

EXPLORING HOW MEXICAN IMMIGRANT PARENTS SUPPORT
THE EDUCATION OF THEIR HIGH-ACHIEVING CHILDREN

by

Alicia Gasca

A Master's Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
Department of Language, Learning, and Leadership
State University of New York at Fredonia
Fredonia, New York

December 2013

State University of New York at Fredonia
Department of Language, Learning, & Leadership

CERTIFICATION OF PROJECT WORK

We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled EXLORING HOW MEXICAN IMMIGRANT PARENTS SUPPORT THE EDUCATION OF THEIR HIGH-ACHIEVING CHILDREN by Alicia Gasca, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.

[Redacted Signature]

Janeil C. Rey, Ph.D., Master's Project Advisor
EDU 690 Course Instructor
Department of Language, Learning, & Leadership

12/23/13
Date

[Redacted Signature]

Department Chair Anna Thibodeau, Ph.D.
Department of Language, Learning, & Leadership

1-2-14
Date

[Redacted Signature]

Dean Christine Givner, Ph.D.
College of Education
At SUNY Fredonia

1/30/14
Date

Abstract

In general Latino students are underperforming in US schools, yet some Mexican immigrant parents are able to support their children in ways that are conducive to their academic success. This study explores how monolingual Spanish-speaking Mexican parents with limited education of their own are involved in the education of their high-achieving children.

As part of this qualitative study, interviews with three parents were conducted, recorded and transcribed. The findings are consistent with much of the literature reviewed and reveal that these Mexican immigrant parents prioritize education for their children through the use of guiding messages, by setting expectations for the future, and by being present at teacher conferences, even though language barriers limit communication with teachers and staff.

Additionally, they used monitoring strategies to maintain awareness of their children's school and social activities. Schools can help Mexican immigrants by adding bilingual staff, by extending assistance for children with their homework, and by promoting practices that immigrant parents can undertake such as consistently setting academic expectations for their children and providing them with messages of encouragement in their academic pursuits.

Keywords: parent involvement; Latino parents; education

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	5
Literature Review	8
Parent Involvement and Achievement.....	9
Motivations for Parent Involvement.....	12
Challenges for Mexican Immigrant Parents.....	13
Strengths of Immigrant Parents	15
School Connections.....	16
Methodology.....	21
Setting	21
Participants	22
Design	23
Data Collection	25
Data Analysis	26
Limitations.....	26
Findings	27
Discussion	33
References	39
Appendices	45

Introduction

Latinos in the United States are underperforming academically. According to existing research a persistent gap remains in math and reading test scores between Latinos and Whites (Madrid, 2011). While schools have always had a moral obligation to educate all students, new accountability measures are forcing schools to show evidence that these disparities are being addressed. One such measure requires schools to implement parental involvement efforts.

Parental participation has been found to be critical for school success, but teachers complain that immigrant parents usually turn out in low numbers at school functions, thus limiting the valuable teacher-parent interaction (Guo, 2006). Teachers are knowledgeable about children's needs and abilities and can provide immigrant parents with information on how to make child-parent interaction at home more substantive. Yet, many teachers tend to limit their communications exclusively to topics about behavior problems or poor grades, which does little to develop a trusting relationship with immigrant parents (Madrid, 2011).

Parents, many with little education themselves, may be incapable of helping their children with academic content or engaging in literacy activities in English, but they do demonstrate behaviors that support student academic efforts (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). Sociocultural and linguistic complexities shape the manner in which immigrant parents participate in their children's education at home and at school. Latino parents care about their children and their children's education, yet the way in which parents support their children's schooling remains mostly incongruent with the presumptions schools have about home-learning practices.

Despite the challenges there are Spanish-speaking, immigrant parents who are able to raise academically engaged children without incorporating traditional home-learning practices

that have been well documented as essential for academic achievement. These parents as well, may not read to their children, may not help with their homework and may not participate extensively at school functions. Even so, their children thrive and succeed in spite of their material disadvantages. My study focuses on understanding how these families are able to foster learning in the home and success in the classroom. Understanding the strengths of these exemplars can help educators direct resources to support other similar families. Learning about the conditions that harbor a positive home-learning environment in Spanish-speaking homes can allow schools to capitalize on immigrants' strengths. Targeted efforts and strategies stand a better chance of helping parents frame their cultural attributes as assets, increasing the possibility for the academic success of their children.

As part of this qualitative investigation, I interviewed three parents in their homes. A set of open-ended questions guided the interviews. I centered my inquiry on three main areas: parent beliefs about education; the actions parents take in support of their children's education; and the nature and extent that their teacher or school connections have helped them. More specifically, this contextualized case study was designed to answer the research question, "How do Mexican immigrant parents with less than a high school degree narrate their contribution to the education of their high-achieving children?"

Numerous studies have connected low socio-economic status and parents' educational levels to poor academic outcomes for their children. Other studies have examined the discontinuity between home and school cultures. These studies generally serve to correlate the immigrant experience to low academic performance. Some studies have focused on projects or interventions to educate the parents on the proper ways they should help. On the other hand, researchers like Valdes (1996) present the view that interventions aimed at changing immigrant

parents' behaviors interfere with their precarious daily struggle to survive, and what may be best is allowing the natural process of acculturation to take place. Very few studies have focused on Latino immigrant successes.

Although the population of Latinos continues to grow at a rapid rate, 43% of all Latinos have less than a high school degree (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). Moreover, children whose parents do not graduate from high school are less likely to graduate themselves (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012). With such a fast growing, young population, it is critical that schools find ways to bridge sociocultural and linguistic barriers. Otherwise they will be accomplices to an institutionalized cycle of academic failure and poverty for this immigrant population.

My interest in the topic stems from my personal experience as an English language learner (ELL) entering the public school system in the United States. My instruction was complete immersion, since there was no English as a second language (ESL) curriculum at the school. Although my mother was committed to my second language acquisition, with only a second grade level education herself, she had little experience on how to foster academic achievement. As a monolingual Spanish speaker from a foreign country, my mother felt intimidated going to school events or talking to the teachers. Nevertheless, she had high expectations about my school attendance and good behavior. I have always felt that my family's willingness to support my education was a resource left largely untapped. Had she been able to establish a relationship with my teachers, my mother would have been, I feel, a more substantial asset to my academic development. Yet to the extent of her capabilities, she was able to participate by providing a home life that was able to support my own learning efforts.

Many who immigrate do so hoping to create more opportunities and believing that their children will have a better, more prosperous future. Yet, many educators still believe Latino

immigrant families do not value education because they do not witness the support that occurs in the home and they misconstrue their absence at school functions. These misconceptions result in blaming the parents for the academic shortcomings without considering the role of the school and its representatives. Nonetheless, some immigrant parents are able to overcome the challenges and create home learning environments that fit within their own sociocultural context and that of the school's. This research aims to examine the factors that make such Spanish-speaking parents successful in their support of their children's academic progress.

Literature Review

As an ethnic group, Latino youth routinely underperform at school (Madrid, 2011). In the classroom, children of non-English-speaking immigrants face an uphill battle as they are more likely to enter the school system needing ESL services and they have to catch up on English while struggling to keep up with content. While empirical evidence points towards a strong relationship between parent involvement and student achievement at school (Harris & Goodall, 2008), immigrant parents face a host of challenges in lending their support to their children. The support they are able to provide frequently differs from what educators might perceive to be normal practices of engaging in home support for learning. This study explores the components of effective home-learning environments for children of monolingual, Spanish-speaking immigrants. Specifically, it focuses on Mexican immigrant parents with less than high school-level educations and how they are able to impact their children's academic outcomes.

To determine what components of the home and school involvement facilitate the academic success in this population, it is important to first look at what the literature says about the role that parent involvement plays on student achievement in general. The decision to participate or the manner that a parent participates in his or her child's education either at school

or in the home is multi-faceted. This review will look at the current studies that address potential motivators of parental involvement and also at effective involvement practices. The scope of the review will narrow as it defines the population and focuses on research that discusses the challenges to home involvement by Mexican immigrant parents. In the final section of this review, I will explore several investigations that highlight the cultural strengths of Mexican immigrants, effective parent involvement practices, and examples of positive home-school connections.

