DIGITAL COMMONS
@ UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

University of South Florida
Digital Commons @ University of South Florida

USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations | USF Graduate Theses and Dissertations

July 2018

Resisting Essentialism in Cultural Research: A Participatory Action Research Study of Parent Involvement in Education among Spanish-Speaking Students and Families

Michael J. Frank
University of South Florida, michaelfrank@mail.usf.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd

Part of the Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons, Educational Psychology Commons, and the Latin American Studies Commons

Scholar Commons Citation
Frank, Michael J., "Resisting Essentialism in Cultural Research: A Participatory Action Research Study of Parent Involvement in Education among Spanish-Speaking Students and Families" (2018). *USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations.*
https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/7290

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the USF Graduate Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

Resisting Essentialism in Cultural Research: A Participatory Action Research Study of Parent Involvement in Education among Spanish-Speaking Students and Families

by

Michael J. Frank

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Educational and Psychological Studies
College of Education
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Linda Raffaele-Mendez, Ph.D.
Jenni Wolgemuth, Ph.D.
Mario Hernandez, Ph.D.
Carlos Zalaquett, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:
June 18, 2018

Keywords: culture, participatory action research, parent involvement, qualitative research

Copyright © 2018, Michael J. Frank

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Dr. Raffaele-Mendez, my dissertation chair, for providing unconditional moral support, practical advice, and a positive outlook on research and life that has been much more merciful than my own. I also want to thank Dr. Jenni Wolgemuth, my co-chair, for teaching me how to follow various paradigms in qualitative research, and when to have the confidence to ignore them. Without Dr. Zalaquett, I would have never had the courage to fly halfway around the world to attend a psychology conference presented primarily in my second and third languages. Dr. Hernandez demonstrated for me a systematic way to involve community stakeholders to speak for themselves, which was essential for this project. In addition to my committee, I want to thank Dr. Suldo for pushing me to expect more from myself, and for showing me how to overcome my trepidation and simply write. I thank my loving wife Alicia for her boundless patience, and my parents and siblings for cheering me on. I want to thank my friends and sensei from the Aikido dojo for teaching me how to take a fall gracefully, and for knocking me senseless whenever I got overconfident. Finally, I wish to thank my participant researchers and fellow faculty members that helped to make this project a reality. The thoughtful methods and the values instilled by my friends, colleagues, and mentors have not only been instrumental to this project, but they have helped to shape me into who I am today.

Table of Contents

List of Tables v

Abstract vi

Chapter One: Introduction 1
- Reflexivity 4
- Educational Concerns among Spanish-Speaking Youth 6
- Parent Involvement 6
- Purpose and Research Questions 10
- Contribution of Study to Literature 11
- Contribution of Study to School Psychology Practice 12
- Definition of Key Terms 12

Chapter Two: Literature Review 15
- Ecological Factors Affecting Spanish-Speaking Youth 15
  - Stressors Related to the Immigration Experience 16
  - Language and Dissonant Acculturation 17
  - Daily Stressors Associated with Racism and Prejudice 19
  - Challenges for English Learners in U.S. Schools 24
  - Educational Outcomes for Latinx English Learners 25
- Culturally Responsive Research and Practice 26
  - Culturally Responsive vs. Culturally Competent 28
  - Cultural Responsiveness and Essentialism in the Literature 29
    - Tripartite Framework 31
      - Individual Level 31
      - Group Level 32
      - Universal Level 32
  - Critical Race Theory 33
  - Dealing with the Discomfort of White Privilege and Racism 34
- Parent Involvement in Education 37
  - Personal Motivation 39
    - Role Construction 39
      - Research with CLD Families 39
    - Parent Self-Efficacy 40
      - Research with CLD Families 40
  - Invitations to Get Involved 41
    - School Invitations 42
    - Teacher Invitations 42
    - Student Invitations 43

Research with CLD Families 43
Family Context 43
Knowledge and Skills 44
Time and Energy 44
Research with CLD Families 44
Investigating Parent Involvement in Culturally Diverse Communities 46
Summary and Gap in the Literature 53

Chapter Three: Method 55
Reflexivity: Being a White Middle-Class Researcher Studying Race 55
Participatory Action Research 57
PAR with Parent Involvement 60
Focus of the Study and Focus Group Questions 62
Original Focus Group Questions 62
Sample 64
Data Collection and Analysis 64
Modified Focus Group Questions 64
Ethical Considerations 66
Potential Benefits 66
Potential Risks 67
Mitigation of Risk 67
Trustworthiness 68
Translation 69
Criteria for Success 69

Chapter Four: Results 70
What Is a Teacup? 70
Before the First Meeting: Organizing the Group 72
The PAR Team 74
Mr. Santana 74
Mrs. Flores 75
Marina 75
Guillermo 76
Rodrigo 76
Focus Group Members 77
Josue 77
Estrella 77
Gabriela 77
Before the First Meeting: Creating a Public Sphere 78
Phone Consultation 78
Session 1: First PAR Meeting 79
Reconnaissance 79
Action 79
Reflection 82
Session 2: PAR Meeting 82
Reconnaissance 83

Action 83
Reflection 83
Session 3: First Focus Group Meeting 84
Reconnaissance 84
Action 94
Reflection 95
Session 4: Second Focus Group Meeting 95
Reconnaissance 95
Action 98
Reflection 99
Session 5: Third Focus Group Meeting 100
Reconnaissance 100
Action 104
Reflection 105
Session 6: PAR Meeting 106
Reconnaissance 106
Action 108
Reflection 109
Session 7: PAR Meeting, Study Conclusion 109
Reconnaissance 109
Action 110
Reflection 110
What Is a Teacup? 113
Research Questions 119

Chapter Five: Discussion 127
Goals of the Researcher vs. Goals of the Participants 127
Cultural Research by a Cultural Outsider 128
Self-Awareness 129
Whiteness and Othering 130
The Public Sphere 130
Parent Involvement Factors 135
Role Construction 136
Parent Self-Efficacy 136
School and Teacher Invitations 136
Knowledge and Skills 137
Time and Energy 137
Obstacles in the Study vs. Obstacles in the Literature 137
Gaps in Communication 138
Culture Clashes 138
Lack of Transitional Support 139
Cultural Responsiveness vs. Cultural Competence 140
Limitations and Recommendations for Practice and Research 140
Sample Size, Location, and Composition 140
Boundaries of the Researcher 141
Next Steps 141

Recommendations for Practice and Research 142

References 156

Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter 143

Appendix B: Recruitment Flier 145

Appendix C: Informed Consent (Spanish) 146

Appendix D: Informed Consent (English) 150

Appendix E: Acronym Dictionary 154

List of Tables

Table 1: Original research objectives vs. those generated by participants 80

Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate a locally-driven action research project to improve connections between Spanish-speaking Latinx parents and the high school that their children attend. Using Participatory Action Research (PAR), the study sought to create a collaborative research agenda that would empower the participants to study their own culture and practices at the school, and how the two combined to create a home-school partnership. Six parents and two members of the school's bilingual staff comprised the PAR team, with a total of nine members including the principal investigator. The project began with the creation of a public sphere in which all members of the PAR team were encouraged to freely contribute to the design and implementation of the research project. Focus group recordings were reviewed and interpreted by two members of the PAR team in the original language of Spanish, and Spanish documents and resources were made to provide easy access to information requested by the team. In this study, I did not attempt to create generalizable knowledge about any culture. Results indicated that the parent participants' priorities differed from those initially defined before recruitment, and that parents were comfortable enough to express differing views in the public sphere. The project was reported to be helpful to the parents, and the school administration agreed to incorporate the results of the project into a parent outreach project for the coming year. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Chapter One

Introduction

This manuscript represents a cultural journey with the intention of coming to understand the culture of a specific community of Spanish-speaking, Latinx parents. My primary purpose is to represent my struggle as a White, middle-class male graduate student who seeks to be culturally responsive when working with students and families who have origins very different from my own. However, this manuscript is also partially a reaction to a portion of multicultural research which, unless reviewed carefully, can be misinterpreted in a way that leads to oversimplifications or generalizations that are applied to entire cultural groups (e.g., Sue & Sue, 2012). Throughout my work with multicultural youth in general and Spanish speaking families in particular, I have found peril in the cultural profiles that I have gained from my academic research of culture. For this reason, I have made with this project an attempt to intimately understand one group of families with no intention of applying the cultural knowledge gleaned to other families that I might meet in the future. By sharing the research process with my participants, I hope to demonstrate an avenue for gaining meaningful cultural understanding that extends beyond general cultural principles such as valuing family connections, speaking Spanish, or serving *yucca con mojo* with dinner.

The proposed study is centered on parent involvement in school with Spanish-speaking families; however, the purpose is not to investigate strategies or solutions for others to use. Ample research exists on the topic of fostering parental involvement with diverse communities,

and thus interested practitioners already have resources from which to draw (e.g., Jeynes, 2003). Rather, the purpose of this study is to focus on the process of becoming culturally responsive when working with members of the community at the individual level. In this study, I expect to demonstrate how I worked to discover rich information that is impossible to glean from generalized research, because the views investigated in this study are not likely to be shared by all members of any cultural group.

The Principal Investigator as a Research Instrument: Why Me?

I am not a cultural ambassador to the Spanish-speaking parent world, nor would I be anywhere near the top of the list if a candidate were sought for such a role. I am a secular atheist Jewish White heterosexual cis-male academic with an advanced college degree, which is exacerbated by a lexicon so erudite that I might use the word "erudite" in mixed company without feeling the immediate need to apologize. Throughout this manuscript I will refer to myself as a "White male" as an abbreviation for the above, as my social qualifiers in sum are quite a mouthful. I favor the term "White male" because it most succinctly represents the privileges and blind spots that I take into my work and my research, most notably, the privilege of pretending I don't have a culture. Many of my Spanish-speaking participants would identify as White, and thus as a *racial* identifier it is not a very useful distinction. However, as a *cultural* identifier, Whiteness to me and in this manuscript will refer to the racial arrogance of assuming the position of a neutral observer. It is a struggle that will vex me throughout the manuscript, and likely for several years, if not forever, beyond the conclusion of this study.

In academia, White (and often male) researchers "otherize" (Said, 2003) racial groups aside from their own, giving the false pretense of objectivity or neutrality. I resist this notion and consider that in the work undertaken in this study, my culture is more akin to an aberration,

granting me *less* objectivity than what my participants might enjoy. After all, without the background required to sort casual observations from profound insights, I may be prone to elevate a small sample of people I barely know as archetypes for an entirely arbitrary cultural category. My participants, on the other hand, have known hundreds or thousands of people from their countries and linguistic world, thus they can dismiss surface level information because they know what is more meaningful to others in their group.

I will go a step further, however, to say that even my Spanish speaking colleagues and the parent participants are not objective, and this leads to my main rationale for embarking on this research journey. In my research, I have encountered and critiqued academic cataloging of what people from different racial groups are like. In my practice, I routinely hear colleagues from Latinx countries saying, "Well they're from Puerto Rico, you know how they are." I used to show deference to this cultural expertise, but now that I *speak* Spanish and have worked with a tremendously heterogenous selection of individuals, I find these confident assessments problematic. My obstacle, however, is that as a White male researcher who only started speaking Spanish at 22, I am not equipped to contest such claims. I wish to create a statement about the individuality of those who comprise Latinx cultural groups, but the statement cannot be spoken in my voice. Even if I did know what I was talking about, I would lack credibility. This is the keystone motivation for using Participatory Action Research, and why I must discard attempts at feigning objectivity or using mathematical theme-counting strategies to reduce my bias in selecting relevant text. I am biased. I have a strong opinion that I wish to support with relevant data. My opinion is this: "No, I *don't* know how they are, and neither can you unless you ask."

I was first confronted with the issue of intra-group diversity when performing a literature review for a qualitative study on life satisfaction. When we asked students about the events or

features of their lives that lead them to feel happy, most described different domains of life than those who originally nominated the areas that are used on the *Multi-dimensional Life-Satisfaction Scale* (MSLSS; Heubner 2001). In order to see if this was an anomaly, I was given the task of searching the literature for other life satisfaction surveys to see what factors students report as contributors to their happiness. As I reviewed studies of life satisfaction that were conducted in different countries, I found that each survey asked about different aspects of life, with the exception of a few common areas (e.g., having friends). If students defined their happiness based on different factors depending on where they live, this might mean that the pursuit of happiness is informed by culture. Familiar with this cataloging approach, I considered that these surveys might reflect cultural differences between Thailand, Norway, and the U.S., until I realized that our Florida students hadn't even identified the same areas as the students surveyed in the next-door state of Georgia. There were no clear demographic distinctions that could claim our students were culturally different than those of the original MSLSS sample, and yet they reported different criteria for assessing their happiness. Although I still use the MSLSS, it dawned on me that if I really wanted to know what my students need in order to be happy, I will have to ask them. Thus, my principal argument in this entire manuscript is this: if you wish to understand the culture, needs, or views of someone who is different from you, you need to ask them.

Reflexivity

Throughout this manuscript I engage in *reflexivity,* which refers to the process of investigating and acknowledging preconceptions about a research topic that might influence the research conducted and the interpretations drawn. Reflexivity requires a researcher to question how they come about the interpretations that they create and how their subjective decisions affect the research product. My intention is not to declare my biases such that they may be cast aside

for the sake of an objective analysis; in fact, I follow the tradition of considering such objectivity in social science to be impossible. As Malterud writes: "A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions" (2001, p. 483-484). For this reason, I shared the research process with a group of individuals who comprise the culture of interest. Here I engage in reflexivity using the metaphor of navigating unfamiliar waters in a canoe to set a precedent for creating a participant research team.

I am a student of culture and a student of Spanish. I see my culture and language study as two oars that I use to row myself across a gulf of ignorance toward understanding. I recognize that a gulf, like a circle, does not have two, three, or four sides; there are infinite points of reference. As I rest my canoe on one end of the sea, learning about anxious students in Ecuador, I recognize that it is teaching me little to nothing about Colombian refugees. I pick up my oars and I begin rowing towards another shore. Awareness of my bias and assumptions is akin to checking my compass and correcting my drift off course. I expect to correct my path as I realize time and again that I do not understand the waters as much as I think I do. I now realize that the compass alone cannot help me because I am not from here and have no memories to guide me. I need a map. My team approaches on the foggy sea and guides me to our shared destination, sharing their memories along the way. We write a map together.

I have my expectations. They may all be wrong, but I cannot easily set them aside because my expectations are worked into the wood that comprises my canoe. Its warped frame steers me off course, and I must constantly adjust as my pervasive optimism paints a rose tint

over everyone with whom I work. I am not afraid of losing my way this time because I will not paddle alone. Around me I shall find members of the community rowing by my side.

Educational Concerns Among Spanish-Speaking Latinx Youth

As of 2014, 25% of all children in schools in the U.S. have origins in Latin America, and this number is expected to grow to 33% by 2050 (Murphey, Guzman, & Torres, 2014). Although 90% of these children are natural U.S. born citizens, more than half have at least one parent who immigrated to the U.S., making immigration an important narrative for a substantial number of Latinx youth (Murphey, Guzman, & Torres, 2014). More than half of the Latinx children in the U.S. speak Spanish as their primary language (Shin & Ortman, 2011). Latinx students comprise nearly one-fourth of all school aged children in U.S. schools (Lopez & Fry, 2013).

Despite over a decade of research since the Surgeon General's Report on disparities in mental healthcare, culturally and linguistically diverse youth are likely to be served poorly or not at all, leading to higher rates of untreated mental illness (Lopez, Barrio, Kopelowicz, & Vega, 2012; U.S. DHHS, 2001). Furthermore, Latinx students are more likely than peers from other ethnic groups to experience poor academic achievement (Allen, 2011) and school disciplinary procedures (e.g., suspension); they also are less likely to graduate from high school (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Challenges facing Latinx youth whose families have immigrated to the U.S. include acculturative stress (Castro, 2010) and poverty levels higher than any other ethnic minority group (Lopez & Velazco, 2011; Motel & Patten, 2012). Latinx youth are most concentrated within inner city, low-income schools with overwhelmed and underqualified teachers, large class sizes, and shortages of academic materials (Barton & Coley, 2009; Marzano, 2003). All of these difficulties are more pronounced if the children have not yet learned English (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010).

Parental Involvement

I have chosen to study culture and parental involvement because I believe that the cultural exploration process I undertake in this study can be replicated by psychologists, teachers, administrators, and other faculty who have opportunities to work with parents. The research approach of Participatory Action Research (PAR; described in Chapter 3) is similar to the modern problem solving process used in schools. Therefore, my research is an example of the type of cultural exploration I would strive to conduct in my daily work as a school psychologist. In other words, with this study I advocate for educators to include linguistically diverse families in the problem solving process such that the school can ensure that their idiosyncratic needs are met. This moves beyond a broad surface level understanding of culture (e.g., "the Colombian-American culture") towards a case-by-case understanding of each community's unique cultural reality (e.g., "*this* Colombian-American culture").

Parental involvement can take many forms and be defined in many ways. For example, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997; 2005) proposed a model of parent involvement that accounts for many different ways that parents might get involved with their children's education, such as instrumental involvement (e.g., helping with homework) or communicating a value of and commitment to education. However, due to the tendency for educational institutions to misinterpret different expectations on the part of the parent as being uninvolved, I will use a relatively broad definition. Hill et al. (2004) define parental involvement as the process by which "parents work with schools and with their children to benefit their children's educational outcomes and future success." Thus, anything that involves the shared commitment of schools and parents toward improvement of students will be considered parent involvement in this study.

Parental involvement is an ideal variable when working with CLD parents due to its power for improving student outcomes, its legal precedent, and the challenges faced by CLD families who wish to (or do not realize that they can) get involved with their children's education. Research has shown that student academic success increases when parents are involved in the education of their children (Domina, 2005; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010). Students whose parents get involved with their elementary school education have lower rates of high school dropout and complete high school sooner than those whose parents do not get involved (Barnard, 2004). Parent involvement has also been shown to reduce the achievement gap between CLD students and their peers (Lee & Bowen, 2006). When parents are involved in their children's education, students and parents alike develop more positive attitudes related to school (Ferrara, 2009; Orozco, 2008). Moreover, when parents are involved with a school they can advocate for their needs and even effect policy change through Parent-Teacher Associations. The benefits of parental involvement have been shown to apply to both elementary and high school levels (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

There is also a legal precedent for parent involvement, as it is emphasized nationally in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and in policies at the state level. In Florida, schools are required to provide a framework for "building and strengthening partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, district school superintendents, and other personnel," and provide opportunities for parental participation, such as parenting classes, adult education, school advisory councils, and school volunteer programs (Section 1002.23, Florida Statutes). Communication with parents, workshops, and opportunities for leadership are also required under NCLB.

Despite the effectiveness of parent involvement and its legal precedents, not all parents have equal opportunities to get involved with their children's education. Parent involvement is more available for families who have the social and cultural capital associated with mainstream U.S. culture (Caspe, Lopez, & Wolos, 2007). Indeed, using a conventional, school-based definition of involvement, parents identified as Hispanic show lower levels of involvement than non-Hispanic White parents (Smith, Stern, Shatrova, 2008). Numerous studies reveal educator assumptions that families who are not involved with their children's education either don't want to be involved or don't value education at all (Wang, 2008). Contrary to this assumption, when researchers have asked families from various Latinx backgrounds, parents have emphasized the importance of education for granting their children a promising future (Nieto, 2005; Zarate, 2007) and their wish to be involved with their education (Lopez, 2001). However, when the majority of school communication and events are in English, parents who do not speak English may not attend because they are unable to participate (De Gaetano, 2007). Additionally, Spanish speaking parents who are below national average levels of education are likely to face social barriers, such as perceived hostility towards Latinx immigrant families (Lopez & Minushkin, 2008; Noguera, 2006), or practical barriers, such as child care and transportation issues (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Many remedies to the cultural divide between educators and students are already under way. The field of education has been moving in the direction of increasing multicultural awareness for years, arguably dating back to Brown v. Board of Education (Warren, 1954). Although clumsy or ineffective at times (e.g., "color-blindness;" critiqued by Bonilla-Silva, 2006), multicultural research has gleaned insight into many common misunderstandings and has created an awareness of social justice issues that is needed for equity in education to be achieved.

As researchers call for educators to examine their assumptions about immigrant families (Auerbach, 2009; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006), caution must be exercised to avoid relying on essentialist literature. It is helpful to know that many people from Latinx cultures consider education to be the sole responsibility of the school (e.g., Golan & Peterson, 2002); however, there is no guarantee that all or even any of the Latinx parents in a given school zone will feel that way. It is my goal to shift the focus of my own cultural research away from broad understanding of culture or what the *majority* of a cultural group thinks toward a focus on understanding the cultural reality of the individuals who sit on the other side of my desk.

Purpose and Research Questions

Through Participatory Action Research, this study aims to explore educational disparities and parental involvement opportunities from the perspective of a research team comprised of Spanish-speaking parents. The parent research team will generate its own focus group questions (listed in Chapter 3), but the research questions listed here are designed to evaluate the overall procedure and the way my skills and beliefs change through the course of the study. The two sets of questions are kept separate to allow me the freedom to pursue my own academic goals without railroading the inquiry of the participants. The research questions are as follows:

1. How can Participatory Action Research (PAR) be used to improve cultural responsiveness?
    - To what extent will a PAR project change or increase involvement of parents, and the welcoming behaviors of the school?
    - To what extent do changes in parent and school behaviors result in improved student outcomes as perceived by the key stakeholders involved in the study?

    - What is observed during the recruitment phase? What facilitators and barriers to participation are noted?

2. How does the inclusion of diverse cultures influence the research process?
    - How can the culture of the school and the primary researcher be adapted to be inclusive of diverse norms, beliefs, and priorities?
    - How might the culture and goals of the school (e.g., improving graduation rates) and the primary researcher (e.g., requiring group adherence to university ethical standards) place constraints on cultural responsiveness?
3. How does the research process influence participants from diverse cultures?
    - How will the values, beliefs, and behaviors of participants change as a result of participating in the study?
    - What elements of the PAR study, if any, will be perceived as helpful or unhelpful to the participant researchers?
4. How does the inclusion of diverse cultures change or improve my own cultural responsiveness?
    - How will my own values, beliefs, and behaviors as a school psychologist change?
    - How will my changing values, beliefs, and behaviors impact my practices and effectiveness as a school psychologist as perceived by the key stakeholders involved in the study?

Contribution of Study to Literature

Studies of cultural diversity within psychology and education are often applied to generate a categorical view of culture (e.g,. Sue & Sue, 2012; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz 2001). Even researchers who appreciate the complexity of intra-cultural

diversity typically control the formulation of research questions, potentially leading the study to overlook important issues or perspectives of research participants (e.g., Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Rather than attempting to reduce bias on the part of the principal investigator, this study uses PAR as an avenue for reducing the impact of inevitable researcher bias by increasing the influence of participants on the research process. Although this study will not create generalizable findings, this study presents a process that other researchers can use to empower culturally diverse communities and better understand them on a case-by-case basis.

Contribution of Study to School Psychology Practice

By combining a parent involvement project with Participatory Action Research, this study represents an attempt to empower culturally diverse parents to directly share their voice with the research community by participating in all aspects of the research process. The aim of this study is to provide an example of how to understand a unique community culture and use this understanding to make meaningful improvements in the lives of parents.

Definition of Key Terms:

Critical Race Theory (CRT). Work originally advanced by legal scholars with the intention of eliminating racial oppression as a part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression, arguing that racism is endemic to American life, expressing skepticism towards the ideas of meritocracy and colorblindness and foregrounding race as a contributor to group advantage and disadvantage (Matsuda, 1991).

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD). A person or community that is heterogeneous in both culture and language, such as a community where both English and Spanish are spoken and different beliefs are held about issues germane to social living.

Culturally Responsive Practice. Practice that capitalizes on the unique views and personal history of diverse students to improve the quality of the education that diverse students receive (Gay, 2002).

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The Spanish-speaking support faculty at the local high school are referred to as ESOL staff in this study, as they are in the school that participated in the project.

Essentialism. The belief that each culture is separated by boundaries that clearly differentiate it from other cultures (Grillo, 2003), placing cultures in discrete, uniform categories.

Latinx. A person who was born or lives in South America, Central America, or Mexico, or a person in the U.S. whose family is originally from South America, Central America, or Mexico (Merriam-Webster, 2016). This term is also used to apply to a person who is from a Spanish-speaking Caribbean island. In this manuscript, the term is written as Latinx as an abbreviation of "Latina and/or Latino," thus the term is both gender inclusive and concise.

Microaggressions. Brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue et al., 2007, p 273).

Othering. Othering refers to a practice of naming other racial categories in such a way that implies that they deviate from a "neutral" position (Said, 2003).

Parental Involvement. The process by which parents work with schools and with their children to benefit their children's educational outcomes and future success (Hill et al., 2004).

Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR refers to research that actively engages participants as researchers and commits to undertake meaningful action towards correcting practices that are unjust, unsustainable, or irrational (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013).

Racism, Colorblind. A defensive reaction that allows the maintenance of racial oppression while creating the illusion that race does not contribute to inequality (Crenshaw, 1998).

Racism, Cultural. Prejudice exercised not against a person, but against the broad range of cultural attributes that a group of people may carry (Sue, 2010). Examples include forbidding the use of non-English languages at work or in school, or strict dress codes that do not accommodate religious or culturally required articles (e.g., a yamaca or hijab).

Racism, Individual. Overt and deliberate behavior with the aim of oppressing people who are identified as a racial minority (Sue, 2010). Examples given include making Black customers wait longer for service, forbidding a family member from interracial marriage, or using offensive racial epithets.

Racism, Institutional. When a business or industry uses policies that deny equal opportunities to racial or minorities while middle-class people from the cultural mainstream profit from inequity (Sue, 2010). Examples include hiring processes that penalize applicants for cultural or socio-economic traits, such as using non-standard English or relying on public transportation.

Reflexivity. An attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher, at every step of the research process (Malterud, 2001).

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a foundation for the current study by reviewing the relevant literature supporting this work and gaps in the literature. The chapter begins with a discussion of the educational status of Spanish-speaking Latinx youth in the United States, with a particular focus on educational inequities and family contexts among Latinx immigrant students. I review conceptualizations of culture and cultural responsiveness as they relate to the field of school psychology and suggest that culturally responsive parent involvement efforts can be used to address racial and cultural disparities in education. I also share examples of multicultural research that convey an *essentialist* view of culture, (i.e., the belief that each culture is separated by boundaries that clearly differentiate it from other cultures; Grillo, 2003), and discuss the need to acknowledge the limits of cultural knowledge with respect for intra-cultural diversity. I then review Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model of parent involvement in education and summarize the research related to this model that has been conducted with culturally diverse families, including Latinx families. The chapter concludes with a summary and review of gaps in the research that set the precedent for the study.

Ecological Factors Affecting Spanish-Speaking Latinx Youth

To understand a student as a part of his/her community and culture, it is important to consider the personal history and daily stressors faced by members of the community. A review of the literature on outcomes for Spanish-speaking Latinx youth in schools in the U.S. reveals a

number of areas of concern for these youth. In this section, I will describe the challenges faced by this population of students in the education system. Subsequently, I will review what is known about their educational outcomes.

Stressors related to the immigration experience. According to the Migration Policy Institute (2011), there are currently about 39.9 million immigrants in the U.S., representing about 24% of school-age children. Families moving to the United States have to find work and income, which may be unstable or low-paying depending on the community. Moreover, housing can be difficult to acquire or afford, especially when the breadwinners of the family do not speak English (Streklova & Hoot, 2008). Refugee families, although provided with legal status and resources, may have survived traumatic circumstances, such as murder, rape, or human trafficking (Streklova & Hoot). Families may also face situational constraints that force some members to move ahead and find housing and work while others stay behind in harsh conditions, causing a further stressor of family separation that can be particularly distressing for children (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez Orozco, 2001). If legal status is not acquired, the transition to life in the U.S. is even more stressful, as the fear of discovery or punishment from authority figures looms overhead. Upon arriving, families may find that their housing opportunities are limited to low-cost, high-crime areas, which bottlenecks opportunities for advancement and increases the risk of mental health problems (Organista, 2007).

Acculturation refers to the process through which immigrants change in order to adapt to their new environment (Berry, 2002). Unlike assimilation, which refers to a wholesale adoption of a new culture while casting aside the old, acculturation involves balancing new customs and rules with the maintenance of one's community and traditional values (Berry, 2002). Acculturation is a complex process and is not experienced the same way by all immigrants.

According to Schmid (2001), economic opportunities play a large role in determining how a family will adjust to life in the U.S., generally with three potential outcomes. Families may work their way into the middle class and emulate the values of White middle class Americans, or they may assimilate into a permanent underclass comprised of immigrants in an ethnic enclave. Schmid also describes a third alternative, wherein families advance economically while maintaining a distinct cultural identity. With this third path, communities maintain their cultural norms while finding their own path to success and learning the essential elements of the mainstream culture in order to advance. During the acculturation process, first-generation immigrants are likely to face anxiety and depression as well as acculturative stress when compared with second generation immigrants (Rogers-Sirin, Ryce, & Sirin, 2014). This is largely due to the direct conflicts, losses, and life disruptions they face as they move from one country to another. However, the identity crises faced by second generation immigrants appear to more greatly affect educational outcomes and physical health (Roger-Sirin et al., 2014), particularly when dissonant acculturation places a cultural divide between family members.

