it's all old people and white people." And I was 21 years old. I got married at 18, 19. Now at 21—and it's all older people and Whites. I went anyway to the meetings, but my husband went once and said, "No. I don't like it—seeing only Whites and everything in English."]

Similarly, a mother of two expressed feelings of unease attending school meetings for her children enrolled in the adjacent county:

Pues algunos bien, otros lo ven a uno medio raro—algunos, la mayoría bien, pero otros sí como que un poco mal. Lo miran a uno, y esa es la razón por la cual yo no me siento completamente a gusto en las reuniones. [Well, some are good, others look at you strangely—some, the majority, good, but others definitely kind of badly. They look at you, and that's the reason I don't feel completely comfortable at the meetings.]

Others mentioned specific instances of bias that they or their children encountered that soured relationships between the family and the school. One mother of six described her daughter's experience in high school as adversarial when she began enrolling in Advanced Placement courses:

La ayudaron mucho, pero como que dijeron, "Tú, no más puedes llegar hasta aquí, pero no puedes pasar." Ahí fue cuando miramos, yo nunca había sabido de racismo, sino ahí nos dimos cuenta, cuando llegó a ese nivel que le empezaron a cerrar las puertas. "Tú no puedes aquí, tú no puedes agarrar esas clases, son muy difíciles, no hay mujeres ahí, no hay latinas ahí, hay puros anglosajones, no te vas a sentir bien. Te vas a sentir mal si no puedes, te vas a avergonzar." [They helped her a lot, but like they said, "You can only get this far, but you can't go farther." That's when we noticed, I'd never known about racism, but there we took notice, when she got to that level and doors started closing. "You can't manage here, you can't take these classes, they're too difficult, there are no women there, no Latinas there, just purely Anglo-Saxons, you're not going to feel at ease. You're going to feel bad if you don't succeed, you're going to feel ashamed."]

Given such experiences and challenges, it becomes rather clear why many immigrant Latino parents, even those with long periods of residence in the U.S. and extensive English language skills, may prefer pathways of involvement outside the school—through community organizations, social networks, or religious organizations, for example. This raises two items for consideration, and the two are not mutually exclusive: first, how teachers and schools can minimize the discomfort felt by parents in their efforts to be present at the school, and secondly, to the extent that these alternative avenues of information and involvement may be inexorable and even beneficial, how teachers and schools can better coordinate with these entities to prevent information gaps, miscommunications, or even misinformation.

Conclusion and Implications for Practice

In summary, the participants in our interviews demonstrated extensive interest and involvement in their children's schooling, both directly through

the school and through numerous alternative pathways that are less visible to school personnel. These findings run contrary to many of the deficit perspectives that hold Latino immigrant parents to be incapable of or indifferent to playing an agentive role in their children's education. Nevertheless, the interviews also raise concerns about obstacles that impede parent participation in the ways that both schools and parents themselves would find ideal, as well as about information gaps that emerge when parents rely on organizations and networks outside the school to mediate their involvement. Numerous publications already outline strategies for ameliorating some of these challenges (e.g., Hamayan and Freeman, 2006, provide insights from a variety of knowledgeable contributors as to how different schools have improved their contacts and relationships with parents of ELLs). In building on this existing literature, we argue that more fundamental to any strategy implemented is a mindset that engages parents as equal collaborators in their children's education.

Such a stance would require abandoning sweeping generalizations about the abilities or ambitions of immigrant parents or distinct cultural groups and recognizing the diversity of experiences and resources even within a single community. As noted by previously mentioned scholars (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), it requires moving from the school into the geographic community to inquire as to parents' expectations and objectives for involvement with their children's schooling, thereby learning about the broader contexts that shape parents' understandings and avenues of involvement. Using this information, schools can address matters of mutual concern, draw attention to matters made salient by various stakeholders, and harness the organizational and communicative capacity of community organizations and social networks to disperse information more effectively.

Suggestions for Schools

Teachers, administrators, and staff must engage parents dialogically as equals. This requires understanding and having a genuine interest in the personal and community contexts from which families approach schools. As encouraged by Ladson-Billings (2006) and Villegas and Lucas (2002), schools would do well to engage parents outside of the school through activities such as home visits and participation in community events. Such interactions provide school staff with a better understanding of the surrounding community and the experiences of families in said community, while fomenting positive relationships. Additionally, schools should open and nurture channels of communication with families and local organizations. Some schools are fortunate enough to have funding for a community/parent liaison position on staff that is charged with hearing parents' concerns and advocating on their behalf to

the school, as well as reinforcing schools' messages to parents. For schools not so fortunate in terms of resources, such responsibility must be diffused among all staff. Teachers and other school personnel must make the school inviting through the use of, among other strategies, interpreters, flexible hours for school events, childcare during conferences, transportation to and from school events, an integrated multicultural curriculum, opportunities to participate in school governance, and inclusion of community languages and practices in the school (Hamayan & Freeman, 2006). As our interviews indicate, a great number of parents' questions go unanswered, and misunderstandings or misinformation pose additional challenges to the many that immigrant parents already face. Information regarding enrollment, assessment, expectations, and curriculum must thus be made available clearly and directly.

We reiterate, however, along with the advice of Olivos et al. (2011), that measures undertaken in the spirit of remediation and deficit perspectives offer no true potential for transformation, only paternalism and new ways for schools to charge parents with not participating. Indeed, essential to the dialogic relationship is that schools listen to parents regarding the particular interventions and practices they would find most helpful and provide the information families find most necessary. Of course, listening to parents requires bilingual staff or, at the least, available interpreters so that parents dealing with language barriers can still partake in the dialogue. To address this needed change in stance toward dialogic relationships, we turn our attention to teacher preparation.

Suggestions for Teacher Education Programs

Citing her own work with teacher candidates, Ladson-Billings (2006) notes an overreliance on culture as an explanatory factor for parent involvement and student achievement patterns. To address this overly simplistic understanding, Ladson-Billings proposes a greater role for anthropological perspectives in teacher training, not only in curriculum content but also through ethnographic participation in the communities in which candidates undertake their student teaching and even international student teaching service. Such content and experiences would reinforce understandings of culture as dynamic and contextual, while making candidates cognizant of their own cultural participation practices and expectations. Assignments such as home visits, attending community events, interviews with parents and students, investigations of community histories and current conditions, and profound discussion and training in concepts of culturally relevant pedagogy ought to go a long way toward combating societal deficit perspectives and preparing teachers to engage parents dialogically when devising optimal participation forms. Moreover, aspiring and current teachers must be made aware of the power differentials that

exist between them and immigrant parents. As several of our interviews attest, it often takes the intervention of third party advocates before parents feel comfortable making demands of teachers and schools. Teachers educated in the workings of power and how this dictates what is "right" and "normal" may be more mindful of their position in relationships with parents.

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Contra la Corriente (Against the Current): The Role of Latino Fathers in Family–School Engagement

Sandra Quiñones and Judy Marquez Kiyama

Abstract

A community-based, multisite study using mixed methods examined the experiences and perspectives of Latino students and families in a low performing urban school district in New York State. This research project was spearheaded by a Latino Education Task Force which brought together multiple stakeholders in a collaborative effort to counteract high dropout rates and deficit thinking about Latino youth and their families. The findings reported here, drawn from a thematic analysis of data collected specifically from focus groups with parents, center on Latino fathers' perspectives and experiences. We utilized a conceptual framework of Latino family epistemology and alternative parental role theory to explore the role of Puerto Rican fathers in family–school engagement. Findings reveal that these fathers: (a) cultivate education as a family and community affair in order to promote school success; (b) critique dynamics within the parent–school–district system and advocate for their children; and (c) acknowledge their vulnerable positioning as fathers resisting racism and invisibility in schools and the larger community. Fathers understood middle-class forms of involvement as well as culture and power dynamics, suggesting their involvement was a form of agency—a pushing back against the system that made them distrustful in the first place. A common theme across the data sources is the idea of moving *contra la corriente* or going against the current. Our research highlights the need for collaboration and community action aimed at "adjusting the sails" as we move toward educational equity.

Key Words: parent roles in education, Latino fathers, Latina/o family engagement, community-based research, Puerto Rican, dads, advocates, schools

Introduction

There is a growing body of scholarship revealing misunderstandings and misperceptions about the role of Latino[1] parents in education and the concept of parental involvement as defined by dominant, mainstream schools (Auerbach, 2007; Behnke & Kelly, 2011; Hill & Torres, 2010; López, 2003; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernández, 2003; Villenas & Dehyle, 1999). This literature reminds us of the need to both counteract deficit perceptions of Latino families and reconceptualize parent roles in education as a means to enhance students' schooling experiences and to provide greater access to educational opportunities including higher education.

Family engagement plays an important role in shaping Latino students' educational experiences (Hill & Torres, 2010; Rodríguez-Brown, 2010). We use the term *family engagement* as a way of reconceptualizing family roles to better capture the influential individuals who are involved in children's education. As noted by Hill and Torres (2010), family engagement also represents the aspirations of Latino families, including social and academic achievement goals—and the sacrifices and investments made to promote such goals—as part of a desire for "upward mobility, a better life, and the deep value for education" (p. 95).

Along these lines, it is important to understand that Latino parents' beliefs about their roles and responsibilities regarding their children's academic development are grounded in sociocultural values about *educación*, which encompasses being moral, responsible, respectful, and well behaved (Auerbach 2006, 2007, 2011; Carger, 1996, Olmedo, 2003). Additionally, Latino parents "believe that they are responsible for developing these aspects of their children, which are the foundation of the academic education that is the school's domain" (Hill & Torres, p. 100).

For many U.S. Latino families, home-based social and moral child rearing practices are foundational to school-based, academic practices (Auerbach, 2007; Quiñones, 2012; Villenas, 2002; Zarate, 2007; Zentella, 2005) and, therefore, integral to Latinos' view of family engagement in education. Both family and school practices are necessary components for *una buena educación*, or "a good education." From this perspective, parental involvement is reframed as a multidimensional concept inclusive of family–school engagement practices and educational expectations and aspirations, anchored in Latino-centered views of education (Auerbach, 2007, 2011; Delgado Gaitan, 2004; Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001; Lopez, 2007; Villenas, Godinez, Delgado Bernal, & Elenes, 2006).

Latino Fathers: An Untapped Resource in Family–School Engagement?

The support from Latino fathers has been positioned as an "untapped resource" with the ability to positively influence the academic experiences of Latino youth (Behnke, González, & Cox, 2010, p. 4). In a study of ecological factors influencing North Carolina Latino youths' academic success, Behnke, González, and Cox (2010) found that "fathers played a strong role in the academic success of the Latino youth (both boys and girls)" (p. 4). However, there is a need to further examine how Latino fathers are positioned in their children's education, since much of the existing literature focuses largely on the role of Latina mothers (see, among others, Auerbach, 2002, 2007; De la Vega, 2007; Espinoza-Herold, 2007; Hidalgo, 2000; Olmedo, 2003; Rolón, 2000; Rolón-Dow, 2010; Villenas, 2001; Yosso, 2006). For example, Hidalgo (2000) explores Puerto Rican mothers' socialization strategies related to children's academic success. Likewise, Rolón's (2000) analysis of Puerto Rican young women's educational experiences reveals significant and positive roles that mothers played throughout their children's educational lives.

In an exploratory quantitative study examining the role of 77 Mexican-origin fathers in their children's education, Lopez (2007) found that "Spanish-speaking fathers reported more negative perceptions of their child's school, less positive contacts with their child's teachers, and were less involved in their child's school than either English/Spanish-speaking or English-speaking fathers" (p. 61). Her findings corroborate with previous research demonstrating that cultural and linguistic barriers relate to Latino parents (mothers and fathers) feeling unwelcome in their child's school community (Auerbach, 2007; Chavkin & González, 1995; Hill & Torres, 2010; Hyslop, 2000; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001).

More importantly, Lopez (2007) found that all of the fathers in her study, regardless of socioeconomic status and linguistic acculturation status, believed "that parents, not just mothers or schools, should be responsible for children's education" (p. 72). The latter finding is important for two main reasons. First, it is in contrast to findings from several previous studies (i.e., Chavkin & González, 1995; Trumbull et al., 2001; Galanti, 2003) suggesting "that Latino parents see a sharp divide between parental and school roles" (Lopez, 2007, p. 72) and that "Latino fathers define their roles in terms of patriarchal authority" (Lopez, 2007, p. 72). Second, this research points to an undertheorized area, namely, changing gender roles and blurring boundaries in U.S. Latino family–school engagement.

Additional literature about the role of fathers in children's education have been limited to studying Mexican American families in Texas, Arizona, and California (Auerbach, 2007; Delgado Gaitan, 1994a, 1994b; López, 2001; Lopez, 2007; Pérez Carreón, Drake, & Calabrese Barton, 2005; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldberg, 1995; Valdés, 1996). This body of scholarship is helpful for understanding how working-class fathers support children's education by giving *consejos* (advice), emphasizing the value of work, and engaging in child rearing practices that foster social and moral development informed by Latino cultural values.

Elenes and Delgado Bernal (2010) suggest that research in Latino education needs to examine the experiences of Latino subgroups. These constellations of experience can differ in the ways that migration, language, politics, and history distinguish subgroups from each other. To our knowledge, existing research about the role of Latino fathers in their children's education does not account for the experiences of Puerto Rican fathers. Given that "Puerto Ricans have achieved the dubious distinction of being one of the most undereducated ethnic groups in the United States" (Nieto, 2004, p. 388), we purposefully focus on Puerto Rican father–school engagement as part of individual and collective efforts to "RicanStruct the discourse" (Irizarry & Antrop-González, 2007, p. 37) in education research. Hence, our work complements the existing research about Latino fathers by accounting for the perspectives and experiences of Puerto Rican families in Northwestern New York.

Purpose and Research Questions

A greater understanding of Latino fathers' experiences and perspectives is particularly important in light of racial and gender disparities and the disenfranchisement of Latino males in U.S. education and society (Noguera, Hurtado, & Fergus, 2011). Nationwide, Latino males are more likely to be characterized as "troubled" and more likely to drop out of high school and college than their female counterparts (Noguera et al., 2011; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Moreover, Latino children in U.S. schools are more likely than their White peers to live in single female-headed, low income households (Mather, 2010). Indeed, the existing trend of the "vanishing" Latino male in higher education (see Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009) has implications for family and social dynamics, workforce relations, economic development, and the overall educational status of Latinos in the United States.

Rather than portraying Latino fathers as troublemakers, problematic, or otherwise vanishing and absent, our research shifted the gaze onto a purposeful sample of socially and academically engaged Puerto Rican fathers who participated in a larger mixed methods study about the experiences and perspectives

of Latino students and families in a low performing urban school district (PreK–12) in New York State. For the purposes of this paper, we specifically examined the data derived from the focus groups in which fathers participated. Although we do not make the assumption that the mere presence of fathers is necessarily associated with more positive or improved educational outcomes, we know that we can benefit from a deeper understanding of their engagement and "attitudes toward their children's education, including their hopes for their children's futures, the misunderstanding of their participation, and suggestions for improving their involvement" (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006, p. 256).

The purpose of this paper is to examine Puerto Rican fathers' perspectives and experiences about their role in promoting school success and supporting their children's education. Drawing from Quiocho and Daoud (2006), the following research questions guide this paper:

a) How do the Puerto Rican fathers in this study support their children's education?
b) What do they perceive as obstacles to family–school engagement?
c) What recommendations do they have for improving the educational status of U.S. Latino students and their families?

Considered together, these questions allow us to gain a better understanding of the role of Puerto Rican fathers in their children's education in the context of family–school engagement.

Conceptual Framework

Hidalgo's (1999, 2005) U.S. Latino families' epistemology framework informs our research and works from the premise that "Latino/a knowledge creation is, in part, a process of accommodation, resistance, and change in response to the cultural and structural forces that shape the lived experiences of individuals and the collective groups" (Hidalgo, 2005, p. 378). This framework offers three tenets of Latino families' epistemology. First is the collective experience of oppression within the U.S. racial classification system. That is, "Latino/as have a unique interpretation of race that stems from the historic racial intermixture that comprises the Latino/a population" (Hidalgo, 2005, p. 379). Puerto Rican families, for instance, represent race as a continuum and fluid phenomena shaped by socioeconomics, sociopolitical history, and colonial dynamics with the U.S. power structure (Hidalgo, 2005). An important take away from this first tenet is the idea that "Latino/a families are not mere victims of racism but resist and adapt to their collective experience of oppression" (Hidalgo, 2005, p. 379).

A second tenet is the primacy of the family and cultural and ethnic values which "stem from common history, language, rituals, beliefs, and experiences that group members share" (Hidalgo, 2005, p. 381). For instance, their culture values the primacy of family functions to maintain family unity, close family ties, and interdependence with immediate and extended kin. What is important to understand from this second tenet is the idea that "ethnic values provide a safety net against conflicting values of the dominant society" (Hidalgo, 2005, p. 381). In other words, the maintenance of cultural values is an integral part of the process of resistance, accommodation, and change.