Parent involvement and achievement

What parents do to facilitate their children's learning manifests in various ways but certain practices may be more influential to academic achievement than others (Altschul, 2011). Academic support can be a form of parental home involvement, such as helping children with homework, engaging them in learning activities, or discussing school related topics with them. The literature also includes other forms of home involvement such as general parent support and encouragement as well as parent monitoring (Lowe & Dotterer, 2013). School-based involvement is seen as attendance at parent-teacher conferences and school events or functions. Research points to home involvement as the most beneficial type of engagement. For example, Senechal and LeFevre (2002) explored the connection between parent involvement and reading proficiency in a study that included 168 kindergarten children and their parents. Literacy is one area where home involvement is shown to be particularly impactful. The researchers followed the subjects to third grade and found that informal practices like reading to young children or exposure to books at home predicted increased vocabulary and comprehension skills in the long term. Formal instruction, such as letter recognition and decoding activities at home, was predictive of early emergent literacy. They concluded that parent involvement in formal or

informal literacy activities created a “promotive effect” (p. 445) that led to good readers by third grade. Similarly, Harris and Gooddall (2008), using interviews and student performance data in their study, determined that although parental participation at school played an important role as a social function, it was the involvement of parents in learning activities at home that made the greatest difference in achievement. Altschul (2011), focusing specifically on Mexican American parents, found the same positive association between parental involvement in the home and achievement.

Student motivation. Some studies suggest that parental involvement affects children’s attitudes about learning, and thus impacts achievement. Dearing, Weiss, Kreider and Simpkins (2004) studied children’s literacy, focusing on how parental home involvement and the mothers’ educational attainment influenced achievement. They found that low-income children with less educated mothers who exhibited high levels of participation showed the most dramatic increases in both positive attitudes and achievement by fifth grade. The authors concluded that a high level of parental involvement mitigated socio-economic disadvantages, and created a path of influence that led to positive literacy outcomes. Gonzales-DeHaas, Willems, and Holbein (2005) analyzed other studies that investigated how parental engagement affects different dimensions of student motivation. Their investigation concluded that students with involved parents report more effort and concentration and are “more inherently interested in learning” (p. 117).

Another common practice used by parents to support their children is known as parental monitoring, that is, maintaining awareness of their child’s school and social activities (Lowe & Dotterer, 2013). Some ways parents engage in monitoring strategies are by keeping tabs on their child’s whereabouts, staying informed about their schedules and friends, and asking their children if they have finished their homework. Lowe & Dotterer (2013) investigated the

associations between parental monitoring and the motivation of minority adolescents at school. Just over 200 middle school students participated in a survey to assess their parents' monitoring practices, the quality of their relationships with their parents, and their engagement and motivation at school. The researchers found that when students reported higher levels of parent monitoring practices they also had greater interest and effort in school and better self-esteem. This correlation strengthened when students reported having warm, positive relationships with their parents. Similarly, from an analysis of self-reported data from the School Success Profile, Woolley, Kol and Bowen (2009) found that parental monitoring was indirectly linked to school satisfaction.

Parent expectations. Another line of research that has associated parental home engagement with academic performance suggests that the strong influence to achievement comes from the expectations and vision parents create for their children through what they do at home. Fan (2001), studied the effects of parental involvement on high school students' academic growth. His analysis revealed that parents' aspirations for their children had the strongest effect on academic achievement across all ethnic groups. Highlighting the importance of parent involvement in middle school as well, Hill and Tyson's (2009) meta-analysis research revealed that the type of involvement with the most consistent association to achievement was parents' expectations for their children's future educational endeavors, termed academic socialization. By promoting educational goals, parents instill a sense of purpose in their children, which may lead to a greater school effort. Interestingly, parent assistance with homework at the middle school level had a negative correlation to achievement. According to the authors, it is thought that when parents are helping with homework in middle school it is because their children are already experiencing significant problems with academics.

Suizzo et al. (2012) measured different dimensions of parental support, including messages of expectations, and their influence on the motivation and academic achievement of Mexican-origin adolescents. They administered questionnaires to 216 low-income sixth graders, and their analysis revealed that the messages parents give about the importance of school success to their children increase students' feelings of determination. In addition, they found the students' level of determination was directly linked to their overall school grades. Suizzo et al. (2012) suggest that practitioners can help parents feel empowered by communicating that the messages about goals and expectations they share with their children "strengthens their children's resolve to succeed" (p. 545), and helps lay a pathway to achievement.

Motivations to parent involvement

In order to study what role immigrant parents play in developing a successful home learning environment, I will examine current research on what motivates parents to get involved in the first place. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) propose that certain components affect parents' decision making about home and school involvement (role construction, self-efficacy, invitations, skills and knowledge, and time and energy). The results of Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007), and Anderson and Minke (2007) found that teacher invitations heavily influenced parents' involvement both at home and at school. This strong influence of teacher invitations is important because it is the variable that educators have the most control over. Another key factor identified was the influence of student invitations, when children invite or ask their parents for help or for participation with school matters.

Using a different construct with three factors that influence behavior (role of parent, perception of a good parent, and perceived barriers), Bracke and Cortis (2012) administered a three-part survey to involved and non-involved parents in a school district reporting problems

with low parent participation. Their research found that most parents believed it was important to be involved at school and wanted to participate, but the non-involved parents were much more likely to perceive that others were not involved with their children's schooling. The authors suggest that social norms, or what other parents do in terms of involvement, influence parents' motivation to participate in their children's education.

Likewise, Sheldon (2002) explored how social influences affect parental practices. His analysis of 298 parent survey responses focused on the relationship between the size of parents' social network and their educational parent involvement practices. His findings showed that parents who had broader social networks, had access to more resources, such as favors or information, and what they gained from their social interactions influenced the level and type of involvement with their children. Sheldon suggests that even "connecting an isolated parent to one or two other parents" (p. 313) could be a promising strategy for schools. Other powerful factors influence Latino families' involvement practices as well.

Challenges for Mexican immigrant parents

Socio-economic. Latinos are the largest and the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, yet have the highest drop-out rate (15.1%) of all ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). The Latino ethnic group, according to the U.S. Census, is composed of people of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American origin. Although 16.7% of the population is of Latino origin, the majority (58%) are of Mexican origin. Although Mexican-origin Latinos are formidable in numbers, they trail in indicators that signal socioeconomic mobility (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). For example, 49% of Mexican-origin Latinos have not completed high school and lead all ethnic groups in occupying low-level occupations such as agricultural workers, fabricators and laborers (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004).

Achievement gap. There is evidence that since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation passed in 2002, the persistent achievement gap between Latinos and Whites has been narrowing. However, while many states have reported slight increases in the number of Latinos scoring at proficient levels, the five states that enroll 70% of Latino students also report Latinos in the lowest three subgroups in math and reading, far behind Whites (Kober, 2010).

Specifically, in a middle school located in Western New York, that is representative of the location where this study will be conducted, 57% of White 7th grade students met or exceeded the proficiency achievement standard for English Language Arts in comparison to only 35% of the Latino students. In 7th grade math achievement scores, 68% of White students met or exceeded the standard compared to only 38% of Latino students (New York State Report Card, 2012). Thus, the disparity remains substantial and many Latino students are not doing well enough to be able to enter or complete college (Kober, 2010).

School culture and language. Immigrant parents face a host of challenges in being able to provide educational guidance and support for their children. The type of home practices that educators consider essential such as reading to a child or assisting with homework requires a level of English proficiency or general education that Mexican immigrants are unlikely to possess. Delgado-Gaitan (1992) found in her ethnographic research that for Latino parents the most frustrating aspect of interacting with their children at home, was their inability to help with homework when their children struggled with assignments. Mexican parents may also be reluctant to initiate dialogue with English-speaking teachers or school personnel. Both Turney & Kao (2009) found that the lack of English-language ability was the leading barrier to parent engagement at school. The cultural discontinuity between school and home has also been found to limit communication and participation on the part of parents. The Mexican parents in a study

by Quioco and Daoud (2006) expressed their willingness to participate and engage with teachers but felt excluded by the school because school efforts were not focused on language needs. Additionally, immigrant parents may hold a different view of the teacher-parent relationship. Smith, Stern and Shatrova (2008) found that parents described a reluctance to advocate for their children even when they had concerns because they perceived educators as powerful authorities deserving of respect and deference, not figures to be openly challenged.

