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Fulfilling Their Dreams: Latina/o College Student Narratives on the Impact of Parental Involvement on Their Academic Engagement

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**Fulfilling Their Dreams:
Latina/o College Student Narratives on the Impact of Parental Involvement on
Their Academic Engagement**

A Dissertation Presented

by

JENNIFER M.D. MATOS

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DEDICATION

for the two loves of my life, Mom and Casey

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ABSTRACT

FULFILLING THEIR DREAMS: LATINA/O COLLEGE STUDENT NARRATIVES ON THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON THEIR ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

MAY 2011

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The construction of parental involvement as it was introduced into American schools over 90 years ago marginalizes Latina/o students and families. While research exists on the positive impact of Latina/o parental involvement as well as cultural parenting practices unique to Latina/o culture that foster academic success, much remains to be learned. What teachers and administrators in K-12 and higher education settings have not yet widely considered are how Latina/o students bring with them six forms of cultural capital transmitted to them via their parents to persist in hostile environments such as predominantly White institutions (PWIs). This qualitative study addresses what can be done to accommodate and support a growing Latina/o population by amplifying student narratives on how, and under what circumstances they employ each of the six forms of capital. The findings reflect my research with 37 Latina/o college students at different types of higher education institutions (a selective all-women's college, a large co-educational University, and a community college) to examine how students: describe and interpret parental involvement, employ cultural messages regarding education, and

how they utilize cultural capital to persist at these PWIs. This study has implications for policy and practice for teachers and administrators in K-12 and higher education settings. It challenges these institutions to adopt asset-based approaches that propose to work with whole Latina/o families to support the whole Latina/o student. Findings from this study also provide recommendations for how Latina/o students can take active roles in advocating for themselves in higher education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of parental involvement in education is not new. The dialogue on parental involvement and the view of the parent(s) as having a critical impact on their children was influenced by and dates as far back as the writings of theorists like Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel. It was Pestalozzi, who in 1951, wrote that the mother is, “the first to nourish her child’s body, so should she, by God’s order, be the first to nourish his mind” (Berger, 1991, p. 26). It would be Froebel’s kindergartens who would be introduced into the U.S. system of education by German immigrant Margarethe Schurz that would spark the increase in the development of U.S. kindergartens from 1870-1890 (Berger, 1991). The increase in kindergartens brought with it an increase in the notion of parental involvement in education and parental education.

The literature on parental involvement suggests that while the interests in kindergarten, childhood, and parental education programs were driven mainly from middle-class parents who were in line with the Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebelian views that children are inherently good; these programs were also a tool used for “acculturating lower-class immigrant families into the mainstream culture” (Berger, 1991, p. 212). When immigrants arrived in the United States during the 1800s, kindergartens and programs like them were designed to ease the hardships of new Americans, to teach the newcomers of the “dominant culture’s ways,” and to indoctrinate immigrant parents with Americanized “moral and child rearing beliefs” (Berger, 1991, p. 212).

The growth of parental education programs, legislative support, and federal funding (Berger, 1991) fostered the view that these programs were a means to promote assimilation into a mainstream culture and did not provide a support to asset-based ideologies for new immigrants coming to the United States. As parent education became more professionalized, the roles of parents began to be defined. Basically, “the parents’ role was dictated by the schools; ideally, parents would be helpers and supporters of what teachers and schools were doing. In particular, parents were encouraged to help with homework, join the PTA, provide merchandise for the bake sale and show up at times specified by the school, such as back to school night” (Zellman & Waterman, 1998, p. 370). It is in the 1920s, with the professionalization of child and parent education programs and associations, that we see how parental involvement would be defined and manifested in schools.

This 90-year-old view of what “involved parenting” means has not been updated to consider the changing complexion of the U.S. In particular, the antiquated view of parental involvement under which schools operate does not take into consideration the rapidly increasing population of Latina/os¹ in the U.S. While the American educational system holds one view of what it means to be an involved parent, that notion is in conflict with some aspects of Latina/o culture. For example, what schools describe as involvement may be interpreted and manifested differently by Latina/o parents. Chavkin and Gonzalez’s study on partnerships between Mexican American parents and school systems found that educators are highly valued and respected in the Latina/o culture (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995). Due to the level of respect Latina/os have for educators,

¹I am defining Latina/o in accordance with the U.S. Census as “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, or South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race” (United States Census Bureau (n.d.a.).

traditional American parental involvement practices may be read as interference by Latina/o parents and this type of interference is regarded as highly disrespectful by Latina/o parents (Chavkin, 1991; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Espinosa, 1995; Trumbull Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). These parents may not have had access to the social capital and understanding of the American concept of parental involvement while the American system of education lacks an understanding of some manifestations of Latina/o parental involvement.

Research and data have aptly documented that Latina/o parents are not *uninvolved*, but rather *differently* involved in the education of their children (Carger, 1997; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Espinosa, 1995; Trumbull et al., 2001). Latina/o parents hold a high regard for education and transmit this regard as a cultural value to their children (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998). Data also support that Latina/o parental involvement is effective in supporting the aspirational, occupational, and educational goals of their children (Behnke, Piercy, & Diversi, 2004; Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Delgado-Gaitán & Trueba, 1991; Moles, D'Angelo, & Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). What the literature to date also suggests is that Latina/o students credit their parents' unique cultural style of parental involvement with their success in school (Antrop-González, Velez, & Garrett, 2005; Ceballo, 2004; Rivera, 1997; Valencia & Black, 2002; Waterman, 2008).

The issue that requires further investigation is the experience of Latina/o students on their path of educational "success." Taking a closer look at Latina/o parental involvement, research has shown that Latina/os possess capital in at least six forms that

are related to the ways in which Latina/o parents are engaged in the education of their children. These six forms are: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant (Auerbach, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 1997; Faulstich Orellana, 2003; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

These forms of capital are important to my study because they are some of the tools that Latina/o parents use to train students how to maintain the hopes and dreams despite setbacks (aspirational); strengthen communication skills through cultural practices, such as the sharing of *dichos* and *cuentos* (linguistic); learn how to care for others and cope through difficult situations (familial); utilize networks for strength, support, and resources (social); move within systems that were not created with people of color in mind and demonstrate agency despite institutional constraints (navigational), and foster behavior that challenges inequality (resistant). Given the fact that in 2000, only 7% of students enrolled in 4-year colleges were Latina/o (compared to 71% of White students and in 2000, only 6% of the bachelor's degrees conferred were to Latina/os, compared to 75% of White students), higher education as a whole, appears to be a setting not created with Latina/os in mind and a type of setting filled with the adversities that Latina/o parents prepare their children for. The six forms of capital assist students in becoming more resilient and offer skills on how to survive and thrive in hostile environments (Yosso, 2005). The higher education institutions from which I recruited participants were not created with Latina/o students in mind; are places where Latina/o students found themselves represented at less than half of the student population, and were institutions where White students made up the majority of the population.

Research to date has explored the ways in which Latina/o parents are involved in the education of their children; the credit successful Latina/o students attribute to their parents for their success; and how the six forms of capital are utilized. This study will add to current scholarship by taking into consideration new emerging voices and phenomena during the current day where an increased population of Latina/os and a contentious debate on Latina/os and immigration is at the fore. This study will contribute to the current field of social justice education by providing insight into how educators can challenge the notion of assimilation as a positive tool toward academic success into the mainstream by gaining an awareness of the assets Latina/o students and families bring to the classroom.

Purpose Statement

This study investigated how Latina/o parental messages regarding the value of education were utilized and engaged by undergraduate students at predominantly White institutions. The study further explored how, and under what circumstances, Latina/o students chose to engage with the six forms of capital (aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant) reported throughout literature on Latina/o parenting to be transmitted from Latina/o parents to their children (Auerbach, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 1997; Faulstich Orellana, 2003; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Using qualitative methods and employing grounded theory, I worked with Latina/o students in three distinct settings: a highly selective women's college, a large co-educational University, and a small community college to explore the choices students made in employing, or not employing parental training regarding education.

Statement of the Problem

There are several reasons why the topic of Latina/o student implementation of Latina/o parental messages regarding education is so critical and is the main theme for this study. First, the rate at which the Latina/o population is growing is astounding. United States census figures tell us that Latina/os are the fastest growing ethnic group (in terms of population), and the years 2030–2050 will have Latina/os at 60% of the U.S. population. Although the Latina/o population is on a path where their number will be three times as large as it is now, this does not mean that the same is true for academic resources and support to which this increased number of Latina/o students will have access. Disturbing trends and figures expose the reality that the academic needs of Latina/o students are not being met. Over 40% of all students in juvenile court schools are Latina/o (Behnke et al., 2004). Latina/os have the lowest number of high school completion rates. A 2003 study revealed that only 52% of Latina/o students graduate from high school and only 9% of those students who start college are academically prepared for the rigors of higher education (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Latina/o students fall behind every other social identity group in earning a college degree (Fry, 2002) and other research shows that Latina/os are less likely than any other racial group to enroll in a four-year college degree program after they complete high school (Perna, 2000). Some explanations for these trends are the factors that are obstacles for immigrants to the United States (i.e., limited educational and social capital, limited or non-existent mastery of the English language). Other explanations place the blame with parents who are described by educational systems as “uninvolved” and un-invested in the academic performance of their children, and some other explanations would assert that the key to

Latina/o student success in American school systems is assimilation into the “mainstream” culture (Heller, 1966). Second, I believe that a lack of awareness regarding the Latina/o culture; a cultural misunderstanding regarding the interpretation of parental involvement, and a difference in the understanding of social capital are obstacles Latina/o students and families face. Finally, I hypothesize that educators would be better equipped to adequately support Latina/o students with insights into how Latina/o students utilize the cultural messages regarding education that are transmitted to them via their parents.

Significance of the Study

There is a great deal of research that details the impact of Latina/o parental involvement on the academic success of Latina/o students. Many of the studies to date on successful Latina/o students concern themselves with factors attributed to Latina/o high school student application to college (Davidson & Cardemil, 2009; Nuñez, 2009; Zarate & Tomas Rivera, 2007), college student enrollment (Becerra, 2010; Denner, Cooper, Dunbar, & Lopez, 2005; Person & Rosenbaum, 2005; Stern, 2009), graduation (Fry, 2002; Hixson, 2003; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Swail, Cabrera, Lee, & Williams, 2005), and the importance and impact of familial (especially parental) and cultural connections. While these studies address specific messages regarding education that encourage students to excel in their academic settings, these studies do not describe the active and conscious methods used by students to persist in higher education when students are no longer living within the same residence as their immediate family members and/or they are of legal age to advocate for themselves. My study will rectify the gap in the current literature in evidencing the active ways in which Latina/o students utilize the messages regarding education they have received from their parents. This

qualitative study has the potential to inform pedagogy and practice for both K-12 educators in their role to prepare Latina/o students for college and for higher education educators and administrators in offering support services directed toward Latina/o college students. This study connects to the field of social justice education in that it concerns itself with social inequities; in this case, it questions the educational inequities faced by Latina/os, and in keeping with the tenets of social justice education, this inquiry takes one step further to take action regarding these inequities.

Significance for the Researcher

I recall first being intrigued by the topic of Latina/o parental involvement in the fall of 2008. I was taking a research methods class and designed a project around Latinas and messages they received about education from their mothers. One of the first questions I asked was: “How did your parents feel about school when you were growing up?”

It was a simple question and one that fueled a flame for a topic starting as something “intriguing” to something worthy of a dissertation. In almost every instance where I asked a Latina student, “how did your parents feel about school when you were growing up?” the student would roll her eyes or say something in Spanish or laugh at a memory and the story would begin.

As a researcher, I couldn’t place a value on what the students were saying. On the inside, as a Latina, I knew what the laugh meant. As I spoke to students, I recalled memories of my own mother who had a strong regard for education. I laughed, too, at the memories of not just having to *do* homework but having to *redo* homework if it wasn’t neat and perfect. My mother reminded me that the teacher was going to see the work that

I submitted, and anything I submitted with my name on it should be my best work. In my family, teachers were respected and idolized. A teacher was a surrogate parent as far as my mother was concerned, and it was made clear that the teacher was to be respected. Although she held them in such esteem, I don't know how many of my teachers my mother actually met. Working two—sometimes three—jobs, my mother wasn't always able to take a night off from work or to switch a shift at the nursing home to make it to PTA meetings, parent/teacher conferences, or my performances in the school plays. She became involved in other ways: in reinforcing the work the teacher gave throughout the day, in encouraging me to be a good student at home so I would be a good student at school, in demonstrating respect for teachers and school staff, in making sure my homework was complete and accurate. I laugh inside when I think about how the words “report card day” still cause a visceral reaction. Every report card day, I would nervously hand the cardstock document to my mother. She would look at it, with one arm folded across her chest while the other held the report card, and she would begin “what happened to this? Why is this A now a B+?” I would have to account for every grade that had slipped, and there was precious little praise for those “A's” and “A+s” that dotted the report card. In the 8th grade, I decided that she would never be able to judge my grades again. On the last day of school, I handed her a report card and was wearing a wide grin across my face. I knew that there was no grade inside the report that was lower than an “A.” She studied the report card carefully, and finally as only she could do, asked “Why aren't these A's all A+s?” This is why I laugh. I laugh at the rigor of what I endured in my training as a student and how I hold myself to those standards now.

When I spoke to Latina students in 2008, I noticed that there were similarities between their stories about their mothers and the stories about mine. What was astounding to me was that Latinas from different social identities, class backgrounds, religious faiths, and geographical locations described that their parents—specifically their mothers—demanded the same academic rigor as mine did.

How was it that Latinas who came from all reaches of life shared the same experience with parental involvement? I began to theorize that there was a commonality and a greater phenomenon with Latina/o parenting that fostered and inspired academic success in their children. The more I read on and researched the topic of Latina/o parental involvement in education, the more I was able to understand my own mother. This realization allowed me to see that my mother, whose intellect and expertise had been discredited because of a lack of formal education, contribution to my education was seen as a deficit and not an asset, and whose involvement was not recognizable by the “standard” definition of parental involvement, and therefore was invalid.

Further study of parental involvement revealed that there were theories with which I could found my ideas. These theories, Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory, explained the experiential learning and lessons of parents like mine and the ones who would lead their daughters all the way to the gates of prestigious colleges. I began to question the concept of parental involvement and how it was constructed, maintained, supported, and demonstrated. More questions followed, such as “how does parental involvement differ in White families when compared to Latina/o families?” The most important question to ask was, “Is Latina/o parental involvement impactful? If so, what’s the impact?”

These are a sample of the questions that were examined in the review of the literature. The following main research questions took a more active role in driving the study.

Research Questions

The main research questions that directed this study were:

- 1) How do Latina/o students describe and interpret parental involvement?
- 2) How do Latina/o students employ the cultural messages regarding the value of education as transmitted to them via their parents?
- 3) How, if at all, are the six forms of capital (aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant) manifested?
- 4) What can teachers and administrators learn through these narratives to provide asset-based support to Latina/o students?

These research questions are influenced by two bodies of literature. The first is literature that examines the construction of parental involvement and its origins and development in the United States. The second is a body of literature on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit)², the theoretical frameworks that informed this study. Chapter 2 includes literature on the foundations and current status of parental involvement as a foundation for understanding how American educators have come to understand and promote the concept of parental involvement as it was originally designed. The introduction of CRT and LatCrit provide perspectives on and the differences in Latina/o parenting and support for education when compared to the

²Theory as it is named in the literature.

standard (i.e., White, middle-class population for whom parental involvement was constructed). The utilization of CRT and LatCrit demonstrates how and why one kind of parental involvement is seen and valued while the other, equally effective, is regarded as invisible and discredited.

Chapter 3 introduces the reader to the design and methodology of this study as well as a rationale for why a qualitative design was chosen to conduct this research. Chapter 4 announces the results of the study through the process of data analysis and offers justification for participant recruitment, site selection, and the use of specific research tools. Chapter 5 compares the similar themes within student narratives as well as differences at the three locations that were chosen for the study. The dissertation concludes with suggested future directions for research and provides suggestions for how educational systems can learn about and work with Latina/o asset-based pedagogies to support this burgeoning population of Latina/o students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review examines how parental involvement was constructed and maintained over the past 90 plus years and how Latina/o parents are situated within that construction. This review demonstrates what is understood to be “traditional” parental involvement when using White, middle-class parents as the norm. Against that norm is the Latina/o parental population and a demonstration of how Latina/o parental involvement differs from the established norm. This review documents how Latina/o³ parental involvement communicates and reinforces the value of education. It further explores how the Latina/o parental style results in a positive influence on the academic engagement of their high-school and first year college aged children. Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit)⁴ and Critical Race Theory (CRT) are the theoretical frameworks with which I analyze the positive contributions of Latina/o parental involvement. I will also explore the empirical research on Latina/o parental involvement with their children’s educational process. This literature review draws from literature in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology and the fields of multicultural education and social justice education.

Origins of Parental Involvement

How did the concept of parental involvement become an important theme in United States education? What is “parental involvement” as defined by the United States

³ Latina/o is used because of a LatCrit and social justice perspective that promotes equality and includes male and female genders as opposed to referencing only the male classification, “Latino” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

⁴ I refer to *Latino* Critical Race Theory instead of *Latina/o* as that is how it is referenced throughout the literature.

Department of Education (ED)? How do scholars define parental involvement? What do educators and administrators—professionals under the mandates of the U.S. Department of Education—mean when they refer to “parental involvement”? Who gets to stipulate what parental involvement is—and isn’t—in a U.S. context? How is parental involvement manifested and why is it deemed to be so important in the educational outcomes of children? What impact does it have on educational outcomes?

These are the questions that will be addressed here, in section two of this literature review. In order to develop a general understanding of what is meant by the term “parental involvement,” I begin with the origins of “parental involvement.”

According to Harro’s (2008) “Cycle of Socialization,” human beings are born, as scholars, such as John Locke, would agree, “blank slates.” It is not until we interact with those who are initially responsible for our overall well-being that the “slate” begins to take shape and we are socialized to live and operate within the world that surrounds us. In this case, parents are our first teachers. They are not only responsible for our physical safety and nurturance, but they are also entrusted with the very earliest phases of our education. This view of the parent as having a critical impact on their children was echoed in the writings of theorists like Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel. It was Pestalozzi, who in 1951, wrote that the mother is, “the first to nourish her child’s body, so should she, by God’s order, be the first to nourish his mind” (Berger, 1991, p. 26).

Given the influence parents had over the education of their children, three theories emerged in the United States that spoke to parental involvement. They were theories that were influenced by European views on education and child rearing and the inherent nature of children. The first theory addressed the Calvinist belief that children were

willful and that willfulness was influenced by an evil from within. Breaking children of this “infant depravity” required that parents used discipline and that children needed to be broken from their willfulness (Berger, 1991, p. 211). The second theory was informed by the beliefs and writings of the likes of Rosseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, that supported the viewpoint that children were inherently good. Rosseau’s work had influenced Pestalozzi’s and this further informed Pestalozzi’s student, Froebel. Froebel, like his teacher before him, held a particular belief in the influence on the mother and wrote, “Thus maternal instinct and love gradually introduce the child to his little outside world, proceeding from the whole to the part, from the near, to the remote” (Froebel cited in Berger, 1991, p. 211). Froebel believed in the goodness of children and the importance that care derived from the family played. In U.S. education, the period from 1870-1890 brought with it an increase in kindergartens and an increase in parental involvement in education, and parental education.

[It was Froebel’s kindergartens that would be brought to the United States by a]“prominent German immigrant, Margarethe Schurz, and by Elizabeth Peabody and Henry Barnard. Barnard, secretary of the Connecticut Board of Education, and later, U.S. commissioner of education, and Peabody, a kindergarten advocate and a sister-in-law of Horace Mann, promoted the Froebelian kindergarten movement throughout the United States” (p. 211).

The third theory was influenced by John Locke who believed that children were influenced by their environments, and he believed since children were influenced by their environment, intervention was therefore necessary (p. 212).

While the interests in kindergarten, childhood, and parental education programs were driven mainly from middle-class parents who were in line with the Rosseau, Pestalozzi and Froebelian views that children are inherently good; these programs were also a tool used for “acculturating lower-class immigrant families into the mainstream

culture” (p. 212). When immigrants arrived in the United States during the 1800s, kindergartens and programs like them were designed to ease the hardships of new Americans, to teach the newcomers of the “dominant culture’s ways,” and to indoctrinate immigrant parents with Americanized “moral and child rearing beliefs” (p. 212).

In the late 1800s, children’s education and parental education programs saw the emergence of organizations dedicated to the study and support of both children and parents in education. They were: the Child Study Association of America in 1888, which “committed itself solely to the study of children and the spreading of good parenting practices” (p. 212); the Congress of Parents and Teachers in 1897, now recognized as the PTA; and the National Association of Colored Women in 1897. By 1897, almost 100 years after the new immigrants arrived in the United States, there were over 400 Free Kindergarten Association Programs in the U.S. (p. 212).

It was not long before the explosion of the growth of these educational programs would be noticed by other professional organizations, researchers, public schools, and the national U.S. government. The interest in children and children’s education was met with rapid legislation and action within the U.S. government. In 1909, the federal government held the first White House conference on the Care of Dependent Children; in 1912, the Children’s Bureau was created; in 1914, the government published *Infant Care*; in 1914, the Smith-Lever Act, which provided 2,000 agents to inform individuals about home economics, agriculture and more; in 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act, which supported child care and nutrition programs (p. 213).

By the 1920s, there were 26 major parent programs (p. 213). The decreased number of immigrants being allowed into the U.S. also decreased the need to mainstream

immigrants decreased as well. The parent programs in place “were not established for new arrivals. They met the needs of middle-class parents who formed study groups for their own enlightenment, or, in some cases, there were developed in response to a need for health information about tuberculosis or nutrition” (p. 213). In addition to the parental education program boom, the 1920s also saw a rapid increase of the numbers of parents in the PTA; new curricula for parental education groups; guides that covered mental health issues, nutrition, behavior, childhood development, discipline, and adolescent development (Berger, 1991); in 1925, the National Council of Parent Education; and the National Society for the Study of Education. As parent education became more professionalized, the roles of parents began to be defined.

[T]he parents’ role was dictated by the schools; ideally, parents would be helpers and supporters of what teachers and schools were doing. In particular, parents were encouraged to help with homework, join the PTA, provide merchandise for the bake sale and show up at times specified by the school, such as back to school night. (Zellman & Waterman, 1998, p. 370)

It is in the 1920s, with the professionalization of child and parent education programs and associations, that we see how parental involvement would be defined and manifested in schools.

Parental involvement wasn’t merely professionalized, it was nationalized. With “buy in” from the national government, it seemed as U.S. support for children’s and parental education was unstoppable. While funding was reduced to these programs with the stock market crash of 1929, programs still received federal funding. Programs would continue to receive funding through the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II of the 1940s. In 1954, although *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, KS* was upheld and presented an “opening” for statistical minorities, these marginalized parents would

not have an opportunity to have an impact on child development and parental involvement until 1964. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 would grant equal rights—according to the law—to statistical minorities, and 1965 would introduce the Head Start Program. This program took the needs of parents into consideration and “empowered parents to make decisions” (p. 215). One of the most influential pieces of legislation passed in 1965 would be one that would reach far into the future of children and U.S. education. That Act was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The ESEA of 1965 was enacted on April 11, 1965 and originally authorized through 1970. It is reauthorized every five years, and the most recent iteration of the Act is what we know today as the “No Child Left Behind Act.” In 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) reauthorized the ESEA, which authorizes funding for professional development, educational materials, funding for educational programs and initiatives such as programs that encourage parental involvement. In the NCLB Act, as with the ESEA, parental involvement is a required component that affects various state and federal education programs. In 2004, the ED produced a document from the NCLB defining parameters for educational funding titled: “Parental Involvement: Title I, Part A.” In this document, the ED incorporated the National Parent Teacher Association’s (PTA) definition to define parental involvement on a federal level as:

A-1. What is parental involvement under No Child Left Behind?

Parental involvement always has been a centerpiece of Title I. However, for the first time in the history of the ESEA, it has a specific statutory definition. The statute defines parental involvement as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring—that parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school; that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and that other activities are

carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (Parental Involvement). *[Section 9101(32), ESEA.]*

According to this document:

[T]he new Title I, Part A is designed not only to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers, but also to change the culture of America's schools so that success is defined in terms of student achievement and schools invest in every child. As indicated by the parental involvement provisions in Title I, Part A, the involvement of parents in their children's education and schools is critical to that process.

Under section A-1, parental involvement activities are further expounded and defined in section A-7 as:

A-7. What are the parental involvement provisions in section 1118 of the ESEA?