Keeping intergroup diversity and fluidity of constructs in mind, the third tenet in Hidalgo's research framework accounts for "shared values in service of resistance" (Hidalgo, 2005, pp. 378–379). That is, Latino families "reaffirm their culture and lay claim to their unique knowledge base" as they engage in daily, everyday life in the U.S. context (Hidalgo, 2005, p. 379). For instance, the development of *confianza* (mutual trust) between residents in a U.S. neighborhood reinforces values of social reciprocity and interdependence. This adaptive strategy is a source of strength for Latino families and validates cultural ways of knowing in the midst of particular contexts.

We complement Hidalgo's U.S. Latino family framework with Auerbach's (2007, 2009) typology of parent roles to better understand how the fathers in our study served as resources in the educational lives of their children. Auerbach's research with Latino families explores schooling and equity issues, particularly how "marginalized parents construct their role in promoting their children's access to educational opportunity" (2007, p. 250). She identifies three parent role orientations along a broad continuum of *apoyo* (providing support) for their children's education. Auerbach's typology is helpful because it accounts for "constraints and struggles faced by working-class, marginalized parents" and highlights their "stance as protectors and advocates" (2007, p. 258).

Of particular interest is Auerbach's category of *struggling advocates*. Auerbach describes struggling advocates as "parents who provided more direct, instrumental support and monitoring at home along with advocacy at school" (2007, p. 258). Struggling advocate parents tend to be proactive (hands-on) and persistent as they seek information and negotiate for access with the goal of enhancing opportunities toward social mobility and quality of life aspirations. They acknowledge the importance of Latino-oriented cultural notions of "home-based training in morals and respect" (Auerbach, 2007, p. 263) and mitigate home and school experiences with the belief that they can make a difference as parents. Although their frame of reference may reflect dominant middle-class college-going practices, they struggle with "considerable frustration in dealing with schools" (Auerbach, 2007, p. 266).

Table 1. Excerpt of Auerbach's (2007) Alternative Typology of Parent Roles

	Moral Supporters	Struggling Advocates	Ambivalent Companions
Metaphor	*Hands-off*; clearing the path, pointing the way from afar	*Hands-on*; pushing for progress, encountering rebuff	*Hands-up*; accompanying the journey, holding on to relationships
Mode of Support	Approving, motivating, encouraging, indirect guidance (*consejos*)	Monitoring, advocating, seeking information, negotiating for access	Encouraging, communicating, protecting, occasional assisting on request
Locus of Support	Home	Home and school	Mostly home
Root of Support	Perception of child's ability and motivation, trust in child, immigrant quest for mobility	Family mobility aspirations, distrust of system, belief that parents make a difference	Close relationship with child, wish to help her meet her goals and avoid the parent's struggles
Goal of Support	Launch child for success, build resilience	Access opportunity, improve life chances	Bolster child's self-esteem, maintain relationship, keep safe

In sum, we draw from Hidalgo's (2005) Latino family epistemology framework and Auerbach's (2007, 2009) research with working-class Latino families to explore Puerto Rican fathers' understanding of their roles in providing support for their children's education. This combined interpretive framework allows us to examine these fathers' experiences and perspectives in context and analyze their stances and participation in family–school engagement processes.

Research Methods

The data in this paper are drawn from a community-based study using mixed methods to examine the experiences and perspectives of Latino students and families in a low performing urban school district (PreK–12) in New York State. The larger research study represents part of the agenda of a Latino Education Task Force, which brings together families, students, community leaders, school officials, university faculty, and graduate students in a collaborative effort to counteract high dropout rates and deficit thinking about Latino youth and their families. Within the study school district, Latinos have the lowest graduation rate at 38%, a rate that recently just fell another 6%. Equally

troubling is the high dropout rate of Latinos in the district, which most recently was reported at 33% (New York State Department of Education, 2011).[2] Latinos within the city make up about 16% of the total population and about 20% of the student population in the city school district.

Data Collection

As part of the larger study, 31 focus groups among parents/guardians and students were conducted at nine community locations over the course of seven months. Forty-four parents/guardians and 95 students (ages 11–18) participated in the focus groups with the intent of identifying resources that promote student persistence and success as well as the barriers that limit educational experiences. Recruitment of participants was a multistep process that included community nominations of students and family members from school counselors, local community leaders, teachers, and community advocates. Information letters were sent to every nominated student or parent. Additionally, the local school district provided the research team with a contact list of parents of students who had dropped out of school. These individuals and their families were also sent information letters and invited to participate. Finally, recruitment occurred through already established programs within schools and through community events like college fairs and school district parent forums.

For the purposes of this paper, we draw from the 11 focus groups with parents and guardians, of which 81% (36) were female, and 18% (8) were male. Fathers were present in five of the focus groups; all eight fathers self-identified as Puerto Rican. While the majority of parent/guardian participants were female, the stories and perspectives shared by fathers were significant as they represented an understudied population. We have chosen to privilege the fathers' responses as there is a lack of literature focusing specifically on father engagement, particularly as it relates to Puerto Rican families.

Focus groups were fitting for this study as it allowed for family members to come together to make meaning of their children's school experiences in a collective space (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Similarly, the collectivist orientation Latino families often come from allowed for a community dialogue to ensue based on shared educational and cultural experiences (Mertens, 1998; Rodríguez, Schwartz, Lahman, & Geist, 2011). Each focus group lasted approximately one hour and was facilitated by two members of our research team.

Focus groups were conducted in Spanish and English with family members often switching back and forth between both languages. Focus groups were audiorecorded and transcribed verbatim. The focus group protocol included questions about parent/guardian perspectives of students' school experiences and transition between grades and schools. We were interested in understanding

why certain students were progressing and others were dropping out. We also asked about the ways in which family members were involved in their children's education—at home, in school, and in community settings. Finally, we asked about concerns or recommendations that family members had about the current status of Latino education in the local school district.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with an initial read of two transcripts by a collaborative research team. This helped to ensure intercoder agreement and consistency in preliminary findings and provided an important element of trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007). A list of preexisting codes was developed from this initial read and was further organized by drawing from relevant literature. Initial analysis began with two primary categories: factors influencing Latino dropout, and factors influencing Latino success. Categories were then organized into subcategories around personal/youth factors, environmental factors, and school factors. NVivo 8 was utilized to further analyze the data into refined themes and categories (Bazeley, 2008). Within each of these subcategories we included a code for parents or family engagement and obstacles to engagement.

Since Hidalgo's (2005) Latino families' epistemology framework "requires the interrogation of the researchers' conceptual lens throughout the research" (p. 376), we included researcher journals and analytical memos in our research process as a way of exploring our own subjectivities, biases, and positionalities. The researcher journals and analytical memos also served as data sources in the development of interpretations and findings.

To develop the line of inquiry about the role of fathers, we did an additional level of analysis of the focus group data. That is, we revisited the focus group transcripts in light of the research questions about Latino fathers' understanding of their roles in supporting their children's education, areas of concern, and recommendations for improving the educational status of U.S. Latino students and their families. With these focus areas in mind, we coded and marked transcripts for individual passages and then grouped codes into categories. We then created three composite narrative profiles based on the eight father participants to further analyze, interpret, and share the focus group material (Seidman, 2006). While these composite profiles highlight three fathers, the identities and themes found within are representative of all eight father participants (see Gildersleeve, 2010 and Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001 for more on use of composite characters). We approached each participant profile as a "case" and have assigned pseudonyms to the names of the fathers and to the city. Although diverse in how the fathers came to participate in the study, there were common themes within and across all of the focus groups in which fathers participated.

Researcher Positionalities

We represent two members of a larger multiracial/ethnic and multilingual research team. Some members originate from the local urban area, while other members have moved into the city for personal, academic, and professional reasons. Thus, we are both insiders and outsiders to the local Latino community. The two authors of this particular paper both identify as Latina, one of whom is originally from Puerto Rico and the other who identifies as Mexican-American. While we were able to communicate in both English and Spanish with parents, we recognize that as two Latina women, our identities as women may have provided an additional barrier when recruiting and connecting with fathers. Yet, we found that our other identities helped to create important connections with the fathers in this study. For example, the first author is a former school teacher in the local school district and has served on a number of community boards and activities. Her presence in the local community was an important element in establishing trust with the families. We recognize the challenges associated with ignoring one's identity and potential biases. Because of this, we regularly shared reflective memos, discussed our positionalities in research team meetings, and followed Milner's (2007) advice to work through the dangers of our and others' racialized and cultural ways of knowing.

Trustworthiness

Credibility in qualitative studies "refers to the trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of the research findings" (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). Due to the interpretive nature of this inquiry, it is unlikely that another research study can "confirm" the credibility of the findings. However, we put procedures in place to confirm inferences and interpretations as we attempted to make sense of the data sources. Including researcher reflexivity as part of the data sources facilitated the process of establishing trustworthiness and validity as a collaborative team of researchers. As noted above, this was accomplished by each member of the research team writing researcher memos and journals. In addition to engaging in researcher reflexivity, important validation and trustworthiness strategies were employed during this study. We took special care to establish a sense of trust and rapport with family participants and spent time before and after the focus groups to learn more about the families. For example, parents were often involved in a community or school-based program. Thus, time was often spent learning more about the roles they played in these programs before the official focus group began. We also drew on characteristics of peer debriefing (Creswell, 2007). Peer debriefing was accomplished by presenting preliminary findings to the larger research team and colleagues within

our school of education. Peer debriefing allowed us to reduce bias in the analysis and representation of the data. Both authors were members of the Latino Education Task Force, commissioned by the community-based organization who initiated the larger research project. Preliminary findings about the role of fathers were presented to the Education Task Force in an effort to obtain feedback. Presentations also occurred to various community stakeholders including personnel from the local school district.

Participant Profiles

Before we begin our discussion of the findings, we provide brief composite narrative profiles of the fathers that we highlight in our findings.

Joel Cabrera

Born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, one of the first things that Joel noted was that he and his wife Rosa originally came to Lakeview, New York on "January 3rd of 1989 for vacation and ended up staying." This migration from Puerto Rico to Lakeview was significant in their lives, and 20 years later, Rosa and Joel still remembered the date. Over this 20-year period, the family had also lived in Chicago and Michigan, but had chosen to return and resettle in Lakeview. They live in Lakeview with their three children (two boys, one girl).

At the time of the focus group interview, Joel had been a supervisor and production manager at a private factory for nearly four years. He seemed pleased with his job, and this was one of the reasons he resettled his family to Lakeview. Although quiet at first, midway through the discussion, he began to talk about his experiences and perspectives. In fact, Joel admitted to us (the researchers) that although he had "a lot to say," he felt reluctant to participate because he wasn't sure he could trust us or the process. He gave credit to his wife Rosa who had encouraged him to participate in the focus group that was held at the local Spanish-speaking Catholic church that they attended as a family.

A salient point Joel emphasized was that he felt "thankful to God that he and his wife have three kids on the path to a good education." He noted that his oldest son aspired to be an FBI agent and was going to college in a few months to obtain a four-year degree. His other children were "well behaved," and he was proud to say that teachers shared positive remarks about each of the three children who were students in the Lakeview City School District (LCSD).

Ricardo Santos

Born to a Chilean father and a Puerto Rican mother, Ricardo Santos was originally from the Bronx but had lived in Lakeview most of his adulthood. Ricardo and his wife had four children. At the time of the focus group, the oldest

daughter was attending a local community college and the other three children were enrolled in LCSD schools. One of his daughters was a ninth grader who was participating in a college outreach program sponsored by the local four-year research university. Accordingly, the focus group that Ricardo and his wife attended on campus was facilitated by the second author. Ricardo, his wife, and their daughter were noticeably weary as they arrived late to the focus group set up specifically for students in the outreach program. We later learned that the family had gotten a flat tire on the way to the event and were unsure if they should come in late. Despite their situation, they were eager to participate and had much to share.

Similar to Joel, Ricardo commented on how "fortunate" he was because he had "great kids" who were sought after and esteemed by many classroom teachers. Overall, he felt like they had not had any bad experiences with the schooling of their children. However, he also felt strongly that this was a reflection of their upbringing and the high expectations held in their home. He stated: "I believe that if we didn't put any expectations or were hard on them, they wouldn't have gotten to where they are right now." When asked to give examples of some of these expectations and practices, he mentioned keeping up with homework assignments and having study time to review academic content and prepare for upcoming tasks and tests. Moreover, Ricardo shared his own experience as a high school dropout and later a "returner" to high school. Ricardo shared that he "capped out" at high school. He did take a few courses at the local community college but did not complete a degree. He tapped into his own experiences as part of the *apoyo* (support) and *consejos* (advice) that he provided for his children in the home and school context.

Orlando Bermudez

Orlando was born in Puerto Rico and had been living in Lakeview for 45 years. He said he migrated from the island to the U.S. mainland when he was "really little." Although this move was difficult as a child, now as an adult, he felt very happy to be in Lakeview. At the time of the focus group, his youngest of five children was a sixth grader in the Lakeview City School District. His four other children lived in Florida, and he was the proud grandfather of three grandchildren.

Orlando participated in a focus group with a large group of Latina mothers who attended a family literacy program at an elementary school site (where his sixth grade daughter attended). He had a pleasant and friendly demeanor and openly shared his experiences as an elementary school student in the 1960s. He spoke about linguistic and cultural difficulties, in addition to challenges related to weather changes. As a father, Orlando acknowledged that he was very protective of his daughter because he adored her greatly. She had good grades in

elementary school, and he aspired for her to attend a middle and high school of choice focused on the arts.

Thematic Findings

In the discussion of our thematic findings, we focus on the perspectives and experiences of Joel, Ricardo, and Orlando as they distinctly represent the themes found across the focus groups. They retold perspectives and experiences not only about aspirations for their children and "pushing for progress" (Auerbach, 2007) but also about encountering rejection, criticism, or setbacks in relation to actions and/or practices they had taken to support their children's education. By taking on roles of *cultivators, critics, defenders,* and *advocates*, the fathers reveal complex stances rooted in U.S. Latino family epistemology (Hidalgo, 1999, 2005).

Theme 1: Cultivators of Education as a Family and Community Affair

The fathers all talked about the importance of having high expectations and instilling Latino-centered cultural values related to respect and having a good upbringing. All fathers agreed that a good education begins in the home and talked about P–20 education as a collective (i.e., home–school–community) affair. This theme aligns with previous findings about working-class Mexican American fathers engaging in child rearing practices centered in family loyalty and broad notions of *educación* (Quiñones, 2012; Reese et al., 1995; Valdés, 1996; Villenas & Dehyle, 1999; Zarate, 2007). In a similar fashion, the fathers in our study held high expectations and aspirations for their children, emphasized the value of hard work, and gave their children advice aimed at building resiliency and encouraging school success (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2007).

What is important to highlight in this theme is the idea that the fathers saw their role as a parent who cultivates education as a family and community affair across generations. This idea is significant because it evokes collectivist and family-centered practices (see Chávez, 2007; Reese et al., 1995; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2007; Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2011; Valdés, 1996). This family-centered collectivist orientation—emphasizing group identity, interdependence, and social responsibility—is consistent with previous research with Mexican American and Puerto Rican families in the U.S. (Hidalgo, 2005).

Education as a Family Affair

We draw specifically on Ricardo's experience to illustrate this theme. For example, Ricardo held high expectations for his high school daughter and was explicit about his desire for her to set a good example for her younger siblings:

> Yeah, I told her, "This is why I push you more; it's not because you're the ugly duckling or whatever, but I need to make sure that—I know that they're [siblings] gonna follow you. So I need to make sure that you're the best that you can be so that they can follow you.

At one point, his daughter chose not to join the family on a vacation because she wanted to attend a pre-college activity instead. In a strategic move, Ricardo and his wife allowed her to stay behind—as part of their effort to encourage college knowledge as a family affair:

> We went on vacation, and she wound up staying because she didn't wanna miss her pre-college program opportunity. So that was on her own. No doubt that our influence and my oldest's [daughter] influenced her, but she decided, and had she not done that, she wouldn't of—she's been to different colleges, and she's experienced seeing some of them. She's already looking forward to college.

Ricardo's "push" was family-centered with the hope that his daughter's college plans would promote aspirations for younger family members to also pursue a college education. Although Ricardo acknowledged that letting their middle daughter stay behind (and not go on vacation with the family) was an uncommon practice for them, he understood educational attainment as a means of cultivating "a better life" for the entire family and for future generations. Additionally, Ricardo demonstrated his families' values of equitable educational opportunities for his daughter. Deficit expectations have historically gendered young Latinas, exemplified by the term, "*marianismo*" (Sy & Brittian, 2008). *Marianismo* emphasizes the Latina woman's role as a family caretaker rather than pursuing an education, suggesting that young Latinas cannot or should not pursue both family and education goals. This conflict is also explained by Cammarota (2004) who suggests that Latinas face the challenge of "managing the contradiction between gender advancement through educational attainment and the preservation of gendered cultural norms" (p. 55). Although Ricardo may not have been consciously rejecting notions of *marianismo*, by encouraging his daughter to participate in the summer program, he was making space for her to flourish in *both* academic and family environments.