Strengths of immigrant parents

It is important to consider what the literature says about the strengths of Mexican immigrant parents in order to identify how it is that some find ways to help their children do well in school. Most parents care deeply about their children's education, including Mexican immigrants, and want to help them succeed. In a prominent ethnography, Delgado-Gaitan (1992) studied the learning interactions in the homes of six immigrant Mexican families. The parents in the study prioritized the education of their children and provided a safe, comfortable environment to support schoolwork even with the limitations caused by their socioeconomic reality. Also the parents often recounted stories to their children about not having the choice or opportunity to pursue an education for themselves as a way to motivate their children and to give a high value to educational pursuits. In a similar ethnographic study by Carreon, Drake and Barton (2005), the researchers found that even with limited material and human resources, all the parents cared about education and made attempts to guide and support the quality of their children's educational experiences. The parents in Smith, et al. (2008) felt their role was ensuring the homework was completed, and that the children were respectful towards their teachers. In addition, Schaller, Rocha, and Barshinger (2007) described all the immigrant

mothers in an intervention program as having a commitment to the education of their children and a vision of what they could accomplish.

In another qualitative investigation using interviews and observation data, Treviño (2004) delved into home involvement practices of five migrant, Mexican families from different parts of Texas whose children were high-achievers. The parents, who were all migrant workers, considered themselves partners along with teachers and recognized their responsibility to support their learning. They promoted respect for teachers, a strong work ethic, and prioritized educational activities above all else. All the parents in the study reported having a vision of academic success and all had high expectations for their children.

In an effort to identify parenting practices that contribute to the academic achievement of underprivileged Latinos, Ceballo (2004) interviewed ten successful students attending Yale University, a prominent Ivy-League institution. All of the students in the study had immigrant parents with limited educational experience, who spoke Spanish in the home. The author found that the students were influenced by their parents' messages about the importance of education, and their parents' actions or decisions in support of their academic endeavors, such as exempting them from family obligations, or making hot chocolate in the middle of the night while they studied. The immigrant parents did not understand the details of their children's education and were not able to involve themselves in traditional ways, instead they trusted their children to make their own decisions about their academic future.

School connections

Teacher influence. Cultural differences have led some educators to develop misconceptions that parents are not capable of lending any support at home (Quioco & Daoud, 2006). Yet through parent interaction, teachers can provide parents with a sense of efficacy,

activating in them a purpose for their involvement. Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011) inquired about Latino parents' motivations for involvement testing the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1997). Their analysis revealed that Latino parent engagement in the home was strongly influenced by the parent's perception of his or her role as a partner with the school or teacher, as well as by the children's requests for involvement. Teacher invitations were the strongest motivation for school involvement. The author suggests that schools should offer opportunities for teacher-parent interaction, as well as "culturally relevant information on how parents can actively support their children's learning at home" (p. 426). Similarly, Smith et al. (2008) suggests that programs and policies should be geared to increasing parental involvement at home.

Developing a trusting teacher and school relationship can serve as a gateway to resources and support. Woolley et al. (2009) posit that, "It is incumbent on schools and teachers to reach out to Latino parents and actively seek to reduce misunderstandings" in order to increase student outcomes (p. 63). The parents of the students who were more advanced readers in the study by Delgado-Gaitan (1992) seemed to have established relationships with teachers and they were more proactive about contacting the teacher regarding homework assignments or about the academic progress of their child. The teachers in turn, perceiving this communication as a genuine interest from the parent, tended to impart more valuable information to those parents. Likewise, Carreon, et al. (2005) suggest that creating a trusting relationship with a teacher or school representative "provides the scaffolding for a more fulfilling school engagement experience" (p. 494). Treviño (2004) credited educators in his study for expanding the vision of migrant, Mexican parents to include a pathway to college for their children. Teachers of course can have a profound and meaningful impact on their students directly. One of Ceballos's (2004)

themes from interviewing successful Latinos at Yale was that their parents facilitated the presence of role models or mentors in their children's lives. All the students described at least one influential teacher in their lives who had challenged them, helped them get involved in extracurricular activities and provided support and inspiration for their academic pursuits in ways that their parents could not. Additionally, teacher support of Latino adolescents has been shown to correlate with student behavior, student satisfaction, and student grades (Woolley et al., 2009).

Parent willingness. The research indicates that parents are receptive and willing to incorporate new practices within their socio-cultural context. For example, Gillanders and Jimenez (2004) investigated the home environment of four low-income, immigrant Mexican children who displayed a high level of emergent literacy in kindergarten. The investigators wanted to know how these children were able to rise above their socio-economic limitations and outperform their classmates. The results revealed that the parents were already participating in literacy activities such as singing rhymes or storytelling, but were also willing to adapt their understanding of home support by incorporating new learning activities when the teacher encouraged the practice. The authors suggest that opportunities exist to develop strategies that complement immigrant parents' efforts. Additionally, the Latino parents in Quijcho and Daoud (2006) requested workshops or guidance to help their children with homework.

Cultural connections. Teachers tend to communicate more often and involve parents in more ways if they perceive parents share their views on parent involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1991), and it is more likely that they perceive similarities with parents who share ethnicity, religion and education level similar to theirs. Yet, educators stand to gain by leveraging immigrant parents' cultural strengths. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) utilized the parents' own knowledge and expertise (funds of knowledge) to develop a curriculum that

incorporated themes from the home culture. The ideas for the themes were developed through interactions during home visits, in turn, the parent-teacher collaboration fostered more trust. De Gaetano (2007) suggests a strength-based approach to engaging parents by emphasizing their own values, experience and way of life in order to “enable the parents’ potential and capacities to emerge and flourish around their children’s schooling through what they know intimately; their ethnicities, backgrounds, language and culture” (p. 147).

In a broader context, schools and districts can create more inclusive cultures that welcome immigrant parents and in the same manner, parents in general. The investigation by Lopez, Scribner and Mahitivanichcha (2001) describes how certain schools serving a large population of migrant families were able to create welcoming environments to reach migrant parents. Critical to the schools’ success was their commitment to addressing the needs of migrant parents in a respectful and nonjudgmental manner and providing an open, collaborative dialogue with parents and other partner agencies.

This study is based on the theoretical framework of role construction theory. Biddle (1986) describes role theory as having to do with patterned social behavior, roles or identities taken by individuals, and social expectations for behavior. More specifically, Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005) defines parental role construction as “parents’ beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children’s education and the patterns of behavior that follow those beliefs” (p. 107). These beliefs about what their role is as involved parents encompasses parents’ understanding of child development, their perception about effective parenting practices and their ideas about what their responsibilities are in helping their children with school learning. Expectations from social groups and parents’ own experiences influence parental role construction. This collection of social influences can change parents’ beliefs, and subsequently

impact their actions. For example, parents may come to learn from other parents in their child's classroom that checking their child's homework every night is a meaningful parental duty and they may decide to incorporate it into their own belief system. Drummond and Stipek's (2004) study supports the potency of social expectations on role construction. Minority parents in their investigation indicated that when teachers provided suggestions about how to help their children with specific content, parents tended to rate the importance of helping their children at higher levels. Likewise, Sheldon's (2002) findings (reviewed earlier) are consistent with the effects of social expectations on parental beliefs about their involvement role.

Scholarly accounts demonstrate the link between parental involvement and academic achievement. Multiple factors play into parent involvement but the literature suggests one of the most significant is parents' ability to create educational expectations for their children and a compelling vision of educational achievement that they can create through the home environment. Latino immigrants face many challenges, including unfamiliarity with the home learning norms and school operation, and lack of English proficiency. The relationships they forge with their children's teachers or school administrators can help guide their efforts at home, provide a sense of efficacy, and nurture a vision for their children's future. Teachers and schools can build the trust with parents in various ways. The literature presents some examples of what educators can do to advance parent involvement including: creating opportunities that are culturally appropriate for parents, inviting parents and providing opportunities for involvement, and providing a collaborative culture that is inclusive of their unique needs.