Language and dissonant acculturation. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) used the term dissonant acculturation to describe what occurs when parents and their children differ in their acquisition of culture and language. If there is little to no bridge between home and school culture, children may eventually be forced into a choice between the two. If the cultures of school and home can be bridged, however, the family can have the means to become relevant to a larger part of a child's life. For example, a rural elementary school near where I live provides English lessons and parent study groups to help parents stay abreast of what their children are learning. In other cases, second-generation children may lose the ability to communicate with their Spanish monolingual grandparents and rely on their parents to translate daily conversations

(Rumbaut et al., 2006). Thus, the extent to which children depart from their families in their acculturation level can place a strain on family relationships. Compared with other countries, the United States is exceptional in that immigrants who arrive on our shores have a good chance of losing their heritage language after only a few generations (Rumbaut et al., 2006). However, immigrants who speak Spanish are much more likely than other groups to retain their language (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Thus, immigrant communities where Spanish is spoken have a different acculturation story than other groups coming to the United States, with language playing a key role in the maintenance of cultural heritage (Linton & Jimenez, 2009).

The maintenance of language and cultural roots can be controversial when there exists social pressure for children to shed their heritage language in exchange for English due to fears that multiple languages may pose a threat to a sense of "national identity" (Huntington, 2004). Despite fears of social division, data do not suggest that using Spanish at home and in school slows English language development, but it does foster the retention of Spanish (Tran, 2010). In the past several decades, retention of Spanish and acquisition of English have both increased for second-generation Latinx students emigrating from all countries represented in Tran's (2010) survey, including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and many countries in Central and South America. However, language retention and acquisition varied from group to group, therefore dissonant acculturation related to language may pose a larger or smaller threat, depending on the community. In general, communities that maintain a strong sense of ethnic identity have been found to experience better mental health outcomes and coping skills when compared to those who do not maintain their sense of heritage (Smith & Silva, 2011). This finding does not hold up in all cases, however, as some Latinx youth do not experience the protective effect of maintaining ethnic identity (Rogers-Sirin et al., 2014). Some researchers hypothesize that the

negative stereotypes (Deaux, 2006) and economic disadvantages (Dovidio et al., 2010) faced by many Latinx communities have created an incentive to accelerate acquisition of a new culture, which may in turn create more dissonant acculturation between first and second generation immigrants (Rogers-Sirin et al., 2014).

Although the immigration experience is stressful and may result in at least temporary isolation, interrupted schooling, and financial hardship (APA, 2012), those who come to the U.S. tend to face better outcomes when compared with those who stay behind (Alegría et al., 2007). Indeed, first-generation immigrants show resilience in many ways and even tend to have better health outcomes than second and third generation immigrants (Morales, Lara, Kington, Valdez, & Pumariega, 2005). Many sacrifices are made even among the most talented, however, as newcomers with advanced degrees are faced with limited professional opportunities (Davila, 2008), which may result from racism and prejudice, or differences between original training experiences and the expectations of the profession in a new country. Taken together, the literature suggests that acculturation is a very personal process that manifests differently depending on the origin country, economic opportunities, and the individuals that comprise a family or community culture.

Daily stressors associated with racism and prejudice. In addition to stressors related to the experience of immigration itself, many of those coming to this country also face racism and prejudice. Unfortunately, many native-born U.S. citizens harbor negative attitudes towards immigrants (Deaux, 2006), which leads to discrimination in the workplace (Dietz, 2010) and unwelcoming treatment in schools (Rumbaut, 2005). Latin-American immigrants face uniquely intense xenophobia and racial discrimination (Lopez & Taylor, 2010), which can lead to mental health problems. Latinx individuals who experience discrimination are likely to experience

depression (Gee et al., 2006), reduced self-esteem (Armenta & Hunt, 2009), increased stress levels (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003), and decreased physical health (Pascoe & Smart-Richman, 2009). The ill effects of discrimination have been widely considered regarding deliberate prejudice, including rejection or intimidation that may result (Contrada et al., 2001), but more recently subtle and unintentional forms of discrimination have also been considered, including institutional racism, cultural racism, color-blindness, microaggressions, and foreigner objectification. Understanding subtle forms of racism is important, as many researchers argue that as blatant forms of racism decline, racism and prejudice continue to thrive in more insidious ways, becoming more difficult to confront as they become less and less overt (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson 2002; Nelson, 2006). Indeed, Dovidio and Gaertner (1996) have found that few people consider themselves to be racist; however, even those who claim to be objective and in support of equal treatment can demonstrate subconscious bias against people of color.

According to Sue (2010), the *individual racism* that typically comes to mind when discussing prejudice is the easiest to identify. It is considered an overt and deliberate behavior with the aim of oppressing people who are identified as a racial minority. Examples given by Sue (2010) include making Black customers wait longer for service, forbidding a family member from interracial marriage, or using offensive racial epithets. *Institutional racism* occurs when no singular individual is responsible or identifiable for inequitable treatment, but a business or industry uses policies that deny equal opportunities to racial or minorities while middle-class people from the cultural mainstream profit from inequity. Examples given by Sue include hiring processes that penalize applicants for cultural or socio-economic traits, such as using non-standard English or relying on public transportation. Institutional racism is harder to identify because standard practices, not individuals, are responsible for inequity. *Cultural racism* refers to

prejudice not against a person, but against the broad range of cultural attributes that a group of people may carry. Examples include forbidding the use of non-English languages at work or in school, or strict dress codes that do not accommodate religious or culturally required articles (e.g., a yamaca or hijab). Such requirements not only exclude the culturally diverse, they also can demoralize those who are left out by communicating a belief that certain cultures, languages, or customs are superior to others. Additionally, among those who do not consider themselves racist, *colorblindness* is a common defensive reaction that allows the maintenance of racial oppression while creating the illusion that race does not contribute to inequality (Crenshaw, 1998). Colorblindness (i.e., the assertion that race is irrelevant) is a form of racism because it denies the economic and social realities faced by people of color by failing to account for the systematic oppression they face. It also denies the systematic advantages possessed by people who have white skin (Solomon et al., 2005). Color-blind attitudes and discomfort with discussing race have been cited as significant contributing factors to ineffective or non-existent efforts to eliminate racial prejudice as the status quo of racial inequality is maintained (Carr & Lund, 2007).

The term *microaggression* came into use when describing unintentional and subtle insults that are communicated on a daily basis to people of color (Sue et al., 2007). However, microaggressions have received growing attention and are now considered in the context of gender, culture, disability, and social class as well (Sue, 2010). I use the definition provided by Sue et al. (2007), who describe microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p 273). Microaggressions are an exceptional form of discrimination because they often occur without

any awareness on the part of the perpetrator, and even when confronted, a perpetrator might not understand how he or she has wronged the recipient. For example, a person may state that a Black male student who uses a collegiate vocabulary is “very articulate” without realizing the implied second half of that sentence: *“which is unusual for a person of color.”*

Although they are not considered to be as distressing as blatant attacks on one’s race or culture, microaggressions are still very harmful because of the way daily occurrences can wear on the recipient (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). Sue noted that because of their presence in the media and even educational content in schools, microaggressions are an ever-present burden to the culturally diverse. Furthermore, because of their subtlety and often unintentional nature, combating microaggressions can be like swinging at a shadow; there is often no clear insult to be redressed. In fact, those who respond with indignance may be accused of overreacting to a truly benign event (Schacht, 2008). In his book on the subject, Sue (2010) described how someone can even inflict microaggressions when appearing to defend a person from more conventional, overt racism. As an example, Sue shared a political exchange in which an elderly White woman at a campaign event told Senator John McCain that Barack Obama could not be trusted because he is “Arab.” McCain defended the now president Obama by saying that he is *not* an Arab; on the contrary, he is a “decent family man.” Sue’s example is pointed, because although Senator McCain defended Obama, he threw people of Middle-Eastern or Muslim heritage under the bus. McCain implied that being a “decent family man” is evidence that Obama is not an “Arab.”

Othering (Said, 2003) is another subtle form of prejudice that occurs when an individual who has noticeable non-White ancestry is treated like a foreigner or culturally “different”, even if they were born and raised in the United States. Upon coming to the United States, immigrants

may expect to become a part of a melting pot wherein they will be treated as "regular Americans." For East Asian immigrants and immigrants of color, it is difficult to shed the status of being a foreigner even after generations have passed and the accent becomes standardized (Devos & Ma, 2008). Armenta and colleagues (2013) refer to this stereotype *as foreigner objectification*. The term "objectification" is used to represent what occurs when a person is treated as an object, which could be substituted for any other object of the same kind without losing any essential characteristics (Nussbaum, 1995). Armenta et al. use the term to refer to social encounters where a person of color is treated as a token representing a larger, uniform group that is essentially un-American.

During an interview on Public Radio International's *The World*, Comedian Joanna Hausman imparted her frustration with foreigner objectification with the following example of how she feels White European Americans view her and other Latina Americans: "We're all Mexican. We all pray to all the Virgin Mary. We're all maids, we all love Pit Bull. There are so many people in Latin America, so many different countries… Coming here and being placed in a single box of being 'Latina' is kind of odd." A humorous example of foreigner objectification and micro-aggressions can be found in a short video directed by Ken Tanaka and David Neptune (2013), wherein a White jogger stops to chat with another runner with clear East-Asian features. He asks "Where are you from? Your English is perfect!" When he is unsatisfied with her response ("San Diego- we speak English there"), he presses on until she reveals that her grandparents were from Korea. Almost immediately, the jogger responds "I knew it! [greeting in Korean]. I actually *love* kimchi." When she turns the tables to ask of his origins, he claims that he is "just a regular American." Although it is a dramatic example, in only a few minutes this video makes a pointed argument about the double-standard racial minority citizens are subjected

to. I use this video as an ice breaker when talking about race because the use of comedy makes an uncomfortable topic more approachable.

Challenges for English learners in U.S. schools. In the landmark Lau v. Nichols case in 1974, the Supreme Court ruled that language-based tracking or ability grouping (such as programs for EL students) must operate such that it meets student language needs “as soon as possible” and cannot create a “dead-end or permanent track" (*Lau v. Nichols.* 414 U.S. 563., 1974). Despite this ruling, many of the Spanish-speaking Latinx students in the U.S. are not afforded the instruction or resources that they need in order to experience success in America’s schools as they are often tracked into lower ability programs (Samla, 2014). Another court case, Hobson v Hanson, abolished ability tracking for reasons related to social class and inequity in educational outcomes. However, it is possible for EL students to be trapped in classes with low standards and expectations until they reach English proficiency, thus replicating the effect of ability tracking (Samla, 2014). The amount of academic content that is typically acquired through reading often presents a tremendous challenge for EL students who wish to keep up with their peers. Indeed, language acquisition is one of the largest obstacles students will face in adjusting to life in the U.S. (Davies, 2008). Students may begin to show proficiency in Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) before they gain the Cognitive-Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) that is required for understanding text and using higher-order thinking to solve problems with language. For most students, it will require 2-3 years to acquire BICS, whereas CALP can take up to 7 years to develop (Cummins, 1981). In other words, as long as students in Spanish-speaking Latinx communities have not yet mastered English and receive no instruction in their primary language, they may have to wait years before receiving on-level instruction. Nonetheless, there is a precedent for improving language instruction; the Elementary

and Secondary Education Act introduced Title III, which holds that students must be provided English language instruction through high quality programs. As an incentive, programs can receive grant funding if they demonstrate improvements in LEP instruction. These factors are complicated by the economic realities faced by the families of ELL students. When compared to English proficient adults, LEP adults are twice as likely to fall below the poverty line and work in low paying, manual labor jobs (US Census Bureau, 2013).

Educational outcomes for Latinx English Learners. The challenges faced by English Learner (EL) students manifest in many important educational outcomes, including retention, high school completion, ability tracking, and inappropriate placement in special education. Latinx students are more than twice as likely than their peers to be retained at least once during elementary or high school (U. S. Department of Education, 2003). Furthermore, Latinx ELL students have historically been much more likely than their English-fluent peers to drop out of high school before graduation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). However, if they can hold on until graduation, it may get incrementally easier to succeed, as Latinx immigrant students who persist from 10th to 12th grade have been shown to experience decreasing levels of mental health problems and improved adjustment (Rogers-Sirin et al., 2014).

Despite the court rulings intended to protect EL students (e.g., Diana vs. State Board of Education, 1970), they are much more likely to be placed into and remain in lower ability groups than their English-proficient peers (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000; Samla, 2014). In general, culturally diverse students are overrepresented in special education for disabilities and underrepresented in gifted programs (Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2004, Morgan et al., 2015). However, most of the research on disproportionality has focused on race and ethnicity, without disaggregating for a closer look at language proficiency, socio-economic status, and other factors

that might play a role in inappropriate placement in special education (Artiles et al 2005). A vital factor needed for EL students to catch up to their peers and remain in general education is the development of their oral language skills in English. Improvements in oral language are cyclical because increased English proficiency yields higher use, and higher use yields higher proficiency. When students gain proficiency in English, they make more English-speaking friends and become more engaged in school (Artiles et al, 2005).

Culturally Responsive Research and Practice in School Psychology

The starting point for this study is the notion that it is important for school psychologists and all educators to be both culturally aware and culturally responsive. Culturally responsive practice refers to work that capitalizes on the unique views and personal histories of diverse students to improve the quality of the education that they receive (Gay, 2002). Culturally responsive practice assumes that by situating academic content within a student's social and historical world, education becomes more meaningful, interesting, and effective. To accomplish this, practitioners investigate the culture of those they serve beyond surface level truisms and customs and get to know the idiosyncrasies that occur at the community level (Sullivan & A'Vant, 2009). For me, this means that every new client whose social history varies significantly from that of a school psychologist (or any educator) requires the development of a unique cultural understanding.

For school psychologists, developing culturally responsive practice is a challenge in that there are considerable cultural differences between the population of school psychologists in the U.S. and the youth they serve. For example, 93% of school psychology practitioners are White, while 44% of school-age youth identify with another racial group (Curtis, Castillo, & Tan, 2014). Additionally, school psychologists in the U.S. are predominantly monolingual English speakers,

whereas 20% of students in U.S. schools speak a language other than English (Curtis et al., 2006). Moreover, almost all school psychologists self-identify as middle class, whereas 16% of school-age age youth live in poverty (Curtis et al., 2014). These types of differences mean that there are a large number of school psychologists who may have to bridge a significant cultural divide with a large part or even the majority of their caseload. Indeed, many educators are confronted with the same realization that I have attempted to reconcile in my graduate training; they feel they are not prepared to work effectively with multicultural students (Athanases & Martin, 2006). This is especially concerning given the educational disparities suffered by students who are English language learners, racially diverse, and/or from low SES backgrounds (Allen, 2011; Barton & Coley, 2009).

It is important to recognize that culturally responsive practice is not limited to studying distinct features of diverse cultures. Cultural responsiveness is incongruent with what Wikan describes as the "old model" of culture, in which anthropologists and other professionals consider culture "as static, fixed, objective, consensual and uniformly shared by all members of a group (1999, p. 62)." Wikan challenges this "old model," claiming that such universal cultures only exist in the minds of social scientists who wish to categorize the world into simplified groups that can be easily studied and understood. This approach to culture has also been described as "essentialist," advancing the belief that each culture is separated by boundaries that clearly differentiate it from other cultures (Grillo, 2003). Essentialism is problematic because it denies the uniqueness of individuals who live within the same culture, nation, or ethnic group. This is particularly true with cultural groups as broad and varied as those that can be described as Latinx, which include communities spanning more than an entire continent. There are certainly

more cultural differences *between members* of the group than there are differences between the group and other racial/ethnic groups (Haycock, & Duany, 1991).

In line with this argument, it would perilous for me to assume that I understand the culture of a student from Cuba simply because I've worked with other students from Cuba. Indeed, I have worked with students whose families support the political regime in Cuba, and their worldview appeared to be radically different from those held by clients who are political dissidents. What I learn from one Spanish-speaking Latinx client may be irrelevant to another, just as my taste in music is different from that of my brother (who, as my twin, shares my cultural upbringing). I am not implying that broad, multicultural research is not useful; without it I would never have known that in many Latinx youth, mental illness can be framed in physiological terms (e.g., stomach-ache rather than anxiety; Tamayo, Rivner, & Muñoz, 2007) and therefore students in need of psychological support might frequent the nurse's office and never approach my desk. Nonetheless, although broad multicultural research is a good place to start in getting to know a cultural group, I argue that it is a bad place to stop. I strive to treat every group I encounter as its own miniature cultural group in practice and intend to do so in this research project.

Culturally responsive vs. culturally competent. The term culturally responsive is used in this document in favor of culturally competent primarily because of the large scale, systematic efforts that have to occur in order to achieve cultural competence. According to Hernandez and colleagues (2015) culturally competent organizations must consistently express *values* that appreciate the importance of being effective with diverse clientele. Furthermore, *communication* and *community participation* are essential characteristics that go beyond notifying and reaching out to community members, but rather actively include the input and ideas of community

stakeholders. Culturally competent care is moreover provided with support from governing bodies, such as administrators, so that the provision of care is guided throughout all levels of an organization. Planning and evaluation are also necessary so that service providers can assess the extent to which their services are effective with diverse clientele. When considering direct services, providers must ensure service is available and accessible to diverse clientele, and is appropriately utilized. Although all of these factors are central to the current study, other organizational factors included in this model of cultural competence (i.e., HR decisions such as hiring and training, adapting the array of services provided, and providing technical support such as financial assistance) are beyond the scope of the study and beyond my influence as a researcher. Thus, the term *culturally responsive* is used to reflect the attempts to be inclusive and attentive to cultural diversity even if cultural competence is not fully realized.

Cultural responsiveness and essentialism in the literature. In the fields of psychotherapy and mental health counseling, Derald Wing Sue has generated an enormous contribution to the study of multiculturalism in psychotherapy and microaggressions. In an instructional video series based on his research, Sue (1989) interrogates approaches to therapy that can be culturally loaded, such as expectations for family dynamics, gender roles, eye contact, and beliefs about mental illness. Sue has also discussed how standard communication styles, including physical proximity, tone, or word choice can potentially alienate culturally diverse clientele. However, Sue paints culture with a broad brush when he describes traditional "Asian" cultures, leaving little room to draw distinctions between families from India, China, Laos, or any other continental country east of Europe. Indeed, even provinces or regions within one country might not share the same traditions or family values. Sue makes clear that generalizations cannot be applied universally, and yet states broadly that "people of color" prefer

counseling that is directive, unambiguous, and uses more self-disclosure. Sue discusses culturally "enlightened" vs. "unenlightened" therapists, as if cultural competence is a final outcome that can clearly be attained, at which point an enlightened therapist can provide responsive and sensitive therapy to people of all cultures. If the exemplars of cultural awareness can make such generalizations, it is clearly difficult to avoid essentialism.

My thoughts on essentialism have been heavily influenced by a book chapter written by Sue and Sue (2008) that I read as a part of a regular study group in graduate school.

For a behavioral interventions course, we were completing a module on effective mental health counseling with culturally diverse clientele. The first part of the chapter presented a pointed argument that helping professions such as psychotherapy are heavily based on White, middle-class values. Everybody in my study group agreed with this point, which argued that psychotheraphy assumed clients prefer standard English, verbal communication, individualistic values, openness and intimacy, orientation to cause and effect, long-term goals, and adherence to strict time schedules, among other features listed in the book.

Although no one disagreed with the assumptions attributed to White middle class psychotherapy, the section that followed was much more difficult to accept. Sue described the features of various racial groups that cause misunderstandings with White middle class therapists. Examples of cultural traits included different time perspectives, concrete, short-term goals, sense of people-hood, temporal difference, and use of supernatural explanations, among others. Two of my colleagues, one from Jamaica and the other with roots in Puerto-Rico, were deeply offended by the characteristics used to describe Black and Hispanic cultures (each of which were presented as one cultural group). My colleagues not only felt that they were not represented by the descriptions in the table and the chapter, but they also felt that there was

veiled racism in the variables listed. One of my colleagues described the chapter's mention of "Black language" and "Sense of people-hood" as euphemisms for behavior seen in the ghetto, and we all perceived the table's description of the "different time perspective" and "temporal difference" seen in Latinx clients as a veiled claim that one should expect Latinx clients to be perpetually late. My colleagues perceived "concrete" and "short-term" goals as euphemisms for lower intelligence and verbal skills. Neither of my colleagues could understand how their entire racial group was grouped together in a presumptively homogenous culture, particularly given the diversity of Latin-American families, who may not even speak Spanish as a first language. In the class that followed this study session, several members of my class actually requested that a video demonstration of culturally competent therapy to be turned off because the sample session of therapy with a large Black offended them and constituted a further oversimplification of their racial identities.

Tripartite framework for understanding dimensions of identity. Sue and Sue were aware that their work could result in problematic assumptions if misused, as was the case in the aforementioned seminar. In the same book, they present a tripartite framework for understanding cultural identity with the aim of placing the traits listed above into context. This framework considers culture on three levels: individual, group, and universal, and is presented below.

Individual level. "All individuals are, in some respects, like no other individuals" (p 61). No two individuals are the same, due as much to unique personal histories as to the subtle genetic differences that occur even between siblings. Therefore, when minding one's culture, it is important to also mind idiosyncrasies that occur at the individual level. Even if a person is familiar with cultural norms, there is no guarantee that they follow them.

Group level. "All individuals are, in some respects, like some other individuals" (p 62). By virtue of belonging to social and cultural groups, people adopt beliefs and attitudes that are shared among group members. Both chosen group membership (e.g., religious affiliation) and inherited group membership (e.g., skin color) influence identities and shared experiences. Though they may differ individually, many students of color will experience indignities related to race and prejudice, and therefore may develop similar attitudes towards those who oppress or insult them. Depending on the situation, one membership may be more salient than another (e.g., race vs. gender).

Universal level. "All individuals are, in some respects, like all other individuals" (p 62). Sue discusses four commonalities that all humans share: those which are biological (e.g., all humans are mammals), those which are experienced (e.g., birth, death), sentience (i.e., humans are self-aware), and the use of symbols (i.e., humans use oral and/or written language). Though these examples are accurate, even experiences that occur at the universal level must be interpreted carefully. For example, even if bruising after blunt trauma is a universally shared experience, methods for treating a bruise may vary at a cultural level, and an individual may even develop their own unique habit for dealing with bruises. Thus, very little in the human experience can be described as universal in its entirety.

I do not deny that some features of cultural groups, at least based on nationality, do extend to most members. For example, 83% of Mexican citizens identify as Catholic (INEGI, 2010), 90% of Colombian citizens, when polled, describe themselves as soccer fans (The New York Times, 2014), and 84% of citizens in Perú speak Spanish (Central Intelligence Agency, 2007). However, in addition to the fact that none of these figures are 100%, they represent only surface level features of a national culture. For perspective, I note that 70% of U.S. citizens

identify as Christian (Pew Research Center, 2015), two thirds like American football, and 79.3% speak only English at home (US Census Bureau, 2015). Few researchers would expect all U.S. citizens to fit this description, and even fewer would accept "Christian, English-speaking football fan" as a meaningful representation of an American's cultural experience, even if those three traits were accurate. I strive to mitigate this type of stereotyping by providing more precise information about the sample under study (e.g., applying conclusions to "Mexican American families in a rural Texas school district" vs. "Mexican American families"). I also seek to ask questions that dig deeper than obvious cultural characteristics, and reveal the individuality of my participants.

Critical Race Theory

The theoretical framework that I use to interrogate the role of race in this study is Critical Race Theory (CRT), which originated in the study of racism in law. CRT has been advanced in an effort to increase awareness of racism in law with the ultimate goal of eliminating racism (Matsuda, 1991). Matsuda highlights six principles that serve as a foundation for CRT:

1. CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to American life
2. CRT expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy.
3. CRT challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law [and] presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.
4. CRT insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society
5. CRT is interdisciplinary

6. CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as a part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (p. 6)

CRT has been adapted to the field of education by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), who argue that in the U.S., property rights take precedence over human rights, and that racial privilege can be used as a property right. This right is protected and manifested by the general acceptance of the current distribution of wealth, education, and property as a “neutral baseline” while ignoring systematic racial oppression (e.g., slavery, segregation, and white flight) as contributors to the present-day imbalance between racial groups. The tracking of LEP students into low-ability and special education classes, as well as their underrepresentation in gifted programs, can be considered among ongoing forms of oppression as allowing for the dominance of White students and families. Many of the researchers who contribute to CRT are people of color; however, I argue that it is equally important for White researchers to study racial oppression in education in order to fully commit to creating equal opportunities for all students.

Dealing with the Discomfort of White Privilege and Racism

It is difficult to deliver culturally responsive education in a setting where the majority of educators are White and middle class teachers serving poor, racially diverse youth (Eslinger, 2013). Race is an uncomfortable topic to discuss in the classroom according to teachers (Young, 2010). Due to the disadvantages faced by people of color, White people, by extension, are the beneficiaries of racism (Helms, 1990). However, coexisting among oppressed people while being complicit in oppression is a distressing thought to most, who wish to view themselves as morally upright individuals (Bandura, 1991). Several theories have been developed to express the defensiveness that arises from this discomfort, including Watt’s Privileged Identity Exploration (PIE) model (Watt, 2007). This model includes three categories of defensive reactions, each containing specific defensive strategies: 1) recognizing privilege (defenses include denial,

deflection, or rationalization of privilege), 2) contemplating privilege (defenses include intellectualization, principium, and false envy), and 3) addressing privilege (defenses include benevolence and minimization). During my graduate training, one of my professors presented a case study that used the PIE model to explain the potentially destructive effects that defensiveness can have on an open dialogue about race and racism.

In the case study by Henry et al. (2007), a White male student expressed discomfort with the views expressed in the course and complained to the professor that being forced to discuss racism and having to listen to dissenting views equated to “harassment.” The student denied and minimized the existence of White privilege and racism, citing anecdotal success stories (e.g., Oprah Winfrey) as proof. He further complained that his civil rights as a White male were being violated and demanded that a police officer be present during his final presentation because he “feared for his safety.” The student did not respect the decisions made by the African American professor and thus went over her head to complain to the university administration. In doing so, he undermined his professor and silenced dissenting views in the classroom. I took the same class with the same curriculum and professor as the student in the case study, and I was dumbfounded by the fears and complaints that the White male student had expressed in the case study. Most of all, I became concerned that, should I try to address racism in a professional development setting, I might face the same resistance.

Henry et al. (2007) presented several ideas for preventing similar cases of backlash, including more open communication between all stakeholders so that professors, administrators, and students understand each other’s positions. The authors also suggested offering opportunities to express views privately and publicly so that no one individual is forced into a binary decision between conflict or debate on the one hand and silence on the other. Another strategy I might use

for preventing such conflict and discomfort is drawn from my training in Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT; Beck, 2011). In order to prevent conflict and severe dissonance in the group, norms can be created for discussing opposing views by using questions, rather than negation, of viewpoints. For example, one might ask if most people of color have opportunities to reach the fame and wealth of Oprah Winfrey rather than directly declaring that discrimination continues to limit the economic success of people of color.

I agree with Eslinger's (2013) argument that cultural competence is difficult to achieve but necessary in schools where the majority of educational staff are White and middle class teachers serving racially and economically diverse youth. Eslinger argues that thoroughly understanding all culturally diverse students may not be realistic, but that White educators must strive to come as close as possible by developing their knowledge of cultural diversity, engaging in introspection regarding their own cultural identity and privileges, and critically examining the curricula and educational approaches used by their schools and districts. It might not be possible to fully understand the lived reality of another culture, but an effort must be made to express a value and concern for the circumstances that diverse students face (Noddings, 1984).

Even if complete understanding is not possible, an affective or emotional component of teaching is vital to creating an environment where diverse students feel valued (in this case, emotional validation of student culture). To care for a student's culture does not necessarily require understanding it, but an attempt at understanding is essential (Eslinger, 2013). This approach raises questions about the effectiveness of White middle-class teachers in "grasping the reality" of students raised in a culture and economic situation that the teachers themselves will never experience, which converges with Duncan's (2002) findings that White teachers may feel a limited, superficial "false empathy" when working with diverse youth. This false empathy (that

is, feeling that one understands another when they truly do not) is problematic because it allows a privileged individual to feel as though balance has been restored and justice served when the work has barely begun (Duncan, 2002). In this study, I support Eslinger's position that White middle-class teachers who attempt to understand culturally and linguistically diverse students will have a hard time doing so but that the effort is valuable and critical to effective teaching. In the next section, I review research related to parent involvement, and discuss the promise of parent involvement efforts as a way to provide culturally responsive practice even when the majority of educators have limited understanding of their students' culture.

Parent Involvement in Education

Given the concerns regarding the educational experiences of Latinx English learners, researchers and educators have sought to identify mechanisms through which to improve outcomes for this group. One area that has received considerable attention in the literature is parent involvement in education and how it might be fostered in immigrant families. In this section, I review important conceptual and empirical research related to various ways that parent involvement can take shape and how action on the part of schools can foster it. Parent involvement with diverse families has puzzled researchers because there is a lack of consensus as to what motivates parents from diverse cultures to become involved (Rodriguez, 2009). It is particularly important to recognize multiple forms of parent involvement because some parents choose primarily home-based involvement activities that are easily overlooked by school personnel (Anderson & Minke, 2007). One of the most comprehensive models of parent involvement was conceptualized by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997; 2005). This model presents a practical conceptual framework for discussing parent involvement, the first level of which (factors that predict involvement) will be discussed in the following section.

One of the major contributions of this model to the understanding of parent involvement is the diversity of parent involvement practices that are recognized. Although the current study will not limit parent involvement to the behaviors included in this model, the Hoover-Dempsey model provides an elegant illustration of the myriad factors that increase parent involvement and the various choices interested parents can make to help their children. The first level of the model includes the behaviors that predict parent involvement, including parental role construction, self-efficacy, and invitations to get involved. Each of these is described in further detail below, with particular attention focused on research conducted with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) families.

Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2011) tested the predictive behaviors in the first level of the model with a large sample of primarily Spanish-speaking, Latinx families, and provided a useful examination of the relative importance of each factor in predicting parent involvement. Because this study controlled for the influence of each factor, it was possible to gauge which were most predictive and which relationships were better explained by other variables. In their exploratory study, Walker et al. recruited participants from a large public school system in the Southeastern United States, which served a new and growing population of primarily first-generation Mexican immigrants. Three elementary schools and two middle schools were included. One potential difficulty in bridging cultural divides noted by the authors is that the community has only recently begun serving a significant amount of Spanish-speaking immigrants, and has traditionally been comprised of White and African-American English speaking students. Another factor considered by the authors was the poverty rate in the sample, with 95% of the sample reporting a total annual family income of $30,000 or less, and almost half reporting a total annual family income of less than $10,000. The authors created structural

equation models to analyze home and school-based parent involvement, and how they were predicted by personal motivation (role construction and self-efficacy), invitations (from the school, from teachers, and from students), and family context (knowledge and skills and time and energy). The results of this study, along with other studies that have tested this model with CLD families, are presented below under each construct of the model.

Personal Motivation

Role construction. This element refers to the expectations that parents have for what they should do regarding their children's education and what they typically do to support their children. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, role construction is influenced by parents' beliefs about child development, effective child-rearing, and what parents are to do at home to foster school success for their children. Role construction in this model is defined as a categorical variable with their child's education being primarily the responsibility of the parent (parent-centered), the school (school-centered), or a combination of both (partnership-centered). Parental involvement is likely to begin with parent beliefs about what they are to do, and such beliefs are likely to be culturally situated and influenced. Therefore, of the constructs proposed by the Hoover-Dempsey Sandler model, role construction is fundamental to this study.

Research with CLD families. Several researchers have investigated the importance of role construction in ethnically and culturally diverse families. Many researchers have found that role construction is the strongest predictor of parent involvement when each part of the model is considered simultaneously (Gonzalez & Chrispeels, 2004; Sheldon, 2002; Walker et al. 2011). Therefore, even when barriers such as time, energy, or competing obligations existed, parents who believed that they were needed for the successful education of their children were more likely to get involved than those who did not feel needed.

For example, Drummond & Stipek (2004) found in their study of African American, Caucasian American, and Latinx American elementary students that role construction was significantly associated with parent involvement practices. Using telephone interviews (about an hour in length), the researchers contacted 234 African-American, Caucasian, and Latinx parents to rate the importance they ascribed to parent support in reading, math, and homework, as well as the importance of knowing what their children were learning. In general, parents rated help as more essential in younger students and in reading as opposed to math. Parents were most likely to report highly valuing their own involvement if their children were struggling to read. The only parents who reported that they did not believe their support was needed were those whose children were performing well in reading, although they also reported their own discomfort with academic material as a contributing factor. The participants' beliefs about the role that parents should take were subject to social influence, as parents reported that they were most likely to get involved when teachers recommended specific involvement practices. Common involvement practices included reading to their children or listening to them read, completing phonics exercises, and working on math worksheet. Parents most frequently reported that the way they found out about their children's learning needs was through teacher communication.

Parent self-efficacy. Parent self-efficacy refers to parents' beliefs about their ability to effect positive change in the growth of their children. Parents who believe they will be successful in helping their children are more likely to attempt to do so (Bandura, 1989). Importantly, high self-efficacy is associated with persistence in the face of difficulty (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). According to Bandura, self-efficacy is socially constructed and based on *personal mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion* (i.e., others convincing that you can do it), and *physiological arousal* (e.g., anxiety, relaxation, excitement, relief).

Research with CLD families. Walker et al. (2011) found that self-efficacy was a strong predictor of home-based involvement, but not for school-based involvement. Drummond & Stipek (2004) found that parents reported discomfort with academic content as a contributing factor when they did not help their child with homework, which also emphasizes the concern of home-based involvement, but does not speak to parent's school-based involvement. However, although self-efficacy related to academic content appears to affect only home-based involvement, confidence in approaching teachers has been reported to play a key role in whether parents decide to get involved at school (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001).

In their study of Latinx immigrant parents, Chrispeels & Rivero (2001) found that parent decisions about how to get involved and to what extent were affected in part by their level of confidence in approaching teachers. In their ethnographic study, they administered questionnaires and conducted interviews with 100 participants in a California based Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). Parents were asked to discuss their past and current attitudes toward their role in their children's education. Before completing the PIQE program, many parents were minimally involved, attending only mandatory events because they felt they did not have the potential to influence the learning process at school. When there was a problem or point of confusion, these "minimally involved" parents were reluctant to even share their questions with teachers because they did not want to confront teachers regarding an educational system when they felt they did not understand the issues at hand. The parents who were actively involved shared that they had more prior experience with schools or had even worked in schools before, and thus they had the confidence to ask questions about school practices.

Invitations to Get Involved

School invitations. In addition to role construction, invitations to get involved comprise one of the most powerful predictors of parent involvement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Green et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2011). According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, invitations should come from the school, teachers, and students. Schools can encourage involvement by fostering a school climate wherein parents are frequently seen on campus and attend events or by posting parent involvement information in numerous locations in the school offices. School principals can also aid in the creation of a welcoming school climate by being present or creating school norms for frequent contact with parents, not simply when child misbehavior occurs (Griffith, 2001). These efforts can make parents feel more welcome than if they were to receive teacher invites only. On the part of teachers, direct invitations express that parent input is valued and will be considered in the classroom context. They also can be helpful because many parents do not know how they can get involved (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001).

Teacher invitations. Teacher invitations are important because they let a parent know that their involvement is desired. Direct teacher invitations may be particularly important for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) parents because without being able to read English newsletters or correspondence, they may miss general school invitations, such as home letters. Teacher invitations often come with practical recommendations for what parents can do to help their children, and parents report having an increased likelihood to help their children when they are told how to do so (e.g., Drummond & Stipek, 2004). This reinforces involvement by granting parents’ desires to better understand what they need to do to help their children be successful (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Student invitations. Students can also request parent involvement, which can be powerful because it emphasizes the most important reason for parent involvement, to help the child. Even if a child does not ask for help, if the parents are aware that their child is struggling, they are more likely to teach or monitor student work (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001).

Research with CLD families. Some researchers have found invitations to be particularly powerful for Spanish-speaking, Latinx families (e.g., Hoover-Dempsey, Wilkins, Sandler, and O'Conner, 2004; Walker et al., 2011). In their study of the PIQE program, Chrispeels & Rivero found that parents who were unlikely to get involved due to poor confidence or due to a school-centered role construction were more likely to get involved if teachers reached out to them. This was especially true if they were given clear expectations on what parent involvement should be. Walker and colleagues found that student invitations to get involved were the best predictors of parent *home-based* involvement when controlling for other types of invitations, suggesting that when students voiced either a desire for help or frustration with their work, parents are more likely to provide help within the home. *School-based* involvement was best predicted by specific teacher invitations, when controlling for other types of invitations.

Family Context

Low SES is often associated with low involvement, yet parents within the same SES group often have very different levels of involvement (Xu & Corno, 2003). Also, role construction has been found to be a stronger predictor than SES, suggesting that considering multiple influences on involvement simultaneously is important to avoid drawing false assumptions. When family context is considered alongside other predictors of involvement (e.g., role construction), its contribution to involvement is found to be relatively weak and often insignificant (Anderson and Minke, 2007; Walker et al., 2011). However, if teachers are aware

of obstacles faced by parents and allow them alternative ways to get involved, parent involvement is more likely. Teachers will yield greater involvement if they are sensitive to parents' knowledge, skills, time, and energy (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). In the Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler model, family context is broken into two parts, *Knowledge and Skills,* and *Time and Energy.*

Knowledge and skills. If parents perceive that they have poor knowledge and skills, they are slightly less likely to get involved themselves and might ask others to help the child instead (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). As subject matter gets more intense (or if parents speak a language other than English), parents might be less likely to attempt than they would be if they were comfortable with the material. However, if ways of helping are available that do not require subject area or language skills (e.g., developing routines, organizing documents), or if parents are given examples of how to help, the effect of poor knowledge and skills disappears (Drummond & Stipek, 2004).

Time and energy. Available time and energy is particularly important to consider for parents who wish to get involved but face socioeconomic barriers. In early research on parent involvement, schedules that are unpredictable or inflexible have been found to predict lower involvement (Pena, 2000; Weiss et al., 2003), but recent studies suggest that involvement is better predicted by other factors (e.g., Anderson & Minke, 2007). That is, if parents view their involvement as important or are offered involvement opportunities that do not appear to conflict with work or other responsibilities, they find a way (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Drummond & Stipek, 2004).

Research with CLD Families. Similar to general research on family context, with Spanish-speaking Latinx families, family context appears to predict a very small portion of the

variance in parent involvement practices. When controlling for other variables, Walker et al (2011) did not find significant relationships between knowledge and skills and either school or home based involvement. With time and energy, the authors found a significant relationship, but it accounted for less than 7% of the variance in their model of home-based involvement, suggesting that the relationship between time and energy and home-based involvement is weak. There was no significant relationship between time and energy and school-based involvement.

Other factors. Although the research is somewhat dated, it is worth mentioning that research conducted by Sheldon (2002) found many of the factors in this model to be robust even in models that include other common explanations for family involvement. Sheldon analyzed the first level of the Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler model along with variables related to social networks, racial group, and peer pressure to get involved in a large sample of parents interviewed in a Michigan public school system. The sample was demographically representative of the state of Michigan, but the relatively small number of Latinx, Arabic, and other racial groups required the authors to dichotomize race into "Caucasian" and "not Caucasian" in order to reach sufficient predictive power in their multiple regression equations. Although this does not permit the examination of the complexities of culturally diverse families, it does at least allow for consideration of the potential impact of White privilege on parent involvement or school invitations. In this study, race was not a significant predictor of home involvement, and although it did significantly predict school involvement, this relationship accounted for only 4% of the variance in school involvement. Perceived peer pressure to get involved predicted a small portion of the variance in school-based involvement, but did not significantly predict home-based involvement. Social networks (i.e., how many other parents are in the social network) were significant predictors of both home-based and school-based involvement, with the strongest

relationship observed with school-based involvement. Despite the predictive power of these relationships, the lion's share of the variance was still predicted by role construction in both forms of involvement. Self-efficacy was not found to play a role in either home-based or school-based involvement.

Investigating Parent Involvement in Culturally Diverse Communities

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) argued that schools and teachers must be considerate of the unique beliefs and circumstances faced by families who have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, and plan for how to facilitate their involvement. Importantly, schools may dismiss parents as uninvolved or uninterested if they are involved in ways not considered or noticed by the school. Indeed, immigrant parents and those who do not speak English are less represented in traditional, formal parent involvement activities such as Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings (e.g., Walker et al., 2011). However, non-school based activities, such as asking children to count change at a supermarket or read signs in the neighborhood provide opportunities to practice academic skills in a home context and should be encouraged for those that have difficulty attending formal school functions. Most of all, parents should receive the message that all parents are welcome and encouraged to be involved with their child's school success.

In their study of parent involvement, Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008) used an open-ended, qualitative methodology to investigate factors that parents perceive as limiting their involvement with their children's education. Their sample was recruited from the rural Midwest and included 15 parents with little to no English language comprehension. Participants were identified and invited to the study by the ELL teacher, who served as a liaison and cultural informant to the researchers to help contextualize the data they gathered and select participants

she saw as typical members of the community. Findings of the study included disagreement between focus group members in terms of priorities. Namely, although all participants in the study agreed that English should be taught, some participants emphasized the importance of teaching math and other skill areas whereas others emphasized the importance of managing discipline and behavior. Many in the study reported that they were not comfortable advocating for their children or questioning authority. If there was a problem at school, parents were reluctant to approach a teacher or administrator, and advocacy became awkward when the child was expected to be the interpreter. One parent reported having removed their child from the school because he was experiencing discrimination, but she did not feel that she had the right to complain and therefore did not mention the incident to school staff. Overall, parents in this study defined their roles in their children's education as seeing that homework is completed, that their children are prepared to go to school, and that their children behave appropriately.

The study is a productive example of generating insight from parents in order to improve outreach efforts, but may be limited by some of the broad strokes that were used when drafting the study. For example, the authors acknowledge that the term "Hispanic" covers a group with more differences within its boundaries than between itself and other groups, and yet the authors make several claims that generalize across the entire "Hispanic" category. For example, the authors claim that Hispanic parents "highly respect teachers… [and] are reluctant to assume more responsibilities that they view as the school's" (Smith et al, 2008, p. 9). This claim, which may be true of their participants, implies that all parents who can be described as Hispanic will be reluctant to assume responsibilities related to their children's education. Another claim made in the study, drawn from findings of Chavkin and Gonzalez (1995), is that Hispanic parents view their role in their children's lives as providing nurturance and teaching morale, respect, and

behavior. Additionally, research by Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz (2001) is cited to claim that Hispanic families value social responsibilities, the well-being of the group, and interdependent relationships above individual fulfillment and choice. This assumes that competition is not valued or encouraged, which may not be true for all Hispanic families. The above observations are not problematic nor inaccurate when applied to the samples from which data were collected. However, by extrapolating these data to draw conclusions about Hispanic families in general, the authors unintentionally encourage stereotyping.

Smith and colleagues do pay heed to the uniqueness of each group in some of their conclusions and references. When referencing the work of Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999), the authors argue that the definition of parent involvement varies depending on culture. For example, Scribner et al. found that teachers described parent involvement as formal activities including meetings and school events, whereas parents defined it as informal home activities, such as checking homework and listening to children read. When describing how parent involvement was culturally defined, Smith et al. were specific in describing how the definitions were limited to teachers and Mexican American parents in a Texas school district. I support this manner of discussing cultural research used by Smith et al., and I posit that stereotyping can be avoided by acknowledging the limits of data and by providing specific rather than general information about a population under study.

In generating their own data, Smith et al. were judicious in their efforts to remain open-ended and to allow parents to explain their point of view. However, their first research question sets a limit on the data that can be produced in focus group discussions: “Why are Hispanic parents settling in one nonmetropolitan area generally not involved with their children’s schools?” (p. 10). This question assumes before any data are collected that parents are

uninvolved and does not account for the possibility that parents may view involvement differently than the researchers. The researcher's views have restricted the data to meet their expectations. I find this example illustrative of how challenging it may be to avoid letting one's assumptions influence research, particularly because in their own literature review, Smith et al. expressed how parents in the Texas study defined parent involvement as the completion of home-based activities.

Good et al. (2010) investigated the dynamics between U.S. teachers and immigrant parents using a sample purposefully recruited in elementary, middle, and high schools of the Rocky Mountain region. The authors voiced concerns that many teachers either did not see parents as useful allies or did not feel they have the support necessary to form effective teams with parents. To ameliorate this dilemma, the researchers interviewed eight Spanish speaking parents and four bilingual teachers in focus groups to analyze barriers to parent involvement in a local Hispanic ELL community. The parents interviewed were first generation immigrants from Mexico, ranging 28-43 years in age, all had received their education in Mexico and had moved to the United States within 5 years of the study. The teachers recruited in the study were between 30-45 years old, had more than three years of experience teaching ELL students, and were bilingual in English and Spanish. All communication with parents was conducted in Spanish, and focus groups followed a semi-structured format and lasted 90 minutes each.

Good et al. (2010) used Creswell's (1998) approach to categorical aggregation of data, seeking emergent themes and relevant meanings and using open coding with peer examination (Merriam, 1998). Rather than striving for objectivity, the authors strived for Merriam's idea of "trustworthiness," which relies on triangulation, checking interpretations with participants, and disclosing researcher biases and assumptions. Throughout the study, the interviewers felt an

obligation not only to listen but also to consider what changes might be needed in the community in order to achieve social justice. Five themes emerged from the study, including 1) communication gaps, 2) culture clashes, 3) lack of a systemic, articulated, district-wide ELL plan, 4) lack of teacher preparation in multiculturalism, and 5) lack of support for families transitioning to a new environment and culture.

Gaps in communication were mentioned by both parents and teachers and occurred in several different dynamics. Gaps between teachers and students were described by teachers who were frustrated that most in the district are not able to communicate with students in Spanish. The belief was shared among teachers that the inability to communicate with students was largely responsible for their lack of educational progress. Gaps were also reported as occurring between teachers and parents. Parents reported lacking the English language skills needed to effectively communicate, desperately wanting to learn English, and appreciating ESL classes offered to parents by district. However, the parents in the study reported feeling that the schools were not welcoming and that teachers were too defensive to build effective relationships. There were reportedly not enough bilingual teachers for parents to have meaningful communication, and parents felt that their schools would not listen to them. More than anything, the parents in the study reported wanting a voice but feeling silenced. Gaps between the schools and the district were also described, with teachers reporting that more conversation was needed across the district to help bridge gaps as students moved to higher grade levels. Teachers in the study often did not know what was being taught in other school buildings and felt that student achievement would improve if there were more cross-school communication.

Culture clashes were described by parents who felt that their input was not appreciated or that they could not trust the school to defend the best interests of their children. Parents in the

study described schools in Mexico as welcoming and more like family, with a high level of trust between parents and teachers when compared to schools in the U.S. Many of the parents in the study felt blamed for student achievement issues, worried about racism, or they felt school personnel were condescending, disrespectful, or prejudiced against parents from Mexico.

A *lack of a systemic, articulated district ELL plan* was reported by teachers in the study who cited an unavailability of sufficient native language support in early grades. The primary need expressed by teachers in the study was for arriving immigrant students to have an emotionally and psychologically safe environment, which is difficult to achieve when students do not have support to navigate new challenges and learn a new language. To support the teachers' concern, Good et al. cite the work of Krashen (1997), which has demonstrated that strong native language skills improve the acquisition of strong second language skills. Thus, ELL programming that relies on immersion (i.e., the expectation that students learn English with English support but no native support) or submersion (i.e., the expectation that students learn English with no support in either language) was considered less desirable in this community when compared to programming that offers bilingual support. The position of the teachers was further situated by the authors within a broader debate about ELL education, in which the politically favored English Only programs may create or accompany negative attitudes toward bilingual education and those who wish to retain their native language (Freeman & Freeman, 2001).

Teachers and parents alike expressed concerns *lack of teacher prep in multiculturalism, language acquisition, and ELL instructional strategies.* Both teachers and parents advocated for increased training for all teachers in the district regarding multiculturalism, language acquisition, and ELL instruction. Despite the English Only approach used by the district, teachers and parents

felt that an understanding of diverse cultures and the way children learn a new language is paramount for teaching children who have limited English proficiency. Without understanding the barriers that students may face due to language or cultural differences, teachers find themselves frustrated and unable to effectively teach their students. The participants in the study expressed a value of bilingual and cultural competence that merits increased training, and financial compensation for those who achieve it. However, there was a shared concern that district administration either does not acknowledge or does not understand the importance of children receiving instruction from teachers who are able to communicate in their native language and understand the cultural adjustments they face.

Parents also felt a *lack of support for families transitioning to a new environment and culture*. Consensus was shared regarding the difficulty associated with moving from one country to another. Parents reported feeling trapped in low-wage jobs that require long hours, thus precluding advancement or escape from poverty, and those in agricultural jobs had unpredictable work. In addition to economic stress, parents voiced concern that emotional trauma may go unnoticed and untreated because of poor communication. Teachers reported students who feel like cultural outsiders are slow to make friends and have little support through friends or adults. This in turn, according to teachers in the study, results in frustration and boredom that underlies behavior and discipline problems among ELL students.

The study conducted by Good et al. provided an in-depth look into the feelings of frustration and separation experienced by a community of Spanish-speaking, non-English proficient families and the teachers who work with them. The findings of Good et al.'s research represent the adjustment experiences that occur in one community and may not generalize to others. However, most of the recommendations made are based on systemic factors that are not

necessarily limited to one community. For example, the recommendation to implement a district-wide plan that addresses language acquisition, content knowledge, and cultural needs of Hispanic ELL students would likely be beneficial in any school district that serves a large number of Spanish-speaking youth. There are still two essentialist assumptions in this article; the first occurs when the authors cite Perea's (2004) assertion that "Hispanic culture" is highly relational and "American culture" is individualistic and competitive, which paints with a broad brush and ignores the possibility that students identifying as Hispanic might be competitive or seek their own individual identity. The second occurs when the authors recommend hiring more minority teachers, citing Salinas' (2000) assertion that they are more effective due to sharing "deep cultural experiences," which might not be true if a teacher from a racial minority has a significantly different cultural, economic, or linguistic background. I do not disagree with the recommendation; indeed, the diversification of teachers (and all school staff) offers tremendous promise for narrowing the achievement gap. However, belonging to the same cultural or ethnic group as diverse students, while increasing empathy, does not automatically increase effectiveness (Faez, 2012). Furthermore, in cultural groups as diverse, varied, and numerous as those emigrating from Latin America, it is important to recognize the cultural differences and misunderstandings that might occur between even a parent and teacher who share the same native country.

Summary and Gap in the Literature

Spanish speaking Latinx youth represent a large and growing proportion of the student body in many of the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2011). Their migration story often comes with hardship that can last for generations (Roger-Sirin et al., 2014). All immigrants experience some level of culture shock and may experience discrimination; however, Spanish

speaking Latinx families may receive a uniquely harsh level of public enmity and prejudice towards their language and cultures (Lopez & Taylor, 2010). Unlike many other cultural groups, Spanish speaking communities are often stereotyped into a singular cultural category of "Latinx," that overlooks regional, linguistic, economical, and other cultural differences between groups from Central and South America. Indeed, the common term "Hispanic" overlooks the fact that a significant number of people from even Spanish-dominant countries in Latin America do not speak Spanish (Central Intelligence Agency, 2007). Unfortunately, even research meant to provide multicultural insight often falls into the trap of oversimplifying cultural groups for the sake of creating generalizable recommendations (e.g., Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008).

Due to the problem of stereotypes toward Latinx cultures, I argue that research conforming to a categorical, essentialist view of culture is unlikely to provide a complete picture of the struggles faced by these groups. Moreover, research that does not include intellectual contributions from members of the community is unlikely to grasp their lived experiences. Given the poor representation of Spanish Speaking Latinx communities in the educational workforce (e.g., Curtis, Castillo, & Tan, 2014), parents can offer a valuable voice to contribute to a more complete investigation of the strengths and needs of such groups at a local level. Because this study is framed with the belief that local cultures differ from each other, it is not intended to provide a generalizable taxonomy of the strengths and needs of Spanish Speaking Latinx families in general. Rather, the study aims to serve as an example of how to use parent involvement to go beyond essentialist multiculturalism and facilitate culturally responsive practice at the local level.

Chapter Three

Method

In the previous chapter, I reviewed factors that have been shown to affect the education of Spanish-speaking Latinx students and how parent involvement has been used to improve outcomes. I also reviewed the problem of essentialism and drawing broad conclusions from a narrow sample or specific population. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to describe the qualitative methodology that will be used throughout the study to generate unique and culturally relevant data. The chapter begins with a reflexivity statement reflecting my positionality as a White male researcher studying race and culture. This is followed by a review of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in relation to how it will inform the research design. Research questions will follow, outlining the learning objectives for the project, along with the initial focus group questions and those that were modified by the PAR team upon review. The sample and procedures for data collection and analysis are detailed next, with particular attention to maximizing trustworthiness. Finally, I will conclude with reflexivity and ethical considerations germane to the study.

Reflexivity: Being a White Middle-Class Researcher Studying Race

In accordance with the goals of CRT, it is incumbent upon scholars who study race to increase awareness of their own racism. I argue that this is particularly important for White researchers, as it is easier to be unaware of racial inequality if one does not have to endure the majority of the challenges it creates (McIntosh, 1990). For example, in order to understand the obstacles faced by a diverse sample of participants, I must understand that I have profited from White privilege, and therefore my first ideas for solving the problems that my participants face

(i.e., regarding what I would do in their situation) may be unhelpful. Furthermore, I have had early experiences with racial diversity that might evoke a subconscious prejudice that is more difficult to challenge than overtly racist beliefs. I am convinced that refusing to talk about race or denying the existence of racism prevents the development of a sincere dialogue, and without discussing problems of race and privilege, such problems cannot be solved. Thus, I have included below a rather candid, albeit brief, synopsis of my own childhood experiences that generated problematic assumptions about people of color.

My hometown was not a paragon of racial equality. The classrooms in the school were tracked by social class and were racially divided as a result. My city was bisected by Division Street, with mostly people of color on the side I didn't live on. The far side contains the leftovers of a rusted steel economy from which the wealthy White citizens escaped to more prosperous regions, leaving behind a high concentration of poor people of color. Property values plunged, unemployment surged, and the result was my childhood introduction to racial diversity. The majority of the Black children I knew in school were in other classrooms. There was a fight about once a week in high school, but never in my classes. Many of the Black children spoke differently from me. Most notably, I felt at the time that they spoke much louder. When I went to the principal's office or detention, I saw mostly children of color being disciplined.

My parents perceived themselves as "colorblind," and were troubled by the prejudice they could see developing in my siblings and me. My mother decided to solve the problem by joining a church with an entirely Black congregation. We were welcomed, and we made very close friends, and perhaps my overtly racist assumptions started to fade. My mother took in one of the children when she realized he was neglected at home, exposed to drugs, and didn't have clothes that fit. My mother bought him new clothes and encouraged him to get more involved

with school. She also encouraged him to speak standard classroom English. After three weeks, he stopped swearing, he began to complete his homework, and his grades indeed improved. My prejudices had not been defeated, and perhaps never will be, but this strange experience very strongly suggested to me that his environment had created his struggles, rather than his race. I was fifteen at the time, and it would be five years before I encountered the research that backed up this anecdote and finally convinced me that racial inequality is not inherent but environmentally produced. It would take me much longer to realize that I was also beginning to associate diverse customs, such as speaking non-standard English or laughing loudly, with academic failure and delinquency.

The introspection I share in the above reflexivity statement does not reveal a one-way, upward journey toward racial "enlightenment." I do not believe that I have relinquished myself of prejudice, nor do I feel that I can bracket my personal reactions to my research and set them aside. Although I am certainly more aware of racial inequality and factors that influence it than I have been in the past, I will never understand the culture and race of participants in my research to the extent that they do. For this reason, I have elected to downplay my role in theorizing and interpreting data in the study by conducting a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is derived from the writings of Kurt Lewin (1951), who reacted in frustration to a scientific community that turns human subjects into objects to be studied, as if their qualities can be aptly surmised by an outside observer. Lewin wrote that this systematic approach cannot capture the complex and dynamic nature of human interaction, and therefore is inappropriate for understanding social processes. Furthermore, he argued that human subjects are disempowered by the language of science, which usually reflects the attitudes of the

rich and powerful people who tend to have access to careers in science and medicine. The tendency for science and medicine to use exclusive or complicated jargon, while giving semblances of credibility to the professions, can make them inaccessible to ordinary people who may have otherwise important insight (Foucault, 1988). PAR actively rejects the notions of epistémé and techné (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). Epistémé refers to the tendency of science to use lofty theories that are opaque to common people, while techné refers to complicated scientific methods (e.g., structural equation modeling) that ordinary people are unable to carry out. According the Chevalier and Buckles, it is difficult to create a narrative that truly captures a group's experience if members of that group are not even able to understand or access the theories that frame the study. PAR rejects epistémé and techné because they are seen as ways of keeping scientific understanding in the hands of the few and powerful. I support this position, and believe that theories about poverty should not be written by the wealthy, and theories about diversity should not be written by primarily upper-class White people.

In developing critical applications for PAR, Carr and Kemmis (1986) also rejected the positivist view of social research that aims at an ideal of objectivity. Among others (e.g., Malterud, 2001), Carr and Kemmis argue that positivist research, like all research, is value- and theory-laden. In one form or another, the researcher stands to benefit from completion of the research (e.g., through their reputation), therefore one cannot divorce their views in research from their own self-interests. Critical participatory action research does not strive for 'objectivity' of the researcher; rather, researchers engage in active and proactive critical self-reflection. In critical participatory action research, far from being 'disinterested', participants are profoundly interested in their practices.

PAR becomes necessary when a research topic under study clashes with conventional science in two ways. First, the group under study has a voice that is not fairly represented in the scientific community. Second, the group under study faces circumstances that are unjust, irrational, or unsustainable (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013). In my case, I am proposing to work with parents who do not speak, read, or write in English and thus are unlikely to have weighed in on the research I might read related to their circumstances. Moreover, I will be working with a community that faces barriers to getting involved with their children's education. While CRT provides an important foundation for understanding the impact that race and culture may have on a study conducted by a White male researcher, I argue that it is PAR that provides a natural defense against essentialism by sharing the research process with members of the community under study. CRT provides the means to understand how my own social privileges create obstacles to understanding the research problem at hand. Through democratic engagement with the participants, PAR provides the means to potentially overcome such obstacles.

PAR involves participation and action on the part of those who are recruited, with the goal of empowering participants to take charge of the discourse that pertains to their lived experiences (Herbert, 2005). Rather than seeking disinterested objectivity, PAR capitalizes on the values and subjective experiences of those who are most affected by a phenomenon. Since PAR studies are intended to create a tangible and positive change in the lives of those under study, it is important to ensure that any and all decisions made are carried out with the input and consent of those who will be affected by the outcomes of the study. "Outside" researchers (that is, those who do not belong to the group under study) are discouraged from attempting to remain neutral but must strive to avoid pursuing their personal interests through the research process. For the purposes of this study, that means creating a project that extends beyond the study itself,

that can continue even when my own publication goals have been met, or a project that includes components that are not related to my proposal or dissertation project.

PAR with Parent Involvement

PAR is an ideal fit for the current study on parent involvement because it lends itself to parent involvement. That is, the creation of a democratic research team comprised of participant researchers naturally places parent participants into a position of power in the research process. A qualitative, open-ended approach is used to conceptualize problems and solutions, and data collection is realized with the intention of enacting meaningful change. The parents are key stakeholders to consult when designing the study, because ultimately the group that is expected to benefit from the research project is the parents themselves. Thus, parent participants must have input regarding the problems that are addressed and the solutions that are generated.