Education as a Community Affair

Our focus group discussion of education as a family affair led to a problem-centered discussion of education as a community affair. One of Ricardo's main concerns was the great disparity between suburban and urban schools. He positioned himself as a parent who had "seen the difference" and was concerned about notable discrepancies around standards, academic and social expectations, resources, and college access for students (and their families). He felt the Lakeview City School District, as an urban school district, was "doing the bare minimum and not giving their best effort." Even when students did graduate from city schools, he questioned to what extent graduates were "really prepared for college." In other words, he seriously questioned their college readiness:

> …Once these kids are graduating, everyone is like, "Yeah, great they graduated!" But, are they really prepared for college? High school graduation is an accomplishment, but then what? I sat down with my daughter, and I said, "Listen, you graduated; I'm proud of you; you did great. But now, it's a whole different ballgame [life after graduation]. Now, I'm expecting more. Now, it starts all over. Scratch that out…now you're back to ground zero. Now, there's different expectations; it's going to be a whole different ballgame.

As noted in the passage above, Ricardo interrogated the value of a high school graduation and felt that a collective sense of low expectations for college going was a community problem that needed to be counteracted and resisted. Ricardo went on to acknowledge the influential role of parents and how misinformed upward mobility and generational thinking perpetuate low expectations:

> But I know for a lot of parents, you're just the only one that graduated from high school, so you did well. You did better than us, so that's it, because they don't know any more anyways. Even if they know, they're aware that there are colleges, but that's not here [an option in the family]. Well, you're gonna have already a better job because you got a high school diploma. They don't realize, because they are not out there looking for these jobs that require college-level education. They don't know that. "Well, you're gonna get a better job because I know a lot of jobs just require a high school education, so you'll have a better job than me." That's it; that's where they top off.

Again, Ricardo's narrative points to the role of parents as cultivators of education as a family and community affair across generations. To expand on this idea from a different experience, he spoke about his oldest daughter who was attending a community college. What concerned Ricardo was that despite taking advanced placement courses in a city high school, his daughter thought her

first year courses were "really hard." Thus, Ricardo felt that more could have been done at the high school level to better prepare his oldest daughter for postsecondary coursework. He also gave the example of a younger daughter who was taking a math class. Again, Ricardo's concern was that she was not being challenged in the classroom.

> She complains every other week: "We don't do nothing. The students don't let the teacher teach. The teacher don't do nothing. We just stay there." So yeah, my daughter looks like a star student now because she's behaving, she's not acting up, and she does her homework. But is she being challenged to do more? It's sad. And I know my kids can do better and more, but they don't get challenged.

For these reasons, Ricardo emphasized that "teachers can do more" and "schools can do more" as far as rigor in curriculum and academic preparation for college. His impression was that students in suburban schools had greater access to college readiness. Therefore, he viewed the disparity between urban and suburban schools as a communitywide issue that needed to be addressed. As a cultivator, he highlighted the individual and collective nature of education and raised issues about the quality and nature of schooling that his children were receiving. In so doing, he moved from a cultivator stance to a critic stance. It is important to note that fathers in this study were all long-term residents of the city of Lakeview and were fluent in both English and Spanish. Thus, their perspectives about family engagement could also have been shaped by linguistic acculturation (see Lopez, 2007) and dominant involvement norms (see Auerbach, 2007). This is evident in the ways in which Ricardo, for example, speaks to both the individual and collective involvement norms. For the second theme, we elaborate on the role of fathers as critics of their children's education. To illustrate this theme, we turn our attention to Joel and Orlando as critics of racism and family–school dynamics.

Theme 2: Critics of Home–School–Community Dynamics

Critics of Communication Practices

All of the fathers in the study shared strategies they used to mediate learning as a process between home and school. This included traditional middle-class practices such as checking book bags, having the children review the notes they took in class, studying for tests, and providing a designated space and/or time for homework to be done at home. However, in talking about these strategies, Joel raised some concerns he had around communication between parents, the schools, and the district. For instance, he questioned the amount and quality of information given to parents (from school and district staff). In his experience,

it was "*muy pobre"* (of poor quality) and could be improved in an effort to enhance relationships between families and schools. For example, he noted that letters sent home to parents often contained names of school or district officials to contact but gave very little or no information beyond a name and number. Joel remarked: "Who is this person that I need to contact? What is their position? What do they look like? Give me a description, at least, please!" Consequently, he recommended that schools take a more person-centered, relational approach to communicate with families. To illustrate his point, Joel shared an experience he and his wife had when dealing with transportation (i.e., bus) issues for one of the children:

> The school sent a letter saying, "Please call so and so at this number." My wife calls. Then they said, "No, you have to call this other number." Then that person says, "I don't know what you are talking about." So then, she had to call like four or five numbers to solve the problem. In other words, the information in the letter was not sufficient, and this led to confusion and unnecessary obstacles in the process of solving a transportation issue.

Additionally, Joel mentioned that the phone numbers given by school officials were often not helpful because the person was not there, and parents had to leave messages. To make matters worse, in his experience, the person called usually did not respond or did not call back. As a parent who wanted to advocate for his children, such communication obstacles provoked frustration rather than *confianza* (mutual trust) between parents and schools. Joel was seeking an authentic caring relationship (Stanton-Salazar, 2001) whereby school personnel would serve to help rather than deceive or frustrate. *Confianza* captures the nature of such culturally based relationships; specifically, "When individuals have *confianza* in each other, they are willing to make themselves vulnerable to each other, to share intimacies without fear of being hurt or taken for granted" (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, p. 31).

Orlando also raised concerns about communication issues, specifically with respect to interaction patterns between the cafeteria workers and the students. What bothered him was the way that the school lunch staff treated the children and, particularly, the way one adult treated his daughter. He felt that the adults working in the lunchroom were rude, disrespectful, and impatient because they yelled at the students extensively and abruptly took the food away from the students even if they were not finished eating, among other things. He felt that these actions and behaviors were disrespectful to the students.

Critics of Pervasive Racial/Ethnic Tensions and Structural/Institutional Racism

The racial and ethnic tensions that Orlando spoke about as he voiced his concern about the quality and nature of adult–student interactions in the school cafeteria are also important to consider. To further elaborate, Orlando stated that historical tensions between African Americans and Puerto Ricans/Latinos were at the root of the problem. In this particular case, the person in the lunchroom that he felt was "mistreating" his daughter was African American. Orlando's statement initiated a lively conversation during the focus group interview, particularly among participants who agreed there was some prejudice and discrimination against/toward Puerto Rican students in the schooling context. In response, Orlando stated that prejudice and discrimination were not only a school-level issue but also a district-level issue. To illustrate his point, he told stories about going to the district offices on numerous occasions to take care of a few problems, only to leave feeling like the district was not responsive to his concerns. Orlando stated, "*se estan echando para atrás*" (loosely translated as "they are stepping back/not taking responsibility"). Later during the focus group when participants were recounting their frustrations with being mistreated by personnel in the Department of Social Services, Orlando stepped in to say *"Despierten! Hay mucho racismo, demasiado* (Wake up! There is a lot of racism, too much). His comment seemed to resonate with many of the parents participating in the focus group as evidenced by their nodding of heads and reflective pause time that followed his "plea" to wake up and confront the racism.

The issue of racism was not unique to this particular focus group. In fact, racism was a frequent topic of conversation across focus groups with students and parents (see Kiyama & Harris, 2010). Students shared that issues of racism impacted their identity development, peer interactions, and sense of belonging in the classroom and the school. Family members across focus groups echoed Orlando's concerns, sharing examples of discrimination based on language and resource allocation. Family members were most passionate when sharing the discrimination that their children encountered. Spanish-dominant students in particular encountered schooling spaces that required a transition into new classrooms, new languages, new ascribed identities, and mixed reactions from school personnel that sometimes included racial bias.

In sum, Orlando and Joel expressed the need to address poor communication practices between schools/districts and families that create obstacles for parents trying to support their children's education. Moreover, they spoke to systemic issues of invisibility and racism that shaped their role as cultivators and critics. Our third theme continues this line of thinking and elaborates on their role as defenders and advocates.

Theme 3: Defenders, Yet Vulnerable Advocates of Educational Equity

Thus far, themes one and two speak to previous research demonstrating that U.S. Latino families value education and want to be considered sources of wisdom and guidance in their children's educational process (Auerbach, 2007; Hill & Torres, 2010; Zarate, 2007). It was clear from fathers' responses that they were not approaching social and academic situations passively. Our participants told stories of how they visited school and district offices in order to raise questions or seek changes for some aspect of their children's education. All agreed that the problem was not that Latino parents didn't care or were passive, but rather that when they voiced their concerns, the response from administrators and/or school officials was, generally speaking, nonexistent or ineffective. Thus, our findings suggest that issues of racism and Latino invisibility led to a vigilant, yet vulnerable positioning of fathers.

Defenders of the Invisible

At the school and district level, Ricardo felt that Latinos were purposefully "being kept out of the loop" since, in his view, most of the policies and practices were "catered to Blacks." Since Ricardo viewed the Latino dropout/pushout problem as a family and community affair, he felt that schools/districts needed to address this issue in a manner that not only accounted for explicit attention to Latino youth, but also institutional roles and responsibilities:

> I truly believe that the Latinos are being kept out of the loop, you know what I'm saying? There's not so much for them. I think a lot of stuff is catered more for Blacks. I don't think there's a lot of help. If there is, like I said, nobody's letting us know, letting anybody know, "look, there's help for this kid." Of if they drop out, they drop out. What are they doing about it? How is the school working on, the district working on, these high school dropouts? They are not really trying to find out why these kids are dropping out. Are they doing some kind of gathering of these kids and asking them why? "Why are you dropping out? Where did we fail you?"

It is clear from the passage above that Ricardo was reminding us of the need to take individual and collective ownership of the problem. He also recognized that for the situation to improve, we also need to look at larger systemic issues at play. Ricardo drew from his own experience as a high school dropout and later a returner to school in his critique of the schools' and district's seemingly "hands off stance" toward Latino dropouts. He advocated for a more explicit, hands-on approach regarding this long-standing issue.

Vulnerable Advocates Amidst a "Sinking" Community

At the school and community level, Joel also felt there was "no help for Hispanics." He attributed this problem to budget cuts that had caused parks to be closed down and school programs and sports activities to be eliminated. Joel also talked about tensions and challenges related to Latino-serving nonprofit organizations. He drew from his experiences as a coach for the Hispanic Baseball League and as an employee of a community agency serving Puerto Rican youth to emphasize repeatedly that the Latino community was "sinking." In his view, it didn't help that local minority-serving community agencies were competing for scarce funds and, ironically, engaging in practices that did not better serve the youth and their families (see Quiñones, Ares, Ravsi Padela, Hopper, & Webster, 2011). Overall, Joel's responses suggested high levels of frustration and disappointment as a defender and advocate of his children and family within the larger context of a struggling Latino community in Lakeview. In other words, the idea of a "sinking" Latino community related to a precarious and vulnerable positioning of Puerto Rican fathers within the larger social context.

This third theme demonstrates how the fathers have high academic expectations for their children despite feeling excluded from the school community (Auerbach, 2007; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Zarate, 2007). Moreover, this finding illustrates that invisibility, racism, and institutional racism are significant factors influencing these fathers' abilities to advocate for their children. All fathers took on a defensive stance when discussing the need for more explicit and responsive attention given to Latino students and families at the school, district, and community levels. Most noticeable, their vulnerability was tied to ongoing and pervasive tensions between African Americans and Latinos in the community. To this extent, this study confirms previous ethnographic research revealing a Black–Brown divide in Lakeview (Ares et al., 2011; Quiñones et al., 2011).

Discussion

Similar to the participants in Auerbach's (2007) study, the fathers in our study supported their children by "monitoring, advocating, seeking information, and negotiating for access" (p. 262). To this extent, the participants reflected dominant middle-class approaches to parental involvement. However, their rationale for this kind of engagement stemmed not only from having high aspirations for their family and believing they can make a difference as a parent, but also because they did not "trust the system" and were very critical of schools and districts for a variety of reasons (Auerbach, 2007, p. 262). In

other words, although their intended goal was to increase their children's access to opportunities and improve the likelihood of better life outcomes, the fathers were "motivated by distinctive concerns linked to their social and cultural location" (Auerbach, 2007, p. 251). By engaging as cultivators, critics, defenders, and advocates, they not only wanted to be involved, but also understood middle-class forms of involvement and culture and power dynamics (Darder, 1991/2012). This suggests their involvement was a form of agency—a pushing back against the system that made them distrustful in the first place. They were intentionally playing "the game" not just because someone told them they should be involved, but because they understood that in order to progress, they had to play by the rules of the middle class, while at the same time critiquing it and their place in it.

Our findings reveal that fathers strategically mediate home and school and cultivate home- and family-centered educational practices grounded in the concept of *educación* (Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999; Villenas & Dehyle, 1999). However, the fathers do so in a critical manner that challenges traditional Latino values around *educación* that promote deference to authority and thereby foster silence and passivity toward school personnel (i.e., teachers, administrators; see Chávez, 2007, Quiñones, 2012). These fathers defend and advocate for their children in order to promote school success and monitor an educational system that they did not trust nor did they feel included in. Likewise, they acknowledged their vulnerable positioning as fathers resisting racism and invisibility in schools and in the larger neighborhood community. Hence, a common theme across the data sources is the idea of moving "*contra la corriente*" or going against the current within the context of a larger community that is perceived to be *hundiendo*, or sinking.

Study Limitations and Strengths

The limitations of this study are also reflective of its contributions. For example, while we have chosen to represent findings in the form of three composite characters based on eight fathers, a seemingly low participant number, the findings illustrate the rich contributions these fathers offer the literature. Furthermore, although mothers represented over half of the participants in the larger research study and their voices are not presented within this article, we have done so intentionally, as research specifically on the role of father engagement is continually sparse. Moreover, although our findings provide us with a better understanding of fathers who are invested in their children's social and academic success, it does little to expand our knowledge about fathers of children who drop out or are pushed out of high school. This is a limitation given that the Latino Education Task Force originally sought our participation

(as university researchers) for the purpose of including family and youth perspectives around the issue of chronic, high dropout rates of Latino youth in Lakeview. Yet, while these fathers cannot pinpoint specific reasons Latino students drop out of the local school district (as their children have successfully progressed), their concerns about schooling practices point to various factors that contribute to a process of dropping out—limited educational resources, negative interactions with school personnel, and a struggling community context. These overall factors help us to better understand both the role that Puerto Rican fathers can play in this particular community *and* the influences that students are negotiating as they work to persist in school.

Implications

Our findings reveal how Puerto Rican fathers in the U.S. operate and construct knowledge within the intersecting spaces of history, culture, social class, and structural/institutional racism. Considered together, these participants remind us that fathers are not only vulnerable as individuals within a family/household social unit, but also as individuals within a collective group facing numerous challenges as Puerto Rican parents. A troubling reality is that our analysis surfaced a kind of vulnerability that we describe through the metaphorical imagery captured in our title. Our findings suggest fathers are moving *contra la corriente* (against the current) within a "sinking" community context. Their overall stances speak to complex ways that historical and structural dynamics shape family–school engagement processes.

Our findings have implications for Latino family engagement and the need for collaboration and community action aimed at "adjusting the sails" as we move toward educational equity (Pedraza & Rivera, 2005). However, we continue to be faced with top-down initiatives premised on middle-class ideologies and deficit notions of Latino parental engagement, rather than empowering and advocacy-centered approaches to bicultural parental engagement (see Hong, 2011; Knight, Norton, Bentley, & Dixon, 2004; Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011; Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009). As a case in point, just recently the Lakeview City School District kicked off an initiative to spur father involvement with the hope that more fathers step up and become more involved in the classroom. While we commend this initiative focused on fathers, we question their approach to parental involvement and hope that the workforce and educational training component of this initiative not only includes custodial assistance and GED training (as suggested in the local media), but also responsive and advocacy-centered approaches to engagement as a family and community affair, one which addresses issues of individual and institutional racism and invisibility, as demonstrated in our findings. Efforts

to engage families are often one-directional and neglect to include community members, organizations, and/or programs.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additionally, our findings suggest important implications for future research. Given our small sample size and the lack of educational research focusing on father engagement, future studies should include additional focus group and individual interviews with Latino fathers. Future research should explicitly focus on the ways in which engagement has been racialized, classed, and gendered. In addition, because our sample included fathers who were established in the local community and were fluent English speakers, we encourage future researchers to include fathers who have recently (im)migrated to the studied locales, as their connection to educational systems will likely be influenced by home cultures and language. We cannot allow for a lack of research in this area to perpetuate an assumption that fathers are not involved in the educational lives of their children. This initial study should encourage others to continue to (re)define the diverse ways in which fathers engage with education both inside and outside of school walls.

Conclusion

As educational researchers concerned with families in schools and educational equity (Auerbach, 2007), we wanted to provide the reader with a greater understanding of the roles that Latino fathers *already* play in supporting their children's education. Our study explored Latino fathers' understanding of their roles in supporting the social and academic development of their children. We also wanted to know if they felt excluded from the school community and what recommendations they had for improving the educational status of Latinos in their local school system.

The Puerto Rican fathers in our study took a critical, hands-on approach to their role as contributors to their children's education. They retold perspectives and experiences not only about "pushing for progress" but also encountering rejection, criticism, or setbacks in relation to actions and/or practices they had taken to support their children's education. It is clear from the fathers' narratives that the community context is a vital element that must not be overlooked. Thus, future efforts to engage family members, and fathers in particular, should be co-constructed amongst school personnel, families, and community members if we are to support Latino fathers. Rather than moving against the current, we can adjust the sails and garner the winds toward a better education for Latino children and their families.