The literature clearly indicates that parent involvement improves student achievement, yet potent socio-economic factors experienced by many Mexican immigrant families hinder parents' ability to optimize their involvement in their children's education. Research nonetheless

reveals many examples of Mexican parents striving to advance their children's school performance, including through ways considered nontraditional. Despite the challenges, some parents succeed in helping their children excel. This study examines how this specific population is able to create a supportive home learning environment that enables children to become high-achievers in school.

Methodology

This qualitative research is as a case study patterned after the investigation by Roberto E. Trevino, titled "Against All Odds: Lessons from Parents of Migrant High-Achievers." I used a combination of interviews and participant-observations, a strategy commonly employed in qualitative research, to gather descriptive data that provides insight for the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Qualitative research captures both meaning and contextual information, and is ideal for developing the narrative of how Mexican immigrant parents support their children's academic achievement (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The interview sessions were semi-structured in that a list of questions was used but there was flexibility to provide follow-up questions in relation to interviewee responses.

Setting

The data collection took place in Western New York in the homes of the study participants. The Mexican participants are here primarily to work the area's extensive grape industry. Many of these workers settle and raise their children in the region. Their presence reflects the employment networks that have developed in the area as most of the Mexican immigrants come from the state of Oaxaca and speak an indigenous Mixtec language native to Southern Mexico. Approximately 23% of the residents living in one of the cities in this region with a high concentration of Latinos, live below the poverty level while 21% speak a language

other than English at home (US Census, 2011). Although Latinos of Puerto Rican origin make up the majority of Latinos in the area, Mexican Latinos constitute a significant presence as evident by the various businesses catering to a Mexican clientele.

Originally I requested that interviews be conducted after school on weekdays when there was greater opportunity to witness parent-child interactions pertaining to school. Families were, however, reluctant to participate on workdays citing their level of fatigue and need to make use of the valuable few hours they have after work. Consequently, sessions were conducted on the weekends and took place in the general living area of the house where the family usually congregated. Each interview took approximately one hour.

Participants

Study participants were identified through existing community contacts. I had previously worked as a volunteer translator for parent-teacher conferences at a local school and in the process met an immigrant father who explained that although he was a farmworker and he could not help his sons in many ways, he did what he could to support them. After he left, the teacher informed me that all of his sons were academic high achievers. This encounter served as the inspiration for this investigation - how was this immigrant parent able to produce such different academic outcomes in his children's performance than other parents I met that night who also shared his background. I began to search through existing community contacts to identify participants for this study hoping to locate and recruit the particular parent who had first inspired my inquiry. A friend, whom I had tutored in English in the past, provided information for three potential contacts. One of those became a participant in the study and referred me to two other contacts. One of those referrals was the father whom I had met a year prior while translating at the parent-teacher conference. Those parents referred me to two more potential participants. One

did not meet my criteria and the other agreed to participate in the study but eventually changed his mind.

To ensure that I selected suitable candidates, I developed a set of preliminary questions that I used as a screening process (Appendix A). In the interest of not putting at risk any parent whose immigration status might be compromised, one of the preliminary questions probed to determine if candidates had any concerns or reservations about participating due to situations such as immigration status. They were not asked to explain their situation. If parents expressed any reluctance then they were excluded from the study. Once the eligibility of participants had been determined, I made appointments to interview the parents in their homes.

The subjects were Mexican immigrant parents who did not speak English at home and had not completed high school. Additionally, the parents had at least one child who was and consistently had been on the school's honor roll. A 90% or above grade point average qualified students for honor roll status on a quarterly basis. Since the honor roll program is only available for middle and high school students, the participating parents had to have children between the ages of 11 and 18. Approximately 20% of the student body in the Western New York school from where parents were recruited qualified for the honor roll each quarter (M. Manzella, personal communication, May 6, 2013). Thus, students who qualified for this distinction were in this way considered academic achievers.

One issue I encountered during the screening process was that none of the parents I talked to was familiar with the term or status of "honor roll." As the honor roll program was described to them they expressed some familiarity but nonetheless ultimately had to ask their child to confirm their participation in the honor roll.

Design

My investigation was in the form of a case study and required face-to-face qualitative, semi-structured interviews in combination with participant observations. Prior to conducting the interviews I first explained my study thoroughly with each participant and reviewed the consent process and the consent form (Appendix B). I reiterated that as participants they could stop participating in the investigation at any time. If the parents had no additional questions, I asked them to sign the Spanish version of the consent form (Appendix C). Formal interviews were scheduled for a one-hour session. Conducting the interviews at the participants' homes allowed them a comfortable space where they would be more willing to open up and share their beliefs and parenting experiences.

Although my original intent was to schedule separate observation sessions to capture the after school atmosphere and interactions, parents expressed reluctance in scheduling additional time. All of the parents are employed as farm workers and described their workdays as long and physically taxing. They explained their hesitation in the context of only having a few hours after work to run errands, make dinner and prepare for the following workday. The parents were gracious in inviting me into their homes but preferred not to participate in separate observation sessions. Trevino (2000) made his observation notes in the process of collecting his participant interviews for his dissertation. Bogdan and Biklen, (1998) also note that collecting observation data can be done in various ways, such as in a passive manner by observing quietly or one could note observations while interacting with subjects. Therefore, during my scheduled interview visits, I used the time to also make observations about the general atmosphere of the home and parents' dispositions with their children. At least one child was present during the interviews but their behavior and actions were not recorded. During the interviews I also asked subjects to

describe the family's morning and afterschool routine in order to gain insight about their support of their children.

Data collection

The interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder. I began my interview by telling the parents of my background and conveying my interest in their personal stories. I received permission from the author Dr. Robert E. Trevino to adapt the questions he used in his guided conversations with parents during his own study (Appendix D). I deleted two of his original questions that were more specific to migrant workers, and reworded one other. I also added one new question to incorporate information from two studies in the literature review about social influences on parent practices. Dr. Trevino indicated that his questions were only used as initial probes, and as a qualitative researcher, he formulated many additional questions as new discussion points presented themselves during his interviews (R. Trevino, personal communication, April 26, 2013). During my interview with parents I tried to adhere to my list questions as much as possible, but I found that most often I needed to rephrase my questions, as they seemed to be exceedingly formal for the parents with limited educational background and with Spanish as a second language. There were also times when parent responses dictated that I use follow-up questions. Since my interest was on learning about parent beliefs and practices, interviews with the children were not necessary since they would fall outside the scope of my research. I also made note of parent actions involving the general home. The interviews were translated and transcribed into English. I assigned a letter code to each parent (A, B, C) so that their identity within the transcript and investigation remain anonymous.

At the beginning of the interviews, all the parents seemed a little nervous after turning on the audio recorder. On several occasions they expressed concern over sounding incoherent on the

recording. I explained again how the data would be used and that all their information was valuable to me. Since I was asking them to discuss their views on a topic that is of great importance to them, the parents became at ease with the process.

Data analysis

As part of the data analysis, I reviewed the transcripts and highlighted items that were mentioned multiple times. From this review, a list of representative phrases (codes) was developed such as language issue, rules and messages (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Paragraphs from the transcripts, or what Bogdan and Biklen (1998) refer to as data units, were labeled using the code list. The data units with the same codes were then sorted into groups. An examination and comparison of the sorted data helped refine my understanding of each theme (Rubin, 2005). Finally interpretations were drawn from the analysis, and their implications presented as the findings of the study.

Limitations

The sample size for this investigation is small – an unfortunate consequence of time constraints. Nonetheless, I feel the data collected using this design allowed me to respond to my research question. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized, they may shed additional insight into what types of efforts may help Mexican immigrant parents improve their children's academic performance.

Findings

Several themes emerged from the analysis of the parent interviews. These themes are evident in various interview excerpts that provide personal perspectives and are representative of their general commentary. The findings provide insight into how immigrant Mexican parents' beliefs about children and education translate into parenting practices that help children succeed at school.