One PAR study conducted by Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2012) serves as a useful exemplar for the study I plan to conduct. The authors used Hoover-Dempsey model (2005) as a reference point and a precedent to be open to the potential diversity of involvement behaviors, but did not limit themselves to the constructs included in the model. The authors also founded their study on an argument raised by Lareau (1989), stating that the social history of a family can produce inequality that influences the extent to which families get involved in school. These two reference points were used to investigate the process of advocating and striving for better education for and by Latinx working class parents. The authors sought to transcend typical involvement strategies, as they shared concerns that PTA organizations and similar standard strategies not only fail to represent diverse families, but also tend to reinforce cultural norms that lead to the exclusion or indifference towards working-class parents and families of color (Auerbach, 2007; Epstein, 2009; Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005; Nachshen, 2005; Sanders, 2009).

There were three projects that were investigated by Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2012). The first project, *La Familia Initiative*, was an effort started by a small group of Latinx immigrant mothers at a large middle school in California who sought to increase representation in parent involvement activities. The second project, the *Charter School Parent Initiative*, was launched by Latinx parents who participated in the creation of a community-based charter school through a series of inclusive community meetings in Southern California. The third project, *Project Avanzado*, was a community based adult education program serving Latinx migrant agricultural workers in Southern California, implemented with the support of a local non-profit. Each of the projects was based in low-income, inner-city contexts, with two located in a school and the third based in a non-profit agency. Although hundreds of parents were involved with each of the projects, data included regular interviews conducted with 10 parents in each study, as well as observations conducted during community meetings.

In the projects studied by Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis, the results suggested that advocacy and activism were largely fueled by collective dedication, immigrant solidarity, and a sense of urgency for resisting unfair schooling practices. Members of the group often worked several jobs, but continued to show consistent attendance to group events because they so highly valued their children's educational success. In this particular community, there was a cultural norm called "tequío," which referred to an expectation of unpaid, communal efforts towards the prosperity of the group. Furthermore, the projects were driven not towards the completion of a research project, but towards changes deemed meaningful to the members of the community. This study is a useful model due to the fact that parent efforts and perspective take precedent and the fact that previous research was used as a foundation for appreciating the diversity of involvement practices, but did not serve as a multiple-choice list of parent involvement practices.

Thus, the researchers were not limited by previous research when considering the conclusions they might draw from the study.

Focus of the Study and Focus Group Questions

My belief that I am unable to fully understand another's culture without having experienced it firsthand creates the rationale for combining CRT with PAR. CRT foregrounds the importance of race and culture in understanding educational outcomes, while PAR creates a community context where I do not have to fully understand another culture, because its very own members will inform the research process. The research process will be largely democratic once a team is created; however, there are tentative questions that I have created for the focus group. My questions reflect some assumptions; for example, that the parents in the study will perceive race and culture as relevant. However, although I suspect my assumptions will be supported, I have attempted to frame my questions such that they can be answered negatively (e.g., "they don't perceive race and culture as influences"). Furthermore, each question will be subject to review by the participant researchers in the study.

Original Focus Group Questions

1. **How do Spanish monolingual parents perceive their role in their children's education?**
   ¿Cómo perciben padres monolingües en español su rol en la educación de sus hijos?
2. **How do Spanish monolingual parents perceive the role of the school in educating their children? Which responsibilities belong to the school, to the home, or are shared by both?**
   ¿Cómo perciben padres monolingües en español el rol de la escuela en educar sus hijos? ¿Cuales responsabilidades pertenecen a la escuela, la casa, o son repartidas entre las dos?

3. **How do Spanish monolingual parents support their children's academic and social development?**

   ¿Cómo apoyan padres monolingües en español el desarrollo académico y social de sus hijos?

4. **How do Spanish monolingual parents perceive race and culture as influences on their children's education and their involvement with their children's education?**

   ¿Cómo perciben padres monolingües en español la raza y cultura como influencias sobre la educación de sus hijos y su involucración con la educación de sus hijos?

5. **How do Spanish monolingual parents feel that they can address discrimination, cultural misunderstandings, logistical barriers, or other factors they deem relevant to their involvement with their children's education? What can the school do to help?**

   ¿Cuales son las estrategias de padres monolingües en español para enfrentar discriminación, mal entendimiento cultural, obstáculos logísticos, u otros factores que parezcan relevantes a su involucración con la educación de sus hijos? ¿Qué puede hacer la escuela para ayudar?

6. **Among practices at [Local High School], what has been the most helpful for getting parents involved in their children's education?**

   Entre las prácticas de [Este High School], ¿cuál ha sido lo más eficaz para incluir los padres en la educación de sus hijos?

7. **What could be done at [Local High School] to facilitate improvements in parent involvement? What barriers may need to be addressed?** *¿Qué se puede hacer en [Este High School] para mejorar la involucración de los padres? ¿Qué obstáculos puedan haber que habría que enfrentar?*

Sample

A total of six parent participants and two teacher participants were recruited from a local high school with a Spanish speaking population. Parents were recruited at the school's fall open house and were eligible if they had at least one child in school, were fluent in Spanish, and were able to attend meetings at the school. Three parents and two bilingual faculty members joined the Participatory Action Research (PAR) team, all of whom assisted with the preparation and planning of the focus groups. Once a data collection plan was agreed upon by the PAR team, three additional parents joined to participate in focus group meetings where they were interviewed by the PAR team. Members of the PAR team were given $25 gift cards, and members of the focus group were given $10 gift cards as compensation for the time required to participate in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The PAR team met on a weekly basis for planning and consultation purposes both before and after focus group meetings. During the initial meeting, I provided a brief presentation on the literature relating to Spanish-speaking family involvement and the purpose of the study. A non-hierarchical, public sphere was created (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013) with the purpose of allowing all members to share the responsibility of proposing ideas, collecting data, and interpreting results. All parents who completed informed consent were welcome to participate in focus groups, intially planned as two meetings but adapted to three due to difficulties with members finding a common meeting time. The focus groups were facilitated by the PAR team (myself included) and used the modified questions developed by the PAR team, presented below:

Modified Focus Group Questions. During the data collection process, the following questions were changed based on input from participants:

Question 2: How do Spanish monolingual parents/guardians perceive the role of the school in educating their children? Which responsibilities belong to the school, parents/guardians, or are shared by the school and by parents/guardians? *¿Cómo perciben padres/tutores monolingües en español el rol de la escuela al educar a sus hijos? ¿Cuáles responsabilidades pertenecen a la escuela, padres/tutores, o son repartidas entre la escuela y los padres/tutores?*

"Families" was changed to "parents/guardians" for improved clarity, and "shared by both" was changed to "shared by the school and by parents/guardians" for improved clarity.

Question 7: What could be done at [Local High School] to facilitate improvements in parent involvement? *¿Qué se puede hacer en la escuela para mejorar la involucración?*

The second question about barriers was removed and replaced with Question 8 to solicit more constructive ideas.

Question 8: What can this team do? *¿Qué puede hacer este equipo?*

Question 8 was added to solicit clear and focused instructions for the PAR team.

Question 9: What would you like teachers and school personnel to know? *¿Qué quieren que sepan los profesores y personal de la escuela?*

Question 9 was added to generate information for professional development with the aim of helping teachers better understand parent experiences.

After focus groups were held to answer the above questions, The PAR team continued meeting weekly to discuss and analyze data from focus groups and plan any actions or changes that were needed. The PAR team also met at the end of the study in order to summarize the most

important themes and ideas that were generated and to evaluate the effectiveness of the meetings. To reduce the barrier of techné, the interpretation of salient themes was conversational and democratic. Meetings were held once a week at 5:30 PM in a conference room on the school campus. Data were collected at meetings with participant-researchers, and included audio from planning meetings and focus groups. Data were also generated from permanent products created by the PAR team, such as fliers, an acronym dictionary, and notes kept during meetings. In order to minimize the burden placed on participant researchers, the principal investigator and a bilingual teacher transcribed the focus group data, which were then discussed by myself and two PAR team members (one parent and one teacher) who volunteered to review written excerpts for accuracy and trustworthiness. Pseudonyms were used to substitute any identifying information in the transcripts.

Ethical Considerations

Participants in the current study were faced with several potential benefits and certain risks associated with participation. In this section, I discuss benefits and risks as well as the measures taken to maintain the ethical integrity of the study.

Potential Benefits. By participating in this study, participants who may not typically be consulted were given the opportunity to speak during the focus group process (Wolgemuth et al., 2015). Because Spanish monolingual families face numerous barriers to sharing their input with educators, they are often overlooked by conventional institutions of parent involvement such as Parent Teacher Associations (Anderson & Minke, 2007). During meetings and focus groups, I encouraged participants to identify and pursue the aspects of involvement that are most meaningful to them, and even adjust the research design and questions if the participants deemed necessary. A unique feature of PAR is that participants are only heard, but are also supported in

their attempts to take action to make meaningful improvements in their lives, such as contacting administrators or attending school events. Findings and successful actions taken by the participants will furthermore be disseminated on a local level (via presentations to faculty, staff, and interested parents) and a national level (via presentations at psychology conventions), thus providing an opportunity for participant voices to be heard in a forum that includes and extends beyond their community. Participants were also granted the knowledge that the benefits experienced by their community may be experienced by others, as those who attend presentations of the research may strive to improve their own culturally responsive practices.

Potential Risks. Due to the sensitivity of the issues included in the research topic, the focus group process had the potential to evoke psychological stress or discomfort among interviewees. Participants were asked to talk about discrimination, obstacles they faced, and other personal experiences. As a PAR study, the action step of research required participants to take on some responsibilities. The team had to participate in relatively academic discussions and reach consensus on issues that held the potential to evoke disagreement among members. Furthermore, once the results are published and disseminated at the school, participants may face resistance from educators who are already overwhelmed with teaching responsibilities, which may result in frustration or disappointment when steps are taken to improve family-school communication and involvement. Finally, when participants held group meetings, confidentiality could not be guaranteed because members of the focus group could discuss content outside of meetings.

Mitigation of Risk. The following steps were taken to minimize potential harm to the participants. First, participants were made aware at the beginning and throughout the study that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Second, participants were able to take relatively large or small roles in the action process depending on their preferences, with the principal investigator compensating when none in the group was comfortable with action steps deemed essential (e.g., initial contact with the PTSA representative). Third, in order to ensure confidentiality, only research group members involved in transcribing the interviews were able to access the original interview data, and pseudonyms were used to substitute identifying information in the transcripts. To mitigate stress related to discussing sensitive or stigmatizing topics, participants were notified that audio recording could be stopped at any time per the request of participants to allow them to freely discuss matters. In addition to these measures, informed consent was obtained from all the participants at the outset of the study, and the principal investigator was available to debrief with any participants who incurred stress or discomfort.

***Trustworthiness*.** Although psychometric, quantitative notions of validity are not applicable to this study, it is important that the researcher is considered credible and that the data are deemed valid to the participant researchers. The notion of "trustworthiness" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) refers to the extent to which the research captures the experiences and perspectives of the participants in a way that is truthful and fair to the participants. Several measures were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and interpretations drawn from the study. First, the PAR team created a public sphere in which all members were able to share their views, and would only decide on measures or research strategies that garnered consensus from the team. Second, although I played a facilitative role, I relied on summaries and clarification questions to garner consensus or determine action steps. Third, the data were interpreted in the original language of Spanish, so the parents in the study could actively and directly participate in the process of determining the most important themes in the study. In writing the manuscript, I

did not attempt to remove my own subjective influence on the written product that results from the study. However, I kept a reflexivity journal in order to monitor my reactions to the research, such that my biases can be accounted for and woven into the research to avoid the misleading guise of "objectivity." Finally, upon the writing of this manuscript, all of the interpretations included in Chapters 4 and 5 were reviewed with two or more of the PAR team members to ensure agreement with the conclusions drawn.

Translation. In keeping with the importance of trustworthiness and maintaining social validity over objectivity, excerpts were translated with the help of Mr. Santana and Marina to ensure agreement with the resulting English statements. This was preferred over more technical approaches (e.g., reverse translation) for two reasons. First, technical analyses are time consuming and often inaccessible to individuals without career research experiences (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). Second, technical accuracy of a sentence can often overlook the different way grammar or idioms are used, and Spanish terms can carry cultural nuances that stray from dictionary definitions. Since Mr. Santana and Marina are proficient in English, they reviewed the English adaptations of excerpts and interpretations and discussed how to change them when the intention behind a phrase had not been fully captured.

Criteria for Success. Because the process of PAR is geared toward achieving positive change, it is not enough to simply document the proceedings of focus group meetings. In order to be successful, the team aimed to develop a public sphere with a sense of trust between members. The team also aimed to effectively identify a shared felt concern. Furthermore, the team was charged with developing at least one or two (but ideally more) strategies for overcoming stated problems, and implementing at least one solution. Criteria for success were further developed at the first PAR meeting, which is detailed in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Results

The data reported in this chapter were gathered for the purpose of answering two sets of questions generated with differing objectives that merge and part at various times throughout the study. My personal objectives (becoming more culturally responsive and resisting essentialism) are those highlighted in the title of this manuscript and the research questions listed in Chapter 1. I begin and end this chapter with these objectives in mind. The objectives of the PAR team are those reflected in the questions listed in Chapter 3 and represent the shared felt concerns reported by the parents who participated in the study. It is with these latter objectives in mind that the meeting and focus group data are analyzed in the body of this chapter. In order to maintain awareness of my own influence on the research process, the chapter is organized such that my personal views and concerns are made clear in the italicized reflections listed after every meeting. Reflections in non-italicized font are those generated by discussion with the team.

What is a Teacup?

To illustrate the problem of essentialism, I borrow an example shared towards the close of the project when we reflected on our work. Although the body of this chapter is written in chronological order, a question raised by Marina, one of the participants on our action research team, artfully exemplifies the struggle of resisting essentialism that I accompanied me as I entered the project and as the project wrapped up.

Marina: “Busqué una definición del esencialismo para entender un poco mejor el concepto. Y nos pone un ejemplo de un objeto. Que si el objeto pierde sus propiedades ya deja de ser ese objeto, ya no va a tener esa naturaleza de lo que era antes. Si esto (toma una taza) es sólido pero lo convierte en líquido, ya no va a ser la taza, porque perdió su esencia.

I looked up a definition of essentialism in order to understand the concept a little better. And we got an example of an object. That if the object loses its properties it stops being that object, now it won’t have the same nature of what it was before. If this (takes a teacup) is solid but we turn it into a liquid, now it won’t be a teacup, because it lost its essence.

The PAR team and I discussed this concept at length. If a teacup does not have tea in it, should we still call it a teacup? Can I put coffee in a teacup? Can a coffee mug be a tea cup if it's filled with tea? What if I eschew the manners I was raised with and drink straight from the carafe? If I place the three aforementioned containers on the table, many people would agree that the little dish is the teacup, thus it may follow that we all agree on what things are. If I were to place a sake cup (a small cup used in Japan for rice wine) on the table without saying what it is, many people may assume it should also be used for tea, and perhaps it should be. The question becomes, who decides what it should be called and how it should be used?

What is a Latina or a Latino? In a room full of people, perhaps we could approach a similar accuracy in identifying who is who by observing language use, skin color, fashion, or food choices. I once tried to inquire about a tip in Spanish only to receive the most dreaded answer: “I’m Greek.” Clearly my reading of context clues was not infallible, and if his reaction is any indication, my Greek waiter did not appreciate my assumption. Likewise, my dark-skinned

Indian colleague says a dozen times a day that she “isn’t Mexican” and doesn’t speak Spanish. What if I hear someone speaking Spanish? Can I make assumptions then? What if I know for a fact that a student is bilingual and I begin speaking Spanish with them, only to find that they are afraid that speaking Spanish with authority figures will lead them to be treated unfairly? In other words, how do I reach out to someone who seems to live in a world different from mine without making assumptions? These were some of the questions we asked when exploring the concept of essentialism and stereotyping.

In this chapter, I will describe how the research process unfolded, including how my plans were modified by the suggestions and ideas from the PAR team. The chapter will describe the meetings and events that comprised the study in chronological order. Each meeting will be further broken down into the classic steps that comprise action research; namely, *reconnaissance, action,* and *reflection (Lewin, 1951).* Reconnaissance is included at each meeting, even towards the end of the project, since the priorities of a group are free to change over time, and my goal was to maintain my finger on the pulse of the PAR team throughout each phase of the project. Finally, I will include excerpts from my reflexivity journal throughout the chapter in italic text to represent how the study affected and changed me as a researcher, and how my preconceptions as a researcher affected my approach to the study.

Before the First Meeting: Organizing the Group

The fliers are taken one by one but the phone isn’t ringing. The staff told me that there would be wide appeal for a project like this, even saying that such partnerships have been requested in the past. I know that there is a meeting in October during the school's conference night where many people go to ask questions about the school, voice opinions, and figure out how to be more supportive of their children. I attend this event and introduce the study,

awkwardly confessing that Spanish is not my first language but that I want to better understand the cultures in the community and see if I can help parents connect to the school. A shared camaraderie of the struggles of learning a second language is echoed by approving murmurs that fill the room. Almost all of the two-dozen people in the cramped classroom express approval of the project, and ten people sign up. My confidence is somewhat shaken that all of my volunteers came from a more or less captive audience, but I decide to begin anyway. I am relieved that those in attendance are interested and decide that whatever barrier prevented parents from responding to phone calls will be addressed throughout the course of the study.

At conference night, a presentation was made, including an overview and rationale for the study. Ten parents gave their names and contact information and took informed consent papers to read at home and discuss with their families. A structured phone call was made to each participant to determine whether they wanted to participate in the study, the best time to meet, whether they wanted to be on the PAR team or in the focus group, and any questions or suggestions they had. Of the ten parents, seven returned completed informed consent forms and six fully enrolled in the study. The seventh potential participant was unable to participate because the time selected by the majority of the participants was contraindicated by her work schedule; however, she was given the opportunity to meet with or call the PI and/or ESOL staff to express her opinions or ask questions about parent involvement. On October 23rd, a meeting was held with two participants (Marina and Guillermo) to get a preliminary sense of their interest in the study. This time was also used to outline my agenda for the first session and modify it based what the participants found to be the most interesting questions.

I am surprised and uncomfortable about how quickly the participants read through the informed consent. I encourage them to take more time, and some of them do. Most of the

participants are reluctant to accept gift cards for participation, although they do take them. I feel that I am taking valuable time from them, but I am told that the consultation I am offering is already compensation. Rather than feel comforted by this assertion, I feel the pressure increasing as I must now ensure something meaningful and worthwhile emerges from a project whose very premise is that I don't know what I'm doing.

The PAR Team

The following is a brief overview of the members of the PAR Team, with an emphasis on the roles they played for the team and some of the experiences they brought to the table. Due to the fact that this research may be read or reviewed by individuals who attend the school from which the data were collected, only very basic background information is provided here.

Mr. Santana. Mr. Santana is a bilingual teacher who has close relationships with many of his students and their families. During our initial discussions, interested participants shared that he has a reputation in the school for his positive attitude and supportive approach to teaching. Teachers and parents alike describe him as a trustworthy individual who knows his students. Mr. Santana expressed interest in the research process and joined the PAR team in order to help me understand some of the local jargon that may be used, since my Spanish is somewhat academic and occasionally quick speaking goes over my head. Mr. Santana also joined to help explain some of the school procedures to the participants, and his classroom experience served as a valuable source of information. Marina in particular praised Mr. Santana for looking out for his students and asking how they're doing in their other classes. He encourages students to stay on track with their all of their goals (even after they are no longer in his class) and often sets aside extra time to make sure the students are getting the help they need. Mr. Santana helped to review audio recordings to discuss important themes from meetings.

Mrs. Flores. Mrs. Flores is a member of the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) team and attended one PAR team meeting to serve as another source of information about school expectations. Mrs. Flores was also praised by participants for developing strong relationships with students and families, and she is often the person who calls parents to let them know when one of their children is struggling academically. The members of the PAR team expressed appreciation for her efforts, and indeed described Mrs. Flores and her teammates as among the strongest facilitators of home-school communication. Per the other participants' request, Mrs. Flores attended a meeting to answer specific questions and relay parent concerns to other members of the ESOL team.

Marina. Marina was the first parent to sign up for the project at Conference Night and served as an essential moving force within the PAR team. Marina's consistent effort, bright ideas, and positive attitude were a salient example of the untapped potential energy in the Spanish-speaking parent community, and were constant reminders to me of the value of this study. Marina only missed one session, and she generated many of the ideas that ended up resulting in concrete actions (e.g., collaboration with the PTSA). Marina is the mother of a male high school student and moved this year from Puerto Rico, where she herself attended graduate school. Marina used her experience as a Spanish instructor in Puerto Rico to identify errors and inconsistencies in translation. Despite concerns about communication, Marina was constructive when generating ideas. Marina was also clear to point out that schooling conditions in the current setting were more rigorous, productive, and professional than what she saw in her hometown. Her post-secondary experiences coupled with her experiences as a Spanish-speaking mother gave her a unique perspective that often seemed to bridge a culture gap between myself and other participants. She was particularly helpful when it came to discussing terms like "self-efficacy",

as she was able to reframe academic concepts in ways that were highly relatable to other parent participants. Marina has emerging proficiency in English and has a job where she uses English every day, but expressed preference for school communications in Spanish.

Guillermo. Guillermo was also one of the first participants to sign up for the project and had excellent attendance to PAR sessions. Guillermo is the father of a female high school student and moved to Florida from Cuba one year ago. Guillermo was task-oriented and answered questions openly and frankly, and he was supportive of ideas that other team members suggested, though he offered different perspectives on several occasions. He was often more reserved than other team members and sometimes chose to listen without necessarily contributing his own opinions. Guillermo did not complain much about the school and was empathetic to the demands teachers face when managing a large number of students. However, when asked for suggestions he was able to point out things that could be improved. Guillermo has not yet developed proficiency in English, and expressed preference for school communications in Spanish.

Rodrigo. Rodrigo received a flyer at conference night, but he did not join the PAR team until a few weeks had already passed. Although he did not attend as frequently as Marina or Guillermo, he contributed consistently to the generation of ideas and was a supportive member of the team. Rodrigo moved back and forth between Colombia and the United States as a child and raised his children in the U.S. Unlike Marina, Rodrigo described school in his home country as more demanding than what he faced in the U.S., and he cited the intensity of schoolwork as one of the reasons he returned to the U.S. after 6th grade. Rodrigo is fluent in Spanish and English, and he is comfortable receiving school communication in either language. Although he did not experience a language barrier, he joined the study to try to help foster a community that

would facilitate more involvement from and inclusion of Latinx families. For the purposes of PAR team meetings and focus group meetings, he spoke in Spanish.

Focus Group Members

Josue. Josue is Marina's husband and moved to Florida later in the year, and thus did not join the group until a few sessions had come and gone. Josue was not as quick to speak up as some of the other members, but he did occasionally share perspectives to clarify issues and he was supportive of the ideas generated by the team. Josue was most engaged when describing the contrast between life as a father in Puerto Rico and as a father in the U.S. Josue has emerging proficiency in English but preferred communication in Spanish.

Estrella. Estrella moved from Puerto Rico and has a son enrolled in the high school. Estrella attended the focus group session on 11/13/2017 and was the only member of the team who frequently expressed disagreement with other members. However, she did not do so in a way that undermined productivity and she was never confrontational. In fact, the back and forth between Marina and Estrella helped to extend dialogue and led to a deeper exploration of some of the questions than previous PAR team meetings. Whereas other members did not mention many concerns with racism, Estrella reported it as a substantial concern, and seemed slightly less trusting of the school system than other members. Estrella reported that she can speak some English, but she expressed preference for communication in Spanish.

Gabriela. Gabriela joined the focus group on 11/27/2017. Gabriela was a driving force behind increasing access to accurate enrollment instructions for Spanish-speaking parents new to the district. Gabriela visited the U.S. three times in July of 2017 before enrolling her son and found the process confusing and stressful. Gabriela does not speak English and thus preferred communication in Spanish.

Before the First Meeting: Creating a Public Sphere - 10/18/2017

Attendance: Guillermo and Mr. Santana

Phone consultation: Guillermo, Rodrigo, and Marina

An essential component of collaborating with a diverse group of individuals is to create a public sphere where everyone is empowered to contribute (Kemmis et al., 2013). This process began during recruitment and the individual consultations I held with parents, and it continued throughout the project. On the surface level, I used a more informal consultation style than I typically do to make team members feel welcome. Tea, water, and snacks were offered on the first few meeting days, and tea became a popular component for a few of the team members. On a deeper level, I began every meeting with open-ended questions to help pinpoint a *shared felt concern* (Kemmis et al., 2013). I gave very general information about the purpose of the study and informed the parent participants that the content of our discussions would largely be determined by what they felt was important. Beyond empowering each member to contribute, I also sought to empower individuals to reserve comment, that is, to choose whether or not they wanted to weigh in on a particular issue. Indeed, Guillermo appeared most comfortable when he was able to plead the fifth, as Marina at times provided a thorough or specialized account that may not have resonated with Guillermo's life experiences. Furthermore, we developed a public sphere that was permeable; members could come and go and had multiple opportunities to contribute. Instead of having two focus group meetings where two sets of questions were answered, focus group members came and went, all the while questions that had been asked before were revisited such that new members could offer unique perspectives. Thus, the focus group was more fluid and permeable in order to maximize each member's ability to contribute despite scheduling difficulties. Finally, the public sphere was not isolated. Members of the

faculty were occasionally brought in to answer questions (i.e., Mr. Santana and Ms. Flores), and I delivered questions to administrators so that I could provide satisfactory answers.

Reflection. *My goal was to make the meetings seem non-hierarchical, so all attendees would feel like equals and would not hesitate to state their mind. I certainly did not wish for anyone to feel pressured to say what I wanted to hear. That said, I was caught off guard by the friendliness of the atmosphere and the amount of laughing and joking. We did manage to create an environment where disagreements occurred and were welcomed, but the process felt strange to me because in research I am used to having concrete and professional boundaries. In my work as a psychologist, I have found a self-directed joke can lower defensiveness or discomfort of parents who find themselves at a table with people who know more about the school's specialized and often bureaucratic system than they do. I did not want to appear like an infallible "expert", and loosening my grip on my dignity was the best way I knew how to avoid that.*

Session 1: First PAR Meeting - 10/30/2017

Attendance: Marina and Guillermo

Reconnaissance. During this session, I asked the members to determine their priorities for the study. Guillermo started the meeting by expressing a straight-forward objective:

Guillermo: Que todo que se desarrolla se lleva a cabo

That we follow through on everything that we develop.

According to Guillermo, the project would only be meaningful if it resulted in a tangible, measurable outcome. At the project’s close, this ended up being one of the most important criteria for deciding if our goals had been met. Accessibility of information was another priority stated during this meeting. Marina shared that she did not know that the parent link phone calls that give weekly announcements were available in Spanish, and that she had been struggling to

understand the weekly announcements in English. Another frustration that Marina shared was that she had to learn much of the information needed to enroll a child in school via word of mouth, because a simple list of requirements was difficult to find at the school. Guillermo agreed that well-translated information was not always easy to find. I wrote down the goals expressed by Marina and Guillermo and reviewed them at the conclusion of the study, resulting in the priorities found in Table 3, which contrasts these goals with the ones I'd assumed before recruitment began.

Table 1: Original research objectives contrasted with those developed by the PAR team.

My original priorities (developed from original focus group script)	**Parent priorities** (developed at the planning meeting 10/30)
Understanding parents' role How do parents perceive their role in their children's education, how do they support their children's academic development? **Understanding the role of the school** Which responsibilities belong to the school? What school supports have been most helpful for parents? What can be done at the school to improve parent involvement? **Resisting discrimination** How do parents perceive race and culture as influences on the education process?	**Outcome and follow-through** Have a definite, observable outcome (Que todo lo que se desarrolle se lleva a cabo) **Accessibility of information** Improve communication in Spanish, including better translations and more available translations **Making new resources** To create reference guides to help parents understand common educational terms, procedures, and ideas **Navigating school resources**

Table 1 (continued)

How can discrimination, cultural misunderstandings, or other factors be addressed?	Facilitate enrollment of non-English speaking students, help parents navigate the school system **Understanding parents** Learn about parents' feelings, worries, what they are comfortable and uncomfortable with, and what needs to be changed. For school personnel to understand the effort parents exert for their children's education.

The objectives identified by Guillermo and Marina (and later reinforced by other members) were compatible with most of the objectives I had established at the proposal. Increasing accessibility of information, making new resources, and navigating existing school resources are answers to questions identified on the left side of Table 3. The goal of understanding parents was compatible with the goal of identifying the parents' role in education. However, the parents did not express addressing discrimination as a priority.

Action. The participants modified the focus group questions, rewording questions about obstacles to invite more constructive ideas and creating questions to ask specifically what the PAR team should do and what parents wanted teachers at the school to know. We found a Spanish version of the registration requirements that was available through the district website and printed out several copies for the guidance secretary to hand out, since she is typically the first person that parents speak to when registering a student.

Reflection*. At first I was frustrated by the vagueness and simplicity of the first response to my question about outcomes ("Que todo que se desarrolla se lleva a cabo"). However, with more thought and conversation with my participants I began to construe this point as a plea for follow-through that may not have been experienced in the past. Guillermo expressed with this remark the hope that something meaningful will come out of our project and that it won't be a series of false promises that fail to bear fruit. Upon listening to the audio data again, I am less concerned with the straightforwardness of the ideas suggested than I am with my quickness to accept objectives and start moving ahead. I wonder what other ideas may have been generated had we spent the whole first day only developing objectives instead of analyzing the few that were expressed in detail.*

When transcribing data, Mr. Santana shared that sometimes other members seemed intimidated by Marina's professional vocabulary and assertive demeanor. Thus, Guillermo's occasional silence may not represent the lack of opinion on a matter, but rather the sense that his opinion may not be able to compete with the articulate and nuanced arguments that Marina advanced. He further argued that although the extent of the resources being requested may not seem practical due to the large number of other languages that also require representation at the school (e.g., Vietnamese, Portuguese), the sheer number of parents and students who speak Spanish may justify the effort. In other words, he argued, case by case support may be feasible when there are seven or eight speakers of a foreign language, but when there are over a thousand, something more systematic is warranted.