Endnotes

[1]While recognizing the gendered nature of the terms Latino (male) and Latina (female), the term Latino will be used throughout the paper.

[2]There are a proportion of Latina/o students who neither graduate nor dropout four years after entering 9th grade. Data is collected five and six years after entering 9th grade. Data suggests that dropout outcomes increased one and two years after students' expected graduation (Kiyama & Harris, 2010).

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Family–School Partnership: Practices of Immigrant Parents in Quebec, Canada

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Abstract

The immigrant population is increasing steadily every year in Canada and in Quebec, in particular. The immigrant population is made up largely of families, most of whom have school-age children. However, we have little information on the practices these parents adopt when they become involved in their children's schooling. In this study, 28 parents from three groups (Latin American, Maghrebi/Northwest African, and Central African) took part in semistructured interviews designed to uncover their perspectives of family–school collaboration. The practices identified were analysed using Epstein's (2001) framework of six types of involvement. The results showed that the parent involvement practices were interdependent and that the intentions underlying the practices could vary from one parent to another. We were also able to identify individual and environmental factors that influenced these practices.

Key Words: immigrants, parents, family, families, parental involvement, engagement, family–school collaboration, partnerships, Latino, African, Quebec, Canada, roles, practices, communication, schools, schooling, education

Introduction

The school's relationship with the family and the community is a major challenge currently facing Quebec schools. The Council of Higher Education (1994) and the Council of Family and Childhood (2001) advise the Ministry of

Education, Leisure, and Sports (MELS) on this dynamic. They identify specific issues such as the recognition of parental skills, the expectations of each party, and the role of parents at school. Moreover, studies show that parental involvement in children's schooling supports children's success in school (Christenson & Reschly, 2009; Deslandes, 2006; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2003; Deslandes, Royer, Potvin, & Leclerc, 1999; Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Lareau, 1989). The importance of parent involvement has implications for traditional and nontraditional (i.e., single parent, families with disabled children, immigrant) families. While the school–family relationship has been studied over the past several years, the relationship between schools and immigrant families has received limited attention.

The number of people immigrating to Canada and to Quebec each year is growing (Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Community [MICC], 2009a, 2009b; Statistics Canada, 2006). Specifically, Canada has had a 7% increase in immigration since 2000 (Statistics Canada, 2010), whereas in Quebec, immigration has had an 8% increase (MICC, 2013). In addition, immigrant families' integration into their new society can be affected by a variety of factors, including their culture and country of origin, their socioeconomic status in their country of origin, their level of mastery of the language of the recipient country, their level of education, their reasons for immigration, their migration plan, the existence of an ethnocultural community that they can identify with in the recipient country, and relationships with the dominant culture (Benoît, Rousseau, Ngirumpaste, & Lacroix, 2008; Bérubé, 2004; Costigan & Su, 2004; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Valdés, 1996).

In 1998, the Quebec Ministry of Education (MEQ) issued a policy on school integration and intercultural education (MEQ, 1998). This policy arose from a recommendation of the Commission for the Estates General on Education (MEQ, 1996a, 1996b), which noted the numerous but scattered efforts made by schools with regard to immigrant families. There was clearly a need to provide guidelines that would specify schools' responsibilities in matters of integration and intercultural education. One of these guidelines deals particularly with the relationship between families and communities, on one hand, and the responsibilities of teaching establishments, on the other. Thus, the goals are designed to facilitate immigrant parents' involvement in schools. While there is limited research on the impact of the links between community and school on parental involvement, some research is emerging on conditions that foster immigrant families' involvement in school.

Immigrant Parents' Involvement in Their Children's Schooling

Immigrant parents' involvement in school can depend on a numbers of factors, including the immigrant family's history and background, the impact

of the new environment, and the recipient society. Studies have confirmed that children's education is very important to immigrant parents (Audet, 2008; Delgado Gaitan, 1991; Kanouté, Vatz Laaroussi, Rachédi, & Doffouchi, 2008; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2011; Valdés, 1996). Indeed, this is reported by parents as one of the main reasons to immigrate. Some studies have also shown that parents who perceive the school as a means of social advancement tend to encourage their children to pursue their education (Carréon, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Mo & Singh, 2008; Orozco, 2008). These parents often have very high expectations for their children. The family dynamic, which refers here to the family's ways of functioning and how parents and children interact, can also have an influence, especially when this dynamic is very different from that promoted by the recipient society (Costigan & Su, 2004; Kanouté & Llevot Calvet, 2008). Parents who sense that their interactions with their children are perceived negatively will tend to withdraw. Finally, everything related to the migratory path (conditions related to their departure, conditions upon arrival) will have repercussions on families' integration into the recipient society. For example, immigrant parents often take on employment that is not secure, and they may therefore be less available to take part in school meetings (García Coll et al., 2002; Kanouté & Saintfort, 2003). In the same vein, studies have shown that the language and cultural differences between the host society and immigrant families influence parental engagement and involvement (Denessen, Bakker, & Gierveld, 2007; Klein, 2008; Li, 2006; Wang, 2008). In addition to learning a new language and getting to know a new culture, it appears that immigrant parents experience more culture shock as they have to navigate two school systems (the one they experienced and the one in which the child develops), and they are confronted with changes in roles (i.e., the role they used to play, and the one expected in the host society; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993; Valdés, 1996). Consequently, some immigrant parents seem to withdraw or participate less in school activities.

Meanwhile, schools may see such behaviors as a sign of lack of parental interest and involvement. Of course, limited knowledge of the dominant language affects the development of a relationship with the school, and translation alone does not remediate this problem. In fact, the differences in values and practices of parents and school staff that are both implicit and explicit and the attitudes of school personnel and their stereotypes toward immigrant families can have more impact on the family–school relationship than language (Benoît et al., 2008; Carreón et al., 2005; García Coll et al., 2002; McAndrew, Pagé, Jodoin, & Lemire, 1999; Moosa, Karabenick, & Adams, 2001; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003; Wong & Hughes, 2006). From

both perspectives, the interpretations of behavior and use of language may be challenging for parents and teachers.

In Quebec, the percentage of school children from immigrant families increased from 13.7% in 1996–1997 to 18.1% in 2003–2004 (MELS, 2006). In 2003–2004, 85% of these students were in public schools, and 77.9% of those were from families whose mother tongue was neither French nor English. Studies have shown that immigrant parents' perceptions of their parenting role and of school is closely related to their personal history (Lahaie, 2008; López, 2001). In addition, the host society expects them to assume a specific role and, in some cases, challenges the values and beliefs of immigrant parents with a very different value system than the one they know (Turney & Kao, 2009). Some of the research on immigrant families and school collaboration has shown that parents' engagement is positively related to children's success in school, and parents' involvement at home is also strongly linked to immigrant children's school achievement (Carreón et al., 2005; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Others have observed that immigrant parents' perceptions of school and of their involvement often differ from those of the host society (Delgado Gaitan, 1991; García Coll et al., 2002; Kanouté & Saintfort, 2003; Kanouté et al., 2008; Orozco, 2008). In fact, their involvement in school may be perceived by this society as an indicator of their social integration and is even considered by some as showing adherence to this society's values. Consequently, these inconsistencies in perceptions are potentially contentious issues between the school and immigrant families. Thus, some schools perceive that there is a lack of participation of immigrant families in their institutions; therefore, these parents may feel the school personnel are judging them which may leave parents further alienated from others and less active in the decisions affecting their children's education.

In the current Quebec context, the majority of the increasing immigrant population speaks neither French nor English. Since parental involvement is encouraged in both official and informal documentation, it is important to understand immigrant parents' vision of their role and the practices they enact to carry out this role. Therefore, in this study, we were interested in understanding the practices that immigrant parents adopt when they become involved in their children's schooling.

Theoretical Framework

Many authors agree that parental involvement is multidimensional (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004; Beauregard, 2006; Desforges &

Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein, 1992; Fan & Chen, 2001). However, the role parents play in school is not consistently defined across the literature. The most commonly described role is related to practices associated with parents' involvement in their children's schooling and their relationship with the school (Christenson & Reschly, 2009; Hoover-Demspey et al., 2005). Various models have been created to illustrate parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey's (2005) and Epstein's (1992, 2001) are the models found most often in the literature. The former focuses on the reasons underlying parents' involvement and is defined particularly by parents' feelings and perceptions of competency and effectiveness, as well as by the opportunities created by the school to foster parental involvement. The latter encompasses parental practices that are related to education. Given that the primary objective of this study was to describe parental practices, we have used Epstein's framework of parent involvement to analyze parent's perceptions of their involvement.

Epstein (1992, 2001) proposed a framework composed of six dimensions, each made up of a group of parental practices. For each dimension, Epstein presented a series of activities or practices that parents adopt when they become involved in their child's education. The dimensions include: (1) family obligations and support of their child ("Parenting"), (2) home–school communication ("Communicating"), (3) family involvement in school life ("Volunteering"), (4) parental involvement in the child's schoolwork at home ("Learning at Home"), (5) parental participation in the decision-making process and in the management and defence of the child's interests ("Decision Making"), and (6) partnership with the school, businesses, and other local organizations ("Collaborating with the Community"; Epstein, 1992, 2001). This framework is useful for identifying parental practices in the schooling experience of a child. We have therefore used this framework to classify the practices of immigrant parents (see Table 1).

This framework can be used to distinguish between different types of parental practices related to their children's education in general. Since there have been fewer studies on parental involvement of immigrant parents, parental perceptions of these practices may reveal whether one dimension is more important than another for immigrant parents (Carreón et al., 2005; Denessen et al., 2007; Hossain & Shipman, 2009; Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012; Klein, 2008; Li, 2004; Wang, 2008).

Table 1. Parental Practices According to Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement (2001)

Dimensions	Practices of Parents
Obligations toward and support for the child	•Ensure the child's well-being: physical health, nutrition, clothing, hygiene •Talk with the child •Take part in education groups
Home–school communication	•Meet with the teacher •Attend information sessions •Obtain support for parents from the school
Family involvement in school life	•Attend training sessions •Attend school activities •Attend extracurricular activities •Visit the classroom •Volunteer
Parental involvement in the child's schoolwork at home	•Supervise homework •Support the work of the teachers
Parental participation in decision-making, managing and defending the child's interests (advocacy)	•Support school programs •Sit on decision-making committees, organizational boards, parents' committees at the school commission •Engage in advocacy for children's interests
Partnership with the school, businesses, or other local organizations	•Meet with businesses, social clubs, community organizations

Although these practices represent the roles parents play, they do not delve into parents' perspectives of their own roles. This representation of their roles can be related to social and personal perceptions they have of the environment and of the roles within that environment. Parents will thus apply the practices they consider to be appropriate and necessary in order to carry out their roles as effectively as possible. This theoretical framework is borrowed from the social psychological work of Abric (1989), which encompasses several aspects related to issues of immigrant families:

> It consists of the product and the process of a mental activity by which an individual or a group reconstructs the reality with which it is confronted and attributes to it a specific meaning. A representation is therefore an organized set of opinions, practices, beliefs, and information referring to an object or a situation. It is determined by the subject himself (his history, his experience), by the social and ideological system into which

> he has been placed, and by the nature of his connections with this social system. (p. 189; authors' translation)

What emerges from this definition is that parents' representation of their role is a social construct that relates parents' personal history with that of the society in which they now live. Thus, examining immigrant parents' representation of their role will provide an in-depth understanding of parents' underlying beliefs and values as they relate to their practices.

In summary, from the limited research on immigrant parents in Canada, we can identify the factors influencing immigrant families' integration into the host society and their perceptions about their partnership with schools, but we know very little about the practices they adopt when they become involved in their children's schooling. This observation raises several questions. How do immigrant parents see their role in the school environment in Quebec? What practices do immigrant parents adopt when they partner with the school? Are these practices the same for all immigrant parents? What were the underlying issues influencing these practices? What factors influence these parents' perceptions? The following research objectives guided our inquiry: (a) to examine immigrant parents' representations of their role; (b) to analyze parental perceptions of their practices as they describe their involvement practices in their child's schooling; and (c) to identify the factors that influenced these practices.

Methodology

Given our objectives, this study used an interpretive paradigm as we sought to understand the meaning attributed to reality, that is, the representations underlying the practices of immigrant parents in Quebec's school system (Savoie-Zjac, 2003). Our desire to acquire both knowledge and a deeper understanding of parental involvement among immigrant families led us to undertake a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The qualitative research approach is particularly useful because it is representative of the respondents' reality; that is, the subjects should recognize themselves in the results. It should also be meaningful for those in the sector involved, so that they can use the results in practical applications. Finally, it should take into account the interactions between individuals and their environment. This approach allows the researcher to adapt to the needs of the research process while still respecting the focus of the study (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2008).

Measures

We used two instruments for data collection. The first was a sociodemographic questionnaire that collected information on the participants: country of origin, number of years in Quebec, number of children, level of education, religious affiliation, first language, education background, employment in their country of origin, and employment in Quebec. This allowed us to develop a picture of the history and background of the participants. The second instrument was a semistructured interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. The open-ended questions were focused on partnership with the school and the practices parents used when becoming involved in their child's schooling.

The open-ended questions were geared toward general practices as well as practices specific to each dimension of Epstein's framework of six types of involvement (2001). We adopted the same questioning frame used in a previous study (Beauregard, 2011). Specifically, we asked parents the following questions: *Tell us about how it is going for your child in school. How do you perceive your parenting role in school? How do you perceive your parenting role with your children? How do perceive your role with your children's teacher? What is your role at your child's school? What is your role in the school board (district)? How do you play your role toward the community?* Before the data collection process, these two measures were validated by peer experts in the field who work with immigrant families. We then checked these questions with a volunteer parent using the discussion grid to ensure the questions were significant and effective (Van der Maren, 1995). The data gathered from this parent were not included in the analysis of our findings. However, this step allowed us to fine-tune certain questions and to confirm that they would elicit information from parents regarding their parental practices. For example, we changed the question *How do you perceive the parent role?* To *How do you perceive your role in supporting children at school?* We also focused more on parent's role in the community by asking how they were playing their parent role in their own community and in Quebec's community.

Procedure

The research team included three interviewers/research assistants who were immigrant students (2 males and 1 female) who were graduate students in the social and human sciences and education and who had lived in Quebec less than 5 years. In addition, the three researchers included two who are French Quebecois and one who is second generation Quebecois whose parents were immigrants. The interviewers were chosen from the associated communities related to this study. Their first language was that of the culture of the families

and parents of this study, and the participants were encouraged to speak their mother tongue if they wished. The interviewers participated in the formulation of the sociodemographic questionnaire and also in the development of the interview questions. This step allowed the researchers to adapt the questions to the ethnic community they were interviewing. For example, we asked the ethnic backgrounds of Magrebiani and Latin American participants, but this was not a relevant question for participants from the Central African immigrant community. In this way, the questions were always adapted to the community that were being interviewed. The assistants underwent training to understand the research objectives and to learn how to conduct semistructured interviews in order to minimize as much as possible any potential for bias on their part. In addition, the interviewers were trained in active listening skills and interviewed the participants in an open-ended and encouraging way to ensure that the participants were comfortable and discussed what was important to them. The interviewers were sensitized to any possible biases that may influence the interviews and to be ethically responsible in formulating and reformulating a question when the participant seemed not to understand or asked for clarification. After the interviews were completed, the interviewers translated as necessary and transcribed them verbatim.

We recruited parents in two ways. The first was by sending a recruitment letter to community organizations that work with immigrant populations. These organizations contacted their members by letter or placed notices in their newsletters about our study. Our recruitment letter presented the research objectives, selection criteria, and how to contact the researcher. To be included in the study, parents had to meet two selection criteria: (a) they were able to communicate in French, and (b) their child had been in a regular class in elementary school in Quebec for at least one year. This was to ensure that parents had a certain basic knowledge of Quebec's school environment. Parents who wished to participate contacted the researcher by phone. During this call, the research objectives were reviewed, procedures for their participation were determined, and an appointment was set up for the first meeting.

The second method of recruitment was the cascade method, which involved asking people working in this field to talk about the research project (Van der Maren, 1995). As mentioned, we hired research assistants who themselves were immigrants from the same groups targeted in the study, that is, from Central Africa, Maghreb, and Latin America. Thus, they shared the same culture as the parents they encountered and were therefore able to observe verbal and nonverbal communication that would be less noticeable to people from outside those cultures. In addition, if parents had difficulty responding in French on the questionnaires or during the interviews, then the assistant could translate

everything or let the parents express themselves in their own language. They recruited families from their own communities who met the criteria.

The interviews were conducted at the families' homes from January to May 2010. During these interviews, parents were first given information about the study and the consent process; they were also asked for permission to record the interview. Once they were assured of confidentiality, they signed a consent form. These steps were intended to create a relationship of trust and respect between the researcher and parents so they could freely express their fears or expectations and ask questions. During the interview, parents were asked first to describe broadly their role in terms of their involvement in their children's schooling. Then they were asked specifically about their role in relation to their child, the teacher, the school team, the school environment, and the community. At the end of the interview, the research assistant summarized the parents' comments and asked if they wished to add anything. In this study, the parents of any one child were considered a single unit.