Parent Profiles

The three participants in this study were of indigenous background – a reflection of the Mexican population of this geographic area and the migration network that connect the Western New York grape farms to the indigenous communities of Oaxaca Mexico. The families included in the study had heard of each other but they do not have close relations nor live near each other. Parents B and C are married. Their interview was conducted jointly. The interviewees spoke about their current and past practices in support of their children's schooling and about their beliefs about their parental involvement role. The parents worked long hours, sometimes including weekends. It was clear that their time with their children was precious. The interaction with their children was warm yet firm, and they maintained a positive, happy disposition throughout my visit.

Parent A. Parent A is a single mother with three children: one a seventh-grader who is a member of the honor roll, one in elementary school and a younger one attending daycare. She comes from a small town in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. Her native language is Mixtec. She learned Spanish when she attended elementary school. She does not speak English and works as a farm worker. She has a support system of several relatives in the area who also work with her

at the farm. Parent A lives in a multi-housing rental with ample living space. It had modest furnishings and it was tidy. Parent A immigrated to the United States thirteen years ago.

Parents B and C. Similar to Parent A, both parents B and C learned Spanish as a second language when they attended elementary school. They do not speak English and work as farm workers at a different farm than Parent A. They have three sons: one is completing his senior year of high school; one is in tenth grade; one has just entered middle school. The sons in high school take advanced placement classes and are members of the honor roll. Parents B and C live in a multi-housing unit. Heated by an electric space heater, the living room seemed cold and confined. There are items stacked in different corners, making the home seem smaller. They have a television in the living room. The parents moved to the United States 10 years ago.

Common Themes

Support for Education. Consistent with the studies reviewed, these parents promoted the importance of education to their children. The parents said that their goal was for their children to attend a college or university yet they had little knowledge about the college enrollment process and had great concerns about the financial aspects of those endeavors. One thing was clear. The parents believed education could change their children's lives and they laid out high expectations for them. With an elementary education himself, Parent B describes what he has always expected of his children, "We tell them to be a high achieving boys. We never stop talking to them, demanding of them what they need to do."

The parents reported that they were for the most part unable to help their children with schoolwork. According to them, their own limited schooling and English language skills prevented them from being able to assist their children when they faced challenges with homework. They did not read to their children or help with reading related subjects, although

Parent B remembers being able to help with basic math in his sons' early school years. Instead, they sought out school resources to provide additional aid such as afterschool tutoring or help with homework in the mornings. They felt that this type of school assistance was invaluable. The parents shared the perception that the schools understood their barriers to home involvement.

Parent-teacher conference. A practice they identified as paramount to their support was attending parent-teacher conferences or meetings without fail. These visits gave them an opportunity to meet the teacher, and to get an update on their children's grades and behavior. Parent A puts her priority on her attendance at school into context, "I am there even if I have to lose my work hours." However, they reported that none of their children's teachers had spoken Spanish and this limited the school's ability to provide details about their children's progress. The parents admit that at times the schools make translators available during teacher conferences, but it is not always consistent according to them. Teachers were described as kind and welcoming during these conferences yet language barriers prevailed, "They want to talk to us. We can tell, but they end up talking to the kids," said Parent C. Both families agree that the children appreciate the efforts they make to attend these meetings even if they sacrifice valuable work time. None of the parents attended Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings or involved themselves in other activities through the schools.

Guiding messages. Another common involvement practice that the parents identified was of providing "consejos" or guiding messages to their children on a regular basis to encourage effort in their studies. Parent A tells her daughters often to "give it your best effort." A prominent theme of the messages was to underscore the valuable opportunities their children have, that they themselves lacked. Parent B describes the messages to his sons, "I tell my sons to study to be somebody in life. To be the person I was never able to be, but I want my children to

accomplish those things.” The parents used their own hardships as an example to encourage motivation in school. The underlying belief about their motivation for involvement is explained by Parent C, “We suffer a lot in the field. We don’t want our children be like us.”

Another salient concern for the parents was the behavior of their children. Guiding messages were also used to promote certain behavioral expectations in their children. Parent C explains what she stresses in her messages, “I tell them to be responsible. Well behaved. To not be like others in the streets.” Parent B said he has always tried to tell the teacher to immediately inform him if there are any behavioral problems with his children. For Parent A, her messages revolved around the importance of respect.

Parental monitoring. Although the parents describe arriving home physically tired from the labor of the fields, they employ several monitoring techniques and strategies that help them stay engaged in their children’s lives. Both parental families mentioned the need for daily dialogue with their children, listening and providing explanations to them about decisions or rules that affect them. Parent A places great value in the time she spends with her eldest after work, “We prepare dinner together and I talk with her. I find out about her school day. I ask her if she had any problems.” Although the parents have never regularly helped with homework, they report asking daily about it. Parent A describes her checking strategy with her eldest daughter, “She is used to telling me or showing me what she has done. Even though I don’t really understand what she shows me sometimes.” In both households, the eldest children are given the responsibility of helping the younger ones with their schoolwork. Parent B explained that his children, even the ones in high school, are first required to do their homework. “As soon as they get home we tell them to do their homework, we don’t allow them to hang out in the streets because it is not good to be out in the street.”

Monitoring and managing their children's friendships is another strategy mentioned by both parental families. The interviewees believe that peers can greatly influence their children, and they make efforts to steer them toward positive relations. Parent C describes the kind of friends her sons are allowed to have. "They can have school friends as long as they are studious, as long as they aren't doing bad things or hanging out in the streets. We tell them to find good friends." Even though Parent A places great trust in her eldest, "because I know the kind of person she is," she consults with a niece, who attends the same school, for information about her daughter's interactions with others and the general character of her friends.

Having three sons, Parents B and C felt strongly about their ban on video games in the home. They felt video games posed a serious problem for the youth of their community. As Parent C describes, "For people like us working in the fields, in the cold to buy them these toys that spoil the children? It's like a drug, a vice."

Schools. The parents felt that they were in partnership with the school to educate their children. However, they viewed the school's role to provide the scholarly instruction while they saw their role as supporting their children's education in practical ways such as ensuring that their children were on time, well-behaved and ready to learn. Both parental families stressed that it was important to teach their sons and daughters to be responsible and hard working.

The consensus among the parents was that the teachers understood their obstacles for not engaging in traditional forms of parent involvement, such as reading or providing homework assistance. They also felt that the school staff was cognizant that many immigrant parents had difficult schedules and they felt appreciated for their willingness to stay involved. The parents said they did not feel unwelcomed at the schools, however all expressed difficulties with the lack of Spanish speaking teachers and staff. Parent A described her difficulties. "Sometimes as

parents we want to drop by and ask how our child is doing, or if I need to pick up my daughters. I make hand signs and say their name. It is complicated for us.” The lack of language resources leaves Parent B unfulfilled with teacher communication, “What I would want is more explanations, and that they have help to explain the information to us.”

Belief system. Parents B and C held other very specific beliefs about child development that they had learned from their own personal experiences with their sons. They believed that giving their sons opportunities to play, or provide entertainment outside the home helped the children be better behaved, and this helped them be better students. Responding to a question about what has helped their sons steer clear of trouble at school, Parent C explained her emphasis on providing a release for their children even in the form of a walk or a ride around the neighborhood, “Then the kids return home from an outing, they seem relaxed, comfortable. They lose their stress.”

When asked where they got their ideas about how to help their children succeed in school the parents had trouble summoning a response. They could not identify what had influenced their own parenting practices except that the void in their own lives of that type of parental focus motivated them be different kinds of parents. Parent C explains, “Our parents did not go to school or know much, like us. They didn't visit the school to find out how we were doing. They just sent us to school and we don't want that for our children.” Similarly Parent A's motivation for the priorities she sets for her daughter come from the impact of her own shortcomings. “They need to make efforts to study because I didn't have the opportunity to finish school, and that affects me now. I do not want this for them.”