Session 2: PAR Meeting - 11/6/2017

Attendance: Mr. Santana, Marina, Guillermo, and Rodrigo

Reconnaissance. The first priority discussed in this session was developing a plan for running the upcoming focus group. We agreed that all ideas would be welcome and disagreements would be polite, but contrary to my expectations, the participants requested that I take an active facilitator role. I was flattered that they expressed trust in me to keep their best interests in mind, and I thus freely shared the focus group questions I thought would be important. Yet this seemed at first like an obstacle, since my main objective in this study was to set aside my own views to better understand those of my participants. Eventually we decided that I would facilitate meetings, but solicit the content from the participants.

Action. After establishing norms, we discussed the questions that I had planned to use in the focus group and the participants generated their own questions. The focus group questions that I had initially written for the study were read through and matters from the first meeting were added. Although the two questions I had written about discrimination were reported as less salient to the present members, they requested that they be left in the protocol in case the topics were seen as more important to focus group members. New questions were generated based on other topics that the PAR team thought would be relevant to the attendees.

Reflection. *I was reassured when some of my ideas were rejected, as it suggested that our public sphere had enough trust for disagreement, but I was surprised when the rejected ideas were primarily about racism. I framed this study using Critical Race Theory, which foregrounds race as a factor in all injustice, and yet ironically this was a constraint I was imposing on the group as a cultural outsider. The questions I had written were approved, but I wondered if this was due in part to social momentum, or if I had somehow contaminated the data by showing them my questions. Regardless, the participants asked to see my questions, and thus in order to support their will, I did so.*

Session 3: First Focus Group Meeting - 11/13/2018

Attendance***:*** Estrella, Marina, Josue

Reconnaissance. This session followed the focus group outline, as indicated below.

1. How do Spanish monolingual parents perceive their role in their children's education?

Estrella: "En mi caso, mi hijo vino muy adelantado de la parte educativa. Estuvo en un colegio, en Puerto Rico, y la base quizás, de las clases principales, se la hecho mucho más fácil. Que uno a lo mejor no tenga la base que el tiene."

In my case, my son came in very advanced academically. He was in a high school in Puerto Rico, and the foundation perhaps, from the core classes, made it much easier. Others might not have the same foundations that he does.

Estrella described how her son was academically ahead when he was in Puerto Rico, so keeping up with his peers (even though he doesn't speak English yet) is not as hard as it might be for others. Furthermore, she shared how she is always providing academic support:

Estrella: "Yo soy una madre que está siempre pendiente de la parte academica. Para mí es sumamente importante. Número uno, él tiene unas metas al largo plazo en cuanto su deporte, y la base de deportes no es únicamente deportes, es estudio. Si no tiene buenas notas, de nada va a practicar deportes."

I am the kind of mother who is always pushing academics. For me it's incredibly important. First of all, he has long-term goals in sports, and the foundation of sports is not just sports, it's study. If he doesn't have good grades, he's not going to play sports.

In addition to pushing her son to study, Estrella stressed that a certain amount of "myth-busting" is necessary, since he will often say he has no homework, but his teachers say that he does. Marina laughed and agreed on this point:

Marina: **“**Pasa lo mismo- ‘no tengo nada.’ Así que también cuando llego a casa, él tiene un break, porque si no, es más intenso (risas)... Después del break, de ver un poco de televisión, ‘a la libreta’.”

Same here- ‘I got nothing.’ So likewise when I get home, he takes a break, because if not, it’s more intense (laughs)... After the break, watching a little TV, ‘to the books!’

This was a point that reached almost unanimous agreement during this and later focus groups: that parents are responsible for teaching respect and work habits, and need to double-check whether their children really have “no homework.”

2. How do Spanish monolingual parents/guardians perceive the role of the school in educating their children? Which responsibilities belong to the school, parents/guardians, or are shared by the school and by parents/guardians?

Estrella described schools as an increasingly unimportant factor in a child’s education, sharing that a student’s success in school all depends on their beginnings at home:

Estrella: “La parte principal está en la casa. Creo que de allí salen los valores principales, para llegar a la escuela- la parte de educación, si la no tiene bien en su casa, se va hacer complicado con la maestra.

The most important part is in the home. From there you get the core values, in order to get to school- the educational piece, if it isn’t good in your home, it’s going to make it complicated with the teacher.

Estrella further shared that with developing technology, schools might not even exist for much longer, at which point students will simply study from home:

“Va a haber un momento en que el maestro será el escritorio”

There will come a time when the teacher will be the desk.

I could not resist adding a comment, provoking laughter from the group:

Michael: "Entonces voy a tener que buscar otro trabajo!"

Then I'll need to look for a new job!

Marina and Josue argued that schools provide a unique element by exposing children to different people with different perspectives. This component of "frente a frente" *(face to face)* education was construed as irreplaceable to them:

Josue: Yo lo veo diferente... La parte humana, de cómo actuar como un ser humano, cómo se porta con los demás. Ese rol social que puede tener, y esa interacción con diferentes personas..." "El salón de clase provee ese tipo de ambiente."

I see it differently... The human element, of how to act like a human being, how to behave with others. That social role that it can have, and that interaction with different people... The classroom provides that kind of environment.

Marina elicited nods of agreement when she added that the school and home environment both play an indispensable role, combining to make a full educational experience:

Marina: "El ambiente que se crea en la escuela va a ser siempre diferente al ambiente que creamos. Y básicamente nosotros no tendremos control como padres, porque eso es lo que estamos escondiendo de ellos. En la escuela, pues no vamos a tener ese control, de lo que pueda surgir. Les podemos dar herramientas... para que cuando llegue a la escuela tenga las herramientas para poder manejar las cosas de la escuela..."

The environment that they create in school will always be different from the one we make. And basically we won't have control as parents, because that's what we are hiding from them. In school, well we won't have that control, over what can happen. We can give

them tools... so that when they arrive at the school they have the tools to manage the things that happen at school.

3. How do Spanish monolingual parents support their children's academic and social development?

Marina described how she prepared her son to be successful in school by teaching him to communicate openly and honestly about what he needs to do, and by instilling the habit of telling her every time he received an assignment or announcement.

Marina: "Desde muy pequeño, yo le fui inculcando, enseñando la importancia de comunicarse con mamá..." "de no mentir dentro del proceso de comunicar- y enseñarle el valor de la verdad."

From an early age, I was teaching him the importance of communicating with mom... not to lie when communicating– and to teach him the value of the truth.

Marina shared that a psychologist informed her that her son struggled to identify emotions, and so she had to explain and demonstrate them for him, which helped to prepare him for life in school. Josue added by explaining how they made communication routine:

Josue: "Nos sentamos, y nos hablamos, y discutimos '¿qué pasó el día de hoy, qué tiene, cómo te siente, tiene hambre?'" Tal cosa... y saber y poder ayudarle en cualquier cosa."

We sit down, we talk, we discuss 'what happened today, what's going on, how do you feel, are you hungry?' Like that, and to know and be able to help him with anything.

Estrella had already expressed that parents prepare their kids for school by teaching responsibility and values, but she also deflected a certain amount of the credit. She shared that her son, for being 14 years old, "Es muy maduro" (*is very mature*) and that raising him is not the same as it might be for other kids. When talking about parenting and teaching, she said it is

important to recognize the individuality of students and that teachers may have expectations that don’t consider everyone’s starting point:

> “Quizas no está acostumbrado al sistema de los Estados Unidos, y se hace más difícil.”
>
> *Perhaps one isn’t used to the U.S. system, and that makes it more difficult.*

Therefore, the child or their background may play a part in how they respond to teaching.

4. How do Spanish monolingual parents perceive race and culture as influences on their children’s education and their involvement with their children’s education?

Despite its low priority in the planning meetings, this question evoked a lot of passionate discussion. The first and most vocal response was from Estrella, who described the myriad factors that she and her son consider as possibly affecting the way teachers treat students, as well as their struggle to figure out exactly why some students are treated differently.

> Estrella: “[mi hijo] hablaba de eso. Tiene un compañero aquí en la escuela que él percibe que hay discrimen contra él. Por una situación que parece que pasó en la clase, y que ha pasado en otras ocasiones, quizás porque él me dice ‘mamá quizás era porque no habla mucho inglés, o porque es negrito, eh, es cubano...’ Él percibe que es un niño que la escuela no le ha brindado confianza en esa parte...”
>
> *[My son] was talking to me about that. He has a classmate here in the school that he feels there are people who discriminate against him. From a situation that seems to have happened in class, and has happened on other occasions, maybe because he tells me ‘mom maybe it was because he doesn’t speak a lot of English, or because he’s dark, or he’s Cuban…’ He perceives that he is a kid that the school does not show a lot of trust in that sense…*

Unsure of whether it was his skin color, his behavior, or his language proficiency, she continued:

> "Y al Latino que no sabe quizás cómo hablar el inglés fluído, porque tiene temor al hacerlo, se hace más difícil interactuar o llegar a un maestro, y se siente a lo mejor hacía un lado. Esa parte yo creo que es un poco complicada."
>
> *And to the Latino who perhaps doesn't know how to speak fluent English, because he's afraid to, it becomes more difficult to interact or come up to a teacher, and he feels at best off to the side. That part I think is a little complicated.*

This further complicated the matter, since there is a very large number of students who speak Spanish, but they do not all receive unfair treatment. Estrella expressed a sense that language was a part of it, but couldn't by itself account for mistreatment. Marina expressed empathy for students from other countries, citing the relative privilege that she and her family enjoys having come from Puerto Rico, which might seem unfair to other students:

> "El puertorriqueño tiene el mejor de dos mundos, porque pertenece a los Estados Unidos, pero se habla español, entonces está en el medio de Latinos que no pertenecen a los Estados Unidos pero hablan español como nosotros."
>
> *The Puerto Rican has the best of two worlds, because they're a U.S. citizen, but they speak Spanish, and then they're surrounded by Latinos who are not citizens but speak Spanish like us.*

Thus, students speaking Spanish may find that there are power differences because some have green cards and some do not. Marina expressed concern that teachers often do not know how to handle situations like these. She also shared a story about her son being told by his teacher that he's not from Puerto Rico, that his documents are "fake". She felt it might be due to

his green eyes, blonde hair, or some other way that he didn't fit her image of a what a person from Puerto Rico should be. He found it difficult to argue with an authority figure who was saying something clearly false about him, and it put him in an uncomfortable position. Estrella also jumped in on this point, stating that it is difficult to argue with teachers who may show less trust toward students who speak in Spanish. Her account described non-Spanish speaking Americans who get offended when they hear people speaking in Spanish.

> **Estrella:** "Un americano que no entienda español se sienta ofendido cuando un puertorriqueño está hablando... Y yo miro porque no entiendo lo que está diciendo y 'siempre está hablando mal de mí'."
>
> *An American that doesn't understand Spanish feels offended when a Puerto Rican is talking... And I look because I don't understand what they're saying and 'they're always talking bad about me.'*

Estrella added to this concern about a general distrust of Spanish speakers by describing an incident where her son had a dental operation and was not supposed to participate in physical education, but his teachers told him "Eso es mentira" *(you're lying)*. And if they are always treated like they are a liar or a delinquent, students may enter a self-fulfilling prophecy:

> **Estrella**: Mandarlo para la oficina es como un castigo y se pone rebelde, porque sientan que se están marginando.
>
> *To send them to the office is like a punishment and makes them rebellious, because they sense that they are being marginalized.*

5. **How do Spanish monolingual parents feel that they can address discrimination, cultural misunderstandings, logistical barriers, or other factors they deem relevant to their involvement with their children's education? What can the school do to help?**

Marina shared she helps her son by talking through situations to help make sense of them. When a teacher argued with him about his heritage, he'd become so offended and confused that he was unable to listen or learn in that classroom until she helped him understand:

Marina: "El se bloqueó por aprender en ese salón, hasta que nos hablamos"

His mind was blocked off from learning in that classroom, until we talked about it.

But when Marina talked it over, her son understood what was happening and was able to move on. Estrella added that at times parents have to go to the school to back up their students, especially if they are shown little trust from their teachers. When her son was accused of lying about the dentist, she went to the school to defend him:

Estrella: "Le mandó a la oficina y yo como madre me encargué a venir a la escuela para notificar el proceso"

They sent him to the office and as his mother I took it upon myself to go to the school and provide official notification.

But she also stressed that she and other parents need to be teaching their children to stand up for themselves:

Estrella: "Están en la adolescencia, los papás vamos a empezar... va a llegar el momento en que ellos tiene que aprender, por lo menos yo lo veo así."

They're in adolescence, ther parents are going to start… the moment will arrive in which they have to learn, at least I see it that way.

Regarding how the school can help address discrimination, Estrella shared her doubts as to whether the school can do much to overcome racism, but that "un proyecto piloto" *(a pilot study)* could be useful for students, parents, and teachers to overcome prejudice. She also shared that the school already provides "herramientas" or strategies to boost communication, and that

increasing the reach and the utilization of existing events (e.g., conference night) could improve involvement and communication, which would lead teachers and diverse families to understand each other better. This suggestion lead naturally into the next question in the protocol.

6. **Among practices at [Local High School], what has been the most helpful for getting parents involved in their children's education?**

Meetings sponsored by the ESOL department (e.g., conference night) and communications from members of the ESOL team were described as helpful. Marina shared that direct phone communication tends to be more helpful than announcements or fliers, "porque hoy en día todos tienen un cellular" *(since everyone has a cell phone nowadays).* More meaningful than the specific strategies, however, is the effort that she sees as coming from the school:

> **Marina:** "Ese intento… Vimos un intento de la parte de la escuela de ampliar la comunicación entre padres y los maestros."
>
> *The intention... we saw the intention from the school to increase communication between parents and teachers.*

7. **What could be done at [Local High School] to facilitate improvements in parent involvement?**

One of the reasons fliers are less helpful, according to Marina, is because phone calls give the opportunity to say she doesn't speak English, whereas fliers often show up in English and parents don't know who to ask for help deciphering them. Even the documents that arrive in Spanish can be less then helpful, as Marina describes:

> **Marina:** "No todos los documentos tiene una traducción correcta. Y uso esa palabra 'correcta' en español… Están traducidos, algunos, no todos, tampoco, pero no

necesariamente son entendibles para un hispanohablante. Porque por alguna extraña razón, la traducción, no suena ni a Google."

Not all of the documents have a correct translation. And I use that word "correct" in Spanish… They're translated, some, not all, but they're not necessarily comprehensible to a Spanish speaker. Because for some reason, the translation, not even Google understands.

She also recommended the school improve supports for Spanish speaking parents to enroll their students. Estrella shared that having more Spanish speaking staff in the front office and in Student Affairs would be helpful, because although there is always at least one person that speaks Spanish, they are often swarmed with questions and inaccessible to the long line of people that need assistance in Spanish.

8. What can this team do?

Ideas generated included creating Spanish documents and reviewing existing ones to help make them more comprehensible. Creating an acronym dictionary was also recommended by Marina, who lamented that even though she works for a school in a nearby county, even *she* doesn't understand half of the acronyms used in school communications. Estrella added that parents might be able to step in to assist with interpretation. She describes who might be able to help:

Estrella: "Dentro de los padres que haya en la escuela. Yo creo que los padres que no trabajan y que serían dispuestos a ser parte de la escuela aunque sea ayudando de una forma voluntaria"

Among the parents that are in the school. I think that the parents who don't work and would be willing to be part of the school even if they're helping as volunteers.

9. What would you like teachers and school personnel to know?

Marina and Estrella shared that the school needs to be aware that enrolling a student with a language barrier is challenging, and google-translated Spanish documents are often hard or impossible to read. Furthermore, schools in other countries or even other states have curricula that are designed differently and therefore graduation requirements can be hard to understand. Immigrant parents may require more information than local parents do. Marina also expressed her desire for teachers to understand the way she values education for her son:

> **Marina:** "No nota la importancia de lo que estoy haciendo para el bienestar de mi hijo. No vine aquí porque sí, yo vine aquí para buscar un mejor futuro para él."
>
> *They don't see the importance of what I'm doing for the well-being of my son. I didn't come here for no reason, I came here to seek a better future for him.*

Reflecting on the hardships they faced, Marina requested empathy from teachers:

> **Marina: "**Aprender a tener un poco más empatía con lo que vinimos acá. Porque no solamente vinimos por los beneficios de quedar en América. Vinimos también a trabajar, vinimos también a sudar, para ayudar a nuestros hijos."
>
> *To learn to have a little more empathy with those of us who came here. Because we didn't just come for the perks of being in the U.S. We also came to work, we also came to sweat, to support our children.*

Marina maintained that since teachers often join the field of education for the purpose of improving the lives of children, recognizing the shared goals between parents and teachers should form a natural alliance that will help everyone be more successful.

Action. Realizing that this group was comprised entirely of participants from Puerto Rico and concerned about the blindspots created by the privileges Marina discussed, we developed a

script for a phone call that would be sent out to all parents who subscribed to the Spanish version of the parentlink.

Reflections. *At one point during this conversation (roughly 17 minutes in) I thought a question had been fully answered and began reading the next one, but one of the participants requested we slow down to continue addressing the point. I was grateful that they felt comfortable interrupting me and regret that I had come so close to eluding their insight. The conversation of race and prejudice was fruitful, but I was conflicted about it. The PAR team had not expressed great interest in the topic but decided to leave it in. Had I railroaded the conversation and implanted a concern that was not genuine to the group? I could not be sure, but I was reassured by Estrella's comment that she and her son had already been discussing the matter. At this point I am starting to consider that my efforts to avoid "contaminating" the data and the direction of the research may be excessive or pedantic. Indeed, they asked me to take an active role in the discussion.*

Session 4. Second Focus Group Meeting. - 11/27/2017

Attendance***:*** Marina, Guillermo, Rodrigo, Gabriela

Reconnaissance. This focus group did not follow the format of the previous one because those in attendance were vocal about a specific issue and pushed back when I asked if they wanted to move on to the next topic twenty minutes into the conversation. Sensing the importance of the continuity of the discussion, I backed off from facilitating and let it develop organically. The session ended up focusing much more on action than on reconnaissance.

The discussion began with an inquiry regarding a notification Marina had received regarding her son that had no indication of who was sending the announcement, aside from the media company used to distribute it. This ushered in the topic of communication mishaps, which

focused primarily on difficulty with the enrollment process. Gabriela discussed her search for affordable vaccines, but in her limited network of known doctors the earliest appointment she could get was in February. This was stressful because she needed to enroll her child in August. Rodrigo and Gabriela both found out about a district "health fair" that was being held at a nearby high school where they got free vaccines and all of their questions were answered, but she wondered what other parents in her situation would do:

Gabriela: "No todo el mundo tiene la oportunidad de ir."

Not everyone has an opportunity to go [to the health fair].

Marina echoed this concern, because she visited the U.S. three times in July before she could enroll her son, and lamented the confusion she experienced. The following excerpt from the ensuing conversation provides an example of the group's frustration:

Marina: "Como todo mantenía en inglés, la información estaba bien diferente cada vez que venía…" "Yo podía utilizar documentos de Puerto Rico para matricularlo aquí, yo vengo con esta información, y cuando llego aquí, encuentro con todo diferente."

Since everything was always in English, the information was quite different each time I came... I could use documentation from Puerto Rico to enroll him here, I show up with this information, and when I get here, I find everything is different.

Rodrigo: "¿Y no fue el caso?"

And it wasn't the case?

Marina: "No, no podia usarlos. Entonces mi hijo perdió lo que fue el open house de la escuela… No tenía la información adecuada para lo que venía por la primera vez aquí."

No, I couldn't use them. So my son missed the open house for the school… I didn't have good enough documentation for when I came here for the first time.

Gabriela: "Yeah pero depende, sabe, por lo que te pide siempre es evidencia de su residencia, un bill, no siempre ve tu nombre, pero lo que digo la vacuna… que es difícil, que a veces no lo tiene en el momento."

Yes but it depends, you know, for what they ask you for is always proof of residence, a bill, they don't always see your name, but when I say the vaccine… well it's difficult, that sometimes you don't have it in that moment.

Guillermo remained quiet for a large part of the conversation, but offered his succinct answer about the vaccine information: "La enfermera la tiene" *(the nurse has it).* He explained how he simply asked around at the school until eventually he stumbled upon the answer he needed, and the nurse gave him a list of places he could go to get free vaccines. Gabriela maintained that for those who do not know how to navigate the school, finding the right person to talk to can be difficult, and Marina agreed that having a reference guide available at the front desk would greatly reduce the stress. As an educator at the school, I asked what the school could do to address the communication issue. Guillermo replied by expressing that it might go beyond the responsibilities of a school, but Marina persisted:

Guillermo: "Está fuera del control de la escuela"

"It's beyond the control of the school."

Marina: "Pero ella dice a lo mejor por el county por este zip code, le toca a este lugar para conseguir la información."

But she's saying ideally from the county from a given zip code, it falls to a certain place to get the information.

Gabriela also followed up, sharing that now she knows several locations near and far where she can get vaccines quickly, but she needed it at a time before she was familiar with the area. Recalling the suggestion Guillermo and Marina had made in the first PAR meeting, I asked if Gabriela and Marina were hinting at a reference guide we could make to provide information to new families. All present members agreed that the PAR team could fill the information vacuum by collecting information in a central document to make available for new parents.

Action. I consulted with an administrator about Marina's mystery announcement, and I was informed that the service is typically used to provide announcements for elementary schools, and that the administrator was unaware of our high school using the service. The media company offers a third party software that can be used by anyone (e.g., coach, teacher, administrator) without involving anyone else from the school. Therefore, there are announcements that the personnel in the front office are not made aware of. After consulting with various administrators over the following week, I discovered that it was not actually sent from the school, but we never found out what it was from.

We further developed the idea of a reference guide for parents, and team members also made recommendations for the acronym dictionary. I created an online document with the acronym dictionary and added e-mail addresses for all of the attendees so they could edit or read the resources at any time. I offered to collect any documents that members received in English that needed translation or seemed to lack Spanish equivalents. Although this idea was popular at the meeting, this strategy was not implemented because I did not receive any documents. Furthermore, only Marina contributed to the online document, so I brought copies of a printed

version to following meetings. I distributed a Spanish-language resource guide to various community agencies and supports that has names and phone numbers under categories such as emergency services, healthcare, and crisis support. In addition to the actions taken by the group, the school's administration expressed support for providing informational sessions to parents and requested that I partner with the ESOL staff to plan more regular conference nights for next year. The school nurse was identified as a valuable contact who can give directions to locations that provide free and timely vaccines. Health fairs are announced in the spring, and the locations change every year. The locations were announced for next year and added to our document which will be available for conference night program that is to begin next year.

Reflection. The critical nature of the public sphere became apparent to me in this meeting. First, there was a part of the conversation where I left the room to fetch community resource guides from my office, and review of the audio recording indicated that the conversation maintained productive momentum in my absence. Second, I found that when I had detected a certain amount of saturation (e.g., that the vaccination conversation had ceased to generate new information), I asked the group if there were other things that could be discussed. When I was met with silence, Guillermo stepped in and explained the purpose of my questions and reminded the focus group of the objectives of the study. Struggling to ensure a productive agenda, I had not effectively read the room to determine that some of the participants were confused and needed more direction. I also hadn't realized that the participants were venting a deep frustration and did not wish to jump to another topic. Guillermo covered for my blindspot, and after his redirection the conversation carried on smoothly. We eventually did move on to generate solutions and ideas, but we stuck to the theme of miscommunication rather than covering multiple topics the way we had in the first focus group. Guillermo did weigh in on

parent support practices when a side-conversation about supervising homework came up, and he offered the same advice as Estrella and Marina: “Hay que chequear” *(you have to check).*

I was frustrated that I was unable to grant a satisfactory answer regarding the third-party announcement software and feel I may have nudged the group back to the shared information resource we were making because it was a point of productivity for the team. I struggle as the mediator between the group and school personnel because there are so many different activities, systems, and events in a high school, each of which has different people in charge. Furthermore, my demanding job during the school day makes it impractical for me to have repeated, iterative consultations that go back and forth between two parties that don’t know each other. I think it would be more productive if I could have some of the members directly involved with speaking to school personnel to have their questions addressed.

Session 5. Third Focus Group Meeting - 12/4/2017

Attendance**:** Guillermo, Marina, Josue, Rodrigo

Reconnaissance. The first topic at this meeting focused on early schooling experiences of participants who came to the U.S. from different countries. Rodrigo shared that when he attended school in Colombia he was dazzled by advanced courses in chemistry and mathematics that required two to three hours of homework each day, and when he went back to the United States after 6th grade, the coursework was much easier. Marina, on the other hand, described a Puerto Rican public school with cynical teachers who did not seem to put much effort into their work, coupled with underfunded schools that often closed because of unsafe structural problems (e.g., sewers belching out unsanitary waters into a schoolyard). She attempted to enroll her son in a private school so that his schooling would be more consistent, but she decided to return him to the public school when she saw that the private school instructors were often teaching subjects

they were not trained in, and she saw inaccuracies in the information he was being taught. When Marina and her family came to the U.S., she found schooling conditions were much better, but her son had a lot of catching up to do due to his inconsistent schooling background. However, she said that the teachers in this high school are attentive to students, and that they keep up with him to make sure he is doing what he needs to do. Marina was reluctant to compare her son's experience to other local students from Puerto Rico because he is still just beginning to meet others, but she had the overall impression that students are more valued at this school than they were in her hometown. These two examples serve as a reminder to me not to make assumptions about Spanish-speaking students, because their schooling experiences can vary greatly.

During this meeting we had our first discussion about how to avoid essentialism, where I asked the participants how I can avoid "painting all Latinos with a single color," or making generalizations between every Spanish-speaking client I serve. Rodrigo was first to answer, bringing up a humorous misunderstanding where Marina used a Spanish word that everyone at the table thought meant something different. Rodrigo said:

> **Rodrigo:** "Por la parte en que hemos conocido hoy, diferentes palabras entre nosotros, estamos aprendiendo. Somos Latinos y aún estamos aprendiendo cosas de nosotros mismos. ¿Cómo se puede poner algo así en un libro? Yo sé que hay un básico, pero eso no es el árbol entero, de la raíz estoy hablando."
>
> *From what we've understood today, there are different words between us, we are learning. We are Latinos and we're still learning things about ourselves. How can you put something like that in a book? I know there's the basics, but that's not the whole tree, it's just the root I'm talking about.*

The next contribution to the discussion came from Guillermo, who did not seem to share the same nuanced view of culture. He said the answer is to “respect.”

Guillermo: “Respetar. Ellos [Marina y Josue] son puertorriqueños, yo respeto la forma de las palabras que ella dice, no lo miro como malo lo miro como su cultura."

Respect. They are Puerto Ricans, I respect the kind of words she says, I don't look at it as bad I look at it as her culture.

Guillermo then pulled me into his example, using the word “Gringo,” which I had unashamedly established for myself as a marker of my cultural blind spots. He offered an example of respect:

Guillermo: “El Gringo… lo respeto porque es su cultura. Yo como arroz con frijoles, usted un hamburger... o un chino comiendo sushi, lo respeto. Este país, algo lindo que tiene, que tiene culturas del mundo entero. Es multicultural. Hoy puedo conocer un Chino, mañana un Japonés, después un Ruso, del todo del mundo entero"

I respect you because it is your culture. I eat rice and beans, you eat a hamburger… a Chinese person eating sushi, I respect it. This country, something beautiful that it has, that it has cultures from the whole world. It's multicultural. Today I can meet a Chinese person, tomorrow Japanese, next a Russian, from the whole world.

I was troubled by the categorical approach that Guillermo was using, since it was going in the opposite direction of what I was trying to accomplish (that is, *resisting* essentialism). However, I did not comment on this because I did not want to conflate my research agenda and views with his, and I wanted all views to be welcome. This would not be the time for me to correct or "educate" someone on the topic. That is not my role in this group, and I thus let the conversation continue without my “corrections”.

Marina also offered a positive and respectful interpretation of culture, and although her description of culture was also categorical, it struck me as more nuanced than that offered by Guillermo. Her description of culture seemed rooted not just in a nation, but in the family, as she talks about how one is raised and educated:

Marina: "Como uno haya sido educado, como uno haya aprendido, que te va a enseñar también cómo tratar a los demás y cómo ver eso como una ventaja para uno, el mayor conocimiento. Yo crecí con una cultura que es bien diferente, aunque somos Latinos, es bien diferente a los cubanos es bien diferente a los mexicanos... Estoy aprendiendo más porque tengo pacientes de diferentes culturas, pero lo veo como algo beneficioso para mí. Es un reto."

How one has been raised, how one has learned, this teaches you as well how to treat others and how to see it as one's strength, better understanding. I grew up with a very different culture, although we're Latinos, it's quite different from Cubans, it's quite different from Mexicans. I'm learning more because I have patients from different cultures, but I see it as something beneficial to me. It's a challenge.

Marina went beyond describing her opinions of the value of multiculturalism and shared how her open-minded views have made her more effective at her job:

Marina: "Se ha podido dar un ambiente adecuado porque respeto a otra persona cuando la veo y no es por un título... A veces quizás un papá viene a un meeting conmigo, y piensa algo así por que lo sabe. Quiero saber que usted quiere para su hijo. Usted, quien está con él. Usted, quien está cuando el niño no está en la escuela. Usted lo conoce mejor que yo, yo lo veo treinta minutos a veces una vez dos veces a la semana, tres veces a la semana... Esa empatía no tiene que ver solamente con que usted sea gringo."