Title I, Part A provides for substantive parental involvement at every level of the program, such as in the development and implementation of the State and local plan, and in carrying out the LEA and school improvement provisions. Section 1118 contains the primary Title I, Part A requirements for SEAs, LEAs, and schools related to involving parents in their children's education. It is this section that identifies critical points in the process of improving teaching and learning where parents and the community can intervene and assist in school improvement. Although section 1118 is extensive in scope and has many requirements for LEAs and schools, the intent is not to be burdensome. These provisions reflect good practice in engaging families in helping to educate their children, because students do better when parents are actively involved in the education process, both at home and at school.

How is Parental Involvement Understood?

One of the criticisms of parental involvement is that there is no one, cohesive, definition for it. Researchers Grolnick and Slowiaczek define parental involvement as “the degree to which a parent dedicates resources of time and energy to his or her child in a given developmental or educational domain” (cited in Kuperminc, Darnell, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008, p. 470). The common theme between this definition and the definition set forth by the ED in the NCLB is that parental involvement is a demonstrated act

performed by a parent that directs that a parent be present in the education of their children. The dedication of “resources and time” can be subject to interpretation.

In 1996, Dr. Joyce L. Epstein of John Hopkins University developed a parental involvement model called the “Six Types of Parental Involvement” that attempted to address the allocation of “resources and time.” This model introduced the challenges and expected results for each of the types and the framework was intended to assist teachers and school administrators in developing school and family partnerships. Epstein’s model included sample practices that described the type of parental involvement in greater detail. The six types are parenting; communication; volunteering; learning at home; decision making; and collaborating with community. The intent behind parenting is that in this first type, parenting was viewed as the ways in which families could establish supportive home environments and the ways in which schools could support families. Schools could assist parents with furthering their own education; assist families with health and nutrition; and schools could arrange for home visits to support parents. In the second type, communication, Epstein described a level of communication that would be “two way” and take part from the home to the school and from the school to the home. To achieve this, schools would have to be aware of any language barriers that might prevent parents from effectively communicating with the schools. To this end, schools should make translators available for non-English speaking families. Communication, in this type, would extend beyond language. She also proposed that schools could keep a regular schedule of sending notices such as making phone calls and sending newsletters. Type three, volunteering, describes the ways in which schools could recruit the help and support of parents. To accomplish this, she suggests that parents are surveyed and

assessed based on time, location and specific talents of parents at the school; and that schools make allowances (i.e., family rooms or parent centers) for families in need of resources that would allow them to care for their families *and* volunteer on-site at a school. In type four, “learning at home,” Epstein suggests accentuating parental styles with the schools providing resources and information on how parents can help their children with homework and making decisions within their education. This would involve keeping parents informed of what their children would need to accomplish and master in school for each grade level. Families would participate in setting goals and start conversations about higher education and they would receive resources and support on how to monitor homework and be informed of what the school’s homework policies were. Related to the topic of decision making, type five, “decision making” would support parents by including parents in the decision making parents and by developing parents in their leadership and advisory roles. To achieve this, parents would be linked to family representatives, and they would voice concern regarding their children’s education through advocates. Finally, type six, “collaborating with community,” would call upon the community’s resources to reinforce school programs as well as the types of support already taking place within the home (i.e., parenting practices and supporting student development). Communities would then provide information to parents on the kinds of support systems available to students within the local community. The community would also work to creatively link student skills, interest and talent to student learning.

Building upon Dr. Epstein’s “Six Types,” the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)—the same organization whose definition of parental involvement was included in the NCLB—created the “National Standards for Family-School Partnerships”

(National PTA, 2011) (Table 1). The implementation guide offers six goals and initiatives that address the ways in which schools and parents can work collaboratively to support students. Taking Epstein’s work in to account, the PTA Standards also consider what schools can do to anticipate obstacles that would stand in the way of parents being involved within the school.

Table 1: National standards for family-school partnerships.

Standard	Explanation of Standard
Standard 1: “Welcoming all families into the school community”	“Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.”
Standard 2: “Communicating effectively”	“Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.”
Standard 3: “Supporting student success”	“Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students’ learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their skills and knowledge to do so effectively.”
Standard 4: “Speaking up for every child”	“Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.”
Standard 5: “Sharing power”	“Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect parents and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.”
Standard 6: “Collaborating with community”	“Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.”

Importance of Parental Involvement

Why is there such an emphasis on parental support and involvement? One explanation may be the research that demonstrates a correlation between parental

involvement and engagement in education and academic achievement. Research indicates that families have a strong impact on the educational performance of their children (Coleman, 1975; Epstein, Croates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997; Finn, 1998; Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; Sheldon, 2005). Research further shows a connection between parental engagement in schools and the attendance rates, academic achievement, attitudes, and record of continued education (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hickman, 1995). Evidence also demonstrates a direct link between parental involvement and student academic achievement (Ascher, 1988; Baker & Soden, 1998; Chavkin, 1993; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Epstein, 1996; Floyd, 1998; Petersen, 1989). These findings are also supported by Inger's (1992) assertion that "there is considerable evidence that parent involvement leads to improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates, and that these improvements occur regardless of the economic, racial, or cultural background of the family" (p. 1).

Interpretations of Parental Involvement: Parents and Educational Institutions

The literature on parental involvement asserts that there is an association between parental involvement in education and the academic outcomes of their children, but how is this involvement manifested? As stated earlier in this paper, the expectations regarding parental involvement in education was originally defined and prescribed by educational professionals in the 1920s. In order for parents to be involved, they had to take on the role of the "helper" and supporter of what the school asked them to support and help with, and they were to "show up" to school events when the school asked them to (Berger, 1991). These descriptions of parental involvement have not changed much since the 1920s. Almost 80 years later, in 1996, the ED's Office of Educational Research and

Improvement released statistics on parental involvement in school related activities. The characteristics defining parental involvement in the report were: attendance at general meetings; attendance at scheduled meetings with a teacher; attendance at a school event; volunteerism or committee service; and homework help (Child Trends Data Bank, n.d.). Teachers, who are informed and held to national educational standards, support the definition, understanding, and standard manifestation of parental involvement. In interviews with teachers, Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) found that teachers defined parent involvement as attendance (including formal meetings and events) and volunteerism (providing assistance at the school). Of note is the fact that while the ED, PTA, NCLB, administrations, and teachers have one perception of parental involvement, some parents have a different understanding altogether.

One explanation for the inconsistency between the understanding of parental involvement among teachers and parents is the fact that parental involvement is difficult to define. In this sense, it can be said that parental involvement lies in the eye of the beholder. Parental involvement and how it is experienced and manifested differs, and these differences are culturally based (Trumbull et al., 2001). Supporting this notion, Ascher (1988), states:

Parent involvement may easily mean quite different things to people. It can mean advocacy: parents sitting on councils and committees, participating in the decisions and operation of schools. It can mean parents serving as classroom aides, accompanying a class on an outing, or assisting teachers in a variety of other ways, either as volunteers or for wages. It can also conjure up images of teachers sending notes home to parents, or of parents working on bake sales and other projects that bring schools much needed support. Increasingly, parent involvement means parents initiating learning activities at home to improve their children's performance in school: reading to them, helping them with homework, playing educational games, discussing current events and so on (p. 109).

If schools and parents hold differing views on parental involvement, so too may they hold different targets regarding manifestations of involvement (Trumbull et al., 2001). One group of parents who have consistently received criticism for a perceived lack of involvement, and whose understanding of parental involvement differs from the ED standard, is Latina/o parents. Arguably, the same can be said of African American, Native American, Asian American, and immigrant parents coming to the United States from all reaches of the world, which is that their perceptions of parental involvement also differ from the historical standard.

This literature review holds Latina/o parents in its focus because of the statistics regarding the Latina/o population, educational outcomes, and the implications of those outcomes. According to the United States Census, Latina/os will become the nation's largest ethnic majority by the year 2050, or sooner (Merco Press, 2010). In 2003, 22 % of babies born in the United States were Hispanic, for a total of 912,329 children (Garcia, 2007). They are becoming the largest "nondominant ethnic group" in our public schools with indicators suggesting continued growth (Gibson, 2002; Hoffman, Llagas, & Snyder, 2003). Despite the burgeoning number of the Latina/o population and Latina/o students in schools, American public school systems are ill-equipped to educate this diversity of students. Latina/o students lag behind their Black, Asian, and White peers when it comes to high school graduation rates. Analyses pertaining to graduation rates for Latina/o students compared to White students show that the national graduation rate for Latina/os is 53% and a graduation rate gap is 22% (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004). Compared with Whites, Latina/o students have reported higher drop-out rates and "lower representation in all areas of higher education" (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Carger, 1997;

Gibson, 2002; McKissack, 1999). They are “more than twice as likely to be undereducated as all groups combined” (Chavkin, 1993, p. 1) and Latina/os are the “most under-educated major segment of the U.S. population (Inger, 1992, p. 1). In the U.S., industries that seek low-skilled and low skilled labor recruit Latina/os (Gibson, 2002). Almost two-thirds of Latina/os live in poverty (Gibson, 2002).

There are many reasons that can explain the academic underachievement of Latina/o students. Some of these reasons may include conditions of poverty, language and communication barriers, low parental educational attainment, and low teacher expectations. Another reason may be the relationship between parents and schools (Scribner, 1999). Given the dire statistics on Latina/o academic underperformance and the research that evidences parental involvement as a factor in academic achievement (Ascher, 1988; Baker & Soden, 1998; Chavkin, 1993; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Epstein, 1996; Floyd, 1998; Petersen, 1989), it is imperative that schools and Latina/o parents have a common understanding of parental involvement so that together, they can work toward comparable and attainable goals.

Interpretation of Parental Involvement: Latina/o Parents

As it has been established through the historical accounts of parental involvement in U.S. education, schools and teachers have, for almost a century, asked parents to assimilate into the mainstream culture. Now, in 2011, when schools have a drastically different demographic than recorded in 1920, it is time to attend to not merely attract—but support—the diversity within U.S. schools. One of the ways to support the changing demographics and the largest growing population of Latina/o students is to better

understand the ways in which Latina/o parents view, interpret, and manifest parental involvement as well as the cultural explanations for the reasons that these views are held.

To better understand Latina/o parental involvement, teachers need to understand one main idea: that for Latina/o parents, education is of the utmost importance and Latina/o parents demonstrate the value of education through cultural practices. These practices include voicing their regard for education; holding a cultural understanding of education; transmitting the cultural value of education through narratives; and demonstrating the importance of education through imparting behaviors and habits to their children.

Throughout the literature, Latina/o parents voiced and demonstrated that culturally, there are clear boundaries as to the role of the school and the role of the parent. The school's primary responsibility is to foster and instill knowledge (Carger, 1997; Chavkin, 1991; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Trumbull et al., 2001) and the role of the parents is to care for their children and to teach them values, respect, and good behavior (Carger, 1997; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Espinosa, 1995; Trumbull et al., 2001). When parents are asked to perform duties and be involved in their children's education in ways that interfere with their cultural understanding of involvement, they are unclear on what their roles are (Sosa, 1997). What the schools describe as involvement may be read as interference by Latina/o parents. Since educators are highly valued and respected in the Latina/o culture (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995), this type of interference is viewed by Latina/o parents to be highly disrespectful (Chavkin, 1991; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Espinosa, 1995; Trumbull et al., 2001).

If parental engagement is viewed and valued differently than the view of schools, what does Latina/o parental involvement mean, and how is it manifested at home and at school? In order to understand how Latina/o parents view parental engagement in the education of their children, it is first important to establish how Latina/os view education.

Latina/o Parental Regard for Education

Some of the dismal statistics regarding Latina/os in the United States portray Latina/o students as not being as invested in their education as their peers. Over 40% of all students in juvenile court schools are Latina/o (Behnke et al., 2004). Latina/os have the lowest number of high school completion rates. A 2003 study revealed that only 52% of Latina/o students graduate from high school and only 9% of those students who start college are academically prepared for the rigors of higher education (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Latina/o students fall behind every other population group in earning a college degree (Fry, 2002), and other research indicates that Latina/os are less likely to enroll in a four year college degree program after they complete high school (Perna, 2000). Statistics such as these implicate parents in the academic underperformance of Latina/o students because, as indicated earlier, parents are our first teachers, and parental involvement is a factor in academic achievement. The logic would presume that if students are underperforming in schools, it is at the fault of the parents who serve as our first educators. Many school teachers maintain these negative assumptions of Latina/o parents as apathetic, uncaring and uninvolved in regard to the education of their children. These negative viewpoints impact the interaction between teachers and parents in condescending ways (Ceballo, 2004). A more careful and clear understanding of the

value placed on education by Latina/os can lead to more positive interactions and as a by-product, more positive outcomes.

In contrast to the belief that Latina/o parents do not hold a high regard for education, the literature on the topic of Latina/o parental involvement shows that Latina/o parents hold and communicate high expectations for their children and express a desire to participate in their academic success (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Moles et al., 1993; Trueba & Delgado-Gaitán, 1988). Although the belief in the power of education is conveyed differently by Latina/os than it is by Whites, a significant number of studies specify that Latina/os in fact hold a firm belief in the value of education and transmit that value to their children (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998). Further findings uphold the idea that Latina/o families hold high aspirations for the academic success of their children (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Moll et al., 1993). Parental demonstration of the value of an education has a significantly positive impact on their children. In cases of high-achieving Latina/o students, Latina/o parental involvement is cited as a factor attributed to academic success, and a consistent factor for positive educational outcomes is the significance that the Latina/o family plays in the lives of students (Antrop-González et al., 2005; Ceballo, 2004; Rivera, 1997; Valencia & Black, 2007; Waterman, 2008). Parents are also highly influential in regard to occupational aspirations. A study by Behnke et al. (2004) shows a correlation between the aspirations of Latina/o parents and those of their children. Results of the study indicated where Latina/o parents stated that they wanted to further their education; the same aspiration was expressed by their children. The study further indicated that the reverse was true in that parents with little or no occupational and/or educational aspirations has children with similarly low or

unnamed aspirations. Support for education, high expectations, and Latina/o parents as a link between the realms of home life and school life are themes that are recurring in the literature. Setting and meeting high expectations (which includes the completion of school through graduation), influencing students through support and motivation (Zalaquett, 2006), the expression of the desire for children to further their education and to surpass the educational attainment of their parents, is also pervasive in the literature on Latina/o parenting behaviors (Lara-Alecio, Irby, & Ebener, 1997; Valencia & Black, 2002). Latina/o parents have power and influence in transmitting the value of education to their children, and that power is significant in regard to aspirational, educational, and occupational outcomes. Parents are aware of the fact that they, similar to the beliefs and expectations held in the 1920s, are “helpers” when it comes to the education of their children. Seeing themselves in this way also suggests that Latina/o parents possess an understanding of their boundaries as “home” educators and teachers as “formal” educators. They see their roles as parents as a support to the role of the school teacher, and they see the values taught at reinforced at home as being supplemental to what is being taught within their children’s classrooms. In doing so, Latina/o parents view their contributions to the education of their children as well as their teacher’s contributions as being “commitments of value” (Waterman, 2008, p. 154). One of the ways that Latina/o parents transmit the value of education is to first establish what education means in a Latina/o family.

Education as a Cultural Value

There is a difference in the meaning conveyed through the English word “education,” and the Spanish understanding within the word “*educación*.” The challenges

presented by translation do not fully allow for a deep and accurate account of what the word *educación* means for the Latina/o people. In Latina/o culture, possessing or seeking to obtain an education means more than merely having formal educational training. Latina/o parents who hold the cultural value of *educación* do not differentiate between formal education and moral training, and see both as having equal importance in child rearing (Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995). The academic and nonacademic aspects of *educación* holds a great deal of significance for Latina/os actively engaged in the education of their children (Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006). Not all Latina/o families and students subscribe to this belief that education is comprised of both academic training and moral values because not all Latina/os come from the same countries of origin or level of acculturation. However, this concept provides insight into the academic experiences and realities of some Latina/o students and their parents (Wooley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009).

For those parents who do subscribe to the concept of *educación* know that the framework of *educación* has powerful implications on the education of their children (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996; Reese et al., 1995; Valdés, 1996). *Educación* deals with moral training and values that are taught by parents and it deals with the academic training that takes place in the classroom and taught by the classroom teacher. Parents see their role as providing a foundation of morals and values necessary to experience positive educational outcomes. A student who is considered to be *bien educada/o* (“well-educated” and good-mannered) is a good person who demonstrates good behavior, who demonstrates respect (*respeto*) for those considered to be adults with authority (such as teachers), who is on the right “life-path”

and who performs well academically (Reese et al., 1995). In terms of direct parenting and transmission of values, Latina mothers in particular concede that while they may lack formal educational training, they can enhance the educational experiences of their children by providing them with *una buena educación* (a good education). This is the way in which they can have a direct and positive impact on the education of their children (Waterman, 2008). The responsibility of providing children with a good education does not rest solely on the shoulders of Latina/o parents, but is a collaborative process that involves the extended family and the community (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Families see personal character and social skills (Valdés, 1996; Villenas & Moreno, 2001) as influential factors in being “well educated” and play a role in helping their children to be “good people.” Parents who put the concept of *educación* into practice see that they take on the role of motivators and encouragers (Azmitia, Cooper, Garcia, & Dunbar, 1996; Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Valdés, 1996). When parents feel that they are limited in their abilities to assist students in the realm of formal schooling, they feel that their primary responsibility where the education of their children is concerned is to have discussion with them about good and appropriate behavior (Auerbach, 2006).

Although this literature review does not go into great detail regarding the class associations that accompany the notion of being *bien educada/o*, the translation suggests that there is a connection between being “cultured” and “classed.” To be *bien educado* is also in some instances, to aspire to a higher socioeconomic class. This is not a novel idea as the idea that education and culture are related goes as far back as Greek society and the teachings of Plato (Berger, 1991). Ancient cultures “imparted skills, mores, and values of

the time, influenced by their life experiences, the environment in which they lived, and their culture” (p. 210).

Latina/os also impart the mores and values that shaped their lives and one such value related to the concept of I, is *respeto*, or respect. Essential to good and appropriate behavior and essential in being perceived as being *bien educado/a* is the concept of *respeto*. Explained by Halgunseth et al. (2006), *respeto* or “harmonious interpersonal relationships through respect for self and others’ particularly elders, suggests that Latino students are raised to respect elders and the roles they serve, which includes adults in the family and with adults at school” (p. 1286). The relationships between parents, students and teachers are considered to be vital in the formal educational experiences of students. Within informal interactions, research documents that when school personnel (administrators and teachers) show respect for parents, parental involvement in school increases (De Gaetano, 2007). Such relationships and collaborations could lead to a “unified front” message where respect is a value upheld in the direct environments that influence student learning and student learning outcomes. Parents, specifically mothers, feel that it is important that they teach their children to be respectful of teachers (Waterman, 2008), and mothers who lack a formal education have a documented valued respect for authority figures in school settings and relay that value to their children (Harding, 2006).

Parenting Practices

Narrative Interventions

While *educación* and *respeto* are concepts that are conveyed passively, Latina/o parents also utilize active parenting practices to demonstrate their commitment to the

education of their children. These more active practices are demonstrated through communication and story-telling, monitoring, and moral support. The communication that education is important is demonstrated through the use of narrative teaching known as *consejos*, or advice and teachings used by Latina/o adults to guide and nurture Latina/o youth (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994). The work done by Villanueva (1996) establishes that *consejos* was the primary way in which less educated adults demonstrated a key form of Latina/o parent support for education (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Gándara, 1995; Valdés, 1996; Villanueva, 1996).

Consejos are used to illustrate a lesson and these kinds of narrative interventions empower students with the confidence to take responsibility for their education (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994). Important to dispensing the wisdom held in *consejos*, cautionary tales similar to those employed through the emergent parenting styles are used as a means to redirect students from the parents' own example and choices, and they are used to motivate students to perform well in school (Gándara, 1995; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Treviño, 2004). The *consejos*, which are repeated and handed down in Spanish, are a form of cultural capital in which the primary knowledge base is culturally rooted. In the absence of formal education, parents rely on cultural frameworks like *consejos* to guide their children toward positive educational outcomes. The practice of sharing one's *consejos* that have been learned serves a dual purpose. First, it is a means by which Latina mothers can promote and support academic achievement. Second, it is the means by which Latina/os preserve their own culture and tradition that takes place within their families. An aspect of the cultural tradition being maintained is the acceptance of the validity held within *consejos*. It provides a structure in which a

relationship of reciprocity can thrive. Adults dispense the wisdom of *consejos*, children follow the *consejos* because a pattern of validity and trust has been established and in turn, parents trust and support their children's ability to make sound academic decisions. Adults stress the importance of *consejos* through repeating them as in *Quien no oye consejos, no llega a viejo* (Someone who doesn't heed advice won't ever live long enough to get old), and youth are entrusted to exercise their free will in following or not following their advice (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). This demonstration of the utilization of *consejos* in Latina/o families as guiding principles that reinforce values, hopes, and dreams (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Valdés, 1996), calls attention to the influence of culture and family in experiences of Latina/o youth. In terms of motivation, *consejos* are used to bolster students with messages, such as “*¡Si se puede!*” (Yes, you can!) as well as advice on how to seek out opportunities instead of becoming discouraged when obstacles to achievement of any kind are presented.

Parents also give *consejos*, not only through the use of cultural proverbs but through their own life experiences. They convey the real-life hardships associated with the lack of a formal education and conveyed mixed feelings ranging from regret and anger regarding their own “missed opportunities” and lessons about life paths they chose in contrast to what they felt their children should do. This regret in not having completed a formal education is used as the basis for their commitment to prioritizing the value of an education for their children. Additionally, they view an education in the United States as an opportunity not to be wasted (Auerbach, 2006).

Where Latina/o parents felt that they could not act as educational role models, they used their stories of life experience as cautionary tales to advise their children

against repeating parental patterns. These tales were accompanied by lessons regarding the importance of a strong work ethic. In the research conducted on migrant workers with successful children, Treviño noted that “parents were promoting their children’s mental toughness as *luchistas* (proactive strivers) who could overcome obstacles” (cited in Auerbach, 2006, p. 282). Within the same theme, López (2001) described how migrant worker parents related and associated hard work in school to hard manual labor, and how these lessons were regarded by Latina/o parents as an example of parental involvement. The idea of students needing to work as hard in school as parents work as hard in the fields is described in the works of Gándara (1995) and López (2001), where parents teach their children that diligent study and effort yields success (Reese et al., 1995) and where parents impress upon their children that it is the “job to study 100%” (Auerbach, 2006, p. 281). Parents hold their children to high expectations and assist in meeting those goals to the best of their ability. When the resources required to meet those expectations exceed their abilities, parents seek out human resources who can help their children meet parental expectations (Antrop-González et al., 2005). While they provide support to meet parental expectations, they also talk about exceeding the accomplishments that they, as parents, have reached. Parents talk to their children about the importance of study and hard work in school for the purpose of obtaining a good job (Waterman, 2008) so that unlike themselves, children should not have to endure manual labor as a consequence for lacking a formal education (López, 2001; Waterman, 2008), and should instead be able to exceed parental levels of education (Waterman, 2008).

Demonstrating Educational Values

These high expectations are not communicated without extensive support. Through their behavior, parents show their children that education is more important than anything else and comes before any other personal, social, and even familial responsibilities. To support the standard of high expectations, successful students featured in a variety of studies reported that their parents excused them from chores, church, family obligation, visiting relatives, and holding a job while in school (Antrop-González et al., 2005; Auerbach, 2006; Ceballo, 2004). Parents further demonstrated this value of education to younger siblings by having the television turned down or by removing siblings and other distractions from the study area (Auerbach, 2006; Ceballo, 2004).

Other strategies employed by Latina/o parents are “monitoring” and moral support. Parents who cannot provide the “in school” support expected by schools ensure that their children are working toward their potential through practicing the monitoring and moral support methods. Latina/o families are positively empowered to influence the educational outcomes of their children by providing these support techniques that are linked to positive educational outcomes. For example, such strategies would include the discussion of schoolwork, teacher interactions, school related activities, and school performance (Wooley et al., 2009). Some parents demonstrate monitoring strategies by checking homework on a daily basis, checking their children’s book bags, completing homework together, and attending meetings at school (when possible) (Antrop-González et al., 2005). The monitoring strategy also applied to external situations that pose a threat to educational attainment. For example, through monitoring, parents safeguard their

children against unsafe neighborhoods or potentially dangerous social situations and external influences (Arzubiaga, Ceja & Artiles, 2000). The result of such monitoring is evidenced in children who perceive that their parents are monitoring their activities and friendships. These children are less likely to engage in any activity or situation that would detract from their concentration on study and school work. Data show that this kind of perceived monitoring is “positively related to educational engagement” (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003, p. 258), and “students’ self-reported grades” (p. 258). Similarly, in a study completed by Plunkett, Behnke, Sands, and Choi (2009) on “Parental Engagement and Academic Achievement in Immigrant Families,” the research findings indicated that when children were aware that their mothers were utilizing the monitoring strategy, they worked harder on their schoolwork and made attempts to be better students. In a study by Antrop-González et al. (2005) on high performing Puerto Rican students, the data revealed that Puerto Rican mothers also engage in monitoring behaviors and helping their children with homework. When they can’t assist with homework, they seek tutors for their children who can. Puerto Rican mothers, according to this study, also instill a deep sense of ethnic pride in their children to offset the effects of racism. This is achieved by informing their children of the realities of stereotypes and challenges that they are likely to experience as a result of their Latina/o surnames. It has been documented that this practice provides Latina/o students with a motivating tool by means of a desire to overcome and disprove these stereotypes (Antrop-González et al., 2005; Ceballo, 2004).