Discussion

The findings from this investigation are consistent with much of the literature reviewed. One conflict with current research was that the parents interviewed for this study did not seem to be influenced by social norms as proposed by Bracke and Corts (2012) and Sheldon (2002). My hypothesis had been that the parents in my study would have had a special influence that had shaped their understanding of their children's potential, and their view of their role as involved parents. To the contrary, all of the parents indicated that other parents they knew were not as focused on their children's education as they were. None of them reported knowing a teacher who had reached out to them or who had influenced their support practices at home. They also did not believe they significantly influenced others with their parenting practices. Yet, others in the Mexican community referred them to this study as potential participants because of their reputation as parents with "smart kids." Instead, it seemed that their personal experiences had influenced their role construction the most, and had fueled a determination to have their children be more successful than themselves. The impact of these parents' experiences on their beliefs is congruous with the research of Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005) about social factors that shape parental role construction. Although parents desire for their children to exceed their own accomplishments, and the involvement practices described in this study are not exclusive to parents with academically achieving children, what sets these parents apart is the extent to which their parental guidance focuses on their children's educational pursuits in spite of their own limited exposure to schooling, significant language barriers, and constrained resources. These parents were willing to sacrifice time and money if they felt it was in the best interest of their

children's education. This emphasis on education above all else is consistent with the finding of Trevino (2000) and Ceballo (2004), the two studies most similar to this investigation.

In line with the findings of Fan (2001), Hill and Tyson (2009), and Suizzo et al. (2012) the parents participating in this study build expectations for their children in a culturally appropriate manner through the regular use of messages or "consejos." Through these messages they highlighted the importance of not squandering academic opportunities, working hard, and making something of themselves through education. Suizzo et al. (2012) states that messages solidify a child's resolve to be successful. The researchers explain this phenomenon using a complex E-V theory in which a child becomes aware of their parents' beliefs and expectations about academic achievement, causing affective reactions that help the child develop their own goals and engage in actions that help him reach his goals.

The involvement practices used by the parents in this study also reflect the way immigrant parents value education and support their children at home (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Carreon, et al., 2005; Schaller et al., 2007). For example, the interviewees did not read to their children yet they promoted respect, good behavior, and hard work through the use of guiding messages (Trevino, 2000; Ceballo, 2004; Smith et al., 2008; Suizzo et al., 2012).

Although, against many obstacles, the parents in this investigation do things that promote educational excellence for their children, the real opportunity may be in their peers who already perceive them as standing out in their community. Other immigrant parents, facing similar hardships and limitations, may only think about these parents as fortunate for having "smart kids," while not being aware of the how these parents are able to prioritize education in their home and how their decisions about parenting affect their children's academic progress. Educators are well positioned to empower immigrant parents by making them aware of the

influential power of setting goals and expectations for their children, as suggested by Suizzo et al. (2012).

Another consistency with several studies was the use of monitoring strategies (Lowe & Dotterer, 2013; Woolley, et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2008). The interviewees checked and reminded their children about homework and prohibited children from engaging in any other entertainment activities afterschool until it was complete. Additionally, they monitored friendships even to the point that Parent B would ban his sons from interacting with someone if he thought he would be a bad influence. They closely monitored children's schedules, and entertainment options as well.

Of personal interest to me was the importance of teacher conferences for all the interviewees. As a parent I share their anticipation for these meetings knowing that it is likely the longest time I have to speak with the person whom my child will spend much of their time with, and will have profound influence in shaping their understanding that year. During these conferences, teachers not only detail my children's progress, they show and explain samples, they provide additional resources for the home, and they even describe vignettes that showcase their personalities in the classroom. I have always come away from these meetings with a thorough understanding of my child's academic and social development, and loaded with information and stories about them. On the other hand, the interviewees, sharing the same sense of responsibility and interest in their child's life as I do, describe a much different experience. With a review of their child's report card, sometimes without an interpreter, the interviewees seem to come away unsatisfied, yearning for more details.

Although the parents indicate that they have always felt welcomed at their schools, it contradicts the theme that resonates the most in their narratives about their interactions with

schools. The salient problem they face is the complications that exist in creating dialogue with teachers. This finding is consistent with other studies that depict the challenges Latino parents face in their efforts to become more involved in their children's education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Quicho & Daoud, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009; Smith et al., 2008). The school district's lack of emphasis in recruiting staff, teachers and administrators possessing Spanish language skills calls into question the general cultural sensitivity of the district given that it serves a significant Hispanic population. Through the years that the parents in this study have had dealings with the schools, they have witnessed little change in this regard.

In addition, when asked who was responsible for educating their children, all of the interviewees indicated that they felt they equally shared that responsibility with the schools. This coincides with the findings from Walker et al. (2011) suggesting that Mexican parents' involvement is strongly influenced by their perception of being in partnership with the educators. Having more staff available to meet the needs of immigrant Spanish-speaking parents would help to bolster parents' perceptions of this sense of partnership, and create a district more culturally inclusive (Lopez, et al., 2001).

Implications of this research

Research indicates that Mexican immigrant families value education and do what they can to support their children's academic progress in ways that may not always be evident to school personnel. The finding of this study, in conjunction with current research, points to an opportunity on the part of schools serving Spanish speaking populations to leverage the cultural strengths of those parents by ensuring that the school environment is culturally inclusive and representative of the community it serves. To a large extent cultural inclusivity requires that schools have available staff that are able to speak the language of the families they serve. Having

the opportunity for greater and more meaningful parent-teacher dialogue may help increase attendance at teacher conferences and parent involvement practices in the home, and ultimately impact student academic outcomes. Parents may also feel more empowered to advocate on their children's behalf if they are able to have hassle-free access to Spanish language personnel.

The findings also point to the importance of providing programs or assistance with homework for immigrant parents who are unable to assist their children in this respect. Homework is one of the most frustrating issues for immigrant parents who feel inadequate about their ability to help. The interviewees of this study sought and relied on afterschool programs to provide the help with homework that they themselves could not offer. Schools may look to expand their efforts by offering homework hotlines or chat, homework buddy programs or simply ensuring that the work that is sent home is within the student's own capability.

The most potential for effective home-school connections lies on individual teachers who can increase immigrant parent participation by exploring different tailor-made ways to make contacts with parents who may be more receptive to certain offers than others. With the help of translators if necessary, teachers can create dialogue with parents through a variety of methods such as offering school tours, conferences, phone calls, journals, and home visits. During dialogue opportunities, teachers can provide updates about both the child's strengths and areas for improvement. They can provide stories that provide insight into a child's personality in class and their social development. Educators can also use these opportunities to find out about a student's family and culture. Finally, by using these parent relationships and ties to the family, teachers can reinforce those parental practices in the home that are positive and call upon the family's strengths. By encouraging the use of guiding messages, the importance of setting educational expectations, and the utilization of monitoring techniques, educators can bolster

parents' sense of self-efficacy. For example even if the parents cannot help with homework, they can be encouraged to ask about it every night, to ask to see it, and to encourage homework before entertainment.

Because of the persistent number of Mexican-origin minority students facing academic challenges, it is essential for research to focus on testing the efficacy of practices and initiatives that bridge the cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic divides that teachers and parents face. Some of the studies in this review indicate that little research is available on parent-teacher connections in minority communities.

This investigation shows that Mexican immigrant parents care and value education. The hardships they have endured and the disadvantages they face now have strongly influenced their beliefs about their role as involved parents. Their determination to advance their children's status in life through education has shaped their beliefs about involvement. The participants in this study are raising successful students through the use of practices that are within their capacities. They hold firm rules for their children that develop responsibility, respect and hard work, as well as provide constant messages that frame their own disadvantages into compelling stories for academic motivation. In addition, the parents give their children frequent reminders about their goals in academic excellence and expectations for the future. Finally the interviewees also stay involved in their children's lives through monitoring strategies, and by attending teacher conferences without fail. Understanding how these families have been able to create effective home learning environments can help schools better tailor efforts that reach similar parents. Finding practical ways to increase academic achievement with underperforming student populations is a worthwhile investment for teachers and schools alike.