We've been able to provide a pretty good atmosphere because I'll respect another person when I see them and it's not because of their credentials. Sometimes maybe a father will come to a meeting with me, and I'll think like this because he knows. I want to know what you want for your child. You, the one who is with them. You, the one who is there when they aren't in school. You know them better than I, I have thirty minutes sometimes once, twice a week, three times a week. This empathy Isn't solely about whether or not you're a gringo.

Later, Marina added that she instills in her own family the importance of avoiding assumptions, the idea that one must always assume there is more to learn. Again, she hearkens the notion that culture is not just decided by the nation one grows up in, but is passed from parent to child:

Marina: "Digo esto a mi hijo: no te creas que tu copa está llena. Tu copa está vacía. ¿Cómo vas a querer mayor conocimiento si vas con tu copa llena?"

I say to my son: Don't think your cup is full. Your cup is empty. How are you going to seek knowledge if you go around with a full cup?

Action. I presented modifications to the acronym dictionary, and solicited other terms that participants wanted to have translated, as well as other questions or resources they would like to have represented in the document. I consulted with the PTSA to discuss Marina's mystery announcement from the second focus group meeting, but they reported that they did not use the service either. This highlighted the fact that different groups in the school (e.g., teachers, sports teams) communicate in different ways, and there is no centralized system of communication that we can influence to improve availability of Spanish language

announcements. Rather, we would need to prioritize which communications we want to influence and then collaborate with the individuals responsible for those communications.

Reflection. *There was a lot more laughing than I expected. There was a whole conversation about cultural misunderstandings because words mean different things in different countries. We spent several minutes coming up with examples and laughing at how silly something may sound to one person despite being perfectly reasonable to the next. This style of discourse seemed out of my comfort zone, almost like a distraction, and yet the experience seemed to lower everyone's guard and contribute to the collaborative atmosphere in ways I hadn't predicted. I no longer felt like an academic interviewer, instead I was just a language learner poking fun at himself for trying to figure out the root of the word "jangueo", only to realize it's derived from an English word (hangout). In this meeting, there were moments of uncertainty or silence that I may have accidentally commandeered, as I recommended joining the PTSA as a way to get more information and realized that was my idea and was not an action recommended by anyone else in the group. I found myself in this meeting becoming more directive in response to silence, which may have undermined the integrity of the public sphere.*

At numerous points in the conversation, I felt concerned about the categorical approach to culture (e.g., “Cubans vs. Mexicans”). However, I may have been a little over eager to shine a light on everyone's individuality. When I asked if Marina notices differences between herself and clients from Puerto Rico, she laughed and said**:** "No. Creo que nos parecemos bastante.” (No. I think we're quite a bit alike). If I try too hard to champion the uniqueness of each individual, I may end up overlooking the fact that geographical and cultural norms can at times be a reliable predictor of what is and is not acceptable, at least in this case. Marina described the enthusiasm with which her Puerto Rican clients greet her, and it sounded like she was implying that

categorical differences between cultures may be useful landmarks for establishing a sense of belonging and determining safety in an ingroup. Indeed, all of the participants nodded when I posed the clarification question: “Entonces hay momentos en que se puede confiar en sus impresiones de la cultura.” *So then there are times when you can have confidence in your impressions of a culture.*

Session 6: PAR Meeting - 12/11/2017

Attendance: Mrs. Flores, Marina, Rodrigo

Reconnaissance. The participants had requested an educational and informative session, and therefore this session changed our focus from gathering information from the participants to providing it. Until this point I had been reluctant to share too much of my own background knowledge for fear of "tainting" or exercising undue influence over the suggestions and ideas presented by the participants, but now that the project was winding down and I felt I had a sense of how the participants' ideas differed from mine, I was more comfortable talking in a didactic, informative way. Before the meeting began, Mrs. Flores joined the group to discuss classroom expectations, how course work contributes to overall grades, how to request schedule changes, and other general information about the programming and scheduling process. Marina was concerned about grades from Puerto Rico that could not be accessed due to lack of power and other setbacks her hometown was experiencing due to the recent hurricane. She had hoped to enroll her son in one class but was unable to prove the prerequisites.

Once the session began, I offered three topics I could discuss depending on the interest of the participants: the research base on parent involvement, the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), or and what prominent psychology and education research say about race and culture in terms of their influences on daily life and social interaction. Marina and Rodrigo

opted to discuss the PTSA first, and between the other two choices they favored parent involvement research, tabling a discussion of race for next week's meeting. The discussion of the PTSA was short, but gave a strong lead as to where we may need to focus our efforts for promoting parent involvement. Specifically, Marina and Rodrigo were not aware that there was a PTSA, and they had limited experience with such groups in the past. Marina described a "consejo" (advisory group) of parents in her hometown in Puerto Rico, but this group was very limited and only had a few members who served as a liaison to speak to the community about school affairs or speak to the school on behalf of parents. Marina repeated her appreciation of the involvement attempts that I was making with this project, lamenting that it was not better attended:

> **Marina**: A mí me gustaría que hubiese más reuniones durante el año, porque usted me llamó y eso, yo dije "wow". Me sentí bien en que, es algo que no había visto.
>
> *I'd like it if there were more meetings during the year, because you called me and that, I said "wow". I felt good in that it's something I hadn't seen before.*

At our high school, I had found that there were a few different parent involvement efforts that operated independently of each other and not necessarily with a lot of knowledge about the activities of the others. There was a booster club which supports athletics and is well equipped with fundraising resources and high membership. There is also the PTSA, which currently suffers from low membership but supports different initiatives and causes for the school and its students, and there is a Student Advisory Council (SAC), which meets once a month at a "round table" event to share updates and get opinions about school operations from those in attendance.

Once our discussion of the PTSA wrapped up, I provided an hour-long review of the different school involvement practices identified by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005), and

reviewed research conducted with Spanish-speaking families (Walker et al., 2011) that indicated the predictive power of different practices on whether or not parents would get involved with their children's education. During the discussion of parent involvement, the research on parents monitoring their children's behavior and role modeling academic engagement were very relatable to the participants. Marina discussed creative ways she has encouraged her son to get ahead. For one, she provides him with audiobooks so he can access content in English while reading in English is still a laborious process. She remarked that English as a second language is tiring, and audiobooks allow one to conserve mental energy and keep working even after an exhausting day of school. Both Marina and Rodrigo seemed encouraged that speaking English is not required for many of the most influential parent involvement practices (e.g., modeling academic behaviors such as reading).

Action. The agenda of the booster club did not seem relevant to the goals of the PAR team, and the PTSA seemed to struggle to reach out to culturally and linguistically diverse parents. Since a face to face meeting provides ample opportunities for questions and answers, the round table event hosted by the Student Advisory Committee was deemed a useful opportunity for getting started with outreach. However, the participants also identified the PTSA's communication problem as an opportunity, and Marina volunteered "me apunto yo" *(I appoint myself)* to serve as a liaison. Marina pointed out that if the involved and eager parents at our meetings didn't know about the PTSA, there may be many others in the same situation. Therefore, she suggested that our group could help market the PTSA and increase its usefulness for diverse families. Mrs. Flores agreed to meet with the guidance department to resolve specific parent questions about scheduling on the following school day. I distributed PTSA membership applications to the attendees, and sent out notifications and reminders about the date of the next

round table meeting, which Marina attended. I learned the identify of the PTSA leader, and she was excited by the idea of having help with outreach to Spanish speaking parents.

Reflection. *I was moved by the forgiving and understanding way Marina and Rodrigo framed their frustration with trying to figure out the school system. While they reported that it's hard to navigate, they did not blame the school, and in fact in an earlier meeting Marina and Estrella had contrasted the helpful ESOL staff to somewhat less helpful school staff in their countries of origin. Marina said that in Puerto Rico she might find out that her son had an F in a class only after the semester was over and nothing more could be done, whereas she gets almost immediate notification now if her son begins failing a course. I myself felt a little ashamed that I didn't know the difference between the PTSA and the SAC before this study, but there was a shared commitment to figure out the answers. The participants in this project maintained a focus on the future and what was to be developed, not on the past and what has been done wrong. Marina shared my disappointment that more parents didn't join this study, and she shared that since she was surprised at all of the supports I was providing, it is possible that other parents didn't realize what exactly was being offered. I got the impression that she also shared my view that our recruitment problem was proof of the importance of our project, and increasing awareness and availability of school resources became an integral focus of the study.*

Session 7: PAR Team Meeting, Study Conclusion - 12/18/2017

Attendance: Marina, Guillermo

Reconnaissance. In our final meeting, I shared information about the next round table meeting and gave out contact information of the PTSA representative so the team members could touch base with her, and we discussed and clarified some acronyms and resources in the shared document.

Action. Adjustments were made to the shared document and an a request was submitted to the district IRB to determine whether I could continue serving as a consultant to support group members in their involvement efforts. The request was approved, and I began attending monthly PTSA meetings with Marina, who helped me lay the groundwork for a weekly English language practice group for parents.

Reflection. Since the study was closing, I wanted to provide the participants with an opportunity to reflect on what we had accomplished and decide if their goals had been met. I asked them to make the decision:

Michael: "Sí yo haya sido útil o no, no es algo que yo puedo decir"

Whether I've been useful or not is not something I myself can say.

Guillermo was the first to respond:

"Yo creo que sí has sido útil porque cosas que no estaban disponible ya se han resuelto"

I think that you have been useful because things that weren't available before have been accomplished.

According to this opinion, the objectives of our study had been met because there are resources available to parents that were not before (e.g., the acronym dictionary and registration instructions), and they understand how to connect to the school. Marina agreed that the basic objectives were met:

"De esa parte yo lo veo así también"

On that point I also see it that way.

But she asked about my objectives:

"Contestar esas preguntas que usted estableció en el inicio. ¿Se contestaron esas preguntas?"

To answer the questions you created at the outset. Have they been answered?

I found myself surprised that my point of view was being solicited again, perhaps because I assume as the non-heritage Spanish speaking White person, my input isn't be relevant. However, having established a public sphere where all are allowed to contribute (including the cultural outsider), I decided to share my opinion that I also felt that the study had been a success. However, I felt conflicted about the small scale. Marina and Guillermo agreed that the scale had been small, but pointed out that the logical next step is to spread awareness of the resources we created so that a larger portion of the community could benefit from our efforts.

Our conversation then turned to race, culture, and essentialism, which were crucial variables that I have struggled to manage since the outset of the study. Until this final meeting, I had kept this personal concern close to my chest, as race and culture were not among the primary objectives brought up by my participants (with the exception of Estrella, who only attended one focus group session). Nevertheless, the conversation that ensued suggested that they were familiar with the concept of essentialism and they did not struggle to understand why I try to avoid it. I began by providing my attempt at a relatable definition of essentialism:

> **Michael:** "La costumbre de entender la cultura como una cosa, que tiene todos los miembros con las mismas características."
>
> *The tendency to understand culture as a single thing, that has all of its members with the same characteristics.*

Subsequently, the participants offered their own definitions and examples, adding that making generalizations may be particularly problematic when they are made by a cultural outsider. I reviewed the multicultural counseling recommendations tips for different racial and

ethnic groups by Sue & Sue (2012) as an example of how "Latinx" can be portrayed as a single group with common traits throughout.

Guillermo offered his own understanding of this phenomenon:

> "Si él va a dar una definición completa de algo que quizás no la tiene, eso es el esencialista, o dar una definición de algo que no conocemos. Entre los mismos latinos hay culturas diferentes.
>
> *If he is going to give a complete definition that he doesn't really have, that is the essentialist, or to give a definition for something we don't understand. Even among Latinos there are different cultures.*

The latter insight Guillermo shared after defining essentialism was a concept that we had come to see up close and personally during the study. Marina added that education and profession can influence your culture too, for example, being a psychologist changes one's culture. Schooling experiences, parenting beliefs, academic readiness, and vocabulary varied greatly from family to family in our study, and in our study there were only a handful of families present. Later in the session Guillermo brought up how this can be a problem for teachers who have fixed expectations on what they're getting when a Spanish speaking student arrives in their class:

> Guillermo: "Recibe por ejemplo 20 latinos, pero depende del país de que viene, ¿qué nivel va a venir- qué va a ser su nivel de educación, cuando asisten? Eso es el problema. So van a venir diferentes tipos de… diferente base es decir. Diferente conocimiento. Entonces es cuando enfrentar cómo ayudar- 'que se hace más difícil porque son latinos.' Son latinos pero no vienen con como un nivel cultural."

You get for example 20 Latino students, but depending on the country they came from, At what level will they come- what will be their level of education when they attend? That is the problem. So you'll get different kinds of… Different foundation, I mean. Different knowledge. Therefore it's when you face how to help- "that it's more difficult because they're Latinx." They're Latinx but they don't come with one [educational] level as a culture.

What is a teacup?

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Marina used an example of a cup of tea to define essentialism. If the cup were to melt or be damaged such that it doesn't hold a liquid, the cup would lose its "essence". Likewise, as people move and change, their "essence" changes. This seems to suggest that even if people were to have an essence that fully defines them in their home of origin, it would change as soon as they left, and therefore be misunderstood by those who would pigeonhole them based on their background. In the ensuing conversation between Marina, Guillermo, and I, we explored the concept of essentialism and our struggle to understand people and their individual needs and quirks through the example of the teacup.

Marina: "Busqué una definición del esencialismo para entender un poco mejor el concepto. Y nos pone un ejemplo de un objeto. Que si el objeto pierde sus propiedades ya deja de ser ese objeto, ya no va a tener esa naturaleza de lo que era antes. Si esto (toma una taza) es sólido pero lo convierte en líquido, ya no va a ser la taza, porque perdió su esencia. Que era un sólido, el objeto que ya no puedo usarlo para rellenarlo. Así que en términos de una persona, le estaba diciendo a él: si nosotros perdemos nuestra esencia, lo que somos, pues entonces estamos perdiendo nuestras raíces, de donde vinimos, nuestra naturaleza."

I looked up a definition of essentialism in order to understand the concept a little better. And we got an example of an object. That if the object loses its properties it stops being that object, now it won't have the same nature of what it was before. If this (takes a teacup) is solid but we turn it into a liquid, now it won't be a teacup, because it lost its essence. It was solid, the object that now I can't use or refill. So when speaking about a person, I was saying to him: if we lose our essence, what we are, well then we are losing our roots of where we're from, our nature.

Michael: "Y puede haber la individualidad, ¿no? Que puede haber una taza redonda y verde, pero esto también (toma una taza más grande) es una taza, ¿verdad? Tiene… eh, ¿cómo se llama esto?"

And there can be individuality, right? That you could have a round green cup, but this too (picks up a larger cup) is a cup, right? It has... um, what do you call this?

Marina: "Mango" *Handle*

Guillermo: "El handle… o el cabo" *The handle... or the end.*

Michael: Y es diferente, por eso si yo digo que una taza es una taza, y así esto es una taza (la taza pequeña)… Si carezco de imaginación, puedo decir esto (taza grande) no es una taza. Es lo que yo pienso evitar.

And it is different, so if I say that a cup is a cup, and this is what a cup is like (the little cup)... If I lack imagination, I could say this (larger cup) is not a cup. This is what I hope to avoid.

Guillermo: El ejemplo que hizo el psicólogo coreano, él dijo que la cultura latina era una cultura, ¿no? Pero dentro de la cultura latina hay varias culturas.

The example that the Korean psychologist made, he said that the Latino culture is a culture, right? But within the Latino culture there are various cultures.

Marina: Y ahí se perdió su esencia (risas). Porque nosotros no somos nunca iguales. Yo puedo decir que esto tiene un handle (indica a la tetera), y que es una taza, pero no es! Así que al perder la individualidad, perdió su esencia, perdió… ya no lo podemos identificar… y a esto es lo que no quiere llegar. Hay que… se pierda el esencialismo, se pierda la esencia de las personas y que solamente lo reconocemos aquí porque somos latinos. And that's it.

And there the essence was lost (laughter). Because we are never exactly the same. I can say that this has a handle (points to the teapot) and that it is a cup, but it isn't! So upon losing individuality, it lost its essence, it lost… now we can't identify it, and this is where you don't want to end up. You have to… you lose the essentialism, you lose the essence of people and we only recognize this here because we are Latinos. And that's it.

Guillermo proceeded to bring up different foods and musical genres that were popular in different countries (for example, ceviche in Perú and carne de res in Argentina), and we discussed the nuance that separates countries and regions within them. Although the conversation maintained a categorical tilt (e.g., cataloguing food or music by nation), Marina contested Guillermo's assertion that people in Middle Eastern countries were more or less similar, discussing how watching soap operas from Korea was teaching her how different people could be even when living under the same roof. I took this opportunity to try to communicate what I saw as the wisdom Marina was offering to see if Guillermo would agree if we explored the concept in more depth. Unlike earlier parts of the study, I was leading Guillermo to a

particular conclusion that I felt represented a valuable insight that I wished for all attendees to understand, even if they didn't agree.

Marina: "Yo tampoco diría que son tan iguales"

I wouldn't say [middle-eastern people] are that similar either."

Michael: "Hasta gemelos pueden tener costumbres diferentes"

Even twin brothers can have different customs/habits.

Guillermo: Diferencias, sí.

Differences, yes.

Michael: De la misma familia, de la misma cultura, y por eso… parece posible, que la única forma de entender todo el mundo es dejar de intentar a...

From the same family, from the same culture, and therefore… it seems possible, that the only way to understand the whole world is to stop trying to...

Guillermo: Entender todo el mundo. (risas)

Understand the whole world (laughter)

Michael: Entender todo el mundo, sí. No hay una característica…

Understand the whole world, yeah. There is no characteristic that is...

Guillermo: Global.

Global (shared by all)

After we reached this point of acknowledging the impossibility of fully understanding an individual solely by knowing the groups they belong to, I asked the group how we could share this insight with others:

Michael: "¿Cómo podría yo ayudar a los otros 'gringos' a aceptar la individualidad de la gente latina?"

How can I help other non-Spanish speakers to accept the individuality of Latina/o people?"

Guillermo: "Es imposible"

It's impossible.

Marina: "Él lo logró, su..."

He did it, his…

Guillermo: "Sí pero es imposible de lograr que toda la gente entienda lo que él va a entender, eso no va a lograr."

Yes, but it is impossible to reach the point where all people understand what he is going to understand, you won't achieve that.

Michael: "¿O tal vez algunas personas?"

Maybe some people?

Guillermo: "Algunas personas, sí, tal vez algunas sí. Los políticos tienen todo en su poder, todo el dinero… y nunca llega a hacer completa una nación. Siempre va a tener, si hay dos partidos van a estar divididos. Siempre se dividen porque no hay gente igual."

Some people, yes, maybe some. Politicians have everything in their power, all the money… and they never reach the point where a nation is totally complete. There will always be, if there are two parties they will remain divided. People always divide because no two people are the same.

Marina: "Pero esto es un inicio. Un comienzo, de intentar de cambiar conceptos establecidos en libros con lo que él está haciendo. Y ahora entiende que existe el individualismo dentro de los latinos."

But it is a start. A beginning, of trying to change concepts established in books with what he is doing. And now he understands that there is individuality between Latina/os.

Guillermo: "Sí, sí, es cierto."

Yes, yes, of course.

Marina: "Que existe la diferencia en la esencia dentro de los latinos, que no se puede englobar a una sola. Él va a llevar esto con esta investigación a un foro donde lo va a exponer los resultados que obtuvo con esta investigación. A partir de allí, de allí sale el escrito de una tesis, que le toca a otras estudiantes más adelante. Y él no piensa dejarlo allí, él piensa continuar ayudándonos y…"

That there is a difference in essence between Latina/os, that you can't generalize to one person. He will take this with the study to a forum where he will share the results that he obtained with this study. From here on, from here the writing begins for a thesis, that will be shared with other students going forward. And he doesn't plan on leaving it there, he plans to continue helping us.

Michael: Si lo escribo bien. (risas)

If I write it well (group laughter)

Despite his doubt in the impact we may be able to have, Guillermo did have a recommendation for avoiding faulty generalizations, and true to his style throughout the study, it was incredibly succinct:

Guillermo: "Conocer. Hay que conocer, para catalogar a alguien "

Understand. You have to understand if you want to sort out what someone is like.

The Spanish word *conocer* translates to "know" as in "to know someone", but it is also a verb that means to "meet" or "get to know". This version of knowing is more dynamic and

interactive than simply having a definition of who someone is, because it is ongoing. This means everyone you encounter is a new person to meet, and you must meet them if you want to understand them. This double meaning of "conocer" is a perfect example of the ongoing, dynamic journey that I have begun at my school and in my research. My journey to understand not just cultural norms, but the real, individual person who sits across from me at my desk. Therefore, my most important takeaway from the study, and the advice I am likely to give researchers who seek a similar self-improvement, is *conocer*.

Research Questions

1. **How do Spanish-speaking parents at a primarily English-speaking high school respond to the opportunity to participate in a participatory action research study?**

To what extent will a PAR project change or increase involvement of parents, and the welcoming behaviors of the school? The immediate consequences of the project did not significantly increase parent involvement, largely due to limited awareness and difficulty communicating. The restricted strategies (i.e., fliers and announcements) were ineffective at spreading awareness, whereas the word-of-mouth approach that is used by the school to advertise the parent conference night yielded significant returns. However, without the constraints of a research project, next year's informational sessions will have the flexibility to use more informal approaches to promotion and may result in higher turnout. Furthermore, though parent involvement is slow-growing, the parents involved in the project have begun taking their own efforts (e.g., attending monthly school round table events) to make their presence known. The welcoming behaviors of the school have been very responsive to the project. The building principal has approved the creation of a monthly informational event for parents and has even

requested that a team consisting of the assistant principal, myself, and ESOL staff attend professional development to ensure the informational events are effective.

To what extent do changes in parent and school behaviors result in improved student outcomes as perceived by the key stakeholders involved in the study? No improved outcomes have been perceived as occurring yet, aside from those reaped by parents directly participating in the study. Consultation with ESOL staff allowed parent participants to become more familiar with graduation requirements and thus guide their children more effectively. However, no data reviewed in this study indicate direct changes in student performance.

What is observed during the recruitment phase? What facilitators and barriers to participation are noted? Finding a common time where everyone can meet was a significant challenge. Although more than ten attendees at the parent conference night expressed interest in being on the PAR team, only three of those were able to find a common time that did not conflict with work and family obligations. Only a handful of others were able to make the same time as the PAR team, leading to a smaller focus group than what was desired. The face to face presentation at conference night was the greatest facilitator to involvement. Of those who signed up at the event, almost all followed through with either PAR planning or focus group participation. All participants on the PAR team were recruited at this single event. Another facilitator was having a consistent meeting time from week to week, since consistency made attendance more predictable. Fliers and phone announcements were not effective at recruiting participants. Participants noted during preliminary consultations that announcements and fliers can be so numerous and easily confused for junk mail that it is difficult for important information to stand out. Differing work schedules was the most cited barrier to participation. The final

sample of 8 participants was within the range expected for the study, but was lower than anticipated.

What is observed during the planning phase? What facilitators and barriers to planning are noted? Participants specifically requested a more active role from my part than I was comfortable with. Given my desire to limit the influence of my biased outsider perspective, I initially intended to take a back seat. At first I asked participants to make almost all decisions and used open ended questions, but eventually I was asked to make suggestions and provide my viewpoints as well. My reluctance to take charge was actually a barrier to planning, as the open-endedness of our operating procedures created ambivalence and confusion. When I made more assertive suggestions, for example, to approach the PTSA or create an acronym dictionary, the group became more productive and discussions took on more energy. Poor recruitment and difficulty making the meeting times were barriers to planning. There were six participants in the focus groups, which included the 3 participants on the PAR team, and the focus group members were not all present at the same time due to scheduling concerns. Therefore, we did not get to have two consecutive focus group sessions, and in fact had to revisit questions in order to get multiple perspectives. However, the members of the PAR team who had excellent attendance facilitated continuity and caught up other members on previous discussion points.

2. **How does the inclusion of diverse cultures influence the research process?**

How can the culture of the school and the primary researcher be adapted to be inclusive of diverse norms, beliefs, and priorities? The first major adaptation was creating tentative objectives that would be replaced or modified by participant contributions (see Table 3). In every research project I have undertaken previously, clear hypotheses and goals were declared before recruitment could even begin. By discarding this custom, I was able to be more

inclusive of the interests of my participants. Creating a public sphere was an essential component of inclusion, since the non-hierarchical style fostered discussions where participants could disagree with me and with each other without fear of reprisal.

How might the culture and goals of the school (e.g., improving graduation rates) and the primary researcher (e.g., requiring group adherence to university ethical standards) place constraints on cultural responsiveness? The goals of the school did not appear to conflict with the goals of the study, in fact the principal was enthusiastic about providing more resources the following year. The goals of the researcher were not obstacles either, since my goals were to foreground the objectives of the participants. However, the culture of the school and researcher did place constraints on cultural responsiveness. The formal communication style that was mandated by the university and school district IRB was ineffective at recruitment. The ESOL staff initially offered to spread word of the study by calling parents they worked with or bring it up with parents who came to them to ask questions, but representatives of the district IRB informed me that this risked creating a sense of coercion and was thus inappropriate for a research study. Furthermore, my boundaries as a researcher and practitioner made it impossible for me to communicate during work hours or using school materials, since this imposed a conflict of interest to my responsibilities as a psychologist.

3. **How does the research process influence participants from diverse cultures?**

How will the values, beliefs, and behaviors of participants change as a result of participating in the study? Although they spoke freely as experts of culture and freely expressed diverse viewpoints, the participants showed a certain amount of deference to my position as a researcher. To reduce influence on participant ideas, pedagogical information on parent involvement and education were reserved until the end of the project. However, when I

did review the Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (2005) model of parent involvement, the factors discussed may have changed their outlook on parenting. In general, participants were more active toward the end of the project, showing a more parent-focused role construction.

What elements of the PAR study, if any, will be perceived as helpful or unhelpful to the participant researchers? Elements described as helpful included creating documents, inviting parents to school informational events, and gathering parent opinions for the purpose of presenting them to school staff. Bringing in Mrs. Flores to discuss graduation requirements and coursework was reported as helpful. "Ese intento", or that effort displayed simply through the act of inviting parents was reported as helpful as well.

4. **What issue(s) do members of the PAR team decide they want to address, and how do they differ from the issues considered salient to the principal investigator? How does the PAR team narrow down their ideas to select a particular direction?**

Issues salient to the PAR team. Confronting discrimination did not seem to be as high a concern for participants as I anticipated, although unfair treatment and lack of trust/hostility toward those who speak publicly in Spanish were noted by Estrella to be concerns. The key issues that reached consensus, however, involved practical logistical concerns such as getting comprehensible announcements, figuring out how to enroll students, and understanding graduation requirements. Furthermore, parents requested resources for Spanish speaking parents (e.g., acronym dictionary; see Appendix C).

Issues salient to the principal investigator. My concerns overlapped with the majority of those selected by the PAR team, though they were phrased more generally (see Table 3). However, throughout the project I had been mostly concerned about essentialist stereotyping of

Spanish-speaking parents. Since this was not one of the primary objectives selected by the participants I waited until the end of the study to discuss it.

5. **How do cultural conclusions or beliefs differ in a local sample from those described in broad, general descriptions of "Latinx" or "Spanish-speaking" culture?**

The review of the characteristics Sue & Sue (2012; see Table 2) offered to describe "Hispanic culture" yielded some sense of overlap, such as Spanish speaking, family orientation, emphasis on cooperation and extended family, and being action oriented. Consistent with this research, some showed a preference for a concrete, structured approach to problem solving *(*i.e., *Qué todo que se desarrolla se lleva a cabo/that we follow through on everything that we develop).* However, on several occasions my action-oriented will to move through our agenda was resisted by those who wished to more thoroughly understand the nature of a problem, suggesting that "action-oriented" was not a unique cultural trait in this group. They disagreed with the notion of a "temporal difference", they did not express favor of short-term goals over long-term goals, and none of them was familiar with the idea of a "religious distinction between mind and body".

6. **How does the inclusion of diverse cultures change or improve my own cultural responsiveness?**

How will my own values, beliefs, and behaviors as a school psychologist change? I am more comfortable asking questions to expand my knowledge of those I serve, but I am also more comfortable trusting my judgement. Most of the questions I had raised at the outset of the study were consonant with the expressed interests of the participants, showing that my academic and practical experiences had prepared me more than I realized to undertake this project. I can make fun of myself knowing that a non-hierarchical and comfortable discussion can be just as

productive as a formal one, and that a few well-placed jabs at my own dignity can reduce tension that may otherwise be present when a parent walks into a “psychologist’s office.” My fear of improper wording is subsiding, since even Marina used words in a context that seemed strange to Spanish speakers with different backgrounds, and when she did, a couple laughs and an explanation were all that it took to get the conversation back on track. Most of all, I now accept that I cannot completely remove myself and my views from a discussion that I am trying to facilitate, as my lack of leadership lead to awkward silences and unproductive conversation.