Participants

The parents who participated in this study resided primarily in the Eastern Townships region of Quebec. This region is near Quebec's borders with Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The territory is large (10,195 km²) with 2.4% of Quebec's population with approximately 310,000 citizens (Statistics Canada, 2012). The Eastern Townships welcome approximately 2.2% of people each year (around 1,000 immigrants) migrating to Quebec; specifically, in 2011, 4.7% of the population was immigrant (MICC, 2009a, 2009b; Statistics Canada, 2012). Even if Eastern Townships ranks as the seventh region numerically in welcoming immigrants in Quebec, it has the third highest number of immigrants coming from visible minorities, with more only in Montreal and Gatineau (near Ottawa, Canada's national capital; MICC, 2009a, 2009b). The majority of the immigrants here are from South America, Central Africa, and the Maghreb (Northwestern Africa); this is why we chose these communities.

In all, 28 immigrant parents were interviewed. Table 2 presents the participants' demographic backgrounds. All families had at least one child at elementary school. Only a few of them had children in high school, but they responded to questions about their elementary school-aged children.

Table 2. Participant Descriptions

Community	African (A) *N* = 10		Latin American (L) *N* = 10		Maghreb (M) *N* = 8	
Parents	Mothers Fathers	0 10	Mothers Couples	1 9	Fathers Mothers Couples	3 1 4
Origin Country	Congo Burundi Nigeria Chad	6 2 1 1	Colombia Peru Venezuela	8 1 1	Morocco Algeria	6 2
Immigrated Elsewhere Before Quebec	7 families		1 family		2 families	
Average Years in Quebec	9		3		12	
Spoken Language at Home	French French/Other Other	6 3 1	French/Spanish Spanish	2 8	French French/Other Other	2 3 3
Number of Children	= 3,5 σ= 1,7		= 2 σ= 0,8		= 2,5 σ= 1,1	
Age of the Children	= 10,8 σ= 4,7		= 10,6 σ= 3,6		= 12 σ= 5,4	
Educational Backgrounds	*Fathers (n=10)* University Master Ph.D.	 6 2 2	*Fathers (n=9)* Master University Elementary *Mothers (n=10)* Master University College High School	 2 6 1 5 3 1 1	*Fathers (n=7)* Master University College High school *Mothers (n=6)* Master University College High School Elementary	 3 2 1 1 1 2 1 1 1
Parents' Occupations After Immigration	*Fathers (n=10)* Student Social Medical Administration Without work	 3 4 1 1 1	*Fathers (n=8)* Student Administration Services Technologies *Mothers (n=10)* Administration Technologies Social Services Student Without work	 4 1 1 2 2 1 2 1 3 1	*Fathers (n=8)* Social Administration Services Without work *Mothers (n=8)* Social Services Without work	 3 1 3 1 2 4 2
Average Family Income	30,000$ *† * 3 unknown		16,000$ *† * 4 unknown		67,000$ *† * 3 unknown	

*Information is missing in some categories because parents could choose not to answer a question.
†Canadian dollars

In summary, participants came mainly from three countries (Congo, Colombia, and Morocco). This may be based on the fact that, in addition to sending a letter for participants' recruitment to various organizations, assistants could recruit in their community, which matched with the countries most frequently mentioned by the participants. Second, we note that—depending on the group—participants are mostly either fathers or couples. However, in the literature, mothers were found more often as participants unless the researcher's intention was to meet couples or fathers (Costigan & Su, 2004; Hossain & Shipman, 2009; Klein, 2008; Patel, Power, & Bhavnagri, 1996). In addition, the majority of the parents in this study have a high level of education but not necessarily a high socioeconomic status. However, studies have shown a relationship between parental education or socioeconomic status and parents' school involvement, which is not the case with these participants (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lareau, 1989; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Finally, most of the parents are working in the social field. Furthermore, seven fathers were students when the interview was done. Their reasons for immigrating were for the father to pursue his studies, or secondly, some fathers who could not find a job in their field decided to go back to their studies.

Two-thirds of participants had immigrated to Canada for reasons of security, related either to war or to unstable political situations, while the remaining one-third immigrated for education purposes. Some immigrated directly to Quebec, and others went to various countries before coming to Quebec. Ultimately, they chose Quebec mainly because of the language spoken, which is French, or because they felt welcome. Finally, two-thirds of the families have been living in Quebec for the past five years, and their children were also born in Quebec.

Data Analysis

The method of analysis chosen for this study was content analysis, a qualitative method used to describe, clarify, understand, or interpret a reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Content analysis by thematic classification, as proposed by Paillé and Mucchielli (2008), was the most appropriate method for this study because it introduces data reduction processes by being able to switch back and forth among the interviews both longitudinally and cross-sectionally, providing in-depth analysis of the corpus. The data were coded in three ways using QDA Miner software (Provalis Research, 2008). The first way consisted of coding from the questions, that is, the response to a question was directly associated with a corresponding code. The second way was to link the data that corresponded to parental practices. Each coding unit corresponding to a

particular parental practice was categorized using Epstein's (2001) framework of six types of involvement. Finally, the third way took into account new data and categories that emerged from the participants' statements.

The analysis grid was validated using a cross-coding process. To ensure validity, we asked pairs to cross-code units (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). We provided them with matrices including coding units selected randomly for each theme (approximately 10% of all coding units) as well as the coding grid with the definitions of the themes and matching categories. We obtained an average concordance rate of 70% between the cross-coders and the primary research investigator, and consensus was attained after discussion meetings between the coders. These results corresponded to the levels of consistency recommended for cross-coding (Miles & Huberman, 2003).

Results

Parents' Representations of Their Role

All the parents, without exception, spoke about the importance of their involvement with their children. Indeed, they chose to immigrate to Canada to facilitate their children's education. Of course, there were other reasons as well, as previously mentioned, but they stressed the fact that they wanted most of all to ensure their children could attend school in a safe environment. In addition, parents often compared the host society and the Quebec school system with what they had known in their country of origin or in other countries where they had lived. Many parents had experienced culture shock when they first arrived. They spoke about how people dressed, the way children spoke with adults, and different rules related to respect. Others found the schools too lax. Irrespective of the number of years living in Quebec—some for over 5 years, and even some for over 10 years—families found it difficult to integrate to Quebec's culture and felt torn between the two cultures. In fact, they often felt powerless, because they had the impression they could not pass on their own values to their children, because their children had much more contact with the values of the host society than with their country of origin:

> You swing back and forth between the values you grew up with that you can't impose on them here, because, in any case, even if you tried to impose them, your child spends a lot of time in school, but only evenings and weekends with you.

These parents perceived that they needed to give up some of their values to avoid conflictual interactions with their children. When these perceptions surfaced, they felt a greater need to conserve their culture of origin. These findings

seem consistent with previous research that shows that regardless of the host country or the immigrant families' origins, these families experience cultural shock when they arrive and are torn between both cultures (Barton et al., 2004; Benoît et al., 2008; Bérubé, 2004; Costigan & Su, 2004; Denessen et al., 2007; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012; Kanouté & Llevot Calvet, 2008; Li, 2006; Patel et al., 1996; Valdés, 1996; Wong & Hughes, 2006). The impact on the family and on the child's education is clearly important, and preservice and inservice teachers can benefit from understanding the implications of these changes on their relationships with families and on the children themselves.

When asked about their perceptions of their parenting role, immigrant parents saw their parenting role as watching over and guiding their children in their daily lives. This representation was related to the reasons cited for their decision to immigrate. This suggests that parents who think their children either are not safe or are not learning would adopt certain practices to remedy the situation. On the other hand, more than half the parents saw their parenting role as being complementary to that of the school. In fact, they saw themselves as supporting the work of the school teacher:

> I help with my children's education, because if I teach them well at home, the children apply it at school, and that makes the school work well.

While several parents reported having experienced culture shock at the start of their children's school year, some said that as they had contact with the school over time, they saw the advantages such as the variety of activities offered at school, learning through reflection, the opportunity to have more contact with their children, and the fact that education was free. With time, they became more trusting of the school community. This suggests that parents' representations of their role and of the environment may influence their perceptions of the school and their role as active partners.

Parental Practices

We used Epstein's (2001) framework of six types of involvement to analyze the practices that emerged from the parents' responses in the semistructured interviews. In presenting the results, we will outline the number of statements associated with each dimension of Epstein's framework. From this, it can be seen that immigrant parents perceived some dimensions as more important than others. The tables that follow indicate the practices seen for each dimension. Clearly, certain practices were more prevalent than others. Table 3 shows the number of coding units for each dimension of Epstein's typology and the corresponding number of participants discussing that dimension.

Table 3. Epstein's Typology: Practices of Immigrant Parents

Dimension	Number of Coding Units	Number of Participants
Home–school communication	130	28
Obligations and support (Parenting*)	30	27
Involvement in schoolwork at home	25	17
Community partnership	22	16
Family involvement in school life	21	14
Participation in decision-making and advocacy	12	10
Total	240	28

*"Parenting" is the termed used for this dimension in Epstein, 2001.

First, we observed that virtually all the parents reported that they engaged in practices related to the *home–school communication* and *obligations and support* dimensions. The *home–school communication* dimension was the most frequently reported by parents (more than 54%). If we examine the coding unit/parent ratio for each dimension, we see that parents referred to communication practices, on average, approximately five times. This ratio dropped to approximately one for the other dimensions. This illustrates that the *home–school communication* theme was important for these parents. This finding is consistent with previous research on parents in the United States (Epstein, 2001) and Canadian parents of children with special needs (Beauregard, 2011). However, it is interesting to note that the *community partnership* dimension was less frequent (ranked fourth) but also more important than to families in other studies who rated it in sixth place (Beauregard, 2011; Epstein, 2001). One explanation for this may be that immigrants often have a more collectivist vision of family and culture compared to Canadian and American families' more individualistic outlook (Delgado Gaitan, 1991; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Kanouté et al., 2008; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005; Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2011; Valdés, 1996). Practices will be discussed in order of frequency.

Practices Related to Home–School Communication (Dimension 2)

Parenting practices related to home–school communication were important for interviewed parents, but also varied with respect to who initiated the communication. We further analyzed these communication practices into two themes: (a) communication practices initiated by parents toward the school, and (b) communication initiated by the teachers, to which parents responded. Table 4 shows the breakdown and frequency of each subtheme.

Table 4. Practices Related to Home–School Communication

Practices	Number of Coding Units	Number of Participants
Methods used (schoolbag, agenda, telephone, email, letters, etc.)	32	21
Request by the parent to meet the teacher because the child is having problems, to talk about the child's particular characteristics, to find out how he is doing, to talk about his school ranking	34	18
Attending annual meetings	21	16
Asking for information regarding the child's homework or report card	11	9
Expressing availability and offering support	7	4
Asking to meet with the school administration	3	3
Request by the parent to set up a mechanism to discuss the child's progress	1	1
Teacher provides information in writing or in person on the child's progress	12	9
Teacher requests a meeting with the parents to talk about the child's progress in class or because the child is having problems	7	7
Total	130	28

First, all the immigrant parents—without exception—spoke about the importance of communication with the school. These communication practices serve as a bridge between the two environments in which the child is growing up. In general, the parents considered that these communication practices were well-received; however, several parents pointed out that this depended on the teachers. For example, some parents reported that teachers were responsive to their questions, while other teachers were less responsive or took time to respond their questions.

> Sometimes yes, sometimes no; we'd like to talk with the teacher, and we try to reach him, but it's not possible; we send notes, and sometimes he doesn't respond.

Even though immigrant parents said they understood that teachers had a heavy workload, they also expressed that this nevertheless did not explain any problems of communication since some teachers seemed to manage to communicate more effectively despite their heavy workloads. Rather, they attributed communication challenges to the teacher's personality. In short, they

did not associate communication problems with all teachers, but rather with certain individuals. The most frequently mentioned communication methods were the agenda book, email, or schoolbag notes. In particular, the parents said they received general information from the school and the school board either in the children's agendas or in letters[1]. This included information about what food to bring in lunch boxes, school holidays, and school registration. They also received information on their children's progress. One-quarter of the parents reported that teachers used the same means to communicate with them (e.g., agendas), whether related to homework or about their children's misbehavior at school. While most parents appreciated these communications, some of them found these tools to be lacking in warmth, with one saying, "There's not enough verbal communication. It's okay to write, but it's cold."

From this statement, it is clear that person-to-person contact is very important for immigrant parents, especially when it comes to talking about problems their children are experiencing. Thus, two parents said they had been informed by letter that their child was being moved to a different school because of behavior problems, without the parents being consulted or advised by anyone. They would have preferred to be consulted about putting in place certain supports to help their child modify these behaviors, and if those failed, then to be involved in the decision-making process. Such a situation frustrated them and made them wonder whether teachers had taken their communication responsibilities seriously.

Teacher–parent occasional meetings were the second most frequent practice that parents initiated. These meetings involved discussing problems that their children were experiencing with school/academic content or with social issues. The school problems were often related to parents requiring additional information regarding French vocabulary or the teaching methods used in Quebec, as these were different and less familiar to the families. When this was the case, it was more difficult for parents to support their children's learning. The social problems that parents were concerned about often varied depending on the parents' cultural origin. For example, Central African and Maghreb parents initiated meetings with teachers when their children were victims of racism, while Latin American parents wanted to explain to teachers the difficulties related to learning a second language.

One-third of the parents also initiated communication related to homework or academic lessons. It appeared that the education system was different in Quebec. However, this is a claim that nonimmigrant parents often make, as well. Immigrant parents also felt that it was important to support the school, and they would like to better understand these new ways of doing things. Therefore, they communicated frequently, in writing or by telephone:

> Each time I found that I didn't know the method, this is what I did: I contacted the teacher to tell her that, regarding this item, I would like to know how you proceed. This will allow me to help my child with his homework.

Some parents felt that there was not enough homework or that the homework was too easy, so they requested that there be more homework sent home. If that was refused, they gave their child more homework themselves (dimension 4).

Formal meetings, particularly the parent–teacher conferences when report cards were discussed, were the third most frequent practice that parents referred to in interviews. The parents reported that this was a time when they could talk about their child with the teacher and discuss how they could support the child. Some parents gave the teacher their cell phone number or their email address. These parents explained that by being accessible, they demonstrated their availability and how important it was to them that their child should do well in school. In addition, one parent said he had used this meeting to ask for a way that would allow him to track his child's progress at home. However, some parents complained that these meetings were too short; they added that the meetings often involved listening to the teacher, rather than allowing them an opportunity to express themselves, as they would have liked:

> Ten minutes, not more, and when I wanted to change the subject, the subject was always brought back to what the teacher wanted. It's serious, I think.

Six parents who were dissatisfied with a teacher's lack of support for their children requested meetings with the school administration. From the parents' statements about their communication practices, their dissatisfaction was apparent. While some said they were satisfied…

> Everything is going well. I can make an appointment if I have some concerns for activities and learning.

…others were very frustrated:

> When we noticed that our son was failing his school year, we went to school. We asked why the school said nothing, did nothing, didn't tell us anything. We were very angry. It was a shock.

The parents emphasized their need to communicate without creating conflict, which meant that sometimes they had to ignore certain prejudices they could sense in the teachers' attitudes.

Practices Related to Obligations and Support of the Child (Dimension 1)

Practices related to obligations and support to the child mainly involved supporting and caring for children's physical, social, and emotional well-being. Examples of parental support practices that emerged are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5. Practices Related to Support and Obligations

Practices	Number of Coding Units	Number of Participants
Emotional well-being (e.g., asking about their day; support for problems; showing the rules of respect toward the teacher, toward different teachers, etc.; support in dealing with racism; support regarding the language spoken)	23	22
Physical well-being	5	5
Supporting the child in his choice of school	1	1
Taking steps to get help for a child in difficulty	1	1
Total	27	26

These immigrant parents also spoke at length about the emotional support they provided to their children. For example, many of them asked their children about what had happened during the day—both in terms of schooling and social interactions—what had gone well and what had not gone well in school. They asked these questions in order to support their children if there were any problems. From their statements, it was clear that their children's emotional well-being was of utmost importance and that their support varied depending on the children's needs:

> One of them excels, he doesn't even need me. But my daughter, I have problems with her because she has a learning difficulty, while the youngest has trouble concentrating. I don't do the same thing with each of them.

The topics of discussion varied across families. For example, three African fathers mentioned talking with their children about racist comments made about the color of their skin. Similarly, three Latin American parents also mentioned talking with their children but about their accent when speaking French. In every case, parents verified whether their children were sad and attempted to de-dramatize the situation by explaining that some people in the recipient society were not used to encountering immigrant persons and that the children needed to keep that in mind. Depending on the children's ages, some parents suggested that the child talk with the teacher. However, if they felt the situation was not improving, parents then asked to meet with the teacher themselves (dimension 2).

Some parents talked with their children about the respect they needed to show for the teacher, even if the child did not agree with what went on in the classroom, for example:

> Even if at times I find the teacher is slow to intervene when an injustice is happening to my child and he is angry, I explain to him that he should respect the teacher because she is the authority of the classroom.