Impact of Latina/o Parental Involvement on Academic Outcomes

Latina/o methods and interpretations of involvement (i.e., motivation, moral support, *consejos*, and monitoring) are effective tools in supporting, enhancing, and promoting positive educational outcomes for their children. The role that the Latina/o family plays in the educational outcomes of students is also crucial to positive Latina/o student academic outcomes. Scholars who have studied factors that are attributed to Latina/o academic success (Antrop-González et al., 2005; Ceballo, 2004; Rivera, 1997) have written that the consistent factor for positive educational outcomes for Latina/o students is the significance of their family in their lives. Although Latina/o parental involvement does not mirror White, middle-class involvement and is “invisible” to schools serving Latina/os, these parenting methods are meaningful.

Studies by Antrop-González et al., (2005), Ceballo (2004), and Rivera (1997) used qualitative research methods to interview high achieving Latina/o students on the factors attributed to their high academic achievement. In the study conducted by Antrop-González, 10 high achieving Puerto Rican high school students were asked to detail the routine of their daily lives and to describe their families. Among the resources these students listed as being instrumental in their academic success, these students listed the importance that their mothers played in offering moral support for education as well as providing academic discipline. Similarly, the study conducted by Ceballo examined Latina/o parenting styles that were attributed to the positive academic performance of Latina/o students. Interviewing 10 first-generation, U.S. born students attending Yale University, Ceballo discovered four themes that were instrumental in Latina/o academic achievement. These were identified as: strong parental commitment to education;

parental encouragement of independence; verbal and nonverbal demonstrations of parental support; familiarity with positive academic supports and role models. The study by Rivera specifically examined the impact of maternal variables on the positive educational outcomes of Latina/o adolescents. Findings exposed that a Latina/o student's home environment was a predictor of academic success.

This demonstrated commitment for education on the part of Latina/o parents is internalized by students and that internalization can lead to higher academic engagement (Plunkett et al., 2009). As parents provide their youth with the encouragement to succeed in school, student homework frequency as well as student grade point averages and graduation rates increased (Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004). Research conducted on Latina/o parental involvement finds that monitoring, moral support and assistance with schoolwork were related to "higher educational aspirations and increased academic motivation" (Wooley et al., 2009). The frequent expression of the importance of education on the part of Latina/o parents is internalized by Latina/o children and results in higher academic engagement (Witkow & Fuligni, 2007). Fuligni (1997) found that when parents were perceived to be conveying the message of the importance of education, their children were more academically successful and engaged in positive educational behaviors.

Latina/o students who have a record of high academic performance credit their parents and the verbal and nonverbal support, nurturance and guidance they dispensed for student academic work. They credit their parents for demonstrating a commitment to their through actions such as earlier reported monitoring behaviors and removal of obstacles and distractions that would detract from academics (Ceballo, 2004; Waterman,

2008). Latina/o students are further able to describe their parents as maintaining an absolute commitment to education and able to relay the parental messages that the only way in which to escape poverty is through obtaining an education (Ceballo, 2004). When Latina/o students perceived that their actions were being monitored by parents, when parents were involved in supporting students with schoolwork and when there were positive rewards for doing well in school, Latina/o students worked harder on homework and made concerted efforts to do well in school (Plunkett et al., 2009). This perception of the parental value of education is internalized by students and can lead to higher academic engagement (Fuligni, 2007). Parents consistently promoted positive messages regarding hard work, trying one's best and persistence even in the face of low grades (Antrop-González et al., 2005). Students are also able to identify the concrete strategies employed by parents such as helping students with schoolwork and when limitations restricted this assistance, noting that parents sought out appropriate resources for their children (Antrop-González et al., 2005). In a study conducted by Rolón in 2000, the 10 high-achieving Puerto Rican students' interviews perceived their parents to be the primary driving force in their academic success and aspired to do well in life so as to become a positive role model for their families (Antrop-González et al., 2005). Further, students reported that they tried their best to do well in school because they felt compelled to make their parents proud of them by being good students and getting good grades, and they commented that their parents operated in the capacities of friends and mentors in times of need and crisis (Antrop-González, 2005).

Specifically related to education, when students believe that their parents are able to dispense advice about school and educational endeavors, they view their parents as

educational role models and perceive that their parents value education (Plunkett et al., 2009). Advice dispensed in the form of *consejos* enable students to view this advice as instrumental in navigating instances of “cultural assault” and rely on *consejos* as a means of support and strength in enduring episodes of oppression (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

Impact of Master Narratives on Parent/Teacher Relationships

Latina/o parents are involved in the academic lives and the academic experiences of their children. However, when this manifestation of involvement does not reflect the White, middle-class representations of involvement as defined in the 1920s, Latina/o parental involvement is imperceptible to schools and teachers. The intangibility of Latina/o parental support renders this support invisible because it takes place within the home and outside of the auspices of the school (Auerbach, 2006).

The lack of understanding regarding Latina/o parental involvement influences the ways in which teachers view Latina/o parents and the assumptions that are then made about Latina/o parents and perceptions regarding how much (or little) they value education. Many teachers maintain negative stereotypes about Latina/o parents and portray them as apathetic, uncaring and uninvolved in regard to the education of their children. These negative viewpoints impact the interaction between teachers and parents in condescending ways (Ceballo, 2004).

During a year-long 2000-2001 study at two elementary schools in Southern California, researchers Quioco and Daoud (2006) reported on teacher perceptions of Latina/o parental involvement. In answering the first question “How can we improve parent participation at this school?” teachers responded:

- They don’t come to school to help in the classroom.
- We try but we can’t get them here.

- They don't and can't help in the classrooms.
- They are illiterate.
- They don't help their children with homework.
- They don't make sure their children complete their homework every night.
- They take their children to Mexico for almost anything throughout the school year and keep them away for weeks. How can the children learn this way?
- This neighborhood and this school have really changed. This used to be a good neighborhood. The professional people have moved and now we have this influx of Mexicans.
- They just don't care as much as the other parents do.

In answering the second question, "What do you see as obstacles to the academic progress of students?" teachers responded:

- Parents don't help them with their homework.
- Parents don't speak English, so they can't help.
- Kids leave for vacations and they don't do any work we assign when they are gone.
- Children don't work as hard as the other students. The students start from a different place in literacy.

Clearly lacking a cultural awareness and understanding of the realities of the values of Latina/o parents in regard to education, many of the listed responses and assumptions were dispelled when teachers acquired first-hand knowledge of parents' home during home visits. Teachers who reported visiting the home of Latina/o parents and took the time to learn about their Latina/o students changed their initial reported perceptions (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006).

Parents who participated in this study were also asked the same questions about parental involvement and obstacles to positive educational outcomes. In the first question, "What can we do to improve parent participation?" Parents responded (in Spanish):

- Better or improved communication between teachers and parents.
- Workshops that help parents understand children's school work
- Make sure that parents understand the work that children are assigned (at home and in school).

- Personally invite parents (to come to school activities or to conferences) through phone calls.
- Use words such as ‘urgent’ or ‘important’ when contacting parents about school matters.
- Teacher has to be more friendly and accessible.

When asked the second question, “What are some obstacles encountered in the learning and success of your student?” Responses were as follows:

- Lack of help with homework at home.
- Transition from Spanish to English without help.
- Consistency in grades students receive from teachers.
- More attention and patience from the teacher.
- Students are confused when there are two teachers (in a team-teacher setting).
- Teachers need to keep their promises to students to reward them for doing well academically.

Latina/o parents expressed a need for consistent and clear communication and a desire for personal and personable communication. Teachers and school administrators would be more effective in educating Latina/o students specifically by understanding such needs and by gaining an awareness of the realities of Latina/o parents and families in the United States. While teachers and administrators criticize Latina/o parents for a perceived lack of involvement, they do not realize that Latina/o parents tend to avoid coming to school for a variety of reasons such as the school lacking Spanish-speaking staff to logistical barriers as well as personal barriers of discomfort and shame in dealing with educators (Gándara, 1995; Romo, & Falbo, 1996). Cultural norms for Latina/os dictate that they defer to teachers when it comes to their child’s classroom activities and environment (Plunkett et al., 2009).

Logistical considerations, such as heavy work schedules, a need for child care and transportation also prevent Latina/o parents from attending school events. Schools continually marginalize this population by lacking an awareness of their needs, failing to

accommodate those needs and the inability to foster a welcoming, inviting, and inclusive environment (Delgado-Gaitán & Trueba, 1991; Fine, 1993; Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

While schools perceive involvement as being one way and while Latina/o parents are unaware of what schools expect from them, there will constantly be miscommunication and missed opportunities. Latina/o parents are capable of meeting the expectations of the school if they are fully apprised of what is expected of them. They misunderstand the school's perception of what involvement means because they are not aware of how the school defines involvement (Valdés, 1996). When parents are made aware of what they are being held accountable for, they become more active in their children's education, increase contact with teachers, attend more school events and offer even greater at-home support (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001).

Summary

The construct of parental engagement in the history of U.S. education is not a new concept. The concept can be traced back to early civilizations that recognized the importance that parents, our first educators, played in the lives of their children (Berger, 1991). The early philosophical teachings of Plato, Locke, Rosseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel influenced the educational practices and policies that would define parental involvement for the next 90 or so years. The burgeoning interest in parent and child education of the 1920s was sustained by the U.S. government both in educational mandates and federal funding. Despite the challenges that the nation would face, support for parental engagement was unwavering. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the Civil Rights Act of 1965 would provide a golden opportunity that could have resulted in the actualization of equal rights for all people. Instead of developing school systems

where students—regardless of race—would have access to equal resources, students from statistical minorities would find themselves on the precipice of an achievement gap (Love, 2004). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was also introduced in 1965, and it would, in part, clarify and support parental engagement and would re-emerge in the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act. Despite legislation that was outwardly and seemingly progressive toward closing the achievement gap and investing in all students, Latina/o students did not benefit from the spirit of these laws.

While caring teachers are factored in Latina/o student academic success (Antrop-González et al., 2005), the acts of racist teachers (Behnke et al., 2004), and the negative perceptions that teachers and administrators have about poor Latina/o parents influence interactions that are negative and patronizing (Ceballo, 2004). Teachers and administrators, who follow the construct that White, middle-class parental involvement is the standard for parental involvement, perceive that Latina/o parents do not care about the educational outcomes of their children (Valdés, 1996; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). Parental involvement can be seen as a means of cultural capital (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Ibanez et al., 2004), and may not be a form of cultural capital that Latina/o parents have access to. What is valued as parental involvement is associated with the construct of parental involvement and these practices include homework help and presence at school events (Auerbach, 2001; Delgado-Gaitán, 1991; López, 2001; Valdés, 1996). While the scholarship of Epstein (1996) attempted to advance the thinking regarding how to get parents more involved in education and offered insight into the reasons why some parents could not be as involved, the PTA's interpretation of that work called for assimilation. The PTA's six standards for school and family partnerships do not fully grasp the specific

and unique realities of the Latina/o parental population. While it is an honorable goal for school and parent partnerships to welcome all families, communicate effectively, support student success, speak up for every child, share power, and collaborate with community, not all families have the necessary resources to equally achieve these goals. If Latina/o parents who are undocumented immigrants and in a position of powerlessness (Young, 1990), how would schools empower parents to be advocates for their children? While the PTA sets a standard for effective communication that is “two-way,” it assumes that the communicators are equal parties on a level playing field when research indicates that teachers see themselves and not Latina/o parents, as the “experts” on the subject of Latina/o students (Yosso, 2005).

Equality in education is not achieved by a pretense that teachers consider Latina/o parents as equal partners. When educators claim to be *colorblind*, they admit to rendering their Latina/o students as invisible. The inability to enact a *color consciousness* that appreciates and affirms the differences and assets in Latina/o parental engagement is detrimental to building truly meaningful partnerships between teachers and Latina/o parents. Schools acknowledge having Latina/o pupils and their parents through a deficit perspective and can theorize about what’s missing but fail to acknowledge what Latina/o parents add and offer to the their children’s education. The definitions of parental engagement agree that it refers to a parent’s ability to offer support and resources regarding the education of their children. Latina/o parents fulfill that definition, and yet, they are not regarded as actively engaged, interested, involved, or committed to the education of their children despite the data that renders their parenting styles as effective. White parents have an impact on student learning through their parenting styles, and

theirs has been the standard on parental involvement. The common denominator here is race, and as Justice Harry Blackmun stated, “in order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way.” (*Regents of University of CA v. Bakke*, 1978, p. 257). How are race and racism relevant to the exclusion of Latina/o parents in the discourse on parental involvement?

The next half of this literature review offers a theoretical framework to consider and examine the implications of racism and racist social constructions in education.

Theoretical Frameworks

Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and Critical Race Theory (CRT)

How do we make meaning out of the assertions that in this country, White parental involvement is valued more than Latina/o parental involvement in American schools? What theoretical frameworks can help social justice educators to contextualize how racism plays a role in whose voice is heard and whose voice is absent in the discussion of Latina/o parental involvement?

I argue that these theoretical frameworks are Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and Critical Race Theory (CRT). In this section, I set out with four goals in mind. First, I will historically situate CRT and LatCrit. This will include tracing the origins of CRT and explaining how CRT provides a foundation for LatCrit. I begin with CRT because this is the foundation from where LatCrit gains its legitimacy. Second, to foreground the relevant principles of LatCrit, I will present the main principles of CRT and make the distinction between CRT and LatCrit. This will be accomplished by sharing the main principles of these theories and demonstrating how a LatCrit framework makes meaning out of the devaluing of Latina/o parental engagement (when compared to White,

middle-class engagement). Third, I will explain how LatCrit is applied to analyzing racial dynamics in education. Fourth, and finally, I apply the principles and understanding of LatCrit to make meaning out of Latina/o parental involvement.

There are many theoretical frameworks that could have been used as lens through which to critique the inherent racism that discredits Latina/o parental engagement and holds White, middle-class parental engagement as the “standard.” There are strength-based and cultural theories that explain and situate the contributions of Latina/o parents in the education of their children. While these theories have their merit and unique contributions, LatCrit and CRT speak directly to the field of social justice education. While CRT deals specifically with race, LatCrit is related to social justice in that similar to social justice, it “can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 312). LatCrit and CRT are related to social justice education, and the challenge put forth by social justice education—transformation. Like social justice education,

[CRT] contains an activist dimension. It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 3)

Social justice is not a static field of study. It is a field of study that is alive, active, and calls upon its students to challenge the status quo, much like the doctrines supported by LatCrit and CRT. In order to understand how LatCrit and CRT can be instrumental in transformation and how they enable educators to be change agents, it is important to understand the meaning and historical positioning of these frameworks.

Origins and Principles of CRT and LatCrit

As defined by Matsuda (cited in Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), Critical Race Theory or CRT, is the theoretical framework that initially began in the field of law to examine and account for the presence of racism in American law and work toward eliminating racism⁵ and all forms of oppression. CRT was initially discussed by early writers and legal scholars Richard Delgado, Derrick Bell, and Alan Freeman, in the mid-1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Yosso, 2006). It was developed as a response to the inability of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) to analyze and address race and racial injustice in U.S. law (Crenshaw, 2002; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado, 1988; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Initially in the field of law, CRT was criticized for focusing too heavily on the Black/White binary. The voices of the intersections of identity and marginalization were absent from the conversations on race and oppression (Espinoza & Harris, 1998). From the field of law it spread into other fields such as sociology, history, ethnic studies and women's studies, and witnessed the creation of Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit).

LatCrit expanded the conversations in CRT to include the experiences of Latina/os and Chicana/os and drew into consideration the intersection of identities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Through LatCrit, these scholars asserted “that racism, sexism, and classism are experienced amid other layers of subordination based on immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, accent and surname” (Montoya, cited in Yosso, 2006, p. 170).

⁵ Wellman's (1977) definition of racism as: “culturally sanctioned beliefs which, regardless of the intentions involved, define the advantages Whites have because of the subordinated positions of racial minorities” (p. xviii).

CRT scholars and the activists who use CRT as their basis for activist work are “interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2).

CRT is driven by six principles that define the CRT movement (Matsuda, 1991).

These principles are related to the application of LatCrit:

1. Critical race theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
2. Critical race theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy.
3. Critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law...Critical race theorists...adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.
4. Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
5. Critical race theory is interdisciplinary.
6. Critical race theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (p. 6)

Believing that race was under-theorized in the field of education, scholars Ladson-Billings and Tate sought to fill this theoretical gap with CRT and its application to race based inequity in education. In 1994, they presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) where they asserted:

[R]ace remains a salient factor in U.S. society in general and in education in particular...In particular, building on the work of Bell and others, they detailed the intersection of race and property rights and the ways this intersection could be used to understand inequity in schools and schooling. (cited in Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 5)

Utilizing CRT's six principles, LatCrit seeks to challenge the notions of colorblindness, meritocracy, objectivity, and neutrality (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). To issue this challenge, LatCrit scholars explore the themes of the notion of “voice” (Delgado, 1989) and the intersection of race and property (Harris, 1993) both of which arise out of legal discourse.

The six principles relevant to LatCrit, the notion of “voice” and the intersection of race and property are important in their relationship to the subject of Latina/o parental involvement. In order to address racism, as Justice Blackmun stated, “we must first take account of race” (*Bakke*, 1978, p. 257). In addressing principle one “CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to American life,” we must examine the ways in which racism plays a part in the race based educational malpractice being experienced by Latina/os. Race is a social construction from a social constructionist standpoint. While “Latina/o” is not a race in the United States, it is a classification that has been *racialized*. As such, it is subjected to the levels and types of oppression (Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2010) and the maintenance of the system of racism. Latina/os experience racism through agents of oppression through conscious and unconscious acts and on the individual, institutional, and cultural level (Hardiman et al., 2000). A sample of how Latina/os might experience levels and types of oppression is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Examples of levels and types of oppression for Latina/o students.

	Individual	Institutional	Cultural
Conscious	Teacher expects students to assimilate into mainstream culture and practices.	State-mandated anti-bilingual education policies.	Latina/os are cast in the media as having too many children and relying on public assistance.
Unconscious	Teachers assume that Latina/o parents do not care about the education of their children.	Latina/o student is placed in a lower track because of language proficiency.	Teachers accept and believe the norm that the best way for a Latina/o child to succeed is through assimilation.

Principle two challenges the notions of colorblindness and meritocracy. In the statistics on the academic performance of schoolchildren, U.S. census data show that in

2004, 59.5% of Latina females and 57.3% of Latino males completed four years of high school. This is in comparison to the 86.3% of White females and 85.3% of White males who completed four years of high school. In the higher education venue, when compared to Whites, Asians, and African Americans, Latina/os have the lowest rate of college graduation (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.b). What stands out in this data set is not a notion of *colorblindness* but a very focused lens on the issue of color and race. LatCrit is skeptical of the notion of meritocracy and rightly so. The notion of meritocracy pertains to the Horatio Alger “American” work ethic belief that every American can succeed by “pulling himself up from his bootstraps.” This is a “myth of meritocracy” (Love, 2004, p. 229) because it assumes that all citizens have equal access to resources. Supporting this claim of a myth of meritocracy is the 2008 fact sheet from the National Council on La Raza (NCLR) that states “more than two in five (41.8%) of Latino workers earn less than \$10.20 an hour, which is too low to lift a family of four out of poverty. Among White and Black workers, 21.9% and 34% earn poverty level wages respectively” (Singley, 2008). The third principle of CRT, one that proposes that the system of racism has contributed to present-day manifestations of advantage and disadvantage is correlated to the introduction of race and property by Harris (1993). To summarize, Harris analyzes whiteness as “property” and describes the “property functions of whiteness” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 22). She details these property functions in three parts. The first among these are the rights of disposition; two, rights to use and enjoyment; and three, the absolute right to exclude.

Rights of disposition.⁶ Property is alienable, and whiteness is valued property (Harris, 1993). In other words, it is that which can be transferred to another's ownership (Merriam-Webster, 1991). Although one cannot bestow whiteness or the benefits of whiteness to someone who is non-White. A person who is non-White can benefit from conforming to White norms. More tangibly put, consider whiteness as a house you (i.e., a White person) couldn't sell, but person of color could benefit from living in. Rewards are given for compliance to White standards. Transferring this application of the concept to Latina/o parents, Latina/o parents who adhere to "White norms" and the White standard of parental involvement are rewarded and touted as being involved and caring parents. On the other hand, Latina/o parents who instead adhere to their own cultural norms of parenting are viewed as uncaring and uninvolved in the educational outcomes of their children. The consequence for not assimilating to White standards is met with sanctioning.

Rights to use and enjoyment. As documented by various scholars, whiteness comes with privilege (McIntosh, 1980; Tatum, 1997; Wildman & Davis, 2000). Following the idea that whiteness is a house, there are privileges associated with owning that house. For instance, there are economic privileges associated with owning the house. The house's mortgage can be refinanced to fund a child's college education, the house can be sold to buy a better house, the house's location can afford access to good schools with advanced placement offerings or even better quality teachers. Considering how rights to use and enjoyment, not having these privileges by virtue of being non-White (i.e., Latina/o) could mean that your child is put in a "low track" because of a lack of

⁶ Property functions 1-3 as noted in Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, pp. 22-24.

mastery of the English language; there are no specialists to work with your child to enter a higher track, which leads to the third and final property function, the right to exclude.

The absolute right to exclude. By owning whiteness, and by owning the house, the homeowner has the right to decide who can enter and who cannot; who is welcomed and who is not. During the period of racial segregation, people of color were excluded altogether. With the decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the right to exclude was even sanctioned by the law. The current manifestations of exclusion lay with such sanctioned and underground segregation as White flight, schools of choice, vouchers, charter schools and magnet schools. Latina/o children would be excluded from a magnet school, for example, if they were unable to pass the admissions testing. Latina/o parents would be excluded and unable to help their children gain access to such a school if they lacked the cultural capital⁷ to do so.

The fourth principle of CRT which acknowledges experiential learning is also connected to the notion of “voice” as it is an important theme in LatCrit. It is one deeply embedded in LatCrit that facilitates “counter storytelling,” that which was initially used to offer a contextual and historical analysis of the law, but which can also be applied in education. “Voice” is the “assertion and acknowledgement of the importance of the personal and the community experiences of people of color as sources of knowledge” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 35). Through the affirmation of the counter stories told by marginalized groups, master narratives can be challenged, the silence and “othering” experienced by people of color can be given voice, and within that voice, a means to combat racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

⁷ “If one is not born into a family whose knowledge is already deemed valuable, one can then access the knowledge of the middle and upper classes and the potential for social mobility through formal schooling” (Bourdieu & Passeron cited in Yosso, 2005, p. 168).

Defining LatCrit as a tool with which to combat racism is further expounded and explored by scholars who study LatCrit and its application in education. It is where principles five and six of CRT are explained more comprehensively.

CRT and LatCrit Defined in Education

CRT as defined by scholars Solórzano and Yosso (2001) extends the definition by Matsuda to say:

[CRT seeks to] develop a pedagogy, curriculum, and research agenda that accounts for the role of race and racism in U.S. education and to work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination in education” (p. 3) They go on to define the application of CRT in the field of education as “an attempt to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community. (p. 3)

CRT as defined here by Solórzano and Yosso argues that critical race methodology in education hold five elements that inform perspectives and methodologies in schools. They introduce these as: the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination, the challenge to dominant ideology, the commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and the transdisciplinary perspective. Solórzano and Yosso discuss the themes of majoritarian storytelling in American schools and how it privileges the dominant ideology. They contend that one of the ways to combat majoritarian storytelling is by introducing methods of counter-storytelling.

The theoretical model as defined by Solórzano and Yosso maintains that in order to understand the mechanizations of race and racism as they are manifested in schools, we must also address the ways in which there is also an intersection of identities (gender and class are two examples most salient in the relevant research), that further complicate race and racism in schools and by examining the intersections of identity for people of

color (in this case, I argue Latina/os), we can more accurately speak to a fuller picture of the experience of Latina/os.

While school systems would like to hold fast to the claim that they are institutions that are merit based, race neutral and colorblind, LatCrit challenges that notion by confronting White privilege and questions deficit theory that skews the perceptions held of people of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Specifically, this privilege is challenged with the argument that if schools participate in ways that can be used to marginalize and oppress people of color and people who identify with traditionally subordinated groups, then schools can alternately employ methods to empower and liberate. With that understanding, LatCrit and the manifestation of LatCrit in pedagogy and practice strives to enact social justice and strives to achieve a liberatory consciousness (Love, 2000).