How will my changing values, beliefs, and behaviors impact my practices and effectiveness as a school psychologist as perceived by the key stakeholders involved in the study? The key stakeholders were grateful that I reflected on our conversations and frequently asked for clarification. Even at the study’s conclusion, I would not say I completely understood what it is like to be in their shoes, and I could not always stop myself from using erudite language; however, the effort of getting closer to understanding was valued by all at the table. Marina and Guillermo agreed that I had a better appreciation for their struggles at the close of the study than I had at the outset, and though it is still imperfect, it is a start. As Marina said in the last meeting:

> “Pero esto es un inicio. Un comienzo, de intentar de cambiar conceptos establecidos en libros con lo que él está haciendo. Y ahora entiende que existe el individualismo dentro de los latinos.”
>
> *But it is a start. A beginning, of trying to change concepts established in books with what he is doing. And now he understands that there is individuality between Latina/os.*

7. **What guidance can this PAR study offer to other researchers who want to implement PAR in their communities?**

This study demonstrated how parents could be included in a non-hierarchical public sphere to better understand the strengths and needs of an individual community. The study also showed that the traits of the individuals that comprise a Latinx community are heterogenous, and that many of the features considered universal or integral to Latinx cultures are not guaranteed to apply to everyone. The inquiry process only required an hour-long meeting once a week for a few months, and therefore is a relatively straightforward approach for improving cultural responsiveness. Maintaining communication with administration is also important, as it can ensure that parent voices are truly heard beyond the focus group. Indeed, the most substantial outcomes from this study are yet to come, as a program of informational sessions is still under development with full administrative support.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to carry out a collaborative research project to increase cultural responsiveness to Spanish-speaking parents at a local high school. As a PAR study, this study foregrounded the participant researchers as experts on their own experiences and sought to empower the participants to determine both obstacles that they may face and the best strategies for overcoming them. This chapter will present a summary of research as it relates Participatory Action Research, parent involvement, and cultural responsiveness. Major themes from the study will be discussed, including the differences between my priorities and those of the researchers and my positionality as White academic researcher and fluent English speaker. The study is evaluated using the criteria of creating an effective public sphere, and the results are compared and contrasted with previous literature on parent involvement and cultural responsiveness. Since a primary argument of this study is the way culture can be contextual and unique, special attention will be paid to the limitations of the data presented in the study, along with recommendations for future practice and research and conclusions for the study.

Goals of the Researcher vs. Goals of the Participants

The goals of the school and parents were not in opposition or competition, but they were also not identical. One of the first and most anticipated discrepancies in the project was in the research priorities. Most of the participant research priorities (i.e., tangible outcomes, accessible information, developing new resources and navigating existing ones, and understanding parents)

were compatible with the original research priorities that were developed in Chapter 3. This was possible in part because the original focus group priorities (i.e., understanding parents' role and understanding the role of the school) were intentionally vague with the assumption that they would be given more specific direction by parent participants. However, one matter in the original focus group plan (i.e., identifying or resisting discrimination) was not deemed an immediate concern by parent participants. In order to avoid railroading the inquiry of the PAR team, this objective was set aside until the end of the project, with the hope that this would reduce the impact of my subjective blindspots. However, since I organized the project, it is still important to interrogate how my cultural baggage interacted with the research process.

Cultural Research by a Cultural Outsider

Although I am not an "outsider" as Kemmis et al. (2013) used the term since I am an educator at the school involved, I am not the most equipped person to carry out a study that seeks to empower Spanish-speaking monolingual parents. Since I grew up as an English-speaking monolingual child in an English-speaking community, I do not share the experiences nor am I likely to be intuitively aware of slights, concerns, or setbacks that the participating community members face. Therefore, culturally speaking, I do identify as an outsider. It is not despite this limitation that I carried out this study, but rather because of it. Increasing representation of the culturally diverse in the ranks of researchers and educators is a necessary aim; but in the meantime I argue that the current, disproportionately large White English monolingual population of educators would be wise to join in the efforts of culturally responsive practice. With this study, I argue that the difficult quest of understanding a heterogenous community is not impossible. However, to do so, a researcher must be prepared to interrogate their Whiteness and the fact that they represent their own biased cultural reference point. I encourage other outsiders

to get involved, but to do so with caution. Two processes that were central to my attempts at being a culturally responsive cultural outsider were self-awareness and the public sphere.

***Self-Awareness*.** In their Action Research Planner, Kemmis et al. (2013) advise:

> "[Outside collaborators] need not ordinarily be members of a community undertaking an action research initiative, or employees of an organization in which an action research initiative happens, but they can be full participants in the life of the research. If so, they must remain critically alert, however, to a particular danger of self-deception: that they may be self-deceived about the extent to which their own self-interests and the self-interests of other participants overlap (p. 9)"

This danger of self-deception is not new to my profession. Over 100 years earlier, William James offered a similar warning to psychologists:

> "The great snare of the psychologist is the confusion of [his or her] own standpoint with that of the mental fact about which [he or she] is making [his or her] report. I shall hereafter call this the 'psychologist's fallacy' par excellence" (James, 1890, p. 196)

Maintaining awareness of my own blindspots was a constant effort during the project, and some of my attempts to avoid self-deception were beneficial. Yet my attempts at sidelining my own opinions were at times an obstacle to productivity. During the first several meetings I responded with open-ended or clarification questions when the PAR team wanted leadership. I sought to foreground race and the voices of the "oppressed" as recommended by CRT scholars (Matsuda, 1991); but when the members of the group asked me to take the lead, I continued to defer decision-making to other team members. The awkward silences of early sessions may have

been uncomfortable, but they did allow Marina and Guillermo to take a leadership role (e.g., when Guillermo clarified the group's purpose to a confused Gabriela).

Whiteness and Othering. One of the blindspots I aimed to address with self-awareness is the problem of "othering." Othering (Said, 2003) refers to a practice of naming other racial categories in such a way that implies that they deviate from a "neutral" position. The dominant position of White researchers in western academic discourse creates an unbalanced view of culture, where White is considered neutral and other racial categories represent the "other" (Goldberg, 2009; Said, 2003). By occupying the role of the "gringo", I represented, if anything, the position farthest from the norm in our research team. The term "gringo" is not exactly a compliment, but was a convenient term because it connotes a host of cultural identifiers. By adding my "gringo" vantage point to the list of categories under consideration, as Frankenberg (1993) recommended, we at least denied any neutral standing I could have otherwise claimed. It was not a perfect solution, and I was not able to dismantle the categorical thinking of the PAR team; even at the project's end, people were sorted into labeled categories such as "Puerto Rican," "Middle-Eastern," and "Chinese." Still, by "othering" the native English speaker on the team, our group was at least prepared to resist the power imbalance imbued with the assumption that I, the researcher, should be considered to have an "objective" point of view.

The Public Sphere. One of central elements that makes a study a critical Participatory Action Research study is the creation of a public sphere (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013), since this is the element that allows otherwise silenced or excluded voices to speak freely. In this study, I did not presume to eliminate my biases, but rather sought to use the public sphere to allow room for my biased view to be separated from those of the participants and mitigate the influence of my biases on other participants. This way, I could draw conclusions about the

questions that are most important to me without ignoring the matters that were most important to the participants. A review of the criteria for an effective public sphere (Kemmis et al., 2013) is presented below, along with an analysis of how our study applied the criteria.

1. **Public spheres create networks of communication among participants.**

A public sphere should not operate in isolation, but rather cooperate with other groups. The parents in this study represented one sphere, while I represented an academic sphere that includes my committee, colleagues, and professors. I also shared a sphere with the faculty members who participated in some of our meetings, giving us a glimpse of how educators perceive our shared felt concern. When contact was made with school administrators and PTSA representatives, even more spheres were pulled into the project. Thus, we did not operate in isolation, but rather formed a network of groups and individuals.

2. **Public spheres are self-constituted, voluntary, and autonomous.**

Our PAR team created a group of willing individuals who occupied a role that was relatively untouched by traditional educator or parent relationships. The participants chose how they wanted to get involved and how much they wanted to get involved. For example, Marina chose to attend several school events beyond the PAR team's schedule to advocate more for her goals, but Guillermo preferred an advisory role that was more limited to the planning meetings. Marina was not assigned any of these responsibilities; she chose them because she was interested in pursuing them, or in her words: "Me apunto yo" *(I appoint myself).* When it became clear that it would be difficult for all of the focus group members to attend on the same day, I did not pressure participants into conforming to our format. Rather, they were allowed to come and go when they were able, spreading out their contributions over several meetings.

3. **Public spheres come into existence in response to legitimation deficits.**

For our PAR team to have work to do, we had to determine something that *should* be happening that currently *wasn't* happening, or vice versa. This was one of the more difficult features for me, because I proposed a PAR project with a community I had only recently met. Until I was able to consult with the parent participants, I could only speculate as to what the perceived deficits would be based on literature. In the Reflections section after our first PAR meeting (on October 30th), I juxtaposed my predicted concerns with those that were eventually expressed by the participants. However, the participating parents quickly identified legitimate concerns that they had hoped to overcome by way of the project, thus this criterion would appear to have been met.

4. **Public spheres are constituted for communicative action and for public discourse.**

This feature is based on reaching intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding, and unforced consensus. Reaching intersubjective agreement (agreement about the meaning of our words) was not usually difficult, yet at times it led to rather comical clarifications. As many language students hope to learn from history and not experience, terms that are common and innocent in some Spanish-speaking countries (e.g., *coger*) can have very different and even offensive meanings in other countries. Fortunately, when somebody used words that sounded awkward or strange to other group members, it led to conversations about the intended message and how it might be different from the message that was heard. Mutual understanding was largely facilitated by Marina, whose graduate training enabled her to rephrase some of my more erudite expressions into a more common vernacular. Unforced consensus was the most difficult element of this criterion to reach, because I felt pressured to move the research agenda along without heavily influencing the actual research agenda. It was difficult to me to advance an agenda without controlling it, just as it would be difficult for me to push a gas pedal without

being tempted to control the steering wheel. However, during several hour discussions we frequently revisited themes to ensure that the tasks under way remained in the forefront of everyone's mind. With these frequent updates about consensus, some matters (such as the acronym dictionary) were consistently reified as being important, while others (such as the mysterious third party communications) were cast aside in favor of other topics.

5. **Public spheres aim to be inclusive.**

Although recruitment efforts were less effective than I had hoped, those who did respond to the study were given a clear explanation that all of their opinions were welcome. Furthermore, participants were free to bring family members, and they were also given the option to leave at any time. Interested faculty members were invited, and although Mr. Santana and Mrs. Flores were the only outside experts to physically attend the meetings, many more individuals at the school or in the PTSA were consulted to answer the groups' questions.

6. **In public spheres, people usually communicate in ordinary language.**

In the spirit of making the content of our discussions accessible to all, technical terms were used as rarely as possible. Even when discussing research concepts, we "translated" terms that were highly technical, and in fact, one of the main products from our study was a list of acronyms commonly used in education, with translations and definitions (see Appendix C). However, success in reaching this criterion during focus groups was satisfied more by Marina's translations of my academic phrases than it was by my own merit. Furthermore, Mr. Santana pointed out during data analysis that Guillermo often provided short, laconic agreements whenever he followed Marina or Rodrigo on a conversation topic. According to Mr. Santana, the clarity and passion in Marina's ideas may have at times been intimidating to other members who otherwise would have felt more qualified to share their insights on an issue. This would be

especially true when it became clear that Marina and I were able to discuss academic ideas that she would then have to reword for others to jump in. Therefore, ordinary language (or lack thereof) may have been a weak point in our public sphere.

7. **Public spheres presuppose communicative freedom.**

Everyone should feel equally welcome to participate (or not participate) depending on their choices. Although the use of academic language may have reduced participation from some of the members, a large part of communicative freedom is a participant's right to say nothing and simply observe. Therefore, it may be appropriate that Guillermo was able to pull back from the conversation at times, and later rejoin as a speaking member of the group.

8. **The communicative networks of public spheres generate communicative power.**

At several points Marina expressed the idea that the consultation taking place in this project represented an opportunity she'd never experienced before, and the participants expressed an optimism that meaningful long-term change could result from the effort. Furthermore, the information gleaned from the meeting that Mrs. Flores attended addressed concerns that the parents in attendance had about their own children's immediate needs. The school has been extremely receptive to the study, and the building principal even requested that the information be used to construct a series of informational sessions for parents in the following year. The head of the ESOL department and I have been assigned to attend a full-day workshop on a twelve week curriculum for empowering Spanish speaking parents, suggesting that meaningful change is likely to occur and be embraced as a result of this study.

9. **Public spheres affect social systems not directly, but indirectly.**

This study did not impose conflicts of interest because it was not funded nor generated by any parties involved with the legitimation deficit (i.e., the school or the parents). The study was not an official extension of any educational or community organization. I am the principal investigator and I do work at the school, thus my bargaining power with administrators at the school is perhaps somewhat inflated. However, my role in meetings was primarily to facilitate, and the concerns raised by parents were free to differ from mine. Furthermore, the information collected will be used to plan a series of parent support events that are now under development with full administrative support. Thus, the school will not be forced to adopt any procedures based on these data, but the data will be available to ensure that new procedures are effective.

10. Public spheres frequently arise in practice through, or in relation to, the communication networks associated with social movements.

There is movement in the school district and the high school in particular to communicate with parents, and already existing efforts such as the Spanish presentation at the school's conference night show the staff's desire to get information into the hands of parents. Training for next year's informational sessions is being offered through and promoted by the district, showing a district-wide commitment to improving involvement practices with Spanish speaking parents and families. The parents at conference night expressed concern about the difficulty they faced getting reliable access to information, suggesting a felt need in their community. Therefore, the staff trying to communicate more and the parents seeking more information formed a natural alliance on the PAR team, because their efforts predated the proposal of this project and the project capitalized on existing inertia rather than starting a movement of its own.

Parent Involvement Factors

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) model was explained to the PAR team near the close of the study, but it was not mentioned during focus groups because I did not wish to limit the ideas generated to a "multiple choice" format. However, many of the elements of the model came up organically in discussion and are reviewed here in terms of how they fit with the sample. Sampling limitations must be considered for each of these factors, as the study only included parents who had already taken the step to attend conference night.

Role construction. Estrella considered education as primarily a parent responsibility, while other participants saw education as a shared responsibility between parents and school. Whether this referred to supervision (e.g., Guillermo: "hay que chequear" *you have to check [their work])* or socializing students to be ready for working in groups (e.g., Marina: "enseñando la importancia de comunicarse" *teaching the importance of communication)*, everyone agreed that parents had some role in preparing their children for school success.

Self-efficacy was not measured in this study, but it did appear to vary. Marina and Guillermo expressed a certain amount of confidence with approaching the school, but Gabriela expressed doubt and anxiety about her approach, with a persistent concern that she wouldn't have enough information. In this sample, it seemed as though determination to enroll a student and communicate with the school outweighed the stress of not knowing what to do.

School and teacher invitations were reported as helpful to the parents in the study, particularly Marina and Josue, who reported satisfaction that even before they were invited to participate in the study, this high school offered more in the way of communication than what they'd experienced in Puerto Rico. Mrs. Flores and Mr. Santana were described as reliable

sources of information who welcomed parents to discuss school matters. Conference night and this study were described as excellent ways to include parent ideas, and Marina began attending monthly round table events, believing now that she is encouraged to share her views. In recruitment, specific teacher invitations (i.e., when I directly invited parents at conference night) were more effective than general school invitations (i.e., announcements and fliers).

Knowledge and skills. Education level did not seem to make a difference, as the group was comprised of highly educated individuals with experience in the educational system (e.g., Marina and Rodrigo) as well as others who reported having less formal education. However, despite the diversity of educational levels that were represented at the table, those with more educational experience did at times dominate conversation. I did not inquire about socio-economic status, so resources and financial stress cannot be considered in our explanation of involvement. This part of Hoover-Dempsey model was left out in part to respect the comfort of the participants and in part due to the weak relationship between resources and involvement behaviors (Anderson and Minke, 2007; Walker et al., 2011).

Time and energy. Time constraints were not a prohibitive obstacle, as Marina and Guillermo report working many hours and having few openings in their schedules. Marina had to drive over an hour to attend the meetings, and still did so cheerfully. Although some parents who had expressed interest in the study were unable to make the time, they had still offered to meet, but they were unable to meet at the same time that was needed by the majority of interested participants. For larger events (e.g., conference night), the ESOL staff address this dilemma by having rolling meetings where material is reviewed as needed, while multiple waves of participants show up throughout the night.

Obstacles in the Study vs. Obstacles in the Literature

Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008) reported that many of the Spanish monolingual children and parents in their study struggled with questioning school authority figures, fearing reprisal or that no one would believe them. This aligned with concerns expressed by Estrella and Marina in the first focus group. Good et al. (2010) mentioned specific obstacles that were faced by their Spanish-speaking communities, some of which also aligned with parent concerns in the current study, and others did not. The following obstacles were observed to a varying degree:

Gaps in communication. Every participant in the study except for Rodrigo (who is proficient in English) mentioned experiencing at least some difficulty with understanding English communications. The parents in the current study perceived school as more inviting than those surveyed by Good et al. (2010), but shared that communication was challenging until they found the right person to talk to. There were also communication gaps between school personnel and school-affiliated groups. We never found out the origin of the announcement on Marina's phone despite several attempts. Though school-related events are well-known and monitored, outside groups that don't work for the school do not always effectively report their activities to administrators, making it difficult to keep track of sources.

Culture clashes. Most participants in the study described the school as accepting of their culture and language. However, Estrella described teachers who were hostile toward her son when he spoke in Spanish, even though he did not yet know how to communicate in English. He struggled to defend himself because teachers didn't believe his account of what he had said in Spanish when he tried to clarify. Estrella described "gringos ofendidos por el espanol" *(non-Spanish speakers offended by the use of Spanish),* who become hostile when they assume Spanish-speaking children are talking badly about them, and Marina shared that teachers and

students were skeptical of her son's heritage, which was hurtful to him. Similar tension was previously encountered not only by Good et al. (2010), but also Smith et al. (2008), who described parents and students reluctant to question, fearing reprisal or that they wouldn't be believed. This barrier was not as frequently reported in this study as in the two examples cited above, however. Marina and Guillermo reported that they felt typically welcome, and that they are supported by many of the Latinx faculty members (including Mrs. Flores and Mr. Santana) who advocate for their children, thus they did not share the same degree of concern about teacher hostility. Nevertheless, it is possible that parents with less experience interacting with the school (perhaps those who have not yet met Mr. Santana or Mrs. Flores) would not have the same supports and thus feel similarly to Estrella.

Lack of transitional support. Though five of the six parent participants reported that the school is supportive to the families they serve, there was a shared felt concern for the parents that the school *does not yet serve*. The transitional period where students are not yet enrolled was reported by all participants to be chaotic and confusing. The people that parents first meet upon entering the school do not always speak Spanish (although interpreters are made available whenever possible), and they do not always provide the same information. All participants shared that they were eventually able to get the answers they needed, but some (including Marina and Gabriela) were set back enough that their child missed days of school before they could be enrolled. This transitional woe was mitigated to some extent by the Spanish enrollment form that is now available in the guidance department. Also, those who had heard about and attended the public health fair in late summer reported that it was a helpful source of information, but they lamented that it is only offered once a year and thus is not an option for parents who arrive after the school year has started.

Cultural Responsiveness vs. Cultural Competence

The initial goal of this project was to achieve cultural responsiveness for my practice rather than cultural competence for the organization, the reason being that culturally competent organizations must express values and foster communication and participation from the community throughout the entire organization (Hernandez et al., 2015). At the outset of this project, such a task seemed an unrealistic goal, but by the end of the project the head principal assigned myself and the head of ESOL to receive training and begin an official outreach project. This level of support may result in systematic changes where I had initially expected only personal ones, especially given the principal's expressed support of using data from the study for outreach and professional development.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Practice and Research

Sample size, location, and composition. The current study only consulted six parent participants and two faculty members, and the viewpoints expressed are not likely to be representative of all (or perhaps any) other parents at the school. Recruitment was limited to one conference night, thus those who participated were parents who had already taken steps to get involved with their children's education. This study did not have the far-reaching power of the initiatives described by Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2012), who had a team of 10 parents gather information from hundreds of others. However, the purpose of the study was not to create generalizable information, rather to demonstrate a process of inquiry that appreciates the uniqueness of the individuals involved. Furthermore, the project represents the beginning of a process that will continue to develop over the coming years.

Boundaries of the researcher. The field of psychology instills a rigorous pursuit of ethical practice, one tenet of which is avoiding conflicts of interest (APA, 2016). While this code of conduct is certainly necessary for avoiding the exploitation of participants for personal gain, in the context of this project I found myself in the stifling position of avoiding effective recruitment procedures because I did not wish to use my position at the school to benefit my research agenda. I followed the university recommendations based on this concept, but it seemed pedantic because the research agenda was to provide assistance to the community. On several occasions as the psychologist at the school I found myself speaking to Spanish monolingual parents who were frustrated about difficulty communicating with the school. However, due to conflict of interest rules (which I take very seriously), I did not mention that we were investigating this very problem and were actively seeking wanted parent input. Whether these limitations were truly enforceable or simply a product of my own interpretation of ethics, the double role of researcher and practitioner limited my agency as an action researcher. Were this simply a project generated by the school, it would have been appropriate (or even obvious) that parents at such meetings should be invited. For this reason, it is possible that a project of this nature would be more successful without association to a university and the restrictions therein.

Next steps. During the coming year, the head of the ESOL department and I will attend a workshop where we will prepare a twelve-week curriculum for Spanish-speaking parents. Without the constraints of a research study, we will be able to use word-of-mouth recommendations during ordinary school consultations, and some of the PAR team members have already volunteered to create new fliers for the event. In order to be culturally responsive, a focus of the upcoming curriculum will be outreach to parents who may not attend school events (eg., conference night) with the same regularity as the PAR team members.

Recommendations for practice and research. This study demonstrated how a White, middle-class researcher who speaks Spanish as a second language improve his own cultural responsiveness while simultaneously effecting changes deemed useful by culturally diverse parents. Replicating this process is a worthy aim, since the majority of educators are White middle class teachers, many of whom serve racially diverse youth who do not share their cultural background (Eslinger, 2013). Although race is an uncomfortable topic to confront (Young, 2010), several steps can be taken to facilitate open dialogue and reduce defensiveness. Recognizing one's positionality and interrogating Whiteness are critical first steps (Duncan, 2002; Henry et al., 2007). Furthermore, it is important to maintain realistic expectations for the outcomes of cultural inquiry. It is unlikely that a cultural inquiry will result in cultural enlightenment (Sue & Sue, 2012), but by creating a public sphere and dedicating time to serving the community, a researcher can communicate a genuine interest for better understanding and helping the community in question. Even if fully understanding an unfamiliar culture is not realistic, expressing the desire to understand makes a statement of welcome and good faith that is helpful in the process of outreach (Eslinger, 2013). Using ordinary language and approachable methodology empowers historically silenced voices to join in the process and speak on their own behalf (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). Future research in a setting without competing roles (i.e., educator and researcher) may allow for more flexibility in communication. Additionally, future research with a larger and more diverse sample (for example, including those who have and have not had previous experiences attending school events) may produce a more complex discussion of culture. However, the most important recommendation for future research is this: do not use these findings to understand Spanish speaking parents that you work with. If you want to understand the culture of the community you serve, put down this manuscript and ask them.

References

Aisch, G., Leonhardt, D., & Quealy, K. (2014, June 10). World Cup Opinions in 19 Countries: Likes, Dislikes, Predictions. The New York Times. Retrieved on April 24, 2016 from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/11/upshot/world-cup-opinions-in-19-countries-likes-dislikes-predictions.html?_r=0

Alegría, M., Canino, G., Stinson, F., & Grant, B. (2006). Nativity and DSM-IV psychiatric disorders among Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans and non-Latinx Whites in the United States: Results from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions.Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, 67, 56-65. doi:10.4088/JCP.v67n0

American Psychological Association. (2012). Crossroads: The psychology of immigration in the new century. Report of the APA Presidential Task Force on immigration. http://www.apa.org/topics/immigration/executive-summary.pdf

American Psychological Association. (2016). Revision of Ethical Standard 3.04 of the" Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct"(2002, as amended 2010). *The American psychologist*, *71*(9), 900.

Allen, R. (2011, December). Bridging the Hispanic achievement gap. Educational Update, 53. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/educationupdate/dec11/vol53/num12;Bridging-the-Hispanic-Achievement–Gap.aspx

Armenta, B. E., & Hunt, J. S. (2009). Responding to societal devaluation: Effects of perceived personal and group discrimination on the ethnic group identification and personal self-esteem of Latinx/Latina adolescents. Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 12, 23–39. doi:10.1177/ 1368430208098775

Armenta, B. E., Lee, R. M., Pituc, S. T., Jung, K. R., Park, I. J., Soto, J. A., ... & Schwartz, S. J. (2013). Where are you from? A validation of the Foreigner Objectification Scale and the psychological correlates of foreigner objectification among Asian Americans and Latinxs. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *19*(2), 131.

Athanases, S. Z., & Martin, K. J. (2006). Learning to advocate for educational equity in a teacher credential program. *Teaching and Teaching Education, 22*, 627–646.

Auerbach, S. (2009). Walking the walk: Portraits in leadership for family engagement in urban schools. *The School Community Journal*, *19*(1), 9-31.

Bandura, A. (1989). Regulation of cognitive processes through perceived self-efficacy. *Developmental Psychology*, 25, 729-735

Bandura, A. (1991). Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action. *Handbook of moral behavior and development*, *1*, 45-103.

Barnard, W. M. (2004). Parent involvement in elementary school and educational attainment. *Children and youth services review*, *26*(1), 39-62.

Berry, J. W. (2002). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 29, 697–712.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Boyd, D., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2005). The draw of home: How teachers' preferences for proximity disadvantage urban schools. Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 24(1), 113–132.

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986). Becoming Critical: Education, knowledge and action research. London: Falmer.

Carr, P.R., & Lund, D.E. (Eds.). (2007). The great White north: Exploring whiteness, privilege, and identity in education. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Castro, A. (2010). Acculturative stress: Experiences of culture conflict and discrimination among Mexican American dropouts (Doctoral Dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses and database. (UMI No. 3428812)

Central Intelligence Agency (2007). Peru. *The World Factbook.* Retreived on April 24, 2016 from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pe.html

Chevalier, J.M. and Buckles, D.J. (2013) *Participatory Action Research: Theory and Methods for Engaged Inquiry*, Routledge UK.

Chrispeels, J., & Rivero, E. (2001). Engaging Latinx families for student success: How parent education can reshape parents' sense of place in the education of their children. Peabody Journal of Education, 76(2), 119–169.

Contrada, R. J., Ashmore, R. D., Gary, M. L., Coups, E., Egeth, J. D., Sewell, A.,...Chasse, V. (2001). Measures of ethnicity-related stress: Psychometric properties, ethnic group

differences, and associations with well-being. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 31, 1775–1820. doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.2001.tb00205.x

Crenshaw, C. (1998). Colorblind rhetoric. *Southern Journal of Communication*, *63*(3), 244-256.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cummins, J. (1981). Empirical and theoretical underpinnings of bilingual education. *Journal of Education*, 163, 16–29.

Curtis, M. J., Lopez, A. D., Batsche, G. M., & Smith, J. C. (March, 2006). *School psychology 2005: A national perspective.*Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of School Psychologists, Anaheim, CA.

Davies, A. Z. (2008). Characteristics of adolescent Sierra Leonean refugees in public schools in New York City. *Education and Urban Society*, 40, 361–376.

Davila, L. T. (2008). Language and opportunity in the “land of opportunity”: Latina immigrants’ reflections on language learning and professional mobility Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 7, 356-

Deaux, K. (2006). To be an immigrant. New York: Sage

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

Delpit, L. (2006). Other people’s children: Cultural conflict in the classroom. New York: New Press.

Dietz, J. (Ed.). (2010). Employment discrimination against immigrants [Special issue]. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 25 (2). doi:10.1108/02683941011019320

Domina, T. (2005). Leveling the home advantage: Assessing the effectiveness of parental involvement in elementary school. Sociology of Education, 78, 233-249.

Dovidio, J. F., Gluszek, A., John, M., Ditlmann, R., & Lagunes, P. (2010). Understanding bias toward Latinxs: Discrimination, dimensions of difference, and experience of exclusion. Journal of Social Issues, 66, 59–78.

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

Duncan, G. (2002). Critical race theory and method: rendering race in urban ethnographic research, *QualitativeInquiry,* 8(1), 85-104.

Epstein, J. L., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2001). More than minutes: Teachers' roles in designing homework. *Educational psychologist*, *36*(3), 181-193.

Faez, F. (2012). Diverse teachers for diverse students: Internationally educated and Canadian-born teachers' preparedness to teach English language learners. *Canadian journal of education*, *35*(3), 64-84.

Ferrara, M. M. (2009). Broadening the myopic vision of parent involvement. *The School Community Journal*, *19*(2), 123-142.

Fishman, J. A. (1996). Language loyalty in the United States: The maintenance and perpetuation of non-English mother tongues by American ethnic and religious groups. Mouton.

Foucault, M. (1988). *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*. Vintage.

Frankenburg, R. (1993). *White women, race matters: The social construction of whiteness. Routledge, London.*

Freeman, D., & Freeman, Y. (2001). Between worlds: Access to second language acquisition. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: Continuum.

Golan, S., & Petersen, D. (2002). *Promoting involvement of recent immigrant families in their children's education.* Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Family Research Project.

Goldberg, D. T. (Ed.). (2009) *The anatomy of racism.* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN (2009), pp. 295-318

Gonzalez, M., & Chrispeels, J. (2004, April). Do educational programs increase parenting practices at home? Factors influencing Latinx parent involvement. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

Gonzalez-DeHass, A. R., & Willems, P. P. (2003). Examining the underutilization of parent involvement in the schools. *The School Community Journal, 13*(2), 85-99.

Good, M. E., Masewicz, S., & Vogel, L. (2010). Latino English Language Learners: Bridging achievement and cultural gaps between schools and families. *Journal of Latinxs and Education, 9*(4), 321-339.

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, 532-544.

Grillo, R. D. (2003). Cultural essentialism and cultural anxiety. *Anthropological Theory*, *3*(2), 157-173.

Hausman, J., 2016. *The World; Public Radio International, October 1st.*

Haycock, K., & Duany, L. (1991). Developing the Potential of Latinx Students. *Principal*, *70*(3), 25-27.