Some spoke with them about their responsibility to do well in school. The parents considered these discussions to be important because their children will encounter all sorts of persons and situations in their lives. Therefore, they were trying to prepare their children for what they perceived as the "real world":

> Sometimes, my children say, the teacher, this and that. I said no, you're the one who isn't working. If you bring me your copy and show me that what you did was correct and that he gave you a poor grade, then I can get involved.

The different statements described above indicate that, on one hand, the parents took the time to really understand their children's situation before getting involved, and on the other, that they intervened if they believed their child was being treated unfairly or if the teacher was not doing anything to help when they requested the teacher's guidance.

A few other practices also emerged from parents' interviews on parental involvement. One had to do with a parent who supported his child's choice of school. In this case, it was not the parent who chose the school, but the child. Another statement came from a parent who, faced with the school's lack of support for his child's learning difficulties, obtained academic support privately. Finally, the physical well-being to which several parents alluded had to do with typical care (i.e., physical health, nutrition, clothing, hygiene).

Practices Related to Involvement in Schoolwork at Home (Dimension 4)

Parents also discussed parental involvement practices in the child's schoolwork at home; these are listed in Table 6.

Table 6. Practices Related to Involvement in Schoolwork at Home

Practices	Number of Coding Units	Number of Participants
Doing lessons and homework	21	21
Adding homework because there is not enough	2	2
Providing support when there are problems	1	1
Signing the agenda	1	1
Total	25	17

More than half the parents talked about specific homework lessons. First, helping their children in this stage of their learning was, in their view, of primary importance. They considered this to be part of their role as parents:

> The parent needs to be present in the child's schooling. There needs to be supervision, making sure the homework is done, maintaining a steady rhythm of work.

In their view, this helped to give children a sense of responsibility for their success. Also, immigrant parents often compared their children's homework with what they had experienced in their country of origin. Some felt there was not enough homework, and/or that it was too easy. However, one mother mentioned that this gave her more time to talk with her children, which she had not been able to do in her country because the homework took too much time. Other immigrant parents said that the way of doing homework was so different from what they had known that they were unable to help their children. It should be noted here that nonimmigrant parents often make the same observations. In addition, Latin American parents also expressed that language difficulty was a barrier to helping their child:

> Once we tried to help her. It was worse. She said to me, "Papa, it's not working," and I said, "Yes, yes, try this." It works for me, but it was not right. We wrote it up in Spanish, but the syntax was different. Now we tell her to do it the way she thinks it should be done in French.

The parents felt that they could not play their role as they would have liked, and this led to frustration. It should be noted that two parents who considered the homework too easy or insufficient added extra work for their children to do in addition to what was assigned by the school. This practice was also in line with the comments of some parents who considered Quebec schools to be too lax. This raises other questions for which we do not currently have answers and should be examined further. What might the school's perceptions of these issues be, and how may they discuss these issues with parents and with children? How do children compare themselves to other students in the class—do they accept themselves, or do they try to hide their differences from their peers, and do they resist their parents' high expectations? The potential for intergenerational conflict between immigrant parents and children is prevalent when the values of the culture of origin are very different from those of the host society.

Practices Related to Community Partnership (Dimension 6)

Parents' community partnership practices consisted of implementing ways to integrate their children in the community and to obtain the support of the various community and governmental organizations (health, social services, etc.). These practices are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Practices Related to Community Partnership

Practices	Number of Coding Units	Number of Participants
Involvement in community organizations	9	9
Involvement in the board of directors of a day care center	3	3
Receiving support from community organizations	3	3
Supporting other immigrant families in their relationship with the school	3	3
Creating organizations to work with immigrant families	3	3
Coaching a sport	1	1
Total	23	16

Sixteen parents spoke about their practices in the community. Two-thirds of those comments were about their involvement in community organizations as directors or volunteers. These organizations promoted links between immigrant families and schools. One parent observed that these organizations facilitated not only intercultural links, but also intergenerational ones. They helped both immigrants and nonimmigrants learn about each other's cultures. Thus, they held a variety of activities such as intercultural suppers, performances, and so on.

Three parents explained that their community involvement sometimes took the form of defending the interests of children or other families. For example, two African fathers mentioned that they helped children who were not their own with their homework because those children's parents had little education and did not have enough knowledge to do so themselves. One Arab parent said he had sometimes acted as an intermediary between Arab–Muslim families and the school. He described different situations in which he intervened to support parents whose children were experiencing racism:

> One parent told me her child's teacher was racist. He left the child outdoors for hours and punished him constantly. This is a child in first grade. So I told her to go to the school board because the school administration was doing nothing. If something was going on, they would settle it. She told me she went…and it dragged on for a long time.

From this statement, we understand that when the school ignored the problem, parents engaged in a different role to defend their children. Finally, three parents explained that they had been or were currently involved in creating community organizations to represent their respective communities. Their objectives were to promote the integration of new immigrants, to draw some

immigrants out of their isolation, and to provide opportunities to bring together people who shared the same culture. Three other parents also mentioned having benefited from such services.

Practices Related to Family Involvement in School Life (Dimension 3)

This dimension related to parents' practices when they became involved at school, which are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Practices Related to Family Involvement in School Life

Practices	Number of Coding Units	Number of Participants
Participation in extracurricular activities	11	10
Informing the class about a topic of interest to the parent	4	4
Visiting the schools and classrooms	3	3
Participating in fundraising campaigns	2	2
Staying in the classroom to reassure the child	1	1
Total	21	14

The practice that emerged most often was participation in extracurricular activities. This involved attending a performance organized by the children, accompanying their child's class on an excursion outside the school, or providing transportation for such activities. In addition, some parents took part in school fundraising campaigns. Some parents mentioned being invited to talk to the class about subjects that interested them, which might have to do with science, religion, or a new language. Some parents visited schools and classrooms, with or without their children, to ensure that they were appropriate for their children. It should be noted that this practice is different from the one mentioned in dimension 1, in which the child chooses a school and the parent supports that choice. Finally, one parent accompanied her child who was starting school because the child did not understand French very well; it would seem that the teacher in that class had an open attitude about parents' presence in the room.

Practices Related to Participation in Decision Making and Advocacy (Dimension 5)

Parents discussed practices related to involvement in decision making, including statements related to their interactions with administrative or legal authorities, excluding the school administration. These practices are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Practices Related to Participation in Decision Making and Advocacy

Practices	Number of Coding Units	Number of Participants
Involvement in the board of directors of establishments	7	7
Involvement in the Parent Participation Organization (OPP) of the school	3	1
Contacting the school board	2	2
Total	12	10

The majority of parents said they were not involved in decision-making committees. Two reasons were given for this. One was that parents did not have time because of work commitments, having to maintain the home, or studies. Others saw the school board as an enormous entity far removed from their daily lives, and it was considered by some to be unapproachable.

Ten parents spoke about their involvement in official committees. They talked mainly about their involvement in the school's board of directors and the Parent Participation Organization (*Organisme de Participation des Parents*; OPP).[2] Each school has its own OPP and board of directors; these two committees were created as a part of the reform undertaken by the Government of Quebec in 1999 to promote parents' involvement in schools. Parents gave two reasons for this involvement: They wanted to better understand the Quebec school system, and they wanted to sensitize administrators to the situations of immigrant parents. Finally, one parent mentioned attempting to contact and meet with the School Board personnel for information, but the School Board's offices were closed at the times when the parent was available (e.g., after work). Another parent who was not happy with the schools' identification of her child's special needs had only three contacts with school staff to discuss the situation, and the situation remained unchanged despite these attempts.

Discussion

Several observations emerged from the data analysis. First, the link between the vision parents have of their role and the practices they adopt to carry out this role is clearly seen. For example, they perceived their role as a support to the school and showed interest in gaining a better understanding of the teaching methods and homework. The practices they adopted included requests for meetings on these matters, requests for information, getting involved with their children's homework, and for some, even helping other families' children. Therefore, it seemed that parents perceived their role as meeting the individual needs of each child, and they may have perceived independence as a process

that would take time to develop as the family settled in and understood these new school expectations. Other studies with immigrant families show a similar link between the vision parents have of their role and their practices (Barton et al., 2004; De Carvalho, 2001). Those authors noted that parents who were seeing themselves as a low educated person without power had the tendency to be less involved in school. The link is not specific to immigrant parents. In fact, we had similar results in a previous study on children with special needs and nonimmigrant parents (Beauregard, 2006, 2011). In previous work, parents also viewed themselves as defenders of their children's rights, and their practices were clearly related to this role.

Epstein's (2001) framework of parent involvement was used to code the different practices adopted by parents when they became involved in their children's schooling. Prior work that has emerged based on this framework has not particularly focused on issues related to immigrant families who are having to adapt to a new country and school system. However, we did not need to add any new dimensions to this model, because all the parental practices that we identified could be classified using the existing dimensions. Our findings were consistent with Epstein, although we had to make a few adjustments to explain our data. First, the *defending interests* practice in dimension 5 was not retained, because we noted that parents were defending their children's rights in all the dimensions; therefore, it was not a separate category. Indeed, the defense of rights was infused along the six dimensions of Epstein's model. The second adjustment was in the *home–school communication* dimension. There, we considered only practices that involved communication between parents and personnel at their children's schools. Any practices involving school board personnel were classified in dimension 5.

The results also showed that the dimensions were interconnected, that is, they were not mutually exclusive. Indeed, a practice that was categorized in one dimension may arise from or be explained by a practice in another dimension. One example would be a parent meeting with a teacher (dimension 2) to help her child with homework lessons (dimension 4). Another would be a parent meeting with his child's teacher (dimension 2) because the child told him about being subjected to racist comments by other students (dimension 1). There seemed to be a need to show teachers that the parents' role was also to protect their children from societal injustices because they believed these attitudes may serve as a barrier to their children's progress and success in school.

Along the same lines, we saw that one dimension can consist of several practices and that these can vary from one parent to another. Moreover, the same practice may be adopted with different intentions. For example, parents were involved in decision-making committees (dimension 5) for different reasons.

Some wanted to better understand the school system, while others wanted to be noticed and to have a presence representing immigrant families in that school. Conversely, the same intention can manifest itself in different practices. Thus, the parent who, in a meeting with a teacher, expressed his availability (dimension 2) and the one who participated in school life (dimension 3) both have the intention of demonstrating their presence in their children's lives. In summary, for teachers, it is important not to base one's conclusions only on parents' actions, but to look for the meaning behind the practice. Demonstrating their presence in the school and in their children's public life may have reflected parents' need to become part of the school community. Therefore, an action was more than just about participating in school activities, but was a way to ensure that teachers perceived their role as parents in overseeing the school life of their children and in helping their children and themselves to adapt to this new society. This is a finding consistent with previous work using Epstein's model, and identifying the importance of the reason underlying parents' practices was most helpful in understanding parents' perceptions of their roles (Beauregard, 2006, 2011). School personnel may have the tendency to notice the practice and not always understand or appreciate the underlying issues related to the practices. This has implications for all school personnel who have (or will have) direct contact with parents, such as preservice teachers, teachers, and principals.

We were able to see some interesting themes related to issues of racism and language competency. New emergent themes regarding parental protection and child independence as well as individualistic and collectivistic views of the family emerged in the parents' discussions of their parenting practices related to school. In addition, parents reported on their perceptions and the underlying issues related to their practices. We have grouped these into two categories: individual and environmental.

Individual factors were found to be associated with parents' culture, migratory pathway, and native language, as well as their views and expectations regarding their children's developmental needs and their adjustments to the Quebec school system. Added to these factors were parents' past experiences of their own school years. Parents reported that these experiences influenced their view of the situation and the practices they adopted. For example, several of them spoke about culture shock and compared their own experiences as students to that of their children. Another parent described the linguistic needs of her young child in kindergarten who benefitted from her visiting and staying in the classroom the first day of class. These differences may have also reflected a growing awareness that they had less and less control over the conditions that their children encountered in school and that these differences

served to socialize their children in different ways than their own beliefs and values would. These results are consistent with previous findings which have shown that immigrant parents from different backgrounds experience similar cultural shock regarding schooling policies and cultural norms and practices in their new country (Bérubé, 2004; Carréon et al., 2005; Denessen et al., 2007; Valdés, 1996; Wang, 2008). They are challenged by the new educational methods and the teaching practices, as well as the role the schools expect of them. In addition, the learning of a new language also interferes with parents' ability to discuss important issues and further complicates the family–school relationship (Benoît et al., 2008; Denessen et al., 2007; Kanouté et al., 2008; López, 2001; Moosa et al., 2001; Wang, 2008). Note, in this study, only Latin American parents had to learn a new language. However, parents from Central Africa and Maghreb spoke about the difficulties related to language accent, vocabulary, syntax, and referents which are different from their own. In these situations, the communication could be difficult not because of the language but because of the cultural language. These concerns voiced by parents speak to the sociocultural adaptation outlined by theorists about how minorities perceive and respond to schooling depending on how they perceive they are being treated (e.g., Ogbu & Simons, 1998). In this study, the parents used a variety of means to solve problems and to find ways to help their child.

The environments within which the child is developing—that is, family and school—are also important for shaping parenting roles and practices. The family environment may refer to the number of children in the family, the language spoken at home, the availability of the parents, the children's relationships with family members, and so on. The school environment included the school issues related to structure (staff turnover, identification of child needs, etc.) and the support provided to children, as well as parents' experiences with school staff and the attitudes of school staff regarding their children's needs. In fact, parents made many comments related to their communication with school personnel who they believed judged them for being different. For example, one parent said the teacher was very surprised to hear his son speak with a Quebec accent, despite the fact that the child was born in Quebec, because he had an Arabic name. The parent found this situation disconcerting and wondered what perceptions and biases teachers had regarding immigrant families. In addition, these types of comments from teachers further perpetuated issues of exclusion and a lack of sense of belonging. These results concur with those of other authors who identified these factors as barriers to parental involvement (Audet, 2008; Carréon et al., 2008; Delgado Gaitan, 1991; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Kanouté & Saintford, 2003; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Based on these reflections, one parent suggested that teachers should

be involved in professional development to learn about how to understand the adaptations that immigrant children need to make and how their teachers could facilitate this process by being aware of each child's situation. Some studies show that teachers will judge parental involvement based on their own values (Moosa et al., 2001; Strickland, Keat, & Marinak, 2010; Trumbull et al., 2003). For example, Moosa et al. (2001) note that teachers and preservice teachers have to know and understand immigrant culture so they can communicate with them in a constructive way. Strickland et al. (2010) and Trumbull and Pacheco (2005) have also produced tools and activities that facilitate this knowledge which promotes better communication.

Overall, it seems that immigrant parents have their own representations of their role. They are able to describe how they support their children's schooling. However, it is also important to note that they face challenges that require them to adjust their roles in order to be perceived as involved parents. Despite the fact that parents protected their children from challenges related to different issues of injustice, they maintained the position that teachers and school personnel should be respected in order to ensure that their children learn to respect authority.

Conclusion

The objectives of this study were to describe the practices adopted by immigrant parents when they become involved in their child's schooling and to identify the factors that influence these practices. Epstein's (2001) model, which has had limited use from this perspective, enabled us to articulate these practices. Our findings and those of other studies, however, also show that researchers and professionals working with immigrant parents need to look beyond parents' actions or practices to understand the meaning these practices have for them and the reasons why they used these practices. Understanding the underlying meaning of parents' practices will allow leaders to develop conditions that promote the development of effective partnerships between immigrant families and the school.

This research had several limitations. Certainly, given the small number of participants, the results may or may not be transferable to schools with similar social and cultural contexts. Also, using research assistants from targeted cultural communities may have introduced some bias to our methodology. It is possible that some parents who were worried about being judged by a member of their cultural group may have been hesitant to express themselves on certain points. Thus, there were very few comments about parent–teacher conflict, although this point was raised in some other studies. However, there is no way of

being sure if this observation would not apply if the assistants had come from the host society. The families of this study came primarily from three countries: Congo, Colombia, and Morocco, and the three research assistants were also from these countries to facilitate verbal and nonverbal exchanges. The families were given the choice of language and interviewer to ensure that they felt comfortable sharing their perceptions. Finally, the fact that many fathers and some couples were interviewed adds a new dimension to the literature. Indeed, mothers are usually more frequently interviewed for this type of research. Certainly, future studies could incorporate varied approaches (mixed, quantitative methods, participatory, different assistants, etc.) to reduce these limitations. Future research with immigrants who are speaking neither French nor English (both official languages in Canada) to learn whether limited language use has a different impact on parental involvement and practices would be interesting. In the same vein, a comparative study of nonimmigrant parents and immigrant parents may shed some light on parent involvement in Canada.

These results also allow us to put forward some recommendations. First, all the authorities involved (education departments, school boards/districts, associations, unions, etc.) could work together to create a greater awareness for the need to acknowledge the importance of the relationship between immigrant families and schools, not only in writing, but also through training programs and in practice. For instance, professional development workshops on the family–school relationship with a particular focus on immigrant families would help future teachers to understand the significance of certain practices. Workshops for teachers could also be developed about verbal, nonverbal, and cultural communication. Just because two communities speak French, English, or Spanish, for example, does not mean that they speak the same language. For parents who don't speak French, school boards in Quebec have translators; however, their role could be more than just translators. They could be cultural mediators and provide teachers with insight about culture. Along the same lines, school personnel can make a more conscious effort to understand parents' perceptions of parental involvement. This involvement seems to be important and not limited to getting involved in homework and attending formal meetings. Moreover, different parents are able to be involved in different ways. Finally, teachers need to be given opportunities to update their knowledge about immigrant students and their families.