In order to achieve a liberatory consciousness, one needs to be aware of the systems of oppression at play around them. If deficit theorists are willing to claim that Latina/o parents are a deficit to the education of their children, how likely would they be to claim that there is an importance and legitimacy in the experiential knowledge of people of color and instrumental in teaching about understanding and analysis of racial oppression? LatCrit views this knowledge as a strength and incorporates cultural strategies like oral storytelling such as sharing *dichos*, *cuentos* and *refranes* (i.e., advice shared through narratives) in highlighting this experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Similar to the belief in the importance of recognizing and analyzing the intersections of identity for people of color, the emphasis on a transdisciplinary perspective calls for an intersection of scholarly disciplines to situate race and racism in historical and contemporary locations.

In their work, Solórzano and Yosso are fully apprised of the reality that while no one of these themes is unique, collectively they can be utilized to challenge deficit models of scholarship. The argument in incorporating this element is that it also advances the ability of people of color to understand the frameworks that construct the arguments against them and by understanding these frameworks, they are further prepared to defend themselves against systems of oppression.

One of the defenses against forms of racial oppression is through the utilization of counter-storytelling against majoritarian storytelling. Similar to the work of Love (2004), Solórzano and Yosso (2001) propose that majoritarian storytelling maintains the advantage of White privilege. If the story of the dominant society is the only story being told, and the dominant practice of storytelling is the “standard,” it creates invisibility on the part of stories in subordinated societies and makes the dominant (White, middle-class) story, the “normal” majoritarian story. One explanation for this is the use of Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) concept of cultural capital. The notion of cultural capital refers to a type of cultural wealth held by members of dominant groups. In the theory of cultural capital, Bourdieu asserts that that three types of capital (cultural, social, and economic)⁸, can be obtained in one of two ways. It can be acquired through one’s family (lineage, heritage, inheritance, etc.) or it could be gained through formal education. Subordinated groups experience exclusion from this capital as the only way to obtain it is through acquisition of wealth or access into education, a field in which they are disenfranchised. Yosso (2006) critiques the use of Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital as it has been used to explain the achievement gap between White students and

⁸ Cultural capital would include education and language; social capital would include one’s networks and connections; and economic capital would include monetary resources and valuable assets (Yosso, 2006, p. 174).

students of color to claim that “some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor” (Yosso, 2006). This explanation is seen through a superficial lens that does not, as LatCrit would have it, analyze the system and maintenance of racism and the subordination of Latina/os at play. It also connects to the notion of master and counter narratives and who gets to define what it means to be “culturally wealthy” or “culturally poor”. It therefore goes back to Harris’s property functions of whiteness where the “interpretation of Bourdieu exposes White, middle-class culture as the standard, and therefore all other forms and expressions of ‘culture’ are judged in comparison to this ‘norm’” (Yosso, 2006, p. 174). This offers a possible explanation to why Latina/o parenting styles are devalued and strengthens the argument for the importance and necessity of counter stories. Counter-stories allow for action and empowerment on the part of traditionally marginalized groups. In discussing the empowerment of Latina/o parents, I use a LatCrit lens with which we can see and understand these counter stories.

Understanding Latina/o Parental Engagement through a LatCrit Lens

Through counter storytelling and the recognition of experiential knowledge, the application of LatCrit acknowledges that people who identify with communities of color (in this case, Latina/o), also have various types of capital. The nature of racism and the property value of whiteness, as discussed earlier, render this capital invisible because it is not the “norm”. People of color do possess capital in at least six forms that are related to the ways in which Latina/o parents are engaged in the education of their children. These six forms are: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant (Auerbach, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 1997; Faulstich Orellana, 2003; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Similar to the acknowledgement of CRTs notion of

intersectionality, these six forms are interconnected. For example, if a Latina/o parent encourages his or her child to overcome obstacles with the adage “¡Si se puede!” they are manifesting *aspirational capital* by encouraging children to hold on to their hopes and dreams despite obstacles; *navigational capital* by fortifying children with inner resources and resilience that empower their children to endure stressful events and hostile environments; *social capital* by utilizing social networks to obtain resources needed for their children to experience positive educational outcomes; *linguistic capital* by the tradition of storytelling evidenced through the sharing of *consejos*, *dichos*, and *refranes*, a style of storytelling in the Latina/o tradition that imparts to the storyteller the skills of “memorization, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, facial affect, vocal tone, volume, rhythm and rhyme” (Yosso, 2006, p. 177); *familial capital* through family members who are either directly related by blood, community, or friendship. The members of the family and the extended family also model for children important cultural mores such as *educación* (Elenes, Gonzalez, Delgado Bernal, & Villenes, 2001; Delgado-Gaitán, 1994, 2001). These lessons imparted by family inform a student’s consciousness on the emotional, occupational, moral, and educational level (Auerbach, 2001, 2004; Elenes et al., 2001; Lopez, 2003; Reese, 1992); and *resistant capital* by teaching children the skills of oppositional behavior to challenge inequality (Delgado Bernal, 1997; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Latina/o parents do this, as mentioned in section two of this paper, by teaching their children about racism and cultural pride in the face of such oppression. In turn, as supported by data, children strive to do well in school to prove these negative cultural notions wrong (Antrop-Gonzalez et al., 2005). Latina/o parents are impacting the educational experiences of their children by

affording them with these six forms of capital. Educational institutions can also have a more positive impact on the educational outcomes of Latina/o children by incorporating the principles of LatCrit into the educational process.

Suggestions for Including LatCrit in Education

CRT aims to keep race at the center of a critique of the educational malpractice perpetuated by academic institutions and to further this critique with the active process of social change (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). LatCrit, in particular, keeps Latina/o issues and the intersectionality of these issues at the center of this critique (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). By attesting to the importance of one of the principles of CRT, counter storytelling, the once “othered” voices of marginalized Latina/o parents and their children can challenge the ahistoricism of the privileged “norm.”

A means by which educational institutions can work to challenge the notion of the “norm” is through a process of anti-oppressive education that, as stated by Kumashiro (2000), acknowledges that schools can perpetuate oppression but have the ability to perpetuate liberation and liberatory practices by incorporating, and not by exoticizing the voices and the experiences of the “other.” In regard to Latina/o parents, property can be shared in the acknowledgement that there is no one, single “truth,” nor one single norm. Privileges need not be withheld from Latina/o parents for not adhering to the White, middle-class standard of parenting. Realizing the contributions afforded by the unique styles of Latina/o parental engagement, Latina/os would no longer be excluded from the use and enjoyment of privileged spaces. Appreciating the fact that Latina/os also possess capital and linguistic capital removes the stigma and sanctions of bilingual education and

confers legitimization of the linguistic skills that Latina/o parents teach their children and the skills that these children bring to their classrooms.

Through incorporating Latina/o perspectives in the utilization of storytelling, appreciating Latina/o parental engagement as a valued practice, and by incorporating the voices and experiential learning of traditionally marginalized students, these students can rise from the sidelines of passive consumerism to take part in their education as active participants (hooks, 1994) seeing themselves and their families reflected in the curriculum (Kumashiro, 2000) and their learning taking on new meanings of relevance. The analysis of whiteness as property, the right to exclude and the analysis of privilege can reveal the construction and “norming” of whiteness and White parental involvement as the norm, facilitate a discourse on the manner in which whiteness remained the norm (thereby excluding Latina/o parents) and lead to the activist engagement of dismantling racist social constructions.

Discussion

The construct of parental involvement as we know it today (i.e., attending PTA meetings, volunteering at your children’s schools, showing up to parent/teacher conferences and school plays) have dominated the discourse regarding parental engagement, creating a majoritarian story (Love, 2000) that there is only one way of parenting that is supported by a larger social construct. This larger social construction of what successful parental engagement looks like omits, silences, marginalizes, and makes invisible, other populations of parents whose parenting styles are effective, but not valued, because it is not the dominant means of parenting (Harris, 1993; Yosso, 2006). One such disenfranchised group is Latina/o parents.

In spite of deficit theorizing that paints a portrait of Latina/o parents as being uninvolved and disinterested in the academic performance of their children, qualitative and quantitative data support the fact that Latina/o parents are not only actively engaged in the education of their children, but that their parenting styles transmit this value of education. Further, the pedagogical approaches of Latina/o parents have a positive impact on the educational outcomes of their children in their academic performance and occupational and educational aspirations. These pedagogical approaches are manifested through cultural values that place a strong emphasis on the value of an education and differentiate between a dominant view of education and a Latina/o cultural value of *educación*. Latina/o parents teach that school is important, remove distractions that serve as obstacles to obtaining an education, help with homework, impart that the teacher's role is one to be respected, and teach the importance of good manners and good behavior in school and with figures of authority.

While data support the high level with which Latina/o parents are involved and invested in the education of their children, this involvement goes unseen. The work of LatCrit and CRT theorists offer a framework with which we can understand the dynamics that perpetuates the invisibility of the contributions of Latina/o parents to the positive educational outcomes of their children. For example, the work of Harris (1993) on whiteness as property can be applied to understand how the dominant view of parental engagement has become the model for what parental involvement looks like. When whiteness is valued property with value only transferrable to members of dominant groups or members of marginalized groups who assimilate to dominant practices, there is little room for the Latina/o voice to be heard or for that voice and that insight to hold

value. When dominant groups have the ability to enjoy and utilize resources in ways that are recognizable and sanctioned by the dominant group, there seems to be little room for Latina/os to utilize, claim, or have equal access to those resources. When the dominant group has the absolute right to exclude subordinated groups, Latina/os have little opportunity to be seen or heard as contributing members to the field of parental engagement. As referred to in section two of this paper, the notion of parental involvement in education did not have a focus on parents and communities of color, but at its inception, had the interests of White, middle-class parents at the center. It is here that one of Pharr's *Common Elements of Oppression* (lack of prior claim) can be applied (Pharr, 1995). In other words, since Latina/o parents weren't present at the original discussions and design for parental involvement, they do not have the right to a present claim of how parents can be regarded as "involved." While a critique of this analysis might suggest that this analysis depicts a bleak and hopeless scenario, the contrary is true.

A LatCrit framework poses that there is hope for the transformation of how school systems envision parental engagement because schools can take active measures to incorporate counter storytelling in the curriculum, practice and pedagogy. The principles of LatCrit and the practice and pedagogy of Latina/o parenting coalesce to create a *new* framework and vision on how to redesign the notion of parental involvement for all parents. LatCrit and CRT can assist with framing this redesign in their practice of keeping race, a critique of racism and suggestions for activism at the fore. LatCrit and CRTs ability to see—and not see through—race, forces educators and educational systems to question and critique the ways in which schools are harmful places (Kumashiro, 2000). These frameworks also problematize expectations of assimilation

that ask that Latina/os fit the schools and not confronting schools to change the ways that they work with Latina/o parents. Accepting and analyzing that race impacts educational practices and policies allows educators to note the groups are advantaged and disadvantaged based on racial categories. White parents who are involved in the education of their children have a positive impact on the educational outcomes of their children. The same is true for Latina/o parents, but they are not valued in the same way, and the common denominator by no coincidence, happens to be a U.S. categorization of race. When LatCrit and CRT challenge the notion that we live in a colorblind society, these frameworks simultaneously offer educators a new way to see, consider, and value parental involvement. Just as there is no one, widely accepted definition of parental involvement, there is no one, sole, universal way for parents to be involved. This consideration invites Latina/o parental involvement into a dialogue that they have been excluded from for far too long. Including Latina/o parents into a dialogue on their understanding of parental involvement has shown to yield learning environments where Latina/o parents and school systems are equal partners in the education of Latina/o students (Delgado-Gaitán, 2001).

Utilization of principles of LatCrit and CRT into educational practices and policies help educators to better understand Latina/o parents and their children. For example, storytelling, a long standing Latina/o tradition, creates space for Latina/o parents to share their experiences in a manner that evidences their expertise, and to be received in a manner where their voices are heard. Storytelling would enable Latina/o parents to share how they feel they are involved in the education of their children (i.e, they are helping the classroom teacher by teaching their children to be respectful,

reaching for not just an education, but *una buena educación*, checking homework, helping with homework or seeking help for their children with their schoolwork). In turn, listening to the stories of Latina/o parents allows for educators to note that Latina/o parents are not uninvolved in the education of their children, they are solely *differently* involved.

The power of the utilization of the principles of LatCrit has been realized in successful partnerships between schools and parents. One instance is in Carpenteria, a small community in California, where the *Comité de Padres Latinos* (COPLA) was formed in the 1970s by Latina/o parents. The group was formed in an effort to generate more parental participation in their school communities. The organization of COPLA embodies the issues faced by Latina/o parents (i.e., miscommunication between Latina/o parents and the schools; misunderstanding of Latina/o parents and culture; ill-prepared teachers who are not cognizant of Latina/o parenting styles). Parents didn't know how to engage with the schools and teachers were mistaking perceived inaction as an indication that the parents of Carpenteria didn't care about the educational outcomes of their children. The teachers in the community lacked the training necessary to understand the cultural differences between how Latina/o parenting was different from the norm, and Latina/o parents were frustrated by the personal limitations (communication and literacy skills) and their confusion about the school system. Not understanding that it wasn't a Latina/o parenting issue, but a structural one, at the root of the problem, Latina/o parents blamed themselves for their children's academic underperformance (Delgado-Gaitán, 2001). Today, the teachers are aware, sensitive, and attuned to the essence of Latina/o parenting in regards to educational engagement. The parents are better informed about

the school system and what is expected of them from the school. Together in this understanding, each works in partnership with the other where Latina/o parents created channels through which they could be heard and where teachers translate the notices that are sent home. To get to this point, parents and school personnel engaged in dialogue where the school was able to identify and explain their expectations regarding parental involvement. In turn, with a shared understanding, parents were able to meet those expectations and share their narrative of parental involvement and how that involvement is manifested culturally.

While LatCrit and CRT frameworks and applications are powerful, they have been met with criticism as well. In regard to the tenet of storytelling, the critiques state that these counter stories take liberties with the truth and that this kind of narrative stifles debate and discussion because it places the subordinated in a better position to make arguments because of their lived experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). The storytelling tenet is also critiqued for lacking intellectual rigor and therefore, making the analysis of storytelling, difficult (Farber & Sherry, 1993; Posner, 1995; Tushnet, 1992). Critics also take what they call the “voice of color” and “standing” to task, taking issue with CRT claiming that they are better equipped with the experience necessary to understand issues of people of color because of their race (whereas White scholars are ill-prepared to do so). The response to this critique on the part of LatCrit and CRT has been that while White scholars should not be disqualified from having a dialogue about issues pertaining to people of color, these issues are “often better addressed by minorities” taking into consideration the stage of consciousness of the “minority” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 92). The critique of CRT storytelling and

assessing the validity of one group's truth over another is met with the CRT response that "truth is a social construct created to suit the purposes of the dominant group" and establishing one universal truth, be it the truth of the dominant or the subordinated is difficult to ascertain (p. 92).

Limitations within the research on Latina/o parental engagement is related to the growth of the Latina/o population. Since the population is growing and changing, every scenario regarding Latina/o parents could not have been anticipated. This leaves a gap in the research that allows for further questioning and inquiry. One such limitation in the research is how Latin/o parents are defined. The literature refers to Latina/o *parents* without an in-depth analysis of what constitutes a "parent" or parental unit. We know that Latina/os value extended family members (including grandparents and friends with the authority of parents), but is the Latina/o notion of "parents" the same as the U.S. construct of as one mother and one father? Other questions arise from the literature, such as the role of specific family members in the education of their children. How might a mother be involved in the education of her children differently than a father? Does gender have an impact on the kinds of messages imparted regarding education? Further, considering that LatCrit and CRT are approaches where storytelling is valued, what are the narratives of children regarding how they experience parental involvement?

Conclusion

In 1970, Latina/os made up 4.7% of the total U.S. population. The most recent census data show that by 2050, Latina/os will make up 24.4% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.a) and if current trends persist, that population will be entering our nation's classrooms. When Latina/os are projected to be the statistical majority in the

United States, is it possible for educational systems to suggest that assimilation is the key to educational equity? With a rapidly growing Latina/o population, how would assimilation be enforced and regulated? When a plan to reform an ailing U.S. health care system sparks heated national controversy, picture what will happen when the current Obama Administration seeks to reform an ailing U.S. educational system. The strand of CRT that calls for action sees such reform not as an opportunity for division, but an opportunity to envision parental involvement anew and along with it, the endless potential for genuine school and parent partnerships that will, in the end, afford all of our nation's children with possibilities yet to be imagined.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to a) examine the ways in which Latina/o college students describe and interpret parental involvement, b) how they employ cultural messages regarding the value of education transmitted to them by their parents, and c) how the six forms of social capital (aspirational, navigational, linguistic, familial, social, and resistant) are manifested. This chapter provides a justification of choice of methodology, human subjects considerations, description of the study, explanation of how data were collected and analyzed, summary of how I tested for validity and reliability in the data collection process, and how researcher bias was addressed. I conclude with providing the reader with the analytical framework utilized to guide the data collection and a summary of the limitations of this study.

Research Model

Given the nature of my study and the population that I was working with, I decided to employ a qualitative methodology for several reasons. First, it is in keeping with the Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) framework described in the literature review that “insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society” (Matsuda, 1991, p. 6). Literature on parental involvement and how Latina/os are situated in that discussion place Latina/o parents and families in a position of deficit and silence the contributions and assets that they bring to the lives of their children. As a researcher, I felt that these four assumptions held true

- (a) Research fundamentally involves issues of power;
- (b) the research report is not transparent but, rather, is authored by a raced, gendered classed, and politically oriented individual;
- (c) race, class, and gender [among other social identities] are crucial for understanding experience; and
- (d) historic, traditional research has silenced members of oppressed and marginalized groups (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 66)

and I sought a methodology that I could work in collaboration with participants to reframe the master narrative and make space for Latina/o students to tell their stories. Through narrative analysis I was able to make meaning of the constructed stories that Latina/o students shared about their lives.

Second, this method allowed me, as the researcher, the opportunity to listen to, describe, and analyze the experiences of my participants and collect data from their narratives (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Third, qualitative methods and the practice of listening to the stories of participants shared by Latina/os honored one of the cultural traditions of the Latina/o culture, storytelling. The incorporation of storytelling highlighted the experiential knowledge of Latina/os (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In connecting the use of qualitative methodology in a social justice education dissertation, this methodology assumes that “storytelling is integral to understanding lives and that all people engage in the construction of narratives” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 5).

Description of the Study

This study examined Latina/o college students from three different colleges in Western Massachusetts. The three colleges chosen were distinct from each other in that one was a highly selective all-women’s college, the second was a large coeducational University, and the third was a community college. The rationale for selecting these three types of institutions was to determine if the phenomenon regarding Latina/o parental

involvement were exclusive to the Latina/o college student experience or if they were specific to the populations within certain types of educational institutions.

I defined colleges as post-secondary degree granting institutions. Due to reported elevated high school drop-out rates and low college admissions rates for Latina/os in comparison to their White counterparts, a “successful” Latina/o student, in this study, is one who is enrolled in a degree-granting program. College settings were chosen keeping in mind the findings within the literature review regarding Latina/o parents offering training to their children on how to survive “hostile” environments through the use of the six forms of cultural capital (aspirational, navigational, social, familial, linguistic, and resistant). The literature describes hostile environments as predominantly White spaces that were designed without people of color in mind.

The demographic data of each institution fits the definition of hostile environments. The 2010 institutional data on the all-women’s college report that 7% of the population self-identifies as Latina as compared to the 63% of students who identify as White. In the town where the college is located, most recent available (2000) census data report that 90% of the city’s inhabitants identify as White compared to the 5.2% of the Latina/os reported to live there.

The 2010 institutional data set for the coeducational University reported 3.99% of Latina/o undergraduates compared to the 68.5% White population. The demographic data regarding the city that surrounds the University report that the 79.3% of the city’s population identifies as White as compared to the 6.2% of the self-reported Latina/o population. Finally, the community college’s institutional data listed a Latina/o population of 20% compared to a White population of 70%. The city demographics for

this community college reports that 65.8% of the population identifies as White and 41.4% identify as Latina/o. Students at the three research sites are not only studying at PWIs, they are studying at PWIs that are situated in predominantly White environments as well.

Human Subjects Considerations

To prepare to interview and involve human subjects in my study, I needed to meet the standards as set forth by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Due to the fact that I would be asking participants to answer somewhat sensitive questions about their upbringing and the methods by which they were raised, it was important to protect the safety and identities of my participants. As a researcher, I wanted to ensure that I was engaging in a practice that was both ethical and safe for my participants. Gaining IRB approval would be a multi-layered process. I would have to participate in the Collaborative Institutional Training (CITI), provide the IRB with my dissertation proposal (which included appendices related to interviews, surveys, focus groups, call for participant communication, and informed consent forms). I also completed short essay responses on my plan for protecting human subjects in my study and submitted those to the IRB. In addition to meeting these requirements, my doctoral coursework included qualitative and quantitative courses that addressed human subjects considerations.

Participants were assured that their anonymity was being protected through all phases of the data collection and analysis. When groups of participants were emailed, emails were addressed to me with participants receiving "blind" copies. Participant names in notes and transcriptions were referred to by participant initials, and I always showed participants that I was only recording their initials to protect their identity. While

there was a limit to which I could report information regarding individual educational institutions in aggregate, my priority was to protect the confidentiality of participants. After I gained the approval of the IRB to proceed with my research study, I was then able to recruit participants.

Participant Selection

I recruited participants who 1) can list a person or persons who identify as Latina/o as a primary caregiver, 2) have a minimum of one semester as a college student at the same institution, and 3) identify as Latina/o. The rationale for requiring participants to list a person or persons as a primary caregiver is that my study focuses on a participant's ability to describe and interpret their interaction with specific Latina/o parental involvement. The rationale for requiring that a participant has served a minimum of one semester as a college student at the same institution is that it allows for a first-year student perspective that can then be compared to an "upper-class"⁹ student perspective. The rationale for requiring that participants identify as Latina/o is because this study focused on the impacts of Latina/o parental involvement on Latina/o students.

With the rationale that Latina/os are astute at using networks to obtain resources (Auerbach, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 1997; Faulstich Orellana, 2003; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001), snowball sampling (Fowler, 1995) was used to reach participants who had access to potential participants who meet the prerequisites of this study.

At the women's college, I maintained contact with a faculty member who serves as the advisor to the Latina women's organization; at the University, I maintained contact

⁹ Meaning advanced grade level, and not a socioeconomic distinction.

with a colleague with connections to various students of color organizations; at the community college, I maintained contact with the advisor to the Latina/o student group on campus. All three of these contacts have training in a social justice field of study and, therefore, possessed the ability to recruit students and described the nature of my study without further marginalizing this student population.

All three individuals were contacted and apprised in written form via email and with a phone call follow-up of the purpose of my study to enable them to discern if my study and methods would “fit” with their student populations and to ensure that they would be willing to agree to the time commitment asked of them in assisting me with the recruitment of participants. I asked my contacts to forward my “call for participants” email (Appendix A) to the leaders of Latina/o student organizations and any faculty who work with students who may have fit the criteria of the participant selection. Participants who responded to the call for participants email were then forwarded a demographic questionnaire (Appendix B). This questionnaire enabled me to determine if potential participants met the requirements of my study and have had a person or persons who identify as Latina/o as a primary caregiver and that the participants identify as Latina/o. Respondents who met the criteria were emailed a copy of the consent form (Appendix C), informed of the purpose of the study and what will be required of them, and participants were asked to provide me with three dates and times where we could meet so questions regarding the study and their involvement in the study can be asked and answered, if they decided to continue with the process.

I met individually with participants who choose to move forward with the study. At this meeting, I answered any questions regarding the study, obtained the signed

consent of participants, provided them with a copy of the consent form and informed them of the Likert-scale survey they would be sent and which was to be submitted at least one week before the our first meeting. I closed the meeting by asking each participant to suggest dates and times they were available for an individual interview.

Data Collection Methods

Likert-Scale Survey

After having determined the eligibility of participants to move forward in the study, qualified participants were sent an email upgrading their status from potential participant to eligible participant. That email included a link to a Likert-scale survey and participants were asked to complete a Likert-scale (Appendix D) that consisted of 10 questions. The rationale for asking this number of questions was to prevent survey fatigue (Fowler, 1995) among participants. I originally created the survey on “Survey Monkey”¹⁰. I found there was a better design on “Google Documents” and the use of Google Documents allowed me not only to collect data from the Likert-scale, but the software also compiled the data making the reading of the data much simpler and easier to use. Participants were still able to complete the survey online and this provided participants with the convenience of completing the survey in a setting of their choosing and on their own time. Questions posed on the survey enabled participants to begin thinking about their thoughts and experiences regarding parental involvement. I requested that participants submit the survey no later than one week prior to our first meeting. The rationale for this deadline was that it allowed me to review responses and add any relevant interview probes related to their survey responses. Some participants were able

¹⁰ A website where a researcher can design a survey and securely collect survey data and respondents have the ability to complete the survey online.

to honor this deadline and some needed a reminder to complete the survey and according to the time stamp on the survey responses, responded to the Likert-scale the evening before an initial meeting.