References

- Altschul, I. (2011). Parental involvement and the academic achievement of Mexican American youths: What kinds of involvement in youths' education matter most? *Social Work Research, 35*(3), 159–170. doi: 10.1093/swr/35.3.159
- Anderson, K. J., & Minke, K. M. (2007). Parent involvement in education: Toward an understanding of parents' decision making. *Journal of Educational Research, 100*(5), 311–323. doi: 10.3200/JOER.100.5.311-323
- Biddle, B. J. (1986). Recent developments in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 12*(1), 67. doi: 10.1146/annurev.so.12.080186.000435
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative Research in Education. An Introduction to Theory and Methods*. (3rd Ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bracke, D., & Corts, D. (2012). Parental involvement and the theory of planned behavior. *Education, 133*(1), 188–201. Retrieved from http://www.projectinnovation.biz/education_2006.html
- Chapa, J., & De La Rosa, B. (2004). Latino population growth, socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, and implications for educational attainment. *Education and Urban Society, 36*(2), 130–149. doi: 10.1177/0013124503261320
- Carreon, G. P., Drake, C., & Barton, A. C. (2005). The Importance of presence: Immigrant parents' school engagement experiences. *American Educational Research Journal, 42*(3), 465–498. doi: 10.3102/00028312042003465
- Ceballo, R. (2004). From barrios to Yale: The role of parenting strategies in Latino families. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 26*(2), 171–186. doi: 10.1177/0739986304264572

- Dearing, E., McCartney, K., Weiss, H. B., Kreider, H., & Simpkins, S. (2004). The promotive effects of family educational involvement for low-income children's literacy. *Journal of School Psychology, 42*(6), 445–460. doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2004.07.002
- De Gaetano, Y. (2007). The role of culture in engaging Latino parents' involvement in school. *Urban Education, 42*(2), 145–162. doi: 10.1177/0042085906296536
- Drummond, K. V., & Stipek, D. (2004). Low-income parents' beliefs about their role in children's academic learning. *Elementary School Journal, 104*(3), 197–213. doi: 10.1086/499749
- Epstein, J. L., & Dauber, S. L. (1991). School programs and teacher practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. *Elementary School Journal, 91*(3), 289–305. doi: 10.1086/461656
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1992). School matters in the Mexican-American home: Socializing children to education. *American Educational Research Journal, 29*(3), 495–513. doi: 10.3102/00028312029003495
- Fan, X. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A growth modeling analysis. *Journal of Experimental Education, 70*(1), 27. doi: 10.1080/00220970109599497
- Gillanders, C., & Jiménez, R. T. (2004). Reaching for success: A close-up of Mexican immigrant parents in the USA who foster literacy success for their kindergarten children. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 4*(3), 243–269. doi: 10.1177/1468798404044513
- Gonzalez-DeHass, A. R., Willems, P. P., & Holbein, M. F. D. (2005). Examining the relationship between parental involvement and student motivation. *Educational Psychology Review, 17*(2), 99–123. doi: 1007/s10648-005-3949-7

- Green, C. L., Walker, J. M. T., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2007). Parents' motivations for involvement in children's education: An empirical test of a theoretical model of parental involvement. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 99*(3), 532–544. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.99.3.532
- Guo, Y. (2006). "Why didn't they show up?" Rethinking ESL parent involvement in K-12 Education. *TESL Canada Journal, 24*(1), 80-95. Retrieved from <http://www.teslcanadajournal.ca/index.php/tesl/article/view/29>
- Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2008). Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning. *Educational Research, 50*(3), 277–289. doi: 10.1080/00131880802309424
- Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the Sstrategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology, 45*(3), 740–763. doi: 10.1037/a0015362
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? *Review of Educational Research, 67*(1), 3–42. doi: 10.3102/00346543067001003
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., & Sandler, H. M. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *Elementary School Journal, 106*(2), 105–130. doi:10.1086/499194
- Kober, N. (2010). *Improving achievement for the growing Latino population is critical to the nation's future*. (Student Achievement Policy Brief 3). Retrieved from the Center on Education Policy website <http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=133>

- Lopez, G. R., Scribner, J. D., & Mahitivanichcha, K. (2001). Redefining parental involvement: Lessons from high-performing migrant-impacted schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(2), 253–88. doi: 10.3102/00028312038002253
- Lowe, K., & Dotterer, A. M. (2013). Parental monitoring, parental warmth, and minority youths' academic outcomes: Exploring the integrative model of parenting. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 42(9), 1413–1425. doi: 10.1007/s10964-013-9934-4
- Madrid, E. M. (2011). The Latino achievement gap. *Multicultural Education*, 19(3), 7–12.
- Retrieved from
<http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ955929>
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132. doi:10.1080/00405849209543534
- National Center for Education Statistics (ED). (2011). *The condition of education 2011*. NCES 2011-033. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011033>
- New York State Department of Education. (2012). *New York State report card: Dunkirk Middle School*. Retrieved from <https://reportcards.nysed.gov/files/2011-12/RC-2012-060800010010.pdf>
- Quiocho, A. M. L., & Daoud, A. M. (2006). Dispelling myths about Latino parent participation in schools. *Educational Forum*, 70(3), 255–267. doi: 10.1080/00131720608984901
- Ratcliffe, C., & McKernan, S.-M. (2012). *Child poverty and its lasting consequence* (No. Paper 21). Retrieved from The Urban Institute website
<http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412659-Child-Poverty-and-Its-Lasting-Consequence-Paper.pdf>

- Rubin, H. J. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Schaller, A., Rocha, L. O., & Barshinger, D. (2007). Maternal attitudes and parent education: How immigrant mothers support their child's education despite their own low levels of education. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(5), 351–356. doi: 10.1007/s10643-006-0143-6
- Senechal, M., & LeFevre, J.A. (2002). Parental involvement in the development of children's reading skill: A five-year longitudinal study. *Child Development*, 73(2), 445–60. doi: 10.1111/1467-8624.00417
- Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Parents' Social Networks and Beliefs as Predictors of Parent Involvement. *Elementary School Journal*, 102(4), 301–16. doi: 10.1086/499705
- Smith, J., Stern, K., & Shatrova, Z. (2008). Factors inhibiting Hispanic parents' school involvement. *Rural Educator*, 29(2), 8–13. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ869288>
- Suizzo, M.-A., Jackson, K. M., Pahlke, E., Marroquin, Y., Blondeau, L., & Martinez, A. (2012). Pathways to Achievement: How Low-Income Mexican-Origin Parents Promote Their Adolescents Through School. *Family Relations*, 61(4), 533–547. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2012.00727.x
- Trevino, R. E. (2004). *Against all odds: Lessons from parents of migrant high-achievers*. In C. Salinas & M. E. Franquiz (Eds.), *Scholars in the field: The challenges of migrant education* (pp. 147-161). Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences.

- Treviño, R. E. (2000). *Parent involvement and remarkable student achievement: A study of Mexican-origin families of migrant high-achievers* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
- Turney, K., & Kao, G. (2009). Barriers to school involvement: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged? *Journal of Educational Research, 102*(4), 257–271. doi: 10.3200/JOER.102.4.257-271
- United States Census (2011). *State and county quick facts*. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3621105.html>
- Valdés, G. (1996.). *Con respeto. Bridging the distances between culturally diverse families and schools. An ethnographic portrait*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Walker, J. M. T., Ice, C. L., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2011). Latino parents' motivations for involvement in their children's schooling: An exploratory study. *Elementary School Journal, 111*(3), 409–429. doi: 10.1086/657653
- Woolley, M. E., Kol, K. L., & Bowen, G. L. (2009). The social context of school success for Latino middle school students: Direct and indirect influences of teachers, family, and friends. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 29*(1), 43–70. doi: 10.1177/0272431608324478

Appendices

Appendix A

Preliminary Questions

- Habla usted español en la casa?
- Graduó usted de secundaria aquí en los Estados Unidos o en Mejiico?
- Usted tiene un hijo o hija entre 11 a 18 años de edad que califica para el programa de honor llamado "honor/merit roll" en la escuela? El/Ella ha calificado en tres de los últimos cuatro cuartos escolares?
- Me daría permiso de entrevistarlos en su casa y observarlos por un total de tres horas?
- Aunque como participante su identidad será confidencial, tiene alguna razón o situación, como su estatus migratorio, por la cual se sentiría incómodo participar en la investigación?

English Version

- Do you speak Spanish at home?
- Did you graduate from high school or get a GED either in the United States or Mexico?
- Do you have children who are on the honor roll? If so, has she/he been on the honor roll three out of the last four quarters?
- Would you be willing to let me come to your home for an interview and a two-hour observation?
- Although as a participant your identity will be confidential, do you have any reason or situation, such as immigration status, that might make you uncomfortable about participating in the study?

Appendix B

Consent Form

I, Alicia Gasca, am doing research on the participation of parents in their children's education. The purpose of this research is to understand how Mexican immigrants are able to support their children's success in school. A possible benefit of this study is to gain insight into what schools can do to assist immigrant parents in helping their children succeed in school. Since the study is focusing on positive aspects of parental practices, participants will not be put at risk.

As part of the study, I will visit your home to observe and take notes on the home routine and parental practices. I will also conduct a recorded interview with you. The interview and observation process will require approximately three hours. Those hours can be spread out over multiple sessions.

The recordings will be destroyed after transcription. In the transcripts, I will not use actual parent names to ensure privacy. The participant list and referenced names will be maintained on my personal password locked computer until the study is complete, at which time the list will be destroyed. The transcriptions will be destroyed three years following the study.

Your children's school is not affiliated with this investigation in any way. Also, your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to change your mind at any time or cease participation in this investigation at any time. If you decide to change your mind, all interview and observation material already collected will be immediately destroyed and will not be used in this study.

If you agree with the conditions, please sign this form. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact the following persons.

Alicia Gasca
Student/researcher
State University of New York in Fredonia
Fredonia, NY 14063
602-380-6353 or gasc0927@fredonia.edu

Dr. Janeil Rey
Assistant Professor
Thompson E 232
State University of New York in Fredonia
Fredonia, NY 14063
716-673-4650
janeil.rey@fredonia.edu

Catherine Kilpatrick
Human Subjects Administrator, Sponsored Programs

State University of New York in Fredonia
Fredonia, NY 14063
716-673-3528
catherine.kilpatrick@fredonia.edu

I, _____ understand the nature of this research.

With my signature, I _____, give Alicia Gasca permission to use the recorded interview material and observation notes for her investigation.

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Consent Form Spanish Version

Consentimiento informado para la investigación

Estoy destacando una investigación sobre la participación de padres de familia en la educación de sus hijos. Este proyecto me ayudará a entender como unos inmigrantes de México logran a apoyar a sus hijos para que sobresalgan en la escuela. Un posible beneficio de esta investigación sería de entender como pueden las escuelas ayudar a padres inmigrantes apoyar a sus hijos para que tengan éxito en la escuela. Como esta investigación se enfoca en prácticas positivas de los padres, los participantes no estarán puesto en riesgo.

Como parte de la investigación, yo visitaré su hogar para observar y tomar datos sobre la rutina de la casa, y su manera de ser con sus hijos. También, voy a grabar una entrevista con usted. La entrevista y el tiempo de observación tomará aproximadamente tres horas. Estas tres horas pueden ser distribuido entre varias visitas.

Las grabaciones serán destruidas después de ser transcritas. En las transcripciones no se usarán nombres actuales para asegurar la privacidad de los padres de familia. La lista de nombres actuales serán mantenida en mi computadora personal que esta protegida con una clave, y esta lista será destruida cuando la tesis sea terminada. Las transcripciones serán destruidas tres años después de la investigación.

La escuela de sus hijos no tiene nada que ver con esta investigación. También puede cambiar su mente en cualquier momento y remover su permiso en cuanto usted quiera. Si decide cambiar de mente, todo el material de las entrevista y observación será destruido inmediatamente y no serán usadas como parte de esta investigación.

Si esta de acuerdo con estas condiciones firme esta forma. Si tiene cualquier pregunta o preocupaciones, puede contactarse conmigo o con encargadas de la universidad.

Alicia Gasca
Estudiante/ investigadora
State University of New York in Fredonia
Fredonia, NY 14063
716-785-9872
gasc0927@fredonia.edu

Dra. Janeil Rey
Profesora
Thompson E 232
State University of New York in Fredonia
716-673-4650
janeil.rey@fredonia.edu

Catherine Kilpatrick
Administradora de Sponsored Programs
State University of New York in Fredonia
Fredonia, NY 14063
602-673-3528
catherine.kilpatrick@fredonia.edu

Yo, _____, entiendo de lo que se trata esta investigación.

En firmar esta forma, yo _____, le doy el permiso a Alicia Gasca de usar la grabación de la entrevista y sus observaciones para propósitos de su investigación.

Firma

Fecha

Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. What educational goals do you have for your child?
2. What at-home parenting activities did you involve yourself in, and what influence do you think they have on your child's achievement?
3. Why did you choose these particular parent involvement activities at home?
4. What do you think your role is at home as far as helping your child excel in school?
5. What in-school parenting activities did you involve yourself in, and what influence do you think they have on your child's achievement?
6. Why did you choose these particular in-school parent involvement activities?
7. What do you think your role is at your child's school, as far as helping your child excel in school?
8. * Do most parents you know get involved with your children's schooling the way you do? Explain.
9. Do you think your child's school sees your role or your responsibilities the same way that you do?
10. **As an immigrant you had certain challenges to deal with such as limited income, time, energy, education, etc. How did these factors affect your parent involvement decisions both at home and at school?
11. How do you expect your child to act or behave in school? With teachers and other students? In class and outside of class?
12. Who is responsible for the education of your child?
13. Have you ever had any problems or disagreements with your child's school?
14. What do you advise your child to do when he/she runs into a problem or challenge at school?

Most of the questions used in this study were from Dr. Roberto Trevino's dissertation "Parent involvement and remarkable student achievement: A study of Mexican-origin families of migrant high achievers," (2000), with his permission. He later published a journal article based on his dissertation. Some of the questions were adapted.

* Question number eight is original and was added to incorporate the information from several studies in the literature review that indicated social norms influence parent involvement.

** The word "migrant" has been changed to "immigrant" in question number ten.

Appendix E

Interview Questions in Spanish

1. Que metas educativas tiene para su hijo/hija?
2. En qué clase de actividades educativos participa usted con su hijo/hija? Y que impacto ha tenido esa actividad?
3. Por qué decidio participar en esas actividades con su hijo/hija?
- 4.Cuál es su rol en ayudar a su hijo/hija en la casa para que sobresalga en la escuela?
5. En qué clase de actividades participa usted en la escuela? Qué clase de impacto tiene este tipo de participación en el éxito de su hijo/hija?
6. Como fue que usted decidió participar en estas actividades en la escuela?
- 7.Cuál es su rol en la escuela que le ayuda a sobresalir a su hijo/hija?
8. La mayoría de los padres de familia que usted conoce participan con la educación de sus hijos en la misma manera que ustedes?
9. Usted piensa que la escuela tiene las mismas ideas sobre cuáles son sus responsabilidades?
10. Como inmigrante usted tiene ciertos obstáculos como el lenguaje, falta de tiempo y energía, y su falta de experiencia con las escuelas en los Estados Unidos. Como le afectaron factores como estos en su decisión para involucrarse con su hijo/hija en la clase y en la escuela?
11. Como piensa que su hijo/hija se comporta en la escuela? Con maestros y estudiantes? Afuera y dentro de la escuela?
12. Quien es responsable por la educación de su hijo/hija?
13. Usted nunca ha tenido un problema o desacuerdo con la escuela de su hijo/hija?
14. Que le aconseja a su hijo/hija cuando se enfrenta con un problema o una situación difícil en la escuela?

Appendix E

Approval Letter



Catherine Kilpatrick

to Janeil, me, Catherine ▾

Oct 9 (12 days ago) ☆



Dr. Rey and Ms. Gasca:

Thank you for the revised application for your research titled "How do Mexican immigrant parents with less than a high school degree narrate their contribution to the education of their high-achieving children?" Your revisions have answered the concerns of the committee. This email is your approval and your research may proceed as described.

As a reminder, you must comply with Part D of the Campus Policies on Human Subjects requiring notification at the time data collection begins and when it is done. You may accomplish this with a simple email to me.

Thank you for keeping the high standards relating to research and the protection of human subjects on the Fredonia campus. Best wishes on your research.

...

Catherine Kilpatrick
Acting Human Subjects Administrator