Endnotes

[1]Note that schools in Quebec are required to communicate formally with parents eight times per year; one of these occasions is the general assembly at the start of the school year, and another is when the first report cards are distributed.

[2]The Parent Participation Organization (*Organisme de Participation des Parents;* OPP) is made up of parents; its purpose is to promote parents' participation in the development, implementation, and periodic assessment of the educational plan and their support for their children's progress at school (Government of Quebec, 1999, art. 96.2). The school's board of directors is made up of a maximum of 20 members. In elementary schools, it includes at least four parents of children attending the school. These parents are elected by their peers at the annual general assembly. Added to these are at least four members of the school's personnel, of which at least two are teachers, one representative of the day care program if the school has one, and two members of the community. The parents and members of the community cannot be members of the school personnel (art. 42). The school's board of directors adopts the school's operating budget each year (art. 66) and establishes the internal policies and procedures (art. 67).

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The Impact of a Collaborative Family Involvement Program on Latino Families and Children's Educational Performance

Julie O'Donnell and Sandra L. Kirkner

Abstract

Latino families highly value education and are committed to their children's educational success; however, Latino students often experience educational challenges. Well-designed family involvement programs can encourage Latino families, especially new immigrants or monolingual Spanish-speakers, to increase their involvement resulting in positive outcomes for children, families, and schools. This two-year study examined the impact of the YMCA Family Involvement Project on levels of family involvement and children's educational performance using a sample of 144 low-income, urban, predominantly monolingual Spanish-speaking, Latino caregivers of 208 elementary-age children. Family workshops developed based on community input focused on in-home education strategies, parenting education, family literacy, and community leadership and advocacy. Teacher training on family involvement and school socials were also provided. Significant improvements were found in frequency of family–teacher contact, family involvement at school, and quality of the family–teacher relationship after program participation. Hierarchical regression analyses found higher levels of family participation predicted significantly better student social skills and work habits grades after one year of participation when controlling for baseline scores. At the end of two years, level of participation significantly predicted student effort, social skills and work habit grades, and standardized English Language Arts test scores and was somewhat predictive of achievement grades. Implications for practice are discussed.

Key Words: collaborative family involvement program, Latino families, education, outcomes, YMCA, Spanish, parents, teachers, social skills, elementary students, achievement, community organizations, classes, workshops

Introduction

Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, and about 25% of all public school children are Latino (Lopez & Velasco, 2011). Unfortunately, the educational inequalities facing Latinos are quite troubling. Latinos, especially those born outside of the United States and English language learners, have more difficulty in school than their peers from entry until graduation (Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008; Fry, 2003; Fuligni & Hardway, 2004). Latino youth are at greater risk to start elementary school less prepared, to experience school failure and retention, to be suspended or expelled, and to drop out of school before graduating high school (Behnke, Gonzalez, & Cox, 2010; Fuller & Garcia Coll, 2010; Galindo & Fuller, 2010; Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011). In California, Latinos score significantly lower than Whites and Asian Americans on the Academic Performance Index, and approximately 22% of Latino students fail to graduate from high school, compared to 11% of Whites and 7% of Asian Americans (California Department of Education, 2010).

These findings are undoubtedly influenced by the fact that Latinos are overrepresented in low-income communities (Balfanz & Legters, 2006; Greene & Anyon, 2010; Stuart & Hahnel, 2011), and 35% of Latino children live below the poverty line (Lopez & Velasco, 2011). Students who live in poverty have significantly lower grades, standardized test scores, and high school completion rates than their higher income counterparts (Balfanz & Legters, 2004; Education Weekly, 2011; Guskey, 2011; Hopson & Lee, 2011; Reardon, 2011; Stuart & Hahnel, 2011). Living in low-income communities also means children are more likely to go to schools that are underfunded and underachieving (Lacour & Tissington, 2011), and out-of-school programs are often limited (Deschenes et al., 2010; Ferguson, Bovaird, & Mueller, 2007). Thus, fewer educational supports are usually available for them and their families.

Family involvement is a broad concept that encompasses many activities. Both home-based (e.g., reading, monitoring homework, discussing school, promoting higher education) and school-based (e.g., attending conferences and events, joining the PTA, volunteering) family involvement in children's education have been found to be predictive of higher academic success, social and emotional functioning, high school graduation rates, and college entry, regardless of ethnicity (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Jeynes, 2005; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, &

Sekino, 2004; Mena, 2011; Pomerantz, Morroman, & Litwack, 2007). Family involvement may also mediate the impact of poverty on school achievement (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Latino parents may have even more influence on their children's educational decisions than parents from other ethnic groups (Behnke, Piercy, & Diversi, 2004; DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006), and immigrants often demonstrate higher educational aspirations for their children (Ramirez, 2008). Unfortunately, schools have often been less effective in engaging Latino families, especially when they do not speak the dominant language or are recent immigrants (Auerbach, 2007; DeGaetano, 2007; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012; Vera et al., 2012).

This home–school disconnect has led to calls for schools to develop, often in partnership with Latino families, culturally sensitive programs for building on and enhancing Latino family involvement (Behnke & Kelly, 2011; Downs et al., 2008; Gonzales-DeHass & Willems, 2003; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Lopez & Donovan, 2009; Osterling & Garza, 2004; Vera et al., 2012; Zarate, 2007). Due to a lack of time, resources, or skills, schools may need to work with community organizations to strengthen family involvement, create more welcoming school environments for diverse families, and improve family–school relationships (Lopez, Kreider, & Coffman, 2005; Zarate, 2007). However, it is important to evaluate programs that promote family involvement to see if they are accomplishing their goals (Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009) and to gain a better understanding of whether schools can help parents develop skills to become more involved in their children's education (Jeynes, 2012). This study investigated the impact of a collaborative family involvement program on levels of family involvement and children's educational performance among low-income, urban, predominantly Spanish-speaking, Latino families.

Latinos and Family Involvement

Studies have documented that Latinos are involved in and supportive of their children's education (Auerbach, 2007; Durand, 2010; Lee & Bowen, 2006; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Mena, 2011). However, U.S. school staff and Latino families may have very different ideas on what constitutes family involvement, and schools often overlook the valuable contributions Latino parents make to their children's education (DeGaetano, 2007; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Zarate, 2007). Cultural differences may result in Latinos being involved more in the home than on school campuses, resulting in their contributions being overlooked by school staff (Auerbach, 2007; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012).

There are other barriers that may prevent Latino families from maximizing their involvement in their children's education. Some of these are logistical

such as lack of child care, transportation, or translation; inflexible work schedules; and inconvenient meeting times (Jeynes, 2005; Lopez et al., 2005). The belief that families have the skills and ability to contribute to their children's education is also an important determinant of level of involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Unfortunately, Latino parents who are new immigrants or monolingual Spanish-speakers might not believe they have such skills or may not have a full understanding of how school systems operate or how to access services for their children (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Olivos, 2004; Zarate, 2007). Latinos might also experience discrimination from school staff who may hold biased views or perceptions or who are unprepared to work with this population (Chen et al., 2008; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Olivos, 2004). Teachers must have knowledge about different cultures and communities to effectively serve diverse children and families (Gonzales-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Lopez & Donovan, 2009).

Special efforts must sometimes be made to encourage involvement among diverse populations. Methods of encouraging family involvement in school-based programs include providing child care, transportation, translation, food, flexible scheduling, and developing culturally appropriate and relevant programs. Including parents in leadership roles and creating diverse opportunities including social events for families are also beneficial. Allowing community input into program development can also be helpful in increasing family involvement (Behnke & Kelly, 2011; DeGaetano, 2007; Downs et al., 2008; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Lopez & Donovan, 2009; Mena, 2011).

Programs to Promote Family Involvement

Jeynes (2012) completed a meta-analysis on the effects of family involvement programs on urban students' academic achievement using a sample of 51 studies. Participation in family involvement programs was positively predictive of academic improvement for both elementary and secondary students. Shared reading programs had the biggest impact on student achievement, followed by parent–teacher collaboration and communication programs.

Efforts have been made to implement school-based programs to encourage Latino family involvement. Zarate (2007) reported that organizational initiatives to increase involvement have typically focused on training parents on how to be involved or to help with academic achievement, building leadership skills so parents can work better with schools and school staff, helping parents to become advocates for their children in the schools, and community organizing. The Latino Family and Advocacy Support Training was a six-session advocacy training program for Spanish-speaking family members designed to support families and increase their school involvement (Behnke & Kelly, 2011). After

attending, participants reported significantly more knowledge of how to request parent–teacher conferences, greater comfort in who to ask for school information, better ways to address school challenges, and more knowledge of available resources (Behnke & Kelly, 2011).

St. Clair, Jackson, and Zweiback (2012) investigated the long-term effects of a 25-session family literacy training program among migrant Latino families with kindergarten students. Six years later, children in the intervention group scored significantly higher on the state reading test than those whose parents did not participate in the program. Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2012) used an ethnographic approach to explore outcomes related to Latino family involvement using participants from three parent and/or community-led initiatives. They concluded that participation in these programs led to parent empowerment, an increased sense of efficacy, and greater involvement and meaningful school engagement among immigrant Latinos.

Chrispeels, González, and Arellano (2004) evaluated the effectiveness of the Parent Institute for Quality Education among a group of predominantly Latino families. After intervention, parents engaged in significantly more home learning activities, had higher educational aspirations for their children, and reported more academic knowledge than parents in the control condition. They also evidenced a greater belief in their ability to support their children's education and in their role related to education. Program participants were also significantly more involved in the school than control parents. However, there were no differences between the two groups in grades or school behavior, possibly due to the short time frame of the intervention (Chrispeels et al., 2004). Another study investigated the effectiveness of Families and Schools Together (FAST), a multigroup family intervention designed to increase child well-being and family involvement, using a sample of Latino families. Two years after the program, teachers reported significantly higher social and academic skills and less aggression in students in the FAST group than those in a family education program (McDonald et al., 2006).

Some have advocated training school staff to work more effectively with diverse populations as a way to increase family involvement. It is hoped that providing staff training related to family involvement will result in less negative perceptions of Latino families, a better understanding of the different types of family involvement, and increased culturally sensitive outreach by teachers (Chen et al., 2008; Gonzales-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Zarate, 2007). Teacher training and parent–teacher social activities (e.g., making lunch together) were part of one project designed to engage Latino parents on school campuses. Teachers seemed to develop higher levels of respect for parents and were more welcoming of their involvement in the

classroom (DeGaetano, 2007). Marschall, Shah, and Donato (2012) found that preservice teacher training and in-service professional development were significantly predictive of the presence of family involvement programs in communities with larger immigrant populations. Overall, these evaluations—both quantitative and qualitative—suggest that well-designed family involvement programs may benefit Latino children, families, and schools.

YMCA Family Involvement Project

The YMCA Family Involvement Project began in 2008 with a three-month planning process; however, the organization had been working on collaborative projects related to family involvement in the Long Beach, California community for many years. The program, both planning and implementation, is funded through a grant obtained by the YMCA. Six bilingual (Spanish/English) community forums were held at five low-income (97%–100% free and reduced lunch), predominantly Latino (78%) elementary schools with 142 family members attending. Participants shared their thoughts on how to make schools a more welcoming place for families, the best ways to get families involved in their children's education, barriers to family involvement, desired family programs and supports, and the types of training that school staff needed to encourage family involvement. Eight meetings were also held with 76 principals and teachers who responded to similar questions. At each meeting, participants were also asked to rank their top five topic areas.

Several key themes regarding family involvement emerged from both groups which guided the implementation process. These were the need to: (a) increase family–school communication and positive interaction; (b) increase educational supports in the home; (c) provide both family members and teachers with training to maximize family involvement; and (d) make the school environment more welcoming and inclusive of family involvement. Stakeholders understood the need to reduce barriers to family involvement, and, similar to the literature, noted the importance of flexible scheduling, providing culturally inclusive programs in multiple languages, providing child care, and offering a broad range of activities that met the specific priorities of the community (Comer, 2005; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Mendez, 2005).

Based on the planning process, the project employed a multipronged approach to increasing family engagement. First, it provided weekly adult and family education. Second, it provided yearly school staff training and ongoing consultation to administrators (and, when requested, to teachers) on culturally appropriate methods to involve diverse families. Finally, monthly school-site socials to improve family–school communication and relationships were also held. During this time, family members met with school staff to learn about the school, academic expectations, and upcoming events, and to share their

concerns in a supportive environment. Team-building activities were also facilitated by YMCA social workers.

Weekly family engagement workshops were held at the elementary school sites. Guided by the major themes that emerged from the planning process, a series of workshops were designed in the areas of in-home education, parent education, family literacy, and school and community leadership development. The four topics rotated throughout the school year so each series was offered at each school yearly. In-home education was an eight-week series which taught structuring the home environment, monitoring homework, talking to children about education, and providing home and community academic support activities. Parent education was an eight-week series designed to help parents to positively discipline and communicate effectively with their children. Several evidence-based parent education curriculums were used depending on the school or year. Family literacy was taught using Motheread/Fatheread (an eight-week program designed to strengthen family bonds, increase school readiness and adult reading skills, and help caregivers be reading role models for their children) and Story Exploring (a four-week intergenerational program that uses multicultural books to foster creative problem solving, increase children's love of books, and build reading skills; see http://www.motheread.org/).

Leadership and advocacy skills were taught through the Community Leadership Institute (CLI), a four-month program developed by the YMCA and community residents. Sessions included team building and collaboration, conflict resolution and communication, cultural diversity, community resources and involvement, group facilitation, public speaking, budgeting and running meetings, leadership styles, how to help your child be successful at school, and school and community codes, laws, and citizen's rights. In the last month, small groups chose, developed, and implemented school and community projects (e.g., developed a valet drop-off system for the school). Homework, such as attending a City Council meeting, visiting a school classroom, and helping at a school event were assigned weekly. Once participants graduated from the CLI, they were invited back as mentors and teachers for incoming groups.

Family recruitment was done primarily through word-of-mouth, booths set up at the front of the school to advertise the program, personal invitations by current participants, flyers, and school invitations. Food, child care, translation, and social activities were incorporated into every program activity. Parents assisted with recruitment and as mentors in many of the classes. Ongoing input was collected so that curriculum could be revised each year to be relevant and responsive to the community. Although the program was open to all families at the schools and in the community and all workshops were offered by bilingual social workers in English and Spanish, this study examined the impact of the program solely on Latino children and families.

Teacher trainings were also offered at each school yearly that focused primarily on current research on the benefits and types of family involvement as well as strategies on how to get families more involved and to make the school environment more welcoming. The YMCA social workers also shared information on the program, encouraged school staff to invite parents to participate, and advised on ways to improve communication with parents. Efforts were also made to include cultural content in the training.

Methods

Data Collection

Participants entered the program throughout the year, and participation in the study was voluntary. On the first day of attendance at any Family Involvement Project (FIP) class, or as soon as possible thereafter, participants were asked to complete a registration form, sign a research consent form, and take a preassessment survey on family involvement in their children's education. FIP staff distributed the surveys in both English and Spanish and provided one-to-one assistance for those with low literacy levels. At the end of each series (usually between 8 and 10 weeks), all class members were asked to complete the survey a second time. Those who attended more than one series (e.g., both in-home education and family literacy) may have completed the survey multiple times; however, the last survey completed was used here. FIP staff provided the researchers with registrations, returned consent forms, surveys, and program attendance data. If the participant had not completed a second survey at the end of the school year, researchers mailed a survey with a prepaid return envelope to them.

Report cards and district identification numbers were collected at the school sites for students whose parents had signed consents. Baseline grades were taken from the first grading period of the year in which the caregiver first attended FIP classes and from the last grading period of each year caregivers were involved in the program. Standardized test scores were collected directly from the school district's Office of Research and Evaluation. The research was approved by both the district and university Institutional Review Boards.

Sample

During the first two years of the program, 733 adults attended at least one FIP class or social, however, only 244 (33%) completed registration forms and consented to participate in the research. Of these 244 adults, 144 (59%) were Latino and had children at one of the FIP school sites with useable school data. Table 1 displays the demographics of the caregivers (N = 144). The sample

Table 1. Caregiver Demographics (*N* = 144)

	%	*n*
Gender		
Female	98%	141
Male	2%	3
Ethnicity		
Latino	100%	144
Language Spoken at Home		
Spanish	93%	134
English	7%	10
Relationship to Child(ren)		
Mother	97%	140
Father	2%	3
Grandmother	1%	1

Table 2. Child Demographics (*N* = 208)

	%	*n*
Gender		
Male	53%	110
Female	47%	98
Ethnicity		
Latino	100%	208
Grade		
Kindergarten	17%	35
1st Grade	16%	33
2nd Grade	20%	41
3rd Grade	23%	49
4th Grade	14%	30
5th Grade	10%	20
Language Fluency		
English Language Learner	76%	158
English Fluent	24%	50

was primarily composed of mothers (97%) and monolingual Spanish-speakers (93%). These 144 families had 208 elementary-age children enrolled in the FIP schools. As shown in Table 2, just over half (53%) of the children were male, and the majority (76%) were English language learners. At the time their caregivers joined the program, students were enrolled in kindergarten through 5th grade, with the highest proportion in 3rd grade (23%).