Helms, J. E. (1990). *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice*. Greenwood Press.

Henderson, R. W., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Library

Henry, W. J., Cobb-Roberts, D., Dorn, S., Exum, H. A., Keller, H. Shircliffe, B. (2007). When the dialogue becomes too difficult: A case study of resistance and backlash. *College Student Affairs Journal, 26(2)* 160-168.

Herbert, J. (2005). Owning the discourse: Seizing the power! Paper prepared for the Betty Watts Award presented as part of the Australian Association for Research in Education 2005 Conference, Sydney, NSW, Australia, November.

Hernandez, M., Nesman, T., Mowery, D., Acevedo-Polakovich, I. D., & Callejas, L. M. (2015). Cultural competence: A literature review and conceptual model for mental health services. *Psychiatric Services*.

Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Wilkins, A. S., Sandler, H. M., & O'Connor, K. P. J. (2004, April). Parental role construction for involvement: Interactions among theoretical, measurement, and pragmatic issues in instrument development. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Battiato, A. C., Walker, J. M. T., Reed, R. P., DeJong, J. M., & Jones, K. P. (2001). Parental involvement in homework. Educational Psychologist, 36, 195–210.

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.

Huebner, S. (2001). Multidimensional students' life satisfaction scale. *University of South Carolina, Department of Psychology, Columbia, SC*, *29208*.

Huntington, Samuel P. (2004). Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity. Simon & Schuster.

Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Geografía (2010). Retrieved on April 24 2016 at http://www.censo2010.org.mx.

James, W. (1890). *Principles of Psychology*.

Jeynes, W. H. (2003). A meta-analysis: The effects of parental involvement on minority children's academic achievement. Education and Urban Society, 35, 202-218. doi: 10.1177/0013124502239392

Jeynes, W. H. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relation of parental elementary school student academic achievement. Urban Education, 40, 237-269.

Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement. Urban Education, 42, 82-110.

Jeynes, W. H. (2010). The salience and the subtle aspects of parental involvement: Implications for school-based programs. Teacher College Record, 112, 747-774

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2013). *The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Kohl, G. W., Lengua, L. J., & McMahon, R. J. (2002). Parent involvement in school: Conceptualizing multiple dimensions and their relations with family and demographic risk factors. Journal of School Psychology, 38(6), 501–523

Krashen, S. D. (1997). Why bilingual education? Charleston, WV: ERIC/Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED403101)

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. American Educational Research Journal, 32(3), 465-491.

Lee, J. S., & Bowen, N. K. (2006). Parent involvement, cultural capital, and achievement gap among elementary school children, American Educational Research Journal, 43(2), 193–218. http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/00028312043002193

Lewin, K. (1951). Problems of research in social psychology. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), Field theory in social science: Selected theoretical papers (pp. 155–169). New York: Harper.

Linton, A., and Jiménez, T. 2009. Contexts for bilingualism among US-born Hispanics: 1990 and 2000. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32(6):967-95.

Lopez, G.R. (2001, Fall). The value of hard work: Lessons on parent involvement from an (im)migrant household. Harvard Educational Review, 71(3), 416-437.

López, S. R., Barrio, C., Kopelowicz, A., & Vega, W. A. (2012). From documenting to eliminating disparities in mental health care for Latinos. *American Psychologist*, *67*(7), 511.

Lopez, M., & Minushkin, S. (2008). National survey of Latinos: Hispanics see their situation in U.S. deteriorating; Oppose key immigration enforcement measures. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from http://pewhispanic.org/ reports/report.php?ReportID=93

Lopez, M. H., & Taylor, P.T. (2010). Latinos and the 2010 census: The foreign born are more positive. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/121.pdf

Malterud K. (2001) Qualitative research: standards, challenges, and guidelines. *Lancet*, 358: 483-488.

McIntosh, P. (2010). White privilege and male privilege. *The Teacher in American Society: A Critical Anthology*, *121*.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam-Webster (2016). Latino Definition. Retrieved September 11, 2016 from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Latinx.

Morales, L. S., Lara, M., Kington, R., Valdez, R., & Escarce, J. (2002). Socioeconomic, cultural and behavioral factors affecting Hispanic health outcomes. Journal of Healthcare for the Poor and Underserved, 13, 477-503.

Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., Mattison, R., Maczuga, S., Li, H., & Cook, M. (2015). Minorities are disproportionately underrepresented in special education longitudinal evidence across five disability conditions. *Educational Researcher*, *44*(5), 278-292.

Motel, S. & Patten, E. (2012). The 10 largest Hispanic origin groups: Characteristics, rankings, and top rankings. Retrieved from the Pew Hispanic Center website: http:/www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/06/The-10-Largest-Origin-Groups.pdf

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319 (2002).

Noddings, N. (1984). Caring, a feminine approach to ethics and moral education. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. American Educational Research Journal, 32(3), 465-491.

Organista, K. C. (2007). Solving Latino psychosocial and health problems: Theory, practice, and populations. Hoboken: Wiley

Orozco, G. L. (2008). Understanding the culture of low-income immigrant Latino parents: Key to involvement. *The School Community Journal,* 18(1), 21-37.

Pandya, C., McHugh, M., & Batalova, J. (2011). Limited English Proficient Individuals in the United States: Number, Share, Growth, and Linguistic Diversity. LEP Data Brief. *Migration Policy Institute*.

Pascoe, E. A., & Smart Richman, L. (2009). Perceived discrimination and health: A meta-analytic review. Psychological Bulletin, 135, 531–554. doi:10.1037/a0016059

Pena, D. C. (2000). Parent involvement: Influencing factors and implications. Journal of Educational Research, 94(1), 42–45.

Perea, S., & Smith, C. A. (2004). *The New America: The America of the Moo-shoo Burrito*. His Ministries Publications.

Pew Research Center, (May 12th, 2015). America's changing religious landscape. *Religion & Public Life*.

Plyer. v. Doe. 457 U.S. 202. (1982).

Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. (2001). Legacies: The story of the Immigrant Second Generation. University of California Press.

Quiocho, A. M., & Daoud, A. M. (2006). Dispelling myths about Latino parent participation in schools. *The Educational Forum, 70*(3), 255-267

Rodriguez, J. L. (2009). Considering the context of culture: Perspectives in the schooling of Latinx adolescents from the classroom, home, and beyond. In N. H. Hill & R. K. Chao (Eds.), *Families, schools and the adolescent: Connecting research, policy, and practice* (p. 37-52). New York: Teachers College Press.

Rogers-Sirin, L., Ryce, P., & Sirin, S. R. (2014). Acculturation, acculturative stress, and cultural mismatch and their influences on immigrant children and adolescents' well-being. In *Global Perspectives on Well-Being in Immigrant Families* (pp. 11-30). Springer New York.

Rumbaut, R. G. (2005). Sites of belonging: Acculturation, discrimination, and ethnic identity among children of immigrants. In T. W. Weiner (Ed.), Discovering successful pathways in children's development: Mixed methods in the study of childhood and family life (pp. 111-164). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Rumbaut, Rubén G., Douglas S. Massey and Frank D. Bean. 2006. Linguistic Life Expectancies: Immigrant Language Retention in Southern California. Population and Development Review 32(3):447-60.

Said, E. W. (2003). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin

Salinas, J. (2000, February). The effectiveness of minority teachers on minority student success. Paper presented at the National Association of African American Studies & National Association of Hispanic and Latinx Studies: 2000 Literature Monograph Series, Houston, TX. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED455235)

Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Parents' social networks and beliefs as predictors of parent involvement. Elementary School Journal, 102(4), 301– 316.

Shin & Ortman, 2011. Language Projections: 2010 to 2020. *Presented at the Federal Forecasters Conference, Washington, DC, April 21, 2011*. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/acs/Shin_Ortman_FFC2011_paper.pdf.

States. *The School Community Journal*, *18*(2), 119-146.

Slama, R. B. (2014). Investigating Whether and When English Learners Are Reclassified Into Mainstream Classrooms in the United States A Discrete-Time Survival Analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, *51*(2), 220-252.

Smith, T. B., & Silva, L. (2011). Ethnic identity and personal well-being of people of color: A meta-analysis. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58, 42–60.

Solomon, R.P., Portelli, J.P., Daniel, B.J., & Campbell, A. (2005). The discourse of denial: How White teacher candidates construct race, racism, and 'White privilege'. Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 8(2), 147-169.

Strekalova, E., & Hoot, J. L. (2008). What is special about special needs of refugee children: Guidelines for teachers. *Multicultural Education*, 16(1), 21–24.

Suárez-Orozco, C., Gaytán, F. X., & Kim, H. Y. (2010). Facing the challenges of educating Latino immigrant origin youth. In N. S. Landale, S. McHale, & A. Booth (Eds.), Growing up Hispanic: Health and development of children of immigrants (pp.151-166) Washington, DC: Urban Institute

Suárez-Orozco, C., & Suárez-Orozco, M. M. (2001). Children of immigration. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sue, D. W. (1989). Multicultural counseling-therapy: Culturally appropriate intervention strategies. North Amherst, Mass. Microtraining Associates, c1989.

Sue, D. W. (2010) Microaggressions in Everyday Life : Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation. Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: implications for clinical practice. *American psychologist*, *62*(4), 271.

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2012). *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Sullivan, A., & A'Vant, E. (2009). Multicultural Affairs: On the Need for Cultural Responsiveness. *Communique*, *38*(3), 8-9.

Tamayo, J. M., Rovner, J., & Muñoz, R. (2007). The importance of detection and treatment of somatic symptoms in Latin American patients with major depression. *Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria*, *29*(2), 182-187.

Tanaka, K., & Neptune, D. (2013, May 23). What kind of Asian are you? Retrieved April 3, 2016 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWynJkN5HbQ.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2003). Handbook of mixed methods in the social and behavioral sciences.

Tran, V. C. (2010). English gain vs. Spanish loss? Language assimilation among second-generation Latinos in young adulthood. *Social Forces*, *89*(1), 257-284.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/

U.S. Census Bureau. 2010. 2013 American Community Survey. Retrieved on May 29 2016 from http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/

United States Census Bureau (2015). Detailed Languages Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over: 2009-2013. Retrieved on April 24 2016 from http://census.gov/data/tables/2013/demo/2009-2013-lang-tables.html

Walker, J. M., Ice, C. L., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2011). Latino parents' motivations for involvement in their children's schooling: An exploratory study. *The Elementary School Journal*, *111*(3), 409-429.

Wang, D. (2008). Family-school relations as social capital: Chinese parents in the United

Warren, C. J. E. (1954). Brown v. Board of Education. *United States Reports*,*347*, 483.

Williams, D. R., Neighbors, H. W., & Jackson, J. S. (2003). Racial/ethnic discrimination and health: Findings from community studies. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93, 200–208. doi:10.2105/AJPH.93.2.200

Xu, J., & Corno, L. (2003). Family help and homework management reported by middle school students. *The Elementary School Journal*, 503-517.

Young, E. (2010). Challenges to conceptualizing and actualizing culturally relevant pedagogy: How viable is the theory in classroom practice*. Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(3), 248-260.

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

July 31, 2017

Michael Frank
Educational and Psychological Studies
Tampa, FL 33613

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**
IRB#: Pro00029541
Title: Resisting Essentialism in Cultural Research: A Participatory Action Research Study of Parent Involvement in Education among Spanish-Speaking Families

Study Approval Period: 7/29/2017 to 7/29/2018

Dear Mr. Frank:

On 7/29/2017, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
Study Protocol.docx

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
English Adult ICF Version #1.pdf
Spanish Adult ICF Version #1.pdf

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research

proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

Appendix B: Recruitment Flier

SE BUSCAN PARTICIPANTES QUE HABLEN ESPAÑOL PARA UN ESTUDIO

Proyecto: Mejorar Comunicación entre Casa y Escuela

(Número del Estudio: Pro00029541)

El objetivo del estudio es hacer un equipo de padres y personal de [name of high school] para estudiar ventajas de la comunidad Latina y obstáculos en contra de su involucración en la educación de sus hijos. Necesitamos hasta 5 participantes en el equipo de investigación, y hasta 10 participantes en el grupo de enfoque.

Participantes eligibles:

- Padre/madre/tutor de un estudiante en [name of high school]
- Hablan español como lengüa materna
- Pueden asistir reuniones en [name of high school]

El equipo de investigación	**El grupo de enfoque**
Reune al menos cuatro veces para hablar en un grupo, investiga obstáculos, y desarrolla soluciones Participa en el proceso de investigar ventajas y obstáculos en la comunidad y escuela Habla con otras familias para mejor entender problemas y soluciones	Reune dos veces para hablar en un grupo, investigar obstáculos, y desarrollar soluciones.

Los participantes recibirán:

- Una oportunidad para comunicar preocupaciones y demostrar su esfuerzo para ayudar a su hijo/a
- Una oportunidad para construir puentes y hacer nuevos apoyos entre escuela y casa
- Una tarjeta de regalo de $25 (por el equipo de investigación) o $10 (por el grupo de enfoque) para usar en un supermercado o tienda

Se le interesa participar, llame a Michael Frank al número (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Appendix C: Informed Consent (Spanish)

Consentimiento informado para participar en investigación que involucra riesgos mínimos.

Pro # 00029541

Usted está siendo pedido para participar en un estudio de investigación. Los estudios de investigación incluyen solamente a personas que deciden participar. Este documento se denomina formulario de consentimiento informado. Por favor, lea esta información atentamente y tómese el tiempo necesario para decidir. Pídale al investigador o al personal del estudio que hable con usted acerca de este formulario, y pídale que le explique todas las palabras o la información que no entienda con claridad. Le recomendamos que hable con su familia y sus amigos antes de decidir si tomar parte de este estudio de investigación. A continuación se listan la naturaleza del estudio, los riesgos, inconvenientes, molestias y otra información importante acerca del estudio.

Le invitamos a participar de un estudio de investigación llamado: **Resisting Essentialism in Cultural Research: A Participatory Action Research Study of Parent Involvement in Education among Spanish-Speaking Families** *(Resistir esencialismo en la investigación cultural: Un estudio de investigación de acción participatorio para entender involucración de padres en la educación entre familias que hablan español).*

La persona a cargo de este estudio es Michael Frank. Esta persona se denomina el Investigador Principal. Sin embargo, otro personal del estudio también podrá participar y podrá actuar en nombre de la persona a cargo. Él es dirigido/a en esta investigación por Linda Raffaele-Mendez, Ph.D. El estudio se llevará a cabo en [Local] High School.

Propósito del estudio

El propósito del estudio es hacer un equipo con padres/tutores que hablen español para descubrir ventajas de su comunidad y obstáculos que enfrentar para mejorar su involucración en la educación de sus hijos. Esto incluye cómo definir "involucración" para reconocer la diversidad de la comunidad y que ciertas familias pueden tener filosofías e ideas diferentes sobre la educación de sus hijos. Investigación de acción participatorio quiere decir que 1) los participantes tendrán la oportunidad de elegir cómo realizar el estudio, y 2) el estudio se realizará con el objetivo de lograr metas elegidas por el equipo del estudio (lo cual incluye los participantes). Los participantes serán parte del "equipo de acción participante."

¿Por qué se le invita a participar?

Le invitamos a participar de este estudio porque usted tiene un hijo/a en [Local] High School y usted habla español como su idioma principal.

Procedimientos del estudio:

Al cumplir este formulario, usted puede unir el equipo de acción participatorio o el grupo de enfoque (explicados abajo). Hasta 5 personas pueden unir el equipo de acción participatorio. Después, participantes solo se considera para el grupo de enfoque.

Upon completing this form you may join the participatory action research team or the Focus Group (described below). Up to 5 participants can join the participatory action research team, after which participants will only be considered for the focus group.

Si usted participa de este estudio como miembro del **EQUIPO DE ACCIÓN PARTICIPATORIO**, se le pedirá que:

> Reúne con un equipo cada semana (durante 4-8 semanas) para compartir sus ideas sobre la educación y las cosas que necesita su familia para tener éxito escolar. Reuniones tendrán lugar en la sala de conferencia en la oficina principal de [Local] High School, y va a durar más o menos una hora. Los miembros del equipo de acción participante facilitarán dos reuniones ("grupos de enfoque") con otros miembros de la comunidad para identificar obstáculos y soluciones para mejorar la relación entre escuela y casa para los padres/madres y tutores que hablan español.

Si usted participa de este estudio como miembro del **GRUPO DE ENFOQUE,** se le pedirá que:

> Participa en dos reuniones que duran una hora, con el objetivo de identificar obstáculos y soluciones para mejorar la relación entre escuela y casa para los padres/madres y tutores que hablan español. Reuniones tendrán lugar en la sala de conferencia en la oficina principal de [Local] High School,
>
> El audio de los grupos de enfoque será grabada para que podamos escribir el contenido de las conversaciones y sacar los temas más importantes para entender la cultura, educación, y relación entre escuela y casa. Sólo el equipo del estudio (incluyendo el investigador principal, su supervisora, y otros miembros del equipo de la universidad) tendrá acceso al audio para transcribirlo. El audio sólo será guardado en computadores de la universidad, protegidos por contraseñas. Todos los nombres, apellidos, e información que pueda identificar participantes serán quitadas de los transcritos para proteger la privacidad de los participantes. Los transcritos serán compartidas con el equipo de acción participante para que el equipo pueda participar en la interpretación de los temas y resultados. El audio será destruido/borrado 5 años después de la conclusión del estudio.

Cantidad total de participantes

Alrededor de 10 individuos participarán de este estudio en [Local] High School. El equipo de acción participante tendrá 5 miembros participantes, y el grupo de enfoque podrá tener hasta 10 miembros.

Alternativas / Participación voluntaria / Retiro

Usted no tiene obligación de participar de este estudio.

Usted sólo debe participar de este estudio si desea ofrecerse en forma voluntaria. No debe sentirse presionado a participar del mismo. Usted es libre de participar en este estudio o retirarse en cualquier momento. No habrá sanciones ni pérdidas de beneficios a los que tiene derecho si deja de participar de este estudio.

Beneficios

Los potenciales beneficios de participar de este estudio incluyen una oportunidad para expresar sus preocupaciones sobre la educación y compartir sus ideas sobre cómo mejorar la comunicación con familias de la

comunidad hispanohablante. Además, los resultados del estudio serán presentadas a la administración y el personal de [Local] High School, haciendo que las conclusiones del grupo de enfoque y el equipo de acción participante sean consideradas para informar cómo trabajar con familias hispohablantes de una manera justa y eficaz. Los esfuerzos de su familia y comunidad también serán reconocidos por la administración y personal porque serán incluidos en la presentación de resultados.

Riesgos o molestias

Pueden existir los siguientes riesgos:

- Puede haber opiniones distintas en el equipo participante, entonces es posible que se ponga incómodo cuando haya un desacuerdo. Sin embargo, el investigador principal es un psicólogo que trabajará en mantener un medio ambiente de respeto.
- Puede haber temas difíciles, por ejemplo, estigma, racismo, o fracaso escolar. Al hablar de circunstancias difíciles, es posible que se ponga incómodo. Si haya información muy delicada, por ejemplo, acerca del estatus de inmigración, puede haber preocupaciones sobre las consecuencias al contar la verdad. Si haya información delicada que a usted no se siente cómodo a compartir, usted puede pedir que pare la grabación de audio o quedarse en silencio sobre el asunto. Para reducir los riesgos vinculados a compartiendo información muy delicada, la confidencialidad y privacidad de los datos del estudio será protegida al máximo nivel posible.
- Si usted ya tiene muchas responsabilidades por su trabajo o casa, es posible que las responsabilidades del estudio aumentarán su nivel de estrés. Si en cualquier momento a usted no parece factible continuar, puede pedir que se retire del estudio sin consecuencias.

Compensación

Usted recibirá una tarjeta de regalo de $25 si completa el estudio como miembro del equipo de acción participante, o $10 si participa en el grupo de enfoque o parcialmente cumple el estudio como miembro del equipo de acción participante. Si usted se retira del estudio por cualquier motivo antes de la finalización, todavía recibirá la tarjeta de regalo de $10.

Costos

No hay costos para participar de este estudio, a menos que usted pierda horas del trabajo o tenga que pagar alguien para cuidar a sus hijos durante reuniones.

Privacidad y confidencialidad

Mantendremos la privacidad y confidencialidad de los registros del estudio. Es posible que determinadas personas necesiten acceder a sus registros del estudio. Toda persona que acceda a sus registros debe mantenerlos en forma confidencial. Estos individuos incluyen:

- El equipo del estudio, incluido el Investigador Principal, su supervisora, y demás personal de investigación.
- Determinado personal del gobierno o la universidad que necesitan saber más acerca del estudio e individuos que supervisan para asegurarse de que realicemos el estudio de manera correcta.
- Toda agencia del gobierno federal, estatal o local que regule esta investigación, por ejemplo, el Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP; agencia que protege personas involucrados en investigaciones).

- La Comisión de Revisión Institucional (IRB, en inglés) de la USF y personal relacionado que tenga responsabilidades de supervisión para este estudio, incluido personal de Integridad y Conformidad de Investigaciones de la USF.

Podríamos publicar lo que aprendamos con este estudio. Si lo hacemos, no incluiremos su nombre. No publicaremos nada que permita a los demás saber quién es usted.

Usted puede recibir respuestas a sus preguntas, inquietudes o denuncias

Si tiene preguntas, inquietudes o denuncias acerca del estudio, o experimenta algún problema imprevisto, llame a Michael Frank al 813-974-5638.

Si tiene preguntas acerca de sus derechos como participante de este estudio, o si desea realizar alguna denuncia, tiene problemas o inquietudes que desea discutir con alguien externo a la investigación, llame a la IRB de la USF al (813) 974-5638 o contáctese por correo electrónico RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Consentimiento para participar de este estudio de investigación

Otorgo mi consentimiento libremente para participar de este estudio. Entiendo que al firmar este formulario acepto participar de este estudio. He recibido una copia de este formulario para mí.

____ ____________
Firma de la persona que participa del estudio Fecha

____
Nombre en imprenta de la persona que participa del estudio

Declaración de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento informado

Le he explicado cuidadosamente a la persona que participa del estudio lo que puede esperar de su participación. Confirmo que el sujeto del estudio habla el idioma que se usó para explicar la investigación y que recibe un formulario de consentimiento informado en su idioma principal. El sujeto de este estudio ha dado un consentimiento informado con validez legal.

____ ____________
Firma de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento informado Fecha

____ ____________
Nombre en imprenta de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento informado Fecha

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form (English)

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Pro # 00029541

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

Resisting Essentialism in Cultural Research: A Participatory Action Research Study of Parent Involvement in Education among Spanish Speaking Families.

The person who is in charge of this research study is Michael Frank**.** This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. He is being guided in this research by Linda Raffaele-Mendez, Ph.D.

The research will be conducted at [Local] High School.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to create a team of Spanish-speaking parents and guardians in order to discover strengths of the community and barriers to improving their involvement in the education of their children. This includes deciding how to define “involvement” to recognize the diversity of the community and that some families may have differing views regarding the education of their children. Participatory Action Research means that 1) the participants will have the opportunity to decide how to carry out the study, and 2) the study will be carried out with the intention of achieving goals selected by the participant researchers (including those who volunteer with this form) These participants will form the “participatory action research team).

Why are you being asked to take part?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you have a child enrolled in [Local] High School and you speak Spanish as your first language.

Study Procedures:

Upon completing this form you may join the participatory action research team or the Focus Group (described below). Up to 5 participants can join the participatory action research team, after which participants will only be considered for the focus group.

If you take part in this study as a part of the **PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH TEAM**, you will be asked to:

Meet as a team on a weekly basis (for 4-8 weeks) to share your ideas about education and the things that your family needs in order to have school success. Meetings will take place in the conference room in the main office of [Local] High School, and will last approximately 1 hour. Members of the participatory action research team will facilitate two focus group meetings with other members of the community in order to identify obstacles and solutions in order to improve or better recognize home-school relationships for parents and guardians that speak Spanish.

If you take part in this study as a part of the **FOCUS GROUP,** you will be asked to:

Participate in two meetings, each an hour in length, with the goal of identifying obstacles and solutions in order to improve or better recognize home-school relationships for parents and guardians that speak Spanish. Meetings will take place in the conference room in the main office of [Local] High School.

Audio from the focus groups will be recorded so that we can write down the content of the conversations and extract the themes that are most important for understanding culture, education, and home-school relationships. Only the research team (including the principal investigator, his supervisor, and other members of the university team) will have access to the audio for the purposes of transcribing it. The audio will be saved only on password protected university computers. All names and information that could identify participants will be removed from the transcripts to protect the privacy of the participants. The transcripts will be shared with the participatory action research team so the team can participate in the interpretation of the themes and results. The audio will be destroyed/erased 5 years after the conclusion of the study.

Total Number of Participants

About 10 individuals will take part in this study in [Local] High School. The participatory action team will have up to 5 participant members, and the focus group can have up to 10 members.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You do not have to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

Benefits

The potential benefits of participating in this research study include an opportunity to express your concerns about education and share your ideas about improving communication with families in the Spanish speaking community. Moreover, the results of the study will be presented to the administration and faculty at [Local] High School, making it so that the conclusions of the focus group and participatory action team will be considered to inform how to work with Spanish-speaking families fairly and effectively. The efforts of your family and community will also be recognized by the administration and the faculty because they will be included in the presentation of results.

Risks or Discomfort

The following risks may occur:

- There may be differing opinions between members of the participatory action research team, thus it is possible that some discomfort will be felt during disagreements. However, the PI is a psychologist experienced with conflict resolution and will work to maintain a respectful environment.
- Difficult topics may arise, for example, stigma, racism, or school failure. Speaking of difficult circumstances may make some participants uncomfortable. If there is highly delicate information, for example, related to immigration status, participants may feel concerns about the consequences of speaking up. If there is information that you are not comfortable sharing, you may request that audio recordings are paused, or you may stay silent on the topic of concern. To reduce risks related to sharing delicate information, confidentiality and privacy of data will be protected to the maximum extent possible.
- If you already have numerous responsibilities at work or at home, it is possible that the responsibilities of participating in the study will increase your level of stress. If at any momento it does not seem feasible to continue, you may ask to withdraw from the study without penalty.

Compensation

You will receive a gift card of $25 if you complete the study as a member of the PAR team, or $10 if you participate in the focus group or partially complete the study as a member of the PAR team. If you withdraw from the study for any reason before its conclusion, you will still receive the $10 gift card.

Costs

There is no financial cost for participating in the study, unless you are required to be absent from work or pay somebody to provide child care during your participation.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the principal investigator, his supervisor, and other research personnel.

- Certain government or university officials that need to know more about the study and individuals that supervise the study to assure that it is carried out properly.
- Any federal, state, or local government agency that regulates this research, for example, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP).
- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of USF and related personnel who are responsible for supervising the study, including personnel responsible for Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have questions, comments, or complaints related to the study or if you experience and unforeseen problem, call Michael Frank at (823) 702-9965.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

_______________________________________ ____________

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study Date

____

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

____
____

Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent Date

____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Appendix E: Acronym Dictionary

Compendium of Acronymns: Common phrases referenced in school communications, along with definitions and context to explain the importance or relevance of the acronym.

- **ACT prep: American College Test.** Es otro examen parecido al SAT, usado para el mismo motivo. Se dice que algunos estudiantes salen mejor en uno u otro, y para esto algunos estudiantes toman los dos y comparten la mejor puntuación con las universidades.
- **AP: Assistant Principal.** Principal asistente, el/la administrador/a que tiene autoridad sobre una cantidad de estudiantes, normalmente una parte del alfabeto. Por ejemplo, estudiantes con apellido que empieza con A-F trabaja con un AP específico).
- **Pd: period** (período en que se reune la clase)
- **Mtg: Meeting** (reunión)
- **Sem: Semester** (semestre)
- **MC: Media Center** (la bibilioteca de la escuela)
- **MCR: Math for College Readiness** (Matematecas para prepararse para la universidad)
- **FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions** (Preguntas frecuentemente hechas / preguntas comunes)
- **TBA: To Be Announced** (Aún no dicho, refiere a informacion que se va a anunciar en el futuro)
- **TBD: To Be Determined** (Aún no determinado)
- **FYI: For Your Information** (Para su información, o mejor dicho, para que sepa)

- **FSA: Florida Standards Assessment.** Examen vinculado a los estándares académicos. En cada grado, los estudiantes deben alcanzar ciertos estándares, es decir, el nivel mínimo para ser "proficiente." Sólo una vez al año (no todos los años), pero es un examen muy importante. Usado para decidir como el estudiante salió y en cuales clases ponerse en el próximo año.
- **FAIR: Florida Assessment of Instruction in Reading.** Prueba de instrucción en lectura, administrada tres veces al año para medir rendimiento en lectura. Usada para predecir dificultades. Es para estudiantes que reciben instrucción intensa en la Lectura.
- **EOC: End of Course Assessment.** Examen vinculado a ciertos cursos que mide si el estudiante ha logrado aprender el contenido. Hay que pasar el EOC para pasar el curso.
- **PTSA: Parent Teacher Student Association.** Grupo de Padres/madres, profesores, y estudiantes que trabajan juntos para la escuela.
- **HCPS:** Hillsborough County Public School
- **HOCO: Homecoming.** Un baile y evento que celebra los equipos deportivos y da una oportunidad para que los estudiantes se vistan de una manera formal y bailen con sus iguales.
- **HR:** Home room
- **PSAT day: Pre- SAT day.** El día en que los estudiantes toman un examen para preparar para el SAT test.
- **SAT: Suite of Assessments.** SAT es un test importante que muestra la aprovechimiento de un estudiante y predice su exito en la universidad. La mayoria de la gente en ingles no sabe que quiere decir el acrónimo "SAT," pero sabe que es un examen importante.