Survey questions were in regard to participant basic understanding of parental involvement and provided a basic gauge of how participants understood the phenomenon of parental involvement.

Focus Groups

Focus groups took place concurrently with the implementation of individual interviews. While the Informed Consent Form notified participants that they would be taking part in an interview and a focus group, I did not anticipate that attending both events would be impacted by student schedules. There was no stipulation that participants needed to attend both to participate in the study and wanting to allow for as many participants as possible, allowed for participants to attend the interview, a focus group on their campus, or both. In addition to the merits of focus groups that will be discussed below, focus groups would make it possible for me to collect a large amount of data resourcefully and with respect to student scheduling constraints.

Aside from being able to collect data efficiently, focus group settings created an atmosphere that was more natural and relaxed. Focus groups took place either on-campus, an area that was familiar to participants or off-site where members of the same college gathered as a group. The groups averaged approximately 5 to 15 students in size, although there were groups that had a larger number of participants. As a researcher, I noted that the tone of the focus group differed greatly from the tone during individual interviews. During interviews, participants were open but shy, descriptive yet somewhat

reserved. The opposite was true in focus groups. In these groups, students were able to provide clarity to the questions I posed in a manner that was natural and meaningful for them. This is further described in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. While a critique of focus groups is that they disadvantage the researcher in the amount of control she has during the focus group (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), I found that this was not the case. In every instance, the focus group mirrored what I have noted at Latina/o family gatherings: people speaking at the same time, raised volumes and pitch and what appears to be to an outside observer, general chaos. Having grown up in a Latina/o family where animated conversations were the norm, it was seamless for me to keep track of what was happening and ensure that I was capturing the verbal and literal meanings that were being shared.

I modeled the structure of my focus groups after the work done by Krueger (1994). His work suggests that a focus group lasts two hours and contains approximately 12 questions consisting within five categories. The five categories contain opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions, and ending questions. The questions for the focus group were developed with my research questions, theoretical frameworks, and research design in mind. Although not explicitly stated so as not to lead participant responses, these questions (Appendix E) measured student experiences with knowledge and/or utilization of the six forms of capital.

The opening questions allowed for participants to practice using their voices and to ease into the focus group process. While these responses were coded, they were not essentially vital to the data collection and analysis process. The introductory questions began to focus the dialogue. The transition questions allowed me as the researcher to invite the group to share responses to deeper questions regarding their experiences. The

key questions were the questions that guide my study and these are the questions that required the closest analysis. The ending questions formally brought the focus group to a close, and this was also the time when I invited participants to partake in individual interviews, had they not done so already.

At the beginning of the focus group, participants were given a name tag with a number, and that number was recorded on a diagram to easily record and recall participant responses. As is the case with the focus group and interviews, all recording devices were examined to ensure their functionality. Participants were asked permission at the start of both interviews and focus groups to be recorded and all participants consented. Wanting to be careful to adhere to Human Subjects considerations, participants in focus groups were asked to complete Informed Consent Forms. Participants who did not want to be recorded wrote their tag number on the Informed Consent Form with the number highlighted. While they were still able to participate in the focus group, they were not included in the transcription and analysis of data, per respect for their wishes.

Phenomenology and In-depth, Semi-Structured Interviews

In the spirit of maintaining the principles of CRT and LatCrit, the Latina/o cultural tradition of storytelling, honoring voice, and principles of qualitative methods, the utilization of phenomenology seeks to make meaning of the lived experiences as described and detailed by the participant (Creswell, 2007).

All participants were asked to partake in one 90-120 minute personal audio taped interview. This interview focused on their responses to the Likert-scale survey and/or focus group and centered on their thoughts and experience regarding their understanding

and interpretation of parental involvement. At the end of the interview, participants were invited to add any information that was not captured or asked, one of the ways that I tested for validity and reliability.

Based on the clarity of the initial interview responses and whether or not responses required further inquiry, some participants were recalled to provide clarity on some responses. This was done in person and in some cases, via email. The purpose for this was to again ensure validity and reliability.

In-depth interviewing was chosen as an instrument because it called for a structure that was less formal and more conversational. I was able to introduce some topics and begin the process of inquiry, but true to the in-depth interview process, the participants were then able to frame and structure the responses as the participant told his/her story. I adhered to the design of unstructured exploratory interviews by introducing myself, reminding participants of confidentiality, asking permission to use a recording device and beginning with some “small talk” (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999). During the interview itself, I asked participants to clarify terms that they were using. While some terms in Spanish would have been understood by Spanish-speaking members of the Latina/o community, I wanted to be sure that I wasn’t inserting my own interpretation of what was being shared by glossing over any responses. Further, I would try to keep participants on the subject at hand by asking them to provide detail on experiential narratives. For instance, I would use phrases as, “Earlier, you had mentioned...please tell me what was significant about that memory for you.” This would allow me to gain clarity on something that was shared earlier and needed additional probing and it would refocus the participant.

Data Management and Analysis

To protect the confidentiality of the participants, Likert-scale submissions were kept in my email in Google Documents, which is password protected. The taped interviews and all transcriptions were kept in my locked, home filing cabinet to which only I possess the key. The email correspondences between me and participants were kept in my password protected email account. Email correspondences between me and individuals who were not selected to participate in the study were deleted and my cache and browsing history was emptied.

I coded my data using grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Grounded theory allowed me to “listen” to participant narratives by entering data analysis without hypotheses or presuppositions and by allowing theory to emerge from the data. My analysis of the data began during my reading of the Likert-scale submissions when I began to take and review notes regarding survey answers. I began “open coding” which allowed me to identify concepts, phenomenon, categories, properties, and dimensions rising from the data after the focus group. I prepared a data inventory from this initial round of coding, labeled my categories and wrote a research memo for the purpose of organization. From that point, I engaged in the micro-coding process to generate initial codes and to decipher any relationships among established categories. At that point, I wrote a second research memo. Upon completion of the research memo, axial coding began to link categories to subcategories. After the completion of axial coding and the research notes on what was gathered in that process, I began the selective coding process. This final process allowed me to begin the formulation of theory.

Researcher Bias

Just as questions, surveys, and questionnaires are instruments with which to conduct and collect data, the researcher is also an instrument by which to conduct and collect data. With this in mind, researchers must understand that our observations and interpretations are processed through our own experiences and lenses (Schensul et al., 1999). As a human being, I come to this research with my own biases because of my own frames of references and lived experiences.

One bias that is known to me is my belief—through my lived experience—that Latina/o parents provide assets to the education of their children. My social justice education has taught me about the social constructions of oppression and how those oppressions are at play and intersect in the world around us. An assumption that I hold that is that Latina/os, as a marginalized population in the United States, are rendered invisible regarding the assets that we do bring to educational settings. Again, I am influenced by social justice education and what I have learned in this field regarding master narratives and counter stories.

As a researcher facing these biases and assumptions, I felt that I had two choices in addressing them. First, I could ignore them and let my biases cloud my judgment and contaminate the authentic findings within the data, giving reason to discredit Latina/o narratives. The second option would be to name, notice, and train myself on how to identify my biases so that I could confront them and ensure that they were not tampering with the data collection and analysis process. I did not allow my biases to surface during these processes because I would “check in” with myself and my participants before, during, and after data collection and analysis. These subjects of this “check ins” ranged

from deciding on what I would wear to an interview to recognizing the quality of follow-up questions I was asking of participants.

Participant responses were recorded and transcribed in their own voices. When checking in with myself, I was reminded that no matter the intentions, I did not want to replicate a system where Latina/os were not allowed to tell their own stories in their own voices. Despite the fact that I also identify as Latina, I was working within a power dynamic and entrusted by my participants to share *their* stories, not my own. Additionally, I repeatedly told participants that it was their poignant stories that would be the contribution to this literature on the assets of Latina/os in education. I trusted that listening to and transcribing data as they emerged, utilizing grounded theory and letting Latina/os stories “speak” would be sufficient enough in yielding data that would be informative and of benefit to Latina/os students and families and those who serve them.

Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure that I was capturing the actual words and interpretations of meanings of what was shared by participants, I collaborated with participants themselves. After individual interviews, I summarized the topics covered during the interview and asked participants if I had accurately captured what they said and intended to say. This communication also provided another opportunity to invite participants to share any additional information or stories that came to mind after having spent time revisiting their responses. During focus groups, participants were audio recorded in addition to having their direct quotes and emergent themes recorded in notes that I used to summarize what was said prior to transcription. This allowed participants to ensure that I was accurately capturing their sentiments as the data were being collected. Notations were made where

some participants, but not all, felt that I had not captured the essence of the messages being shared. As was the case with individual interviews, at the conclusion of focus groups, participants were asked if there was anything they wanted to add and they were invited to contact me after the focus group if there was something additional that they wanted to share.

With regard to reliability, it was my intent to create a research design that could be used by future doctoral students, researchers, and educators to approximate the research process. My hope is not necessarily duplication of the research findings but to generate more research and data on Latina/o students and families (Schensul, LeCompte, Nastasi, & Borgatti, 1999). Detailed research notes, questionnaires, surveys and other instrumentation as well as my transparency in my connection to the population I studied would play a role in this study's reliability.

Analytical Framework

The literature review within this dissertation introduced and described the implication of the census data and projections regarding Latina/os in the United States. The demographical data on low graduation rates, high dropout rates, and participation in juvenile justice systems offer one explanation for Latina/o student "failure" as a lack of parental involvement. While statistics present one reality for Latina/os in the U.S., what is portrayed is not a complete reality. If one argues that Latina/os bring deficits into the classroom, one must also logically presume that the opposite is true—Latina/os parents and families also provide assets in the lives of their children. Latina/o parents show a high regard for the value of education and demonstrate this value by modeling involvement within the home. Some strategies employed by Latina/o parents are

“monitoring” and moral support. Parents who cannot provide the “in school” support expected by schools ensure that their children are working toward their potential through practicing the monitoring and moral support methods. Latina/o families are positively empowered to influence the educational outcomes of their children by providing these support techniques that are linked to positive educational outcomes. For example, such strategies would include the discussion of schoolwork, teacher interactions, school related activities, and school performance (Wooley et al., 2009). Some parents demonstrate monitoring strategies by checking homework on a daily basis, checking their children’s book bags, completing homework together, and attending meetings at school (when possible) (Antrop-González et al., 2005).

The literature review of this dissertation also introduced the rationalization for the use of CRT and LatCrit as the theoretical frameworks for staging a discussion on Latina/o parental involvement in comparison to “traditional” parental involvement as it has been known for nearly a century in the United States. For the purposes of analyzing the data collected and evaluated in this dissertation, an analytical framework is applied to make meaning out of the data. That analysis is Yosso’s (2005) “culture of wealth” framework. The culture of wealth framework speaks directly to the six forms of capital (aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, social, resistant) passed on from Latina/o parent to student and the basis for which I determined if those six forms were being utilized by participants, and under what circumstances they were each manifested.

With both of these portraits of Latina/o parents in mind, I wanted to see if these themes emerged in my study through the narratives of the population at the core of this study—Latina/o students. Additionally, my curiosity was piqued by what other themes

would emerge that were not addressed by the literature on cultural capital. I was interested in examining the ways in which Latina/o parenting and their purported regard for education had an impact, if at all, on their children.

Limitations

As a social justice education student, my coursework and personal reflections on social justice education have trained me to ask the question “whose voice is missing?” in considering how stories are told and who may have been omitted in the telling of those stories. In the case of this study, the “voice” that is largely absent is that of the male voice. At the selective women’s institution, none of the students identified as biologically male or as transgendered female to male (FTM) students (see Demographic Questionnaire Results Appendix). In the University setting despite conscientious attempts to include men in the study, only two men responded to requests for individual interviews. A third man initially responded to the request and instead of participating in an individual interview opted to attend the focus group, citing that he had a busy schedule and participation in the focus group was the only time that he could contribute. Present at the focus group at the University were three men and three women, which I did feel was sufficient in establishing an environment where both male and female narratives could be shared. At the community college, despite attempts to recruit men through targeted and snowball sampling, only one man was present at the focus group, and the same man consented to an in-depth interview. In this case, the findings within this study largely represent the Latina voice in regard to how parental involvement in Latina/o households was described and interpreted, how students used cultural messages taught by parents regarding the value of education, and how students utilized the six forms of capital.

Additional research would need to be conducted to include the male voice to gain a more complete picture on Latina/o parental involvement as reported by college students.

An additional limitation of this study is that it was conducted solely in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Despite the large concentration of colleges within the region of Western Massachusetts where the study was conducted, the study is limited in its geography. With the exception of the all-women's college where participants came from all different regions of the United States, participants from the University and community college identified as Massachusetts residents. Therefore, a national study would need to be conducted in order to gain perspective on the unique stories of Latina/o college students who attend institutions in other regions of the United States with high concentrations of Latina/os for example southern states, southwestern states and the west coast.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This study examines the ways in which a) Latina/o college students describe and interpret parental involvement, b) Latina/o college students employ the cultural messages regarding the value of education as transmitted to them via their parents and c) how, if at all, the six forms of capital (aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant) are manifested.

To answer these research questions, I sought participants who identified as Latina/o, who were raised by at least one Latina/o parent, and who were enrolled in college. I chose to interview Latina/o college students who are typically around the age of 18 years old, an age considered to be a legal adult in the United States. The rationale for choosing college students being that they are crossing the threshold between childhood and adulthood and could reflect on the types of parental involvement demonstrated during elementary and high school years as described in the literature in Chapter Two. Seeking participants with at least one Latina/o-identified parent was significant as this study aims to examine the efficacy of Latina/o parental involvement. By referring to *Latina/o parents*, I am not merely referring to biological parents. The literature supports that Latina/o families are not only comprised of biological family members but also of extended family, adopted family, and community members who can act in the role of a family member. Some Latina/os in the study have regarded aunts and uncles who were involved in their upbringing as parents even if they were not biologically so. The rationale for choosing college students was due to the amplified high school drop-out

rates and lesser college enrollment rates among Latina/os in comparison to their White counterparts.

These research questions were answered in three different venues. First, I chose an all-women's highly selective liberal arts college. Second, I chose a large University. Third, a small community college was chosen. All of these educational institutions were chosen because according to their demographics, they are predominantly White institutions (PWIs). As discussed during the topic of cultural capital in the literature review, PWIs were designed without people of color in mind and the cultural capital passed down from parent to child is done so to protect them from, and prepare them for, these hostile environments. Three different types of institutions were selected to investigate if there was indeed a phenomenon taking place regarding college student views on parental involvement or if these views were specific to the types of institutions attended by the participants.

In this chapter, I will first introduce the reader to each institution by way of a brief history and then report on the findings at each institution as they relate to the first three of my research questions that deal with student descriptions and interpretations of parental involvement; employment of cultural messages regarding education; and how the six forms of cultural capital (aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, social) are manifested. The fourth question that asks what teachers and administrators could learn from college student narratives will be discussed in Chapter 5.

This chapter and the subsequent chapter will refer to the selective all-women's college as the SWC, the University will be referred to as the UNI, and the community college will be referred to as the CC.

Selective Women's College (SWC)

SWC History

The SWC is a highly selective, liberal arts, PWI located in a small town in Western Massachusetts. The college is relatively small with about 2,500 undergraduate students enrolled. The college was founded in 1871, and the mission of the college is to empower women and prepare them for “lives of distinction.” The founder of the college had expressed an intention of having the college located in the center of a town so the students could be a part of the life of the town and so the town could be a part of the institution. The town that the college is located in could be described as the “idyllic” college town, offering many coffee shops, bookstores, restaurants, and pubs. While a female President presently leads the college, it wasn't until 1975 that the institution was led by a female President. Most of the students enrolled at the college live within a house system on campus in dwellings that more closely resemble cottages. Not all of the undergraduate students enrolled are “traditionally aged” students.

While the college offers an array of courses in the arts and humanities, it is receiving greater attention for their science program and the renown of being the only all-female institution with an engineering program. This attention to engineering was due to the leadership of the college's last President, the first African-American woman to lead an institution with this profile. Although the college is an institution that reports graduating female undergraduate students, there is a population of FTM identified students enrolled. Students come from all of the six populated continents. Despite the

college’s stated commitment and desire to create a diverse learning community, only 7% identify as Latina. The demographic summary¹¹ is provided below (Table 3).

Table 3: Demographic summary of SWC.

Racial/Cultural Categories	Degree-Seeking Undergraduates (includes first-time first-year)
Nonresident aliens	230
Hispanic	188
Black or African American, non-Hispanic	137
White, non-Hispanic	1,121
American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	10
Asian, non-Hispanic	289
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	4
Two or more races, non-Hispanic	88
Race and/or ethnicity unknown	521
TOTAL	2,588

SWC Data Collection

Students, staff, and the Faculty Advisor to the Latina student organization were contacted at the SWC to recruit participants. This was done by sending the “Call for Participants Letter” (Appendix A) via email. Participants who were interested in being a part of this research study were then to complete a “Demographic Questionnaire” (Appendix B) to determine their eligibility to participate in the study. Once participants were deemed eligible, they were forwarded a copy of the “Informed Consent Form” (Appendix C) and asked to bring a signed copy with them to our first meeting. These meetings were established through email communication. At the first meeting, participants were given a signed copy of the Informed Consent Form and were invited to ask any questions about me, the nature of the study, or who they could contact with questions. After discussing their participant rights an in-depth interview was scheduled.

¹¹ According to the College’s 2010-2011 Common Data Set.

Participants were notified that they would be asked to complete an online Likert Scale survey (Appendix D) prior to the interview and that they would be invited to participate in a focus group meeting. My call for participants was forwarded to the President of the Latina cultural organization who then forwarded it on to her group, *Hermanas Unidas*¹². She consented to an in-depth interview so she could become familiar with the nature of the study. After having done so, she sought permission from the group to have me attend a “general body” meeting (different from their Executive Board meetings) where I conducted a focus group and recruited interview participants. A traditional Puerto Rican dinner of *pernil* (pork) and *arroz con gandules* (rice and pigeon peas) was offered to ensure that participants would not miss dinnertime because of attendance at the focus group.

There were 18 Latina students in attendance at the focus group that was held in the multicultural space at the SWC. Of the 18 students in attendance, 11 volunteered to take part in a 90-120 minute individual in-depth interview. All 11 participants provided complete data sets¹³. Between the focus group attendees and in-depth interviews, a total of 18 students participated in the study. Focus group questions (Appendix E) were used to guide the discussion. The focus group themes that emerged were consistent with the themes of the in-depth interviews.

Description and Interpretation of Parental Involvement

In focus groups and in-depth interviews, participants were asked about how their parents were “involved” in their early education. I provided no definition or history of involvement, as I felt that such information would be leading and might tamper with the

¹² This is a pseudonym to protect the identity and narratives of the group.

¹³ A complete data set included a demographic questionnaire, Likert-scale, and interview.

data. Students would describe parents as being “strict,” meaning that there were clear expectations and explicit consequences for failing to meet those expectations. One participant shared that her mother started a child care business in their home so she could monitor the activities and school attendance of her daughter. Another participant shared that her mother was involved through the parental practice of monitoring (Antrop-González et al., 2005; Arzubiaga et al., 2000). When asked, “What was report card day like at home?” this participant shared:

She knew we had a report card. If we didn’t give it to her, she would look through your book bag and be like, “Oh, where’s your report card? Oh it doesn’t matter if you don’t bring it. I’m going to your school to get it anyway.”

The theme of monitoring was raised by another participant who said that her mother would come home from work and check her homework and book bag and emphasized checking for a tidy book bag as a demonstration of involvement.

One participant spoke of how there was a clear routine and expectation regarding the completion of homework and shared that her mother would “sit with us and make us do our homework, and we couldn’t get up until we were finished.” Another demonstration of parental involvement was evidenced through the time spent with students on homework and school issues. Taking the time to invest in their education, despite a busy and complicated work schedule, was something that the participants noted. “They took the time to check my homework” or “Dad would take time to drive me to school” showed participants that school was a priority and something their parents took very seriously.

Parental involvement was also shown through parents showing up at school to talk to a teacher about unfair or inaccurate grading practices. One participant’s father had

gone to his daughter's school because she was upset about a grade she received on a math test. The father showed the math teacher that she had made erroneous calculations and issued the wrong grade. Another participant's mother challenged her daughter's English teacher because she "never gave anything higher than an 85."

In contrast to how their parents were involved in their early education, participants were asked how they felt their parents were involved in their college education. Participants in the study were quick to name the fact that parental involvement had changed because their parents were unfamiliar with the college experience. They may have had a child go to college, but the experience of having a child leave the state to attend school was a foreign idea for some. Where parents had been involved with trips to a child's classroom teacher, this was no longer possible because of college norms that called for students to be self-advocates in their education. While they had once helped with middle-school level math, parents were not prepared to assist with statistics. Nonetheless, parents still offered moral and emotional support and demonstrated involvement and investment in the education of their children through that support.

This involvement started as early as move-in day for some participants. When asked, "Who moved you to the SWC?" participants would roll their eyes and respond, "The whole family!" When I probed for clarity on what was meant by the "whole family," I was given the list of aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, parents, and family friends who had made the trip to see where the student would be spending the next four years and to help her settle in to her new room. I asked, "What did everyone do when they arrived at your room?" and was given a list of chores that various members performed, such as cleaning the room, making the bed, hanging up the clothes, affixing a

crucifix over the bed, unpacking suitcases, and mopping the floors with Pine Sol or Mistolín, which are household cleaning products preferred by some Latina/o families. Men would take on the tasks of hanging hooks and setting up electronic devices and women would get to the tasks of beautifying the room. I asked participants, “Why do you think they did all of those things?” and the responses revealed that their families wanted to give them “a sense of home.”

Prior to returning home for a college break, students reported that their mothers would ask *¿Que quieres comer?* (What would you like to eat?) and upon arriving home would be fed their requested meals and find that their parents had purchased their favorite foods for them to enjoy during their stay. In a sense, food is cultural capital in Latina/o households. The SWC dining halls serve “traditional fare,” such as pastas, sandwiches, salads, and various meat products. When SWCs and other colleges attempt to be inclusive of other cultures with a “themed” dinner, these dinners are reported to be lacking the flavor of home. One student shared in a focus group, “It’s been a long time since I had some good rice!” Going home to enjoy a meal that is reserved for special occasions has been reported as a highlight of returning home. One participant from California spoke about the planning that is done over the phone prior to her return home

We talk every day. If I don’t call them at a certain time, they’re like “Are you ok? Just send me a text.” Or they’ll send notes in the mail from time to time or when I go home it’s like, “Oh, what do you want? What would you like to eat? Where would you like to go? Should we go out to Disneyland?” and I’m like, “Mom, I still live here, it’s not like I am a visitor.” But they just feel that they want me to feel comfort while I have that little time when I am at home, and that’s their way of showing that they care.

Parents also offered messages about self-care, and these were the same at home as when students were away at college. Students were reminded to eat, sleep, and relax.

While students appreciated the ways in which their parents were involved, they also voiced frustration that their parents couldn't be as involved as "other" parents¹⁴ in their college education. This was through no fault of the parents but due to a lack of access to social capital provided through a formal education. One participant offered the following:

Now that I have graduation coming up and I'm graduating, they're like, "I don't understand why graduation is like a whole weekend like why do we have to go up there?" And I'm like, "I didn't come up with that. I didn't apply here thinking that. I'm sorry" and I'm like, "Damn, shouldn't you just be happy that I'm graduating from someplace?"

One student felt that she was receiving negative attention from her family when she returned for January Break, which at this SWC lasts for one month. She was being questioned by her family for being able to be away from college when her cousins in college didn't have such a break. She felt as if she was being accused of having dropped out of school and trying to hide it. While she felt that this was a demonstration of a lack of appreciation of her accomplishment of going to school out of state, I felt this comment and the comment regarding the duration of Commencement activities was more reflective of lack of access to social capital. Some families may have no prior knowledge that winter break can last a month at some institutions, and some families may be unfamiliar with the word "interterm" altogether if they do not have the access to varied college experiences and practices.

When parents have completed a college education in their country of origin, they are able to explain college-level concepts in a familiar area of study and even then a sense of distance is created.

¹⁴ These were revealed to be White parents with college degrees.

My dad graduated. He has a master's in his country, and it's very different. In high school, he was able to help me because he was at my level that he could still help me but now that I'm in college, it's a little bit different because I'll call him and say, "Hey, let's discuss what I learned in my sports econ class" and he feels intimidated because he knows I'm getting to know more than he does now.

Some parents reverted to familiar support tactics when they didn't know how to offer the support that students were seeking. One such practice was to push students to earn good grades. Participants reported being frustrated with this because they felt that their parents didn't understand that an "A" or a "B+" meant something different in college than it did in high school.

Regardless of distance or misunderstanding, Latina/o parents make endless attempts to be involved through demonstrations of support. Parents, whether they could afford it or not, would send college advertised care packages and attend Family Weekend at the college. When I asked why the family would make this sacrifice, students told me that parents didn't want their children to feel alone. There seemed to be an unspoken fear harbored by the parents that their children would feel unsupported as other students received packages and spent the weekend with their families. The practice of ensuring that students didn't feel alone took place during regular phone calls with participants. During these conversations, parents would remind their children that they were capable of completing their college educations. One father sent a letter to his daughter that said "I'm so proud of you. You're an inspiration to me." Parents also told participants how they had been boasting to their bosses or co-workers about their daughter "who is a college student!" If they weren't told this directly, extended family would call saying that they had heard about the participant's good grades from their parents or told "they are always talking about you." Calls from home also contain messages like "We'll be proud

of you as long as you do your best” and parents provided reminders of all of the other life challenges students were able to surmount. One participant reported that she felt better after having revisited life obstacles and was surprised that her father could remember so many and in such detail.

Employing Cultural Messages Regarding Education

In order to understand how Latina/o college students are employing cultural messages through what their parents imparted about education, it is important to learn what those messages were. The data collected and analyzed in this research study is consistent with the literature that supports Latina/os are invested in education (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Moles et al., 1993; Trueba & Delgado-Gaitán, 1988). Similarly, parents of college students spoke of the importance of education in the lives of their children. One participant spoke of how her mother shared messages about the necessity of completing an education. She emphasized the seriousness of her message by completing her own course of study to become a nurse.

She never quit going to school, regardless if she had to take care of me, got to work, and got [sic] to school. No matter how long it took to finish, she wanted me to know that no matter what, you have to finish your education. You didn't have to be rich and fabulous just live a good and ordinary life. You didn't have to struggle to get the basic necessities.

There were parents who lamented about their own unrealized dreams of pursuing a college degree as participants shared the following with me:

But to this day she always says that she wishes she could have gone to school, and she says that she came to this country so we could have a better future and that we needed to go to school and college. It's kind of like she always said she wanted us to do what she wasn't able to do.

A participant who was the first high school graduate in her family shared:

I know for her it was just important that I finish high school because she never got to do it. My grandmother never did it. Back in those days in Puerto Rico, there was no high school really for women.

Another participant shared that her father started college “but couldn’t finish due to family issues” and that both parents imparted that “education was good for you. It could open doors for you, and you could do something with your life.”

Participants also shared that their parents demonstrated a value for education through the personal sacrifices they were willing to make solely for the purpose of obtaining a good education for their children in the United States. One participant poignantly stated:

My mother had a life in Ecuador. My mother was a rich girl. She had maids. She had everybody and my father did what he had to do. They had a life, and they had an amazing life, and for them to come here and all of a sudden to go back to zero, like they lost their education. My father was a lawyer, and he came back here, and he had to end up working in a factory and do things he’s never done in his life. For him to do that is the reason why I did do well in high school is the reason why my mother did sit with up and wait with me to finish my homework. She was there if I had to go to school, and I was a little late. She didn’t care what was going on, she would take me. She didn’t have a car but the *vecino* (neighbor) knew somebody who knew somebody, and I would get there no matter what, thanks to my parents. And for me, I’m the immigrant story. My parents are immigrants. They’re here to give us a better life. I have an older brother. He graduated, and he did his part because he finished. He did school, and he’s still going, and for me, it’s like I have to finish this and it’s hard for my parents to have me here...The only reason I’m here is for them and to prove and just to fulfill the goal of all the suffering for all these things of why they had to go through everything just for me to do it and the second, I’m at your [researcher’s] level and when I’m graduating [participant pauses to cry] I’ll feel so good because it’s the reason for why my parents did it, and why your parents go through all that because they want to see you fulfilled and when I’m there, I want to be really good, and I did it for them. I did it for my brother, and I did it for myself.

Students employ the cultural message that education is important by pledging to, and eventually succeeding in, accomplishing their goals of “finishing” school. This concept of finishing is analyzed in Chapter 5.

Lessons on the importance of education would not be the only lesson that parents would impart to their children. Parents would also send their children off with cultural capital to prepare their children for hostile conditions. These would come in the form of the six forms of cultural capital (aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, social). This research study set out to examine how those forms of capital were being utilized.

Manifestations of Cultural Capital

Aspirational capital. Parents transmit aspirational capital by encouraging children to hold on to their hopes and dreams despite obstacles. Students at the SWC utilize that capital to push themselves beyond the limits of what they thought was possible for themselves or what had been achieved in their families. One participant connected the goal of completing her college education to her identity as a woman:

I just feel like everybody gives credit to the men in the group. My cousins, two of them are cops, the other one is a Marine, and they're so successful, and the women in the family just so fill the stereotype. Like one of my cousins got pregnant at a young age, and the other didn't go to college. I'm going to be the first woman to graduate college in the U.S., and it feels really good and honestly, I'm doing it for my mom because she showed me that women can do it, too. That's why I'm doing it, to show them that women can make them proud.

When participants were asked, “What is keeping you in college?” they talked about wanting to complete their college educations, and they talked about the hopes and dreams that they have for the future. This participant shared:

I just want to make sure that I'm going to be able to take care of them [parents]. Also my small sister, my younger sister, I want to be an example for her, and I

want her to do well in school and go to college. It's also for me because I want to be someone in life, and I want to make sure that I'm going to be able to be dependent when I grow up. And if I someday decide to have children, they're not going to be suffering because of me or because they don't have money or they don't have the resources. They have a parent who wants to help them.

Students who were sophomores and juniors were already considering post-baccalaureate programs and planning ahead for what they would need to do to meet admissions requirements at those programs.

Familial capital. As discussed in Chapter 2, parents impart familial capital through members of the family and extended family. These individuals model important cultural values, such as education, and lessons communicated by family enlighten a student's awareness on emotional and moral levels.

Students demonstrate a utilization of this capital in the way in which they replicate familial structures. The importance of *Hermanas Unidas* is one such example. While participants are quick to explain that the organization is not actually family but like a family, the hierarchy of the organization is set up very much like a nuclear or single household family. This year, there is one President of the organization. She is a senior who consults with the group but who is the ultimate spokesperson for the group. In the past, there have been organizational co-chairs who, would consult with the group but would ultimately make final decisions and be the representatives for the group. The organization even assigns siblings to new students and members of the group. You can get a sibling in the group even if at home, you are an only child. Similar to the finding that there is a positive rivalry that exists among actual siblings and family members, the students in this organization also look to fellow high achieving members as role models and people to "keep up with."

An interesting observation of this group has been that in their replication of family structure, they also replicate the ways in which the six forms of capital are passed down. Aspirational, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social capital are all transmitted throughout the group. One student explained the rationale behind “creating culture” when she explained:

It’s a lot harder for us because there are not a lot of us and not that we have to assimilate, but we have to get used to a culture that’s not our own. So Latinas have to make our own culture, make this SWC what we know because we have to survive because this is not what we know.

Of note is the fact that what these students chose as a survival mechanism and one that is culturally recognizable is that of family.

Linguistic capital. Linguistic capital is related to the tradition of storytelling. This kind of storytelling can include *consejos* (advice) or *refranes* (proverb-style messages) and demonstrates linguistic strengths in the ability to tell a story while employing comedic timing, intonation, memorization, facial expressions, and dramatic pauses. I was able to witness this capital in action when I observed participants during the focus group and when members of the organization recognized one another on campus. While the exchanges were brief, participants told stories about other students, going so far as to re-enact the story they had been a part of. During in-depth interviews, some participants told stories that they had heard that were so convincing, they seemed to be a part of the participants’ own memories and experiences. The most memorable of these stories was when a participant shared the story of a Latina mother who attended a function for newly admitted SWC students

One of the *Hermanas Unidas* girls said the first time—the only time—her mom went to one of those meetings, because it’s in the home of an SWC alum, that she got so excited when she saw another Hispanic lady. She was like, “OH HI!” And

she wanted to talk, and then she noticed that she was the maid, and she was like, “Oh, never mind.”

Storytelling and shared memories seems to reinforce the familial connection that these women have created amongst themselves.

Navigational capital. Children who receive this capital are fortified with inner resources and resilience that empowers them to endure stressful events and hostile environments. This capital was manifested among Latinas at the SWC who felt a personal obligation to support and encourage and empower fellow Latina students who were questioning their right to be a student at the SWC. They described what it was like to be Latina on campus and how they coped with their feelings of being in a space where they found themselves to be members of a statistical minority. One participant described the experience of having to reassure an incoming first-year student of her uniqueness and her ability to be seen as an individual:

Let’s say it’s your first class, and you’re standing around the class. You’re going to be one of the only people of color and one of the only people where your parents are like immigrants. And I shouldn’t think of it like that because everybody’s an immigrant, so like everybody’s Hispanic, so she [the first year student] doesn’t really see that. It’s like making her unique among the other girls, I guess.

Another woman talked about how she gained support and perspective from fellow Latinas and students of color when she noticed feeling intimidated by being at a PWI:

I remember when I did the program Connections,¹⁵ and I was talking to one of my Connections leaders, and I was like, “I’m a little intimidated. I’m going to be honest because you know I come from a completely different background than most of the women here,” and she was like, “Don’t worry about it when you go to the classroom. You go and you act like you own it. Not raise your hand for every question, but you contribute and that shows that even though you’re here and

¹⁵ Pseudonym for a pre-orientation program at the college for women of color designed to familiarize them with campus resources prior to the official start of the academic year.

you're not of the same class or whatever the case may be, but at the same time you have the knowledge, and you didn't have the same resources to get here, but you still made it."

Participants felt that imparting these messages to students who were struggling with the lack of diversity on campus or doubtful of their abilities was key in ensuring that these students were successful and remained enrolled at this college.

Resistant capital. This capital is of particular use at a setting such as the SWC, a predominantly White institution that was designed without people of color in mind¹⁶. Resistant capital teaches students how to employ oppositional behavior to challenge inequality.

Utilization of this capital was evidenced in two ways. First, it was evidenced through a sophisticated student critique of the inequality in operation at the SWC. One student concluded:

I think one of the biggest problems at the SWC is that the school still operates as if it were a White, middle-class institution. I feel that they just ignore us minorities in the sense that they don't take into account the things that we need in order to succeed, and they won't do anything to bridge the gap between us and the majority of the students here.

An analysis such as this is oppositional in itself in that White privilege and social constructions are not considered to be topics for "polite conversation" at the SWC and are therefore not discussed. As one participant questioned, "Why don't we focus on students of color?"

Another way in which this capital manifests is when students speak up to educate others in the classroom. One participant described the rationale behind her utilization of

¹⁶In the literature, this particular design that marginalizes people of color is regarded as a "hostile environment."

this capital in the classroom setting and what she feels she stands to lose if she doesn't employ resistant capital when she shared the following:

I feel that the minute you forget where you come from, you lose everything. You lose yourself, you lose your values. And I feel like that's when your life starts going out of control, when you forget the things that are important to you. And I feel like that happens very often, being at a place like this. It's very easy to assimilate into the mainstream and not stand up for the things you value, the things that make you who you are because it's easier. In my classes I'm known as the crazy Puerto Rican,¹⁷ and I've gotten passionate about the human rights violations of Puerto Ricans by the American government. So any opportunity I have to bring that up, I do. What if I didn't bring that up? I'm going to be suppressing that voice inside of me. When you start doing that, you start losing yourself.

This is directly linked to what this participant learned from her mother. During the focus group, I asked participants to share what messages they had carried with them from their parents to the SWC. After one participant shared, "Don't forget where you came from," this participant contributed:

My mom always tells me, "Just remember the things in your life that have made you who you are because without those experiences, you wouldn't be who you are today."

Remembering who she is and the self-obligation to be true to oneself is what compels these students to speak out against injustice.

Social capital. Parents who transmitted social capital to their children also transmitted the skill of utilizing social networks to obtain resources needed for their children to experience positive educational outcomes.

Similarly, within a self-created family, the members of *Hermanas Unidas* are able to utilize social networks for themselves and fellow women of color when they exercise social capital.

¹⁷ This participant self-identifies as Dominican.

One student talked about needing to find a way to get herself and her sister (also an SWC student) a way to get to their grandmother's funeral in California. The participant asked a peer she thought might offer some guidance and that networking was met with positive results. The participant asked her friend for potential resources during lunchtime and by dinnertime, her friend had a list of college resources that she could email and provided advice on what to say in the email. The participant and her sister followed this advice and were both able to be with their families in California for a funeral service later that week.

Another participant described how she felt the SWC deprived students of color of available resources (book, internship, and junior year abroad funding) by not being transparent in advertising these opportunities. When describing how she learned about resources at the SWC, the student disclosed:

The only reason I found out is because another woman of color told me. Other than that, if you're not speaking to people of color who are finding out about information, you're not going to get the information.

This student felt that for her, if she wanted access to resources, she would need to use her network of women of color, a source of social capital she did have access to.

Students at the SWC were able to describe and interpret parental involvement during their early education as being a very "hands-on" process and described how parental involvement was based more on moral support during their current college experiences. Participants were also able to describe parental messages regarding the importance of education. Parental stories of personal struggle and sacrifice endured to secure a good education for their children inspired participants to "finish" school and

fulfill the dreams that their parents held on to. Participants at the SWC manifested all six forms of capital mainly through the replication of the Latina/o family culture.

Co-Educational University (UNI)

UNI History

The UNI campus is part of the state's University system which consists of five universities and has approximately 24,000 students. This would make the student population 10 times bigger than the SWC. The UNI is situated in a small town that offers coffee shops, restaurants, bars, bookstores, and a small movie theater. The UNI was founded in 1863 originally intended to be a land-grant agricultural college. At its inception, the curriculum included liberal arts, farming, science, and technical courses. There were four faculty members and 56 students enrolled.

In 1892 the UNI admitted its first female student and graduate degrees were instated. In 1947 it went from being a college to becoming a University and this change was reflected in the broader curriculum, facilities, and larger student population. The student population of the UNI seemed to reflect the political climate of the United States. After World War II with veterans returning home, there was a growth in enrollment and a growth in the facilities to support the 4,000 students enrolled there in 1954. In the 1960s as "Baby Boomers" were able to enroll in the UNI, enrollment grew to 10,500. The UNI would see a student initiated protest that resulted in a takeover of the main administration building. By the end of the 1960s the UNI saw the building of a new residential area and new academic departments that reflect what the UNI looks like today.

The 1970s brought additional changes. A completion of the college library in 1973 earned the UNI the distinction of having the tallest library in the world, and the UNI

also added a parking garage, restaurant, campus center, hotel, and fine arts center. The 1970s to the 1990s would earn the UNI distinction in the areas of sports and research with a basketball championship and new graduate research center.

Within the geographical area in which the UNI is situated, it has gained a reputation for being a “party school,” an image that the UNI is trying to change and one that some students seem to resent. Despite this image, it is seen by the local community as a good school with a serious academic program. Demographically, women outnumber men both in undergraduate and graduate enrollment numbers. There are on-campus resources for men, women, LGBT students, international students, honors students, and students with disabilities, to name a few. Students come from all over the United States and all over the world to attend the UNI. Participants in the study were residents of Massachusetts and, therefore, were within driving distance to their families. A demographic summary¹⁸ is found in Table 4.

Table 4: Demographic summary of UNI.

Racial/Cultural Categories	Degree-Seeking Undergraduates (includes first-time first-year)
Nonresident aliens	229
Hispanic	1,007
Black or African American, non-Hispanic	757
White, non-Hispanic	14,613
American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	55
Asian, non-Hispanic	1,562
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	26
Two or more races, non-Hispanic	454
Race and/or ethnicity unknown	2,088
TOTAL	20,791

¹⁸ According to the University’s 2010-2011 Common Data Set.

Data Collection

Individual students, staff, faculty, and student organization leaders were contacted at the UNI to recruit participants. Similar to what was done at the SWC, a “Call for Participants” email was sent out, respondents were asked to complete the “Demographic Questionnaire,” and those who were deemed eligible to continue in the process were forwarded an “Informed Consent Form.” A meeting was scheduled where participants were given a copy of the consent form, asked questions about the nature of the study, were told who they could contact about the study, and were informed of their rights as a participant. Participants were notified about the Likert-scale survey, and they were invited to take part in the focus group discussion.

The main contact and my liaison to the students I was working with was an undergraduate UNI senior with ties to all of the Latina/o organizations on campus. He forwarded my “Call for Participants” and spread news of the study through word of mouth. He was the first subject to take part in an in-depth interview. He agreed to seek out potential candidates for the study and have them contact me. In the interim between the time of his in-depth interview and the focus group, in-depth interviews were taking place through connections made by staff and faculty. I was invited to hold a focus group in the office of one of the Latina/o organizations on campus where I recruited participants. Similar to what had been done at the SWC, dinner was provided. I had heard that wings and pizza would attract students and provided a meal consisting of those items.

A total of six Latina/o students attended the focus group. Of that number, one had already taken part in an in-depth individual interview, and one volunteered to take part in

an in-depth interview but did not respond to my emails. After trying to contact her several times, I ceased my efforts and continued holding interviews with students on my participant list. Ten students made contact with me to take part in in-depth interviews; three did not respond to additional email reminders; and seven followed through with the process and completed data sets. The total number of participants between the focus group and in-depth interviews was 11. The focus group themes that emerged were consistent with the themes of the in-depth interviews.

Description of Parental Involvement

Similar to the descriptions offered by participants at the SWC, parental involvement during early education was reported by UNI students to be very “hands-on.” Participants described having a routine to follow upon returning home from school and that parents would help with homework. During early education there was a strict regimen where schoolwork was concerned. One participant stated:

There was no TV until homework was done, and there was no other option. My family was big on grades, and there was no understanding of bad grades because you didn’t like the subject.

Another participant shared:

Mostly it was, “All right, come and eat first,” and then it was, “Just do your homework,” basically. My mom always tried to help us. Eventually it came to a point when she couldn’t help us, but she was always involved and because of my brother [who is disabled], she was pretty involved in the school system. She knows the school system very well. Always going to meetings, always talking to janitors.

She was not the only participant who would respond that parents would help where they could with school work, but their ability to help was affected by the level of schooling they attained, and as one participant stated, “My mom was able to help with math early on because math is universal.”

Participants also revealed that the type of support and involvement provided was specific to gendered roles. One participant said that her mother was more nurturing when she had difficulty with schoolwork whereas her father, in his attempt to be supportive would say things like, “Man up or shut up.”

Parental involvement was also demonstrated in how good grades were rewarded and how bad grades received negative attention and consequences. One participant said that she was paid in cash for good grades, but she would also have to pay her parents back in cash for every bad grade that she earned. When one student got poor marks for conduct and was told that she was “too social” in school, her mother would make her write, “I will not talk in class” 100 times and then hand that in to her teacher. This seemed to be her mother’s way of demonstrating to the teacher that she was supportive of what the teacher was doing in the classroom by having her daughter complete the punishment for talking in class.

In contrast to how their parents were involved in their early education, students at the UNI were asked how their parents are currently involved in their college education. For the most part, participants felt that their parents were okay with them going away to college and admitted that “everyone gets homesick at first.” While students report at the UNI report what students at the SWC did—that parents are involved in college but the involvement takes on a different appearance—students in both participant pools described how parents still wanted to ensure that their children were taking care of their basic needs. As one participant stated:

It’s always like, “Just do your best”, “You know you can do it,” “Make sure you eat,” “Make sure you’re sleeping enough,” “Don’t stay up too late,” just little tips. It makes my day because I know they’re trying. You know, “Don’t stay out too late,” “How’s school going?”

Similar to what was reported regarding move-in day at the SWC, UNI students shared that their parents and families were also excited and supportive about the move into a college dorm. When I asked one participant, “Who moved you to the UNI?” she laughed and replied, “Everybody!” and then listed that her entourage that day consisted of her “mother, brother, cousin, her husband, his friends, my friends, and one of my aunts.” When I asked her what they did when they arrived at her room, she reported:

They helped me set up my room. They help me put my fridge and all of the food from home. They put it in there. They made my bed. They set up my posters. That was a really sad day. I cried that day. I was like, “What do I do now?”

When asked “why did they help you unpack?” She said:

I guess they wanted to make sure that I was okay. There was no one that I really knew out here. They just wanted to know that I was okay. It was just family being family, I guess.

A lack of familiarity with the opening of the academic year was something that families experienced. One student recalled:

My parents weren’t really there for the high school to college process. They didn’t know how to help me. I mean that’s understandable but they were just like, “Oh, she’s going to college now,” but we didn’t know once we came here and saw that everybody was moving in. My mom kind of freaked out. Like, “Was I supposed to bring you food or something or was I supposed to bring snacks? Do you need money? What do we give you?”

As was the case at the SWC, students at the UNI reported that they were greeted with a hero’s welcome when they arrived home for a school break. Participants were asked, “What do you want to eat when you’re home?” and when participants returned home, they found that their parents had purchased all of their favorite foods. One male student reported:

I get spoiled when I go home. My mom does my laundry and she does too much for me. It's like I want it to stop but I don't want it to stop. I know she misses me, and this is her way of showing me, and I don't want to say, "Stop," and be rude.

Another student said:

I remember waking up during Christmas break to my mom frying food for me during breakfast and my mom was like, "This is for you to take back to school." And I was like, "What time did you get up?" and she would say, "Oh, 8 o'clock in the morning," and there would be all of these Tupperwares filled with rice.

When I asked students to theorize on their parents' behavior and why they thought that their parents were going out of their way to welcome their children home, participants responded:

I feel like Spanish parents are more attached to their children. I don't know if attached is the right word.

At this point, a participant chimed in:

I feel that they just tend to be closer and especially when people tend to go away for a long time, and they've always been there in the house forever, and then they go away for some time or move out, when they do come by, it's like, "Oh my God, you're here! What do you want?!"

Participants reported coming home to find that the rooms that they left have been cleaned and have presents waiting inside for them. These presents usually consist of items to make their college rooms more comfortable and reminiscent of home.

Phone calls to and from home ranged in frequency from 3 times a day to every two weeks. There didn't seem to be a pattern or profile to who called home, how often, and when. The only distinction was according to gender. Males called home less frequently than women did and were expected to.

Despite the length or frequency of contact, one thing was clear. Parents were proud of their children and would boast to their friends and co-workers about having a son or daughter in college. Participants talked about how parents wanted to advertise to

the world that they were parents of a UNI student by sporting UNI “mom” and “dad” apparel and asking for UNI “mom” or “dad” sweatshirts, t-shirts, and hats for birthday and holiday presents. One participant said that his dad was sporting a UNI hat that he bought for himself and as another participant stated, “My parents want UNI para.¹⁹”

Employing Cultural Messages Regarding Education

The messages imparted to UNI students echoed the sentiments of SWC parents with the message being “education is important.” Parents demonstrated the value of education by establishing routines and habits, taking grades seriously, working with the classroom teacher on in-class behavioral issues, taking time to help with homework to the best of their ability, and exhibiting pride in their children for their college-student identities.

The value of education was also demonstrated by restrictions that parents placed on their children. For example, despite a desire to have a job, parents prohibited their children from being employed. The message was, “You need to focus on your education, then you’ll get a better job later,” and “If you get a job, you won’t want to focus on school—you’ll just want to work more hours to make more money.” Parents felt that it was their role as parents to provide what a child needed and sometimes wanted. They felt that it was one of the roles as their children to focus on school and removed a potential obstacle to education by ensuring that children had all they needed. Good grades secured that they could on occasion, get what they wanted.

¹⁹ Slang for paraphernalia.

Verbal messages about the importance of education were relayed by parents, and their children were able to retain these messages as evidenced by their ability to recall these messages and repeat them to me.

One participant remembers her mother saying:

My mother...honestly this kind of sums everything up. My mother always said that "We are not rich, and the only inheritance we can leave you is a good education." It's mainly been drilled. Neither of them actually finished college. They had some experience but in Mexico. It was always, "Get a good education, and you can find a good job. Be successful. It will give you a lot of opportunities. Just really focus on your education." That was really the top priority.

Parents, as cited in the literature, used their personal stories as cautionary tales (Auerbach, 2006) and life lessons as reasons for why their children should stay in school. A number of the participants of the focus group reported hearing parents saying, "You need to get an education because you don't want to have to be working like me." One parent shared her regret of not having been able to obtain a formal education and told her daughter:

My mom would say, "Oh, you're lucky to be where you are because when I was your age my parents didn't want me to go to college. So what my mom did was at my age she ran away and had kids but like at the same time she came here and the only thing that she could do was go to a community college. So basically she's like, "Live my dream, but in your own way."

Education was seen as a way up and a way out of the family's current economic reality. Students were aware that after completing their education, they would be expected to care for their parents later in life.

Participants were acutely aware of the fact that dropping out was not an option for them. Students did not want to join the ranks of family members who had started college but not earned their degree. A female student was told, "Don't drop out. Don't be like your sister [who dropped out]. You have to finish." Again, there was the issue of positive

rivalry and comparison to successful cousins with messages like, “Be like your cousin, Moses. He went to college.”

Participants also expressed an interest in “finishing” college to fulfill their parents’ dreams, to save face for the family, to express gratitude for how their parents raised them, and because they didn’t want to waste familial financial resources. One participant expressed:

I would feel bad if I dropped out and they spent all that money. Like some people don’t care and they just figure, “Oh well,” because their parents have money. Try saying that in a Latino household!

UNI students received more than messages about the importance of education from their families. Additionally, they were fortified with cultural capital as well.

Manifestations of Cultural Capital

Aspirational capital. Participants continued to express a desire to complete their degree programs during the data collection process. One participant said that she had to finish school. She had aspirations of :

Earning my B.A., going to grad school and making money. I ultimately want to give my mom things and give my mom money. That’s important for my mom, too.

Later on in the in-depth interview, that same participant stated:

The only option I ever had was to go to college. College was the ticket—it was going to be the defining thing. I want to go beyond everything she [her mother] wanted to be.

A student who had aspirations of pursuing a nursing degree shared her aspirations to be a provider for her parents when she said:

It’s not just the expectations that my parents have for me. I want to get out of here, and I want to be a nurse. I want to give my parents more than they have ever given me, and I just want to have them sit, relax, take it easy.

At the UNI, participant aspirations were closely tied to enhancing family life experiences and options. Students at the SWC and the UNI both seem to possess a desire and an aspiration to fulfill the dreams of their parents. The students at the UNI speak more of aspiring to obtain jobs and make money that would create comfortable lives for their parents and would create opportunities for which children could “take care” of their parents as a sort of repayment for all they feel their parents have afforded them.

One participant who wants to become a firefighter despite his mother’s objections laid out a plan to inform her of his aspirations. Because his mother disapproves of his aspirations because of the risks involved and because he always follows his mother’s advice, she is in a sense, an obstacle to his realizing his aspirations. To convince her to give her blessing for him to become a volunteer firefighter, he told her that being a firefighter and having experience caring for others in distress would enhance his chances of getting into medical school, something that she was very excited about. When he explained how the experience of being a firefighter would be related to aspects of the medical field, he not only convinced her to give her blessing, but he impressed her with his vast knowledge of firefighting and emergency rescue procedures.

Familial capital. Without family members in close proximity, participants in this study felt the need to replicate a family structure they were familiar with. This was accomplished by “adopting” surrogate family members to “create” families that consisted of friends and members of support networks. At the SWC, creating such a familial structure was easier than at the UNI because they had one established Latina organization. The UNI had several Latina/o organizations to choose from and participants described having to look outside of the college-sponsored multicultural organizations for

support. Unlike the replication of family that took place within *Hermanas Unidas*, the ways in which the six forms of cultural capital are transmitted were not fully actualized through the surrogate families at UNI.

A male student spoke of how a White friend of his had become for him, a father figure. He noted that he and his friend, Brian,²⁰ relied on one another for support and that he considered Brian somewhat to be an honorary Colombian and a member of the family. This student stated that he did not feel a need to seek out members of Latina/o cultural organizations to make friends. I credit this participant's ability to create an extended family out of familial capital. This participant is no stranger to the process of inviting and welcoming extended family members and regarding family friends as members of the family. This is what he has demonstrated through his friendship with Brian.

While this participant adopted Brian into his family, another participant would adopt an entire family, her sorority sisters, into her family. This group would make up a group of women who she would refer to as her "sisters," once again exhibiting a replication of Latina/o family culture. When speaking of the group she says that they check in with each other every day, and she relies on these people that are like family. "These friends have become my family. They are my home away from home."

Initially, when she told her family that she was joining a sorority, they feared that she had joined a cult while away at school. This evidenced a lack of social capital on the part of family members who did not have prior access to information regarding college groups and activities. Once she explained that the group was actually a Latina organization, her family was open to the idea of her membership and mentioned that

²⁰ Pseudonym

“every one of the sisters has even met my mom!” which signifies that the members of the group were significant enough to her to introduce them to an important member of her biological family.

Linguistic capital. During focus groups, participants told stories about their families in very animated ways. They used their entire bodies to tell the stories of individual family member idiosyncrasies. They memorized dialogue that had taken place, used dramatic pauses, imitated people within the story, and utilized facial expressions and comedic timing. Participating in the act of sharing an anecdote, these participants were embodying linguistic capital.

This phenomenon was noted during in-depth individual interviews as well. Participants changed their voices to “play different roles” in the story they were telling and were able to retell stories that had taken place in some cases, as long as 30 years before their birth. Instead of telling a story that had happened to someone else, participants were so convincing in the story-telling, it was as if they were there as the story unfolded. These historical re-enactments were artfully done and always in the spirit of fun. I noticed that the telling of one story sparked the telling of multiple stories, especially in the focus group setting.

Navigational capital. One male student describes how his mother instills resilience and fortification to endure hostile settings. He disclosed that his mother teases him during phone calls in a good-natured way. She uses humor to provide levity when he is describing being stressed, and this type of play reminds him not to take himself so seriously. He has stated that this exchange of communication has helped him to “laugh at myself a little.”

Another male student spoke of how he used adaptability as a resilience tool. Adaptability is something he learned from his father who recounted endless stories of how he had to adapt to American culture after moving here from the Dominican Republic. As a result of seeing this behavior modeled, the participant was also able to adapt to a “foreign” culture, that of the UNI, when he first arrived as a first-year student. Being able to adapt is something he credits for making his first year much easier.

A female participant drew the connection between resilience and the choice to be resilient when she said:

There is will and what you learn. You can be taught to go to school, but that has nothing to do with wanting to do something. At the end of the day, it’s up to you if you want to do something or not, if you want to finish school or not. Some people fail when they don’t have the will.

Having “will” was a theme that arose during the discussion on resistant capital and utilizing voice to work against oppression.

Resistant capital. Participants at UNI voiced feeling the need to challenge inequality both during their time at UNI and after graduation. One student talked about using resistant capital in her classes. She shared:

I feel like it’s my job not to be invisible in the classroom. I never noticed that before coming here. I feel like I have to work twice as hard to be here.

Another participant discussed using resilient capital when she talked about what she is considering doing after she graduates from UNI:

I feel I have to do some kind of work in the Springfield public schools. In the Access²¹ class, the community service that we do is in Springfield, so I started to get really attached to the school system there. I just feel like I need to do something about it. I feel like I had an advantage with my mom always being there, but I see that most of the boys only have one single mother, and I see how that affects their education. I really want to do something there.

²¹ Pseudonym for the group she is involved with on campus.

This participant spoke of challenging campus-wide inequity and taking on the UNI administration for the restructuring of campus diversity programs:

I did research on the VP to see what programs he cut at his former institution and I have been learning about him. And we had a meeting with him, and he was sitting at one end of the table, and I was sitting at the other. And he said, “I sense a lot of hostility in the room,” as we were questioning him, and I said, “That’s interesting. So do I.”

This exchange was enough for the VP to seek her out after the meeting in private, assuming that she was the spokesperson for the group. She informed him that she was just someone who was concerned over what was happening with diversity on campus.

Social capital. With a restructured diversity program on campus, participants reported feeling at a loss for being able to locate and/or utilize resources on campus. Instead of turning to the administration for this support, students turned to each other to relay campus news and social activities information. I was told that there is no better publicity for students of color on campus through word of mouth, and through that pipeline of information you can basically learn anything you want to know. One student said that resources on campus weren’t easy to find, but she felt, “like I started hearing things from other people because by myself I really didn’t know. It was through other students.” Further, she felt as if locating resources was a mystery for Latina/o students on campus:

It was a mystery because you kind of have to find it. I keep hearing there are so many resources, but it’s not until now that I know about the resources. And that’s kind of my job is finding the resources, providing underrepresented students with those resources that I know about.

She remedied this issue of not having connections to resources by reaching out to fellow students by enrolling in a diversity course, decide to “instead of just sitting here in

my room watching TV let me go outside and talk to somebody,” “finding other minorities and hanging out” and getting involved with diversity organizations that served students of color.

Other participants talked to Latina/o staff and developed relationships with as a resource for different opportunities on campus. In general, participants developed connections with those who could inform them of resources available on campus since these weren't conscientiously advertised to students of color.

Students at the UNI were able to describe parental involvement as a foundation that parents built during early childhood and extended through college through moral support. The cultural messages that they learned were regarding the importance of education for increasing advancement opportunities. Another was lessons related to the lamentations of their parents regarding not having fulfilled their personal dreams of obtaining a formal education. Participants employed these messages by developing aspirations that would strive to support their parents as repayment for their sacrifices and to fulfill their parents' dreams of higher education. Finally, through data derived from the focus group and in-depth interviews, participants revealed that students at the UNI were utilizing all six forms of cultural capital.

Community College (CC)

CC History

The CC was founded in 1946 and is the “youngest” of educational institutions featured in this research study. It began as a Junior College that was sponsored by the city. The small college was said to have lacked the resources at the time that were available at more traditional colleges. It started with only two staff members: the

college's founder and his secretary who shared a small room within the space they borrowed from the local high school. Lacking the simple resources needed for the faculty who taught in the evening, the two staff members would steal whatever erasers, pencils, and pieces of chalk that they could.

In January 1968 the college's newly renovated campus suffered a fire and the campus was completely lost. Despite this tragedy, the college community worked together to ensure that work could begin again in a few days within transitory quarters. The community worked together to bombard the Governor with correspondence that would demand that the school be rebuilt in the town of its origin.

The college has come a long way since its founding 65 years ago. It now boasts a multi-million dollar, 165 acre campus and updated technology. The college serves over 9,000 students and is proudest of its history of originality, service to students, and a vision for continued success. Unlike students at the SWC and UNI who would be able to live on campus, the CC does not have residential facilities, and, therefore, its students are commuters from the immediate area. Most of the participants still live at home with their parents, a distinct difference between students at the SWC and the UNI, and a factor I believe to have had an impact on the data. A demographic summary²² can be found below (Table 5).

²²According to the College's Fall 2010 Common Data Set.

Table 5: Demographic summary of CC.

Racial/Cultural Categories	Number of Students
Nonresident aliens	20
Hispanic	1,420
Black or African American, non-Hispanic	467
White, non-Hispanic	5,049
American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic	23
Asian, non-Hispanic	178
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	4
Two or more races, non-Hispanic	96
Cape Verdean	7
Race and/or ethnicity unknown	140
TOTAL	7,404

Data Collection

The Coordinator for multicultural academic services was contacted for assistance in recruiting participants for the study. Similar to what was done at the other research sites, a “Call for Participants Letter” was emailed, respondents were asked to complete the “Demographic Questionnaire,” and those who were deemed eligible to continue in the process were forwarded an “Informed Consent Form.” A meeting was scheduled where participants were given a copy of the consent form asked questions about the nature of the study, who they could contact about the study and their rights as a participant. Participants were notified about the Likert-scale survey, and they were invited to take part in the focus group discussion.

The main contact and my liaison to the students I was working with was the aforementioned program Coordinator who has access to and rapport with a large population of Latina/o students on campus. She forwarded my “Call for Participants” through email and spread news of the study through word of mouth. I believe that the latter technique utilized was the most effective. The Coordinator identifies as Latina,

Puerto Rican to be exact, and has earned a great deal of credibility and trust among the Latina/o students. The Coordinator also identifies as a lesbian and her wife also works at the institution and is an academic advisor within the multicultural academic services department. They are both actively involved in taking the students they serve on educational and recreational field trips and have become surrogate parents to some of the students they serve. I was invited to hold a focus group during the meeting time of the campus's only Latina/o organization on campus where I recruited participants. Similar to what had been done at the SWC and UNI, food was provided not by me but through the Coordinator's office.

A total of eight Latina/o students attended the focus group. One student who was recruited outside of the focus group was invited to take part in the study but chose not to even after repeated attempts to contact her. Eight participants followed through with the process and completed data sets. The total number of participants between the focus group and in-depth interviews was eight. The focus group themes that emerged were consistent with the themes of the in-depth interviews.

Description of Parental Involvement

Since some of the participants in this study live with extended family members, the descriptions offered by CC students do not always refer to biological parents but by family who have become parental figures.

The first participant interviewed shared that her parents were together until she was 5 years old after which time she was raised by her mother and extended family who she respected as parents because "respect was ingrained" in her, as she stated. She described her mother as "very involved" in her education. Where grades were concerned,

she was told to “do your best and try your hardest.” Her mother frowned upon grades that were a “C” or lower, and there were consequences for poor grades. Her mother would take away TV watching privileges, and the time that she would normally spend playing with cousins would be reduced. There were also rewards for good grades and her mother would reward this by taking her out to eat or purchasing a small gift for her.

While her mother’s work schedule prevented her from attending PTA meetings and parent teacher conferences, she was able to attend the school’s open house event. A lack of attendance at these events did not diminish her involvement. She taught her daughter to be respectful to the teacher at all times because the teacher was “giving her something and helping her out.” Her mother taught her never to be disrespectful to her teachers. Currently in the college setting, her mother demonstrates support and involvement through messages and encouragement. When asked about how her mother demonstrates support, the participant said:

[When I am experiencing stress, my mother] tells me to relax, not to worry so much, that I am a smart girl, and I could do whatever. She really just helps me to relax because I am a very anxious person. So when she sees that I’m getting that way, she will sit me down and talk to me, tells me that I am doing a good job and not to worry.

Like other parents described in the research study, this participant’s mother boasts about her daughter, is looking forward to her graduation, and has voiced the sentiment that she is proud of her.

Another participant that was interviewed shared that both of her parents were college-educated and deeply involved in her education. There was no rhyme or reason to who helped her with homework. Both parents assisted with homework and the parent who helped would be the parent who returned home from work first. There were no

consequences for bad grades. If she didn't do well in school, her parents would say, "Just do better next time." There were also no rewards for good grades. She shared:

[My parents demonstrated involvement in my early education by] attending open houses. Involvement was more at home. They would go through my back pack, and up until middle school, they could just walk up and talk to my teachers since they worked in the same school.

This participant shared that she felt her parents didn't attend PTA meetings because it was a "White parent thing." As a college student, she felt that her parents are proud of her, and she was invested in making them proud.

One participant shared that her mother demonstrated involvement because she didn't pressure her to stay in school when she wanted to drop out. Rather, her mother talks to her in such a way the participant shared that "it helps me to refocus and go for what I want."

A different participant shared that her parents motivated her by presenting a bleak outlook of what her life would look like if she didn't complete her education. "Do you want to work at Home Depot all your life?" they would ask her.

I would be remiss if I didn't introduce the data that reported Latina/o parents who were uninvolved and disengaged in the education of their children. Some participants in the study cited that they didn't have any support from their parents or that their parents felt that going to school was a waste of time when they could be employed with full-time jobs and helping to financially support the family. One participant shared that the way in which her mother was "involved" in her education was that her mother's lifestyle was evidence that education was important and that she didn't want to follow in her mother's footsteps. During the interview, she whispered that her mother had *vicios* (vices), and she didn't want to go down a similar path.

Employing Cultural Messages Regarding Education

For the majority of participants interviewed, the main cultural message regarding education was that education was important and valued within the family. One parent told her daughter that “your [educational] degree determines who you are.” A male student was reminded that as far as family college graduates were concerned “nobody finished. I wanted to go further than they did.” Another participant was told “if you want to be successful, you have to be successful in school.” This was accentuated by the fact that the people imparting this message to her were seamstresses, and she would note that their work was never-ending. They would work in the factory and then bring work home. What was demonstrated to her was that an education could provide different life options than what was available to her family. What she was told was “you have to study because you have to get out.”

Messages that these students received about education were mainly that an education was vital in improving one’s life situation and in providing more options. While some participants expressed wanting to make parents proud, the general sentiment was that education provides access and escape.

Manifestations of Cultural Capital

Aspirational capital. Students at the CC brightened when they talked about the aspirations they have for their futures. After asking one participant about her aspirations, she quickly answered:

I always knew I was going to college. That was always my dream in school. Now that I am in college, I want to be a forensic psychologist. And I have another dream which is to someday buy a house and take in veterans and homeless people.

Another participant shared that she wanted to be a high school English teacher so

she could use multi-media to attract students to want to read and to accommodate students with learning disabilities. She said that she wants to show kids that “reading doesn’t have to be boring.”

“Wanting to make my parents proud” was an aspiration for another participant who said that this was an aspiration because: “I am blessed to have the parents that I have. I credit them for who I am.” Similarly, another participant said: [She] “always knew I would go to college. I can do it. I can go to college, be successful, better myself and make my mother proud.”

Another participant’s aspirations were very simple. After college, he simply wanted to “have a career and be a good person.” A participant whose dream is to be a neonatal nurse shared that the highest degree she wanted to obtain was a master’s degree. She was exuberant when she talked about premature babies. She offered statistics on the survival rates of “preemies” and likened their struggle to her struggle obtaining an education. She said that she had the same message for preemies as she does for herself which is, “You can do it! Fight! Fight hard!”

While some participants held aspirations to make their parents proud and to show gratitude for the parents that they have, other participants had aspirations to better their own lives. As evidenced in the aspirations of students, there are some whose aspirations include helping and improving the lives of strangers and the marginalized, such as veterans, the homeless, young people, and premature babies.

Familial capital. Familial capital was an interesting phenomenon to analyze with this group in particular because most of the participants in the study still live with their families. A need to adopt new family or extended family members largely does not exist, nor is there a need to seek out people who identify as Latina/o at the CC.

While it was evident that support systems existed in the places that participants called “home,” I was still curious to know where they found support at the CC and if familial capital was at play. Living at home did not necessitate a need to replicate family structure; however, participants unanimously spoke of the multicultural academic services Coordinator as if she were a surrogate mother and also included the Coordinator’s wife as a source of support. This was information that was not solicited but, rather, volunteered from the participants themselves. It was notably interesting that the Coordinator’s wife was mentioned when I never brought her up as a point of discussion. The Coordinator was especially vital for those participants without close ties to a mother figure. Due to the fact that she is referenced so frequently, I have assigned the Coordinator the pseudonym “Michelle.”

When asked who they found to be a support on campus, students referenced Michelle, and I noted that she possesses the characteristics described of highly involved Latina mothers. When I asked one participant why Michelle was considered to be a support, she said:

She knows what classes I have taken, and she can answer my questions resourcefully. She’s easy to talk to, and she checks up and checks in. She has high expectations for me, and she wants me to succeed.

Another participant stated, “Michelle is my home. A lot of students feel that

way.” A participant who is estranged from her mother said, “Michelle gets excited that I could be on the Dean’s List. She’s the reason I am staying in college. She’s very demanding.”

Of the Latina/o cultural organization that Michelle currently advises, participants describe this group as a “little family.” As one participant said:

Educationally, we’re there for each other. Emotionally, we’re there for each other. There is also a sibling sort of rivalry. You want to do better, compete with each other, pick each other up. If one does good in math, we’re all inspired to do good. The group is like a giant family. Yeah, we have our arguments, but they don’t last long. We’ll argue and then someone will kick you like to say, “I’m sorry,” and then you move on.

Where participants at the SWC and the UNI might not have had a family member who had gone to college, could help them navigate college, and who could communicate the expectations and milestones within college to families unfamiliar with college practices, all of the participants had this resource in Michelle—someone they considered to be a second home.

Linguistic capital. Linguistic capital was not something reported in the focus group or in-depth interviews, but it was a part of my observations as I sat in the multicultural academic services space to wait for and interview students. The space is rarely empty, and it is rarely quiet. There always seems to be at least one student in the reception area and students speaking to Michelle in her office. In between class periods and during lunch, the office was abuzz with activity and laughter that could be heard echoing down the hallways.

Linguistic capital in the form of storytelling was a common occurrence in the office. Students would be telling stories to Michelle about something that had happened in class or something that a cultural organization member did, and the hallmarks of

linguistic capital were evident. Using body language to tell the story, inflection of voice, dramatic pauses, facial effects, memorization, and use of rhythm and rhyme were all evident. If two students had been together at an event, and one was retelling a story from the event in such a way that didn't capture the moment, the other student would take over the story. A back-and-forth storytelling would take place with two storytellers allowing space for the other to enter and exit the story. It was entertaining, beautiful, fluid, and seamless to watch.

It seemed in this setting, the purpose of the storytelling was not to impart educational or moral lessons but to make others laugh and create moments of levity within the day.

Navigational capital. One participant talked about possessing and practicing inner resilience in how she problem-solved. She would tell herself, "You're grown. You can do this," and she would set out to solve problems on her own. It was only in circumstances that she tried to solve problems on her own and was unsuccessful that she would seek out the help of others.

For another participant, living with her mother has reinforced the navigational capital she originally learned. The participant is confident that she possesses the strengths necessary to accomplish what she sets out to and said, "Now my education is for myself, and what I want to do. I am committed to my schoolwork, and I hold myself to high expectations."

A student who is not living with her mother and whose mother did not reinforce the value of education shared her story:

I wanted to drop out after high school. My mom didn't motivate me. She never had anything to say about school and if I did good, she wasn't excited. I figured,

“What’s the point?” I live with my grandmother, and she thought that high school was the end. She gets happy about good grades but not excited. She feels like school is wasting your time. Sometimes I feel down and I say, “Grandma, I need to do this.” She supports my decision, but she’s not happy. I am in school thanks to Michelle. She gets excited when I get good grades. She gets more excited than I do. Now I feel like education is more important than you think. I value it more now, and I am proud of getting good grades.

This student’s story is evidence that navigational capital can be transmitted and learned later in life with the appropriate support. It is also evidence that it can be transmitted through someone who understands Latina/o culture and someone who is regarded and trusted as a family member.

Resistant capital. Resistant capital was evidenced through the topics that participants chose to lend their voices to. After attending two cultural organization meetings, I learned that the group was currently comprised of women who took the initiative to do community service work as a group activity and really enjoyed it. It seemed important to the group that injustices against women need to be addressed and that women need to be celebrated. One woman who participated in the research study described that the men in her family want to dominate the women. She shared that she has two uncles who own businesses and tried to pressure her to drop out of school and come work for them when she was younger. It was the women in her family, she added, who advocated for her to stay in school and complete her studies.

The intersection of gender and Latina/o culture are salient for these women. While many of the women have said that they are nervous about taking part in public artistic performances, several women have signed up to take part in the Spanish production of the “Vagina Monologues.” The CC sponsored the monologues where one participant, Michelle, and Michelle’s wife were also in the production. The proceeds

from the CC sponsored production went to a local women's shelter. Now, the Spanish version of the monologues will be performed in the community outside of the college. Michelle is working with the actresses to teach them the craft of acting and to get them comfortable with the material they are working with. Proceeds from this production will be going to a women's shelter as well. While they may not describe it this way, participants are engaged in the practice of working toward social change.

Social capital. Students at the CC expressed an ease, comfort, and skill in locating the necessary resources to ensure their academic success on campus. Michelle is a large contributor to their access to resources; however, they are also cognizant of and savvy to the other resources at their disposal. Some participants are aware of how to locate and utilize these resources even before they are enrolled at the CC. This is due in some part to pre-college programs that highlight colleges in the surrounding area. A student who participates in a pre-college program would be able to locate the actual office on campus they are looking for before a matriculated student can.

Observing the students in the campus space that is most familiar to them, I watched them act as resources for one another. This was most obvious when I observed an organizational meeting. During this meeting, the group was trying to create a list of activities that they wanted to do in the spring. When the question of how they would secure resources for an activity was raised, almost instantly, a group member would mention a personal connection they had who would be able to provide the necessary resources at little to no cost. From sitting with the group for no more than one hour, I was updated on everything from the bus schedule to where I could go if I wanted to go

horseback riding. It wouldn't take very long until I myself was assessed for my resource potential and asked, "Do you have any connection to the Fine Arts Center?"

The innovation that the college was founded and maintained on is clearly reflected in these students.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In Chapter 4 I presented the results of my study. In this chapter I will present the findings of this study as they are positioned within the theoretical frameworks of Chapter 2. Following the presentations of the findings I will provide a conceptual model that sets out to explain the results of this study. I conclude by discussing implications of my research and by offering recommendations for future inquiry.

Summary of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Latina/o parental messages regarding the value of education are utilized and engaged by undergraduate students at predominantly White institutions. The study further explored how, and under what circumstances, Latina/o students choose to engage with the six forms of capital (aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social) reported throughout literature on Latina/o parenting to be transmitted from Latina/o parents to their children (Auerbach, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 1997; Faulstich Orellana, 2003; Sólorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Using qualitative methods and employing grounded theory, I worked with Latina/o students in three distinct settings: a highly selective women's college, a large co-educational University, and a small community college to explore the choices students made in employing, or not employing parental training regarding education.

In preparation for the study, I examined two bodies of literature. The first is literature that examines the construction of parental involvement and its origins and

development in the United States. The second is a body of literature on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), the theoretical frameworks that informed this study. I also compiled research regarding Latina/o parental involvement its impact on Latina/o students.

After reviewing the literature I decided to use Yosso's (2006) "culture of wealth" framework as my analytic framework for this study. The culture of wealth framework refers to the six types of cultural capital purported to be transmitted to students via their parents in regard to education. These six forms of capital are: 1) *aspirational capital* (encouraging children to hold on to their hopes and dreams despite obstacles), 2) *familial capital* (connections with family and extended family), 3) *linguistic capital* (storytelling and utilization of memorization, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, facial affect, vocal tone, volume, rhythm and rhyme), (4) *navigational capital* (fortifying children with inner resources and resilience that empower their children to endure stressful events and hostile environments), 5) *resistant capital* (teaching children the skills of oppositional behavior to challenge inequality), and 6) *social capital* (utilizing social networks to obtain resources needed for their children to experience positive educational outcomes).

Using snowball sampling, I recruited participants for my study. Participants were asked to complete a Likert-scale survey regarding education and familial involvement (results found in Appendix F) asked to talk about the ways in which their parents and families were involved in their academic engagement during childhood and compare that to how parental involvement has manifested in college. Additionally, they were asked to

describe how their parents demonstrated their regard for education during childhood and how they demonstrate that regard today.

Included in this study are the responses of 37 participants representing 6 different Latina/o ethnicities. A demographic profile of participants is included in Appendix G.

Discussion and Findings

Description and Interpretation of Parental Involvement

In focus groups and in-depth interviews, participants were asked about how their parents were “involved” in their early education. I provided no definition or history of involvement as I felt that such information would be leading and tamper with the data. Students would describe parents as being “strict,” meaning that there were clear expectations and explicit consequences for failing to meet those expectations. Participants noted that when they were in elementary, middle, and high school, parents engaged in monitoring behavior by helping with homework, demanding high academic performance, removing obstacles from education, and checking book bags. Participants also noted that when more distance that was created between student academic experience and parental experience, parents were less able to help with homework. This by no means diminished the sense of parental involvement; it simply altered the ways in which parents were able to assist their children. In these instances, parents resorted to demonstrating parental involvement by giving their children moral support.

The gap created by educational attainment seemed to reach its peak when students enrolled in college. Parents who did not have prior experience with norms and traditions within higher education settings lacked the social capital needed to understand the environments that their children were in. This shift was most prevalent for SWC students

who, unlike UNI and CC students had moved a great distance away from home and to a setting that was vastly different socioeconomically from what they were raised with at home. Parents who had received a college education in their country of origin also found themselves in a difficult position. While they were able to understand the stress of being a college student, they couldn't necessarily relate to the nuances of the college or university that their children were attending. This caused some frustration for students who were discouraged that their parents didn't understand the victories and struggles that they experienced in college. Participants noted that their parents were still evaluating their success based on the grades they were earning in college. According to one participant who was being pushed by parents regarding grades:

It's also that they see me through grades so they're like, "You're not trying hard enough. You're not answering the questions right," and they don't see success any other way and that frustrates me.

Placing an importance on grades and the monitoring of grades is a documented Latina/o parenting practice that is also named by the participants. For working-class parents, school is considered to be a job, and the report card is the paycheck. How they understand grades is related to their own work environments. If you work more hours, you get paid more money. For them, if you work harder, you get better grades. What is lacking in this case from both parents and participants is a socioeconomic and oppression based analysis of what is at play here. Working-class parents in skilled labor positions are at the same starting point as their colleagues. They have all learned and mastered the skills required to do their jobs. In non-salaried positions, you get paid for the hours you work and get paid overtime for working more hours. In higher education because of a lack of resources in one's school, community, or household, college students are not all at

the same starting position. They may not have had access to the resources necessary to perform in the way they are asked to in college settings, such as the SWC. If a student starts at a disadvantaged position, they can work many hours and many hours of overtime and see less results, whereas students with advanced skills can put in less time and still “make” more in terms of grades. Working-class parents who may not have had a college education apply their knowledge of a system of work and pay to relate to the experiences of their children to try and understand what they are going through. This sentiment of the “harder you work, the more results you yield” is evidenced in the work of Gándara (1995), López (2001), and Reese et al. (1995). These attempts to bridge the distance between themselves and their children are one way in which parents evidence support.

Parents demonstrated support by regularly checking in with their children; encouraging them to eat, rest, and relax; reminding them of the obstacles that they surmounted in the past; boasting to family, friends, and colleagues that they had a child in college; and ensuring that they felt welcomed home during breaks from school. Participants were receptive to this level of involvement and felt that the reason they were able to persist in higher education settings was due to the fact that they had the support of their family.

Employing Cultural Messages Regarding Education

When participants were asked about the early messages they received from their parents regarding education, a variety of lessons were shared that dealt with familial and personal history as well as examples of how obtaining an education could improve the opportunities that would be available to them.

Parents demonstrated a regard for education in taking the time, despite busy work schedules, to help with homework and to prohibit children from holding a job in fear that it would interfere with their education (Antrop-González et al., 2005; Ceballo, 2004; Waterman, 2008).

Consistent with the literature, participants credited their parents for their academic success (Antrop-González et al., 2005; Ceballo, 2004; Rivera, 1997; Valencia & Black, 2002; Waterman, 2008). Participants told stories of the sacrifices that their parents had made and the insults that they had endured for the sole purpose of ensuring an education for their children. Participants expressed a deep gratitude to their parents for their sacrifices and pledged to complete the education that their parents had sought for them.

It was here that participants spoke of the concept of “finishing.” Through coding and analysis of the data, I have arrived at a description of what it means to “finish” school. School completion is one way to repay parents for the sacrifice of having given all so that their children could have a better education and, therefore, an increased chance of having a variety of life options available to them. Finishing isn’t just about completing a college degree program. Rather, to finish is to complete what their parents started by coming to the U.S. in search of a better life for their children. To finish is to rectify all of the wrongs that their parents endured and as the participant stated herself, parents want you to finish so that they see you “fulfilled.” By taking steps to stay in school and try their best despite obstacles, students are ensuring that they get to be fulfilled, per their parents’ wishes, but they also get to fulfill and exceed their parents’ dreams (Waterman, 2008).

Manifestations of Cultural Capital

Central to the research in this study was the question how, if at all, are the six forms of capital (aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social) manifested? This question was inspired by the literature on cultural capital (Yosso, 2006) that theorized that while people of color were viewed as being “culturally poor” in comparison to Whites, communities of color possessed a form of cultural capital. In Latina/o families, this capital was transferred from parent to student to protect them against hostile environments and to prepare them for engagement with institutions that were created without people of color in mind.

While the literature supports the ways in which this capital is transmitted, I was interested in assessing two questions. First, if college students decide to employ these forms of capital, how do they do so? Second, is the utilization of capital dependent on the type of institution that a student attends? To test my questions, I chose three distinct higher education venues as research sites. One was a highly selective, private women’s college that I refer to in my study as the SWC, the second was a large co-educational University that I refer to as UNI, and the third was a small community college that I refer to as the CC. What follows is how each form of capital was manifested across the three institutions.

Aspirational capital. Participants at the SWC manifested this form of capital in detailing their aspirations regarding their families and their identities as women. Insofar as family was concerned, these women wanted to be able to return home to give younger siblings a chance to go away to college while they returned home to help the family.

Female-identified aspirational capital was evident when women discussed a desire to prove that women were capable of being sources of pride, and this was something to be shared with other women in the family.

Students at UNI wanted to earn a degree to earn money. The rationale was that in doing so, they would improve upon the opportunities that would be afforded to them and improve upon the current socioeconomic condition of their families. Taking care of parents was seen as a way to repay them for the resources utilized in providing good care and a good education.

At the CC, participants wanted to improve conditions for marginalized populations. One participant spoke of a desire to eventually purchase a home so that she could house veterans and the homeless. Another participant spoke of how she aspired to become a neonatal nurse so she could encourage babies to fight for their lives just as she had been encourage to fight for her education.

Across all three institutions, participants expressed a desire to make their parents proud of them. While their parents had assured children that they had already ensured parental pride, making parents proud through the completion of a degree was stressed as an important aspiration.

Familial capital. The main theme raised in the manifestation of familial capital was the “replication of Latina/o family culture.” At the SWC, this was done by involvement with *Hermanas Unidas*, the sole student cultural organization for Latinas on campus. The organization had a President who acted as the “head” of the family, and the organization would assign “big sibs” or “big siblings” to newcomers to the college. Participants stated that being with this group was like being with family, and this family

membership was also able to transmit the forms of capital that was learned by their own families to be shared with the group.

At UNI, there was not one umbrella organization for Latina/o students, and UNI students did not express as great a need to befriend such a group. Instead, these students replicated family on an “as needed” basis. One male participant “adopted” a friend and regarded him as family just as Latina/os have been known to regard friends as extended family members. A female participant decided to join a Latina/o sorority and had sorority “sisters” who she regarded as and relied on as family.

CC participants, by virtue of the fact that they were living with their families did not have a need to replicate Latina/o family culture unless they felt that there was an element lacking in their own families. Participants who were estranged from their parents regarded the Coordinator of the multicultural academic services program as a surrogate mother.

Linguistic capital. Participants at all three institutions were able to demonstrate strong evidence of linguistic capital. Storytelling was mainly utilized for the purpose of entertainment and not to convey any moral messages. When stories were recalled in group settings a type of “storytelling forum” was created where stories led to the telling of other stories. Narratives that took place before the storyteller was born were told in such a way that they seemed to be a part of the storyteller’s lived consciousness. When two individuals were telling the same story, there was a back-and-forth storytelling that took place with each storyteller enhancing the story with details.

In every instance that a story was told, it was done so with humorous outcomes. Additionally, all of the storytellers used a combination of facial expressions, full body

language, memorization, dramatic pauses, and comedic timing to bring their stories to life.

Navigational capital. Participants at each of the three institutions were able to utilize navigational capital. At the SWC, this was described as something that happened through the process of the replication of Latina/o family culture. Students were able to support and encourage one another using the resilience strategies they learned from their parents to share with their “new” family.

A UNI student reported that he was able to use this capital that he learned from his mother who used humor as a means of encouragement. Her use of humor taught him how and allowed him to laugh at himself to provide levity during difficult situations. Students also described adaptability as a manifestation of navigational capital in that they possessed the inner resources to survive and thrive in unfamiliar and uncomfortable environments.

CC students talked about navigational capital as something they used to be able to solve problems without the aid of others unless absolutely necessary. Living with family members created an environment where navigational capital was ongoing and reinforced. For students who were estranged from their parents, they accessed and learned navigational capital through surrogate family members.

Resistant capital. Resistant capital was manifested across all three institutions with different characteristics. At the SWC, it was demonstrated through the use of one’s own voice. A participant who spoke of utilizing resistant capital felt that to deny one’s voice and experiences was to lose one’s core sense of identity.

At the UNI, a sentiment was shared that it was one's duty as a member of the Latina/o group to be visible especially in classroom settings. Additionally, there was a demonstration that such oppositional behavior could take place outside of the classroom to challenge the institution as a whole.

CC students expressed resistant capital in making conscientious decisions to be a voice for the voiceless and marginalized populations. This was accomplished through community service projects and artistic representations.

Social capital. Social capital was also demonstrated at all three institutions but with subtle nuances. At the SWC, students relied on student of color networks to gain access to resources they felt were poorly advertised to students of color. This utilization of networking proved to be effective in sharing important information among Latina students. They felt that White students knew how to access resources, such as Study Abroad opportunities, and that White students knew how Study Abroad could positively impact their college experiences and increase their social capital. They felt that access to these resources were needed for Latinas so that they, too, could increase the social capital they would need to navigate life at a PWI.

Since the UNI had undergone a restructuring of support services to underrepresented students, participants reported that students took it upon themselves to learn about and transfer education through an informational pipeline. When students did not have access to the pipeline, individual choices were made to reach out to other students of color or to enroll in diversity courses.

CC students seemed to navigate social networks effortlessly. They were acutely aware of the resources that were available to them and ready to share their personal

network of resources for the good of the group. CC students who had taken part in pre-college preparation programs were savvier to the resources offered at the college than students who decided to matriculate there.

Table 6 demonstrates how capital was present at the research sites.

Table 6: Manifestations of cultural capital across three institutions.

Form of capital	SWC	UNI	CC
Aspirational	YES	YES	YES
Familial	YES	YES	YES
Linguistic	YES	YES	YES
Navigational	YES	YES	YES
Resistant	YES	YES	YES
Social	YES	YES	YES

Engaged Retention—A Conceptual Model

The findings within this study demonstrate that Latina/o college students a) offer descriptions and interpretations of parental involvement, b) employ messages regarding the value of education as transmitted to them via their parents, and c) manifest the six forms of capital (aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social).

Further, this research establishes that while the manifestations of capital vary at each type of higher educational institution, all six forms of capital are present amongst students at each institution. The institution does not interfere with a student’s ability to utilize cultural capital.

Students who were utilizing cultural capital and who identified at least one form of support while at a college or university were making strides toward completing their degree program. In substantiating what compels these students to persist even in hostile environments and through analysis of the data, I have defined this particular phenomenon for persistence as “engaged retention.” An individual demonstrates engaged retention

when recognizing a past accomplishment and replicating the formula for that accomplishment to ensure future positive outcomes. The definition comes from the word “engaged” or to lock in, and retention, “to preserve the aftereffects of experience and learning that makes recall or recognition possible” (Merriam-Webster, 1991).

I differentiate this phenomenon from navigational capital in that it is not transmitted from parent to student. Engaged retention is central to students’ manifestations of the six forms of cultural capital. Engaged retention makes it possible for students to recognize and integrate the benefits of cultural capital and later transform them into action to overcome challenges. Figure 1 illustrates how engaged retention is transmitted from parent to student, Figure 2 demonstrates how engaged retention is integrated by the student. Figure 3 shows how the student transforms engaged retention into action.

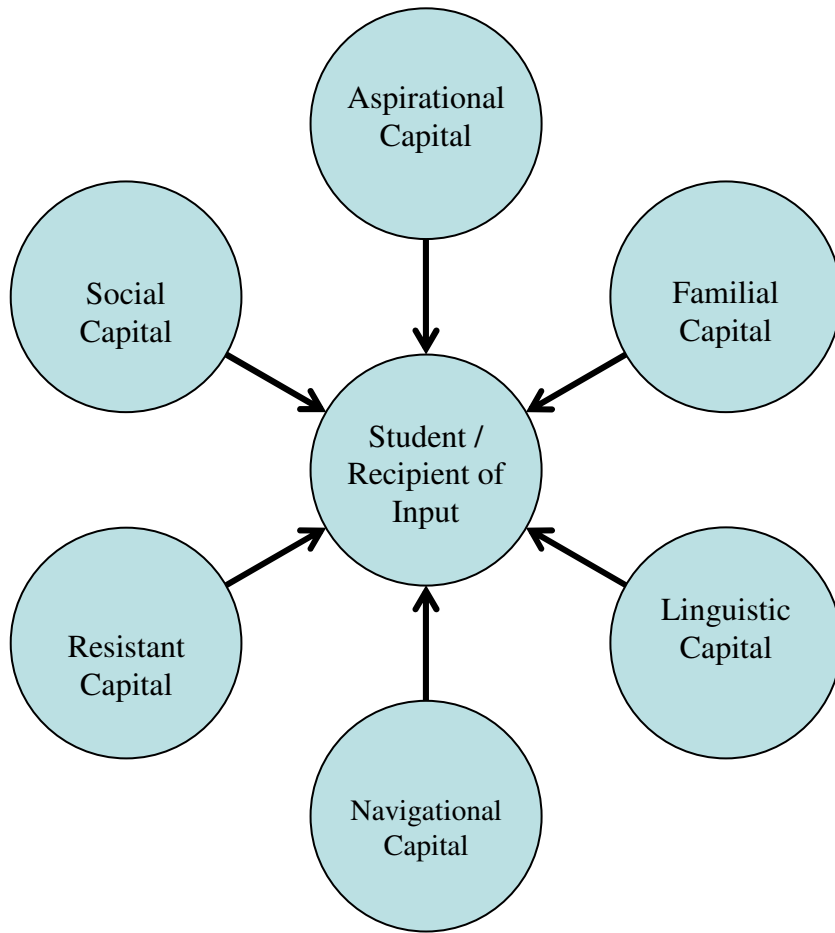


Figure 1: Transmission (parent to student).

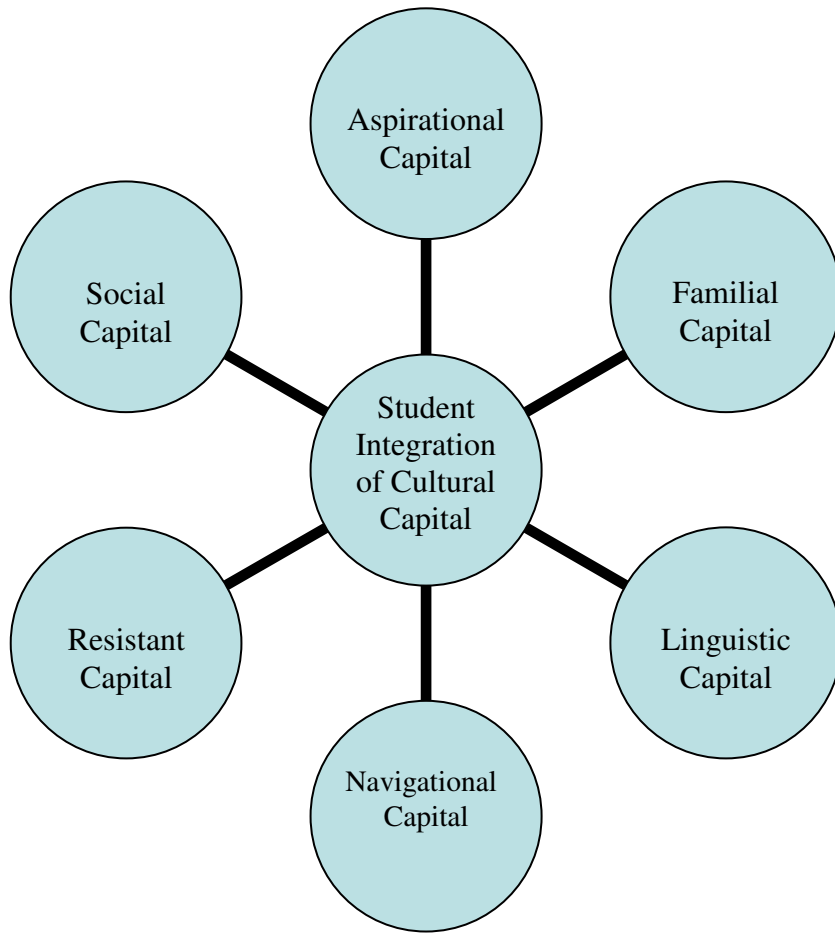


Figure 2: Integration.

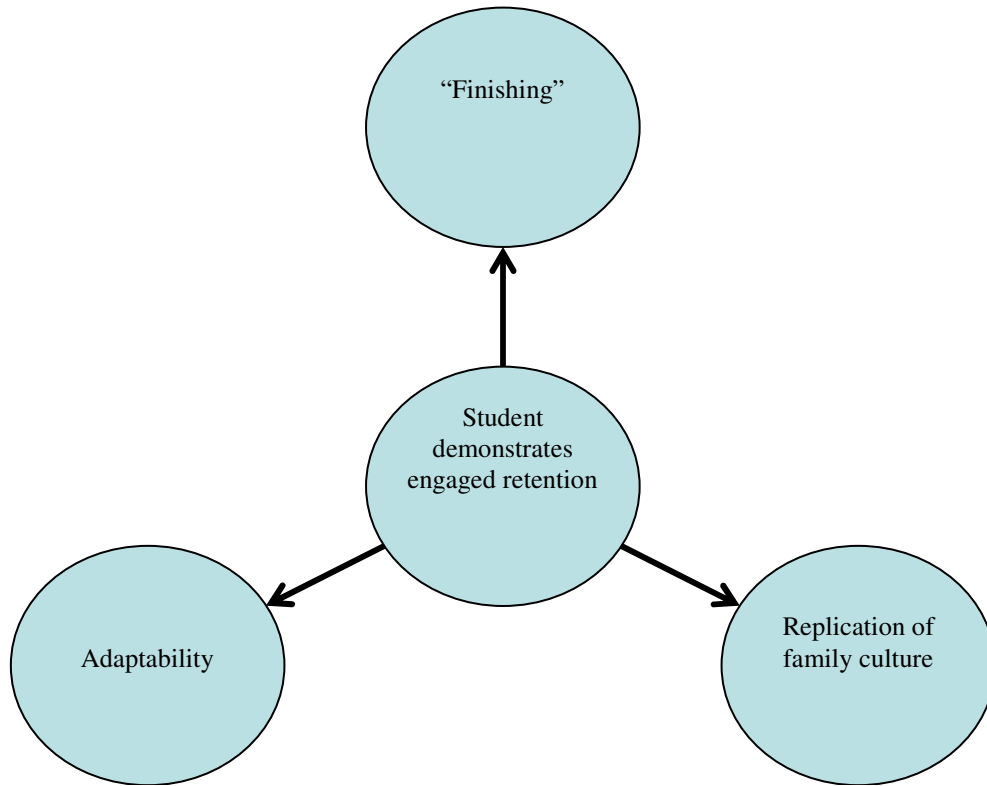


Figure 3: Action.

Stage 1: Transmission

As described, the six forms of capital are transmitted from parent to child. As was the case with students who were estranged from their biological parents or who were raised by extended Latina/o-identified family, these forms of capital were transmitted from those who they identified as family-like members. Having role modeled the forms of capital, students were able to learn what was transmitted and to retain that information for later use. This is similar to the human cognitive process of learning where we take in new information and are able to replicate it.

Stage 2: Integration

In this stage, students take the information that was transmitted and make it their own. This is evidenced in how students describe, interpret, and then analyze the transmission of cultural capital. Students do not necessarily accept capital exactly as it was modeled to them and can choose the extremes to which they employ the messages regarding education transmitted to them via their parents. In any event, students make their own meaning out of capital and, therefore, make their own decisions on how to utilize capital.

Stage 3: Action

In the Action stage, we see how students have taken the transmission of cultural capital, integrated that information and transformed that into action. Students may have learned familial capital, but when that capital is integrated into their own learning, it may look differently from what was originally learned during Transmission to Action. An example of this is when students replicate familial structures to, as one participant put it, “create our own culture.” The culture they create may have different values and norms from what was taught at home. Therefore, they adapt to their new environments, not through assimilation but by being able to balance what they have learned with what they have come to believe. Finally, they act upon the desire to “finish” the task that they set out to complete. The aspirational capital, as has been displayed in this study may have been intended by the parent to benefit the student, but that is altered in integration and action. In integration, students are able to reflect on and appreciate the sacrifices made by their parents so that they can be afforded with an education. In action, they pledge themselves to complete the mission that their parents began.

Implications for Educational Institutions

What Teachers, Administrators, and Students Can Learn from Latina/o Student Narratives

K-12 settings. As evidenced in the literature and in this research study, Latina/o parental involvement has a positive impact on Latina/o student academic engagement. What is needed is a new definition of how parental involvement is defined and valued. The notion of parental involvement that is currently understood by American school systems is over 90 years old. At its inception, it could not have prepared for the influx of communities of color that would come to the United States and into American schools.

Deficit-based and misperceived generalizations of Latina/os as illiterate and uninterested in the education of their children do not reflect the reality of how Latina/os hold education in high esteem and transmit this regard to their children in an effort to enhance their educational advancement. What I propose for K-12 teachers and administrators is to consider policies and practices that are inclusive of the assets that Latina/o families and students bring to the schools that go beyond “cultural fairs.” This would mean treating Latina/o parents as experts on the subject of how their children learn best and what they need to succeed in the classroom based on their own experiences of having sat down to complete homework assignments with them. Additionally, teachers and administrators need not categorize Latina/o students as having low literacy skills, and instead consider the cultural assets they bring with them. Latina/o students, if given the opportunity, could demonstrate literacy through the inclusion of storytelling, a method that would be culturally responsive to this population of students.

High school counselors and teachers could educate students earlier than