Measures

Family involvement was measured, with permission, using the Parent–Teacher Involvement Questionnaire (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1991), a standardized measure that assesses family and school involvement. The instrument has been shown to have strong reliability and validity with diverse populations (Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000; Wilson & Hughes, 2006; Wong & Hughes, 2006). The family–teacher contact scale consisted of the mean of four items measuring the frequency of contact between the parents and their child's teacher. Response categories ranged from "Never" to "More than once per week." Questions included, "In the past year, you have called your child's teacher," and "In the past year, your child's teacher has written you." The scale reliabilities were .77 and .83.

The family involvement at home scale consisted of the mean of four items measuring how often caregivers participated in educational activities with their child at home or in the community. Responses ranged from "Not at all" to "A great deal." Questions included, "You help your child at home with subjects that he/she is having difficulty with," and "You make sure that your child gets his/her homework done." The scale reliabilities were .64 and .68. The family involvement at school scale consisted of the mean of five items measuring how often parents participated in educational activities at the school. Response categories ranged from "Never" to "More than once per week," or from "Not at all" to "A great deal." Questions included, "In the past year you have stopped by to talk to your child's teacher," and "You volunteer at your child's school." The scale reliabilities were .62 and .77.

The family–teacher relationship scale consisted of the mean of seven items. Responses ranged from "Not at all" to "A great deal." Questions included, "You feel comfortable talking with your child's teacher about your child," and "You think your child's teacher is interested in getting to know you." The reliabilities for this scale were .87 to .92. The family endorsement of the school scale consisted of the mean of five items measuring how strongly the caregiver approved of the school. Response categories ranged from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." Questions included, "I think my child's school is doing a good job of preparing children for their future," and "My child's school does

a good job of informing me about meetings and events." The scale reliabilities were .82 and .91.

Educational Performance Measures

Report card data was used to create four educational performance scales measuring achievement (α = .84 and .87), effort (α = .89 and .91), social skills (α = .93 and .94), and work habits (α = .90 and .92). The achievement and effort scales consisted of the mean of seven items; achievement or effort in reading, writing, language conventions, listening and speaking, math, history/social science, and science. The social skills scale consisted of six items which included self-control, following rules, getting along with others, respecting authority, accepting responsibility for own behavior, and respecting the property of others. The work behaviors scale consisted of five items: making effective use of time, listening and following directions, completing class work, completing and returning homework, and working independently. Higher scores indicated better grades. Individual items measured standardized English Language Arts and Math content test scores. Standardized testing began at the end of second grade so not all children had this data. Grades and test scores were collected for the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years.

Analyses

Descriptive statistics were used to describe FIP participation. Paired t-tests were used to compare family involvement among adult caregivers before and after participating in FIP. Hierarchical linear regression was used to examine the impact of FIP participation on children's educational performance. Given that a randomized experimental design would be extremely difficult to employ with a voluntary school-based family involvement program, a hierarchical regression analysis was used since it has been found to be useful in measuring the effect of program attendance (Riggs, 2006).

Results

During the first year a family participated in FIP classes (2008–09 or 2009–2010), FIP attendance ranged from one class (12%) to 55 classes (1%), with an average of 15 classes per adult. Over the two-year period, FIP attendance ranged from 1 class (4%) to 112 classes (1%), with an average of 24 classes per adult. Half of the group attended 14 or more classes a year or 22 or more classes over a two-year period. Most (82%) attended classes or events in both years.

Self-Reported Changes in Levels of Family Involvement

As shown in Table 3, caregivers reported significantly more family–teacher contact, t (94) = 2.15, $p < .05$; family involvement at the school site, t (95) = 3.51, $p < .05$; and better family–teacher relationships, t (98) = 2.60, $p < .05$, after participating in the program. However, they also reported a small but significant decline in endorsement of the school, t (98) = 2.04, $p < .05$.

Table 3. Caregiver Report of Changes in Family Involvement

	Before FIP Classes			After FIP Classes		
	Mean	SD	*n*	Mean	SD	Diff
Family–Teacher Contact	1.84	.92	95	2.07	.88	.23**
Family Involvement at School	2.44	.84	96	2.72	.77	.27**
Family Involvement at Home	3.42	.81	99	3.52	.67	.10
Family–Teacher Relationship	3.96	.75	99	4.14	.68	.17**
Family Endorsement of School	4.59	.41	99	4.49	.48	-.10**

*$p < .10$, **$p < .05$

Relationships Among Family Involvement Program Participation and Children's Educational Performance

Hierarchical linear regression analyses, controlling for beginning grades and test scores, were then run to determine whether FIP participation was related to better educational performance at the end of one year and two years of program involvement. Beginning performance levels in each area were entered into the first model, and total FIP attendance during year one was entered into the second model. As shown in Table 4, at the end of the first year, beginning grades and test scores were significantly predictive of each of the educational outcomes measured. The addition of one year of FIP attendance significantly improved the ability of the model to predict social skills grades, $\Delta R^2 = .012$, F (2, 195) = 139.12, $p < .05$, and work habits grades, $\Delta R^2 = .021$, F (2, 195) = 150.83, $p < .05$. Higher levels of FIP involvement significantly and positively predicted better social skills and work habits grades.

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression of Predictors of Children's Performance After One Year of FIP Participation

	n	R^2	R^2 change	β unstd.	*t-value*	β std.
Achievement						
Model 1	196	.635**				
Beginning Achievement				.785	18.380**	.795
Model 2	195	.635	.000			
Beginning Achievement				.785	18.017**	.795
Total FI Attendance First Year				.001	.264	.012
Effort						
Model 1	192	.402**				
Beginning Effort				.631	11.313**	.634
Model 2	191	.403	.000			
Beginning Effort				.634	11.236**	.637
Total FI Attendance First Year				-.001	-.340	-.019
Social Skills						
Model 1	198	.576**				
Beginning Social Skills				.770	16.302**	.759
Model 2	197	.588	.012**			
Beginning Social Skills				.749	15.787**	.738
Total FI Attendance First Year				.006	2.426**	.113
Work Habits						
Model 1	198	.587**				
Beginning Work Habits				.752	16.678**	.766
Model 2	197	.607	.021**			
Beginning Work Habits				.727	16.238**	.740
Total FI Attendance First Year				.006	3.211**	.146
English Language Arts Content Standard †						
Model 1	89	.180**				
Beginning ELA Score				.515	4.376**	.425
Model 2	88	.193	.013			
Beginning ELA Score				.517	4.404**	.427
Total FI Attendance First Year				.511	1.171	.113

Table 4 cont'd next page

Table 4 cont'd

Math Content Standard †						
Model 1	94	.418**				
Beginning Math Score				.670	8.131**	.647
Model 2	93	.421	.003			
Beginning Math Score				.668	8.094**	.646
Total FI Attendance First Year				.347	.72	.057

*$p < .10$, **$p < .05$
†Grades 3–5 only

As shown in Table 5, when entered in Model 1, beginning performance levels were significantly predictive of all of the educational outcomes except effort grades two years later. The addition of two years of FIP attendance significantly improved the ability of the model to predict effort grades, $\Delta R^2 = .125$, F (2, 95) = 7.90, p < .05, social skills grades, $\Delta R^2 = .110$, F (2, 93) = 13.87, $p < .05$, work habits grades, $\Delta R^2 = .122$, F (2, 93) = 13.11, $p < .05$, and English Language Arts standardized test scores, $\Delta R^2 = .125$, F (2, 44) = 9.07, $p < .05$, and was somewhat predictive of achievement grades, $\Delta R^2 = .021$, F (2, 97) = 28.81, $p < .10$. Higher levels of FIP involvement predicted better educational performance in each of these areas.

Table 5. Hierarchical Regression of Predictors of Children's Performance After Two Years of FI Program Attendance

	n	R^2	ΔR^2	β unstd.	*t-value*	β std.
Achievement						
Model 1	100	.351**				
Beginning Achievement				.648	7.287**	.593
Model 2	99	.373	.021*			
Beginning Achievement				.605	6.658**	.554
Total FI Attendance Two Years				.004	1.813*	.151
Effort						
Model 1	98	.018				
Beginning Effort				.155	1.329	.134
Model 2	97	.143	.125**			
Beginning Effort				.140	1.277	.121

Table 5 cont'd next page

Table 5 cont'd

Total FI Attendance Two Years				.010	3.715**	.353
Social Skills						
Model 1	96	.120*				
Beginning Social Skills				.438	3.579*	.346
Model 2	95	.230	.110**			
Beginning Social Skills				.391	3.380*	.309
Total FI Attendance Two Years				.012	3.641**	.333
Work Habits						
Model 1	96	.098**				
Beginning Work Habits				.373	3.198**	.313
Model 2	95	.220	.122**			
Beginning Work Habits				.325	2.964**	.273
Total FI Attendance Two Years				.014	3.810**	.351
English Language Arts Content Standard †						
Model 1	47	.167**				
Beginning ELA Score				.469	3.003**	.409
Model 2	46	.292	.125**			
Beginning ELA Score				.440	3.010**	.383
Total FI Attendance Two Years				.738	2.787**	.354
Math Content Standard †						
Model 1	51	.481**				
Beginning Math Score				.688	6.733**	.693
Model 2	50	.486	.005			
Beginning Math Score				.703	6.707**	.708
Total FI Attendance Two Years				-.196	-.711	-.075

*$p < .10$, **$p < .05$
†Grades 3–5 only

Discussion

This study investigated the impact of the YMCA Family Involvement Project—a collaborative school-based family involvement program designed based on community input—on Latino families and children's educational performance. Caregivers self-reported significant improvements in frequency of family–teacher contact and quality of family–teacher relationships. These findings are somewhat encouraging since better family–teacher relationships have been linked to higher student reading engagement and achievement in early elementary school (Hughes & Kwok, 2007), and prior research has indicated Latinos may be less culturally inclined to contact teachers, given the high regard they may have for school staff or the perception that education is the business of schools (Mapp, 2003; Ramirez, 2003). Although, as found in other studies (Auerbach, 2007; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012), these Latino families engaged in substantially more in-home (rather than school-based) involvement activities both before and after participation, they did evidence a significant increase in their school-based involvement. It is possible that, as these caregivers learned more about how the educational system worked, they became more confident in their skills to help their children (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Also, by coming to classes or socials, they may have become more comfortable interacting with teachers and school administrators, thus increasing their involvement on the school campus. It is also possible that, as a result of the school staff training, the school became a more welcoming place for Latino families. While most of the measures of family involvement increased after participation, levels of family endorsement significantly declined. Increased time and exposure at the school may have led these caregivers to think more critically about current school programs and practices.

One component of the FIP was the Community Leadership Institute (CLI) which was created to help caregivers develop and practice their leadership skills to become more involved in their schools and communities. Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) suggested that parental advocacy and empowerment programs, a nontraditional approach to family involvement, may be particularly useful in communities with high numbers of English language learners. Other studies have demonstrated that family involvement programs designed to enhance leadership skills, particularly those that actively engaged and built on the strengths in the Latino community, have helped family members to take on more active leadership roles in their schools and communities (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011; De Gaetano, 2007; Lopez & Kreider, 2003).

Family involvement has been linked to both better children's social skills and work habits (El Nokali et al., 2010; McDonald et al., 2006; Patall, Cooper,

& Robinson, 2008). Here, more frequent participation in FIP was significantly and positively predictive of social skills and work habits at the end of one year of caregiver involvement. It is possible that social skills and work habits may be more influenced by family involvement than academic measures, at least in the short term. It might also be reasonable to suggest that better work habits and social skills may allow more time for learning within the school classroom, which, in the long run, may contribute to better academic success (Arnold, Kupersmidt, Voegler-Lee, & Marshall, 2012; Konold, Jamison, Stanton-Chapman, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2010).

At the end of two years, FIP participation was positively and significantly predictive of effort, social skills and work habit grades, as well as standardized English Language Arts test scores, and somewhat predictive of achievement grades. Family involvement has been found to be related to increased student effort (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003) and, in this study, FIP involvement was predictive of children's effort even though their beginning effort grades lost the ability to predict after they had completed two more years of school. The ability of FIP participation to predict higher standardized test scores is noteworthy given that, while many types of family involvement programs have resulted in better children's academic performance, it is rarer that such program participation has been linked to standardized test scores (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2012). On average, children's ELA test scores moved from "basic" to "proficient" during the two years caregivers participated in the program. This finding is particularly important since Latino students, particularly those who are English language learners, typically score significantly lower than other students on these tests (California Department of Education, 2010). Overall, the findings here suggest that the FIP helped these Latino caregivers to become more involved in their children's education, particularly in relation to the school site and school staff, and improved children's educational performance in multiple ways. This suggests that collaborative family involvement programs have the ability to positively impact Latino children and families, thereby helping schools to better reach their educational goals.

Implications for Practice

Latino families can play an important role in their children's social and educational development and contribute to the mission of schools to effectively educate all children. In order to maximize this resource, schools should develop culturally appropriate programs, on their own or in partnership with community-based organizations, to engage this population. However, these programs need to be developed strategically since increasing low-income, culturally diverse families' involvement requires creative strategies that take into

account culture, gender, language and reading ability, and economic status (Arias & Morrillo-Campbell, 2008; Caspe, Lopez, & Wolos, 2006). First, as has been suggested elsewhere (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012), it is crucial to obtain Latino families' input into program development and implementation to attract families to the program. Holding community forums to gather input from caregivers provides evidence from the very beginning that the school and/or community agency value the strengths and knowledge of the Latino community, an important aspect of successful involvement programs (De Gaetano, 2007; Durand, 2010; Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; Lopez & Donovan, 2009). Input should also ensure that the program is seen as relevant to Latino families which should make engagement easier. It may also prove beneficial to hold forums with school staff, as was done with this project, both as a mechanism for educating about family involvement and for increasing staff commitment for such programs.

Second, higher levels of FIP involvement predicted numerous educational performance outcomes over a two-year time period. This may suggest that family involvement programs targeting Latino families should be ongoing and multifaceted rather than merely a once yearly, short-term effort. This might be particularly true given that many types of family involvement programs have been shown to be helpful for the Latino community and to contribute to academic achievement and positive family growth (Jeynes, 2012; Zarate, 2007). While family workshop topics were identified by the community itself, many of the components had been shown to be beneficial for this population including family literacy, in-home education promotion, leadership development, and caregiver education (Berzin, 2010; De Gaetano, 2007; Jeynes, 2012; Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; Patall et al., 2008; St. Clair et al., 2012). Providing diverse classes and events may lead to more broad involvement and, hopefully, once families attend one type of program offering, they may be more inclined to attend others. Having a comprehensive program providing many different educational involvement opportunities for Latino families may increase the likelihood of a program both increasing family involvement and children's academic performance (Zarate, 2007). In addition, to recruit and retain participants, it is necessary to do personal outreach, provide child care and/or family classes, translation, food, a welcoming atmosphere, and opportunities to build social relationships among participants (Behnke & Kelly, 2011; Larrotta & Yamamura, 2011; Lopez & Donovan, 2009). Creating ways for participants to be meaningfully involved and gathering ongoing input, as was done here, may also help schools to involve more Latino families (Downs et al., 2008).

Third, given the literature on institutional barriers related to Latino family involvement, it is unlikely that family involvement programs can focus solely

on educating families on how to be involved. In order to really encourage their involvement, teacher and school staff training is needed, and mechanisms such as social events may help school staff and families to develop more positive relationships (De Gaetano, 2007; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Lee & Bowen, 2006; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012). These efforts should make the schools a more welcoming place for caregivers to practice the new skills they are learning in their classes. It should also help school staff to engage in more culturally appropriate outreach to families. Given that combining these interventions may be time consuming and take skills that are not available in the school itself, it may prove beneficial to partner with community organizations to implement comprehensive family involvement programs (Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012; St. Clair et al., 2012). Similar to previous research suggesting comprehensive family engagement programs are more likely to be successful (Redding, Langdon, Meyer, & Sheley, 2004), total FIP participation was predictive of many positive educational performance changes; however, sole participation in each of the different class options was not predictive. Future research efforts might attempt to explore whether one type of training (family literacy, leadership development) contributes more to educational outcomes.

Although the findings here indicate that the FIP was effective, there are some limitations to the study. The lack of a comparison group makes it impossible to conclude that FIP participation solely was responsible for the changes in family involvement, although it may be somewhat unlikely that these changes would occur without some type of intervention. While the regression analyses did control for baseline functioning, there may have been other factors that should have been controlled for as well. Future research efforts in this area should attempt to include a control or comparison group. In addition, there was no mechanism to measure changes in teacher or school staff that resulted from the training or levels of their involvement with family members. This is an important area in need of further study.

Overall, the results of this study provide evidence of the ability of comprehensive family involvement programs to positively impact both Latino family involvement and children's school performance. However, it appears the best programs should be ongoing, culturally relevant, responsive to the community, and target both families and school staff. It may also be useful for schools and community agencies to work collaboratively to develop and implement these programs given the fiscal and staff constraints often faced by schools. These partnerships are particularly warranted given the many positive outcomes found here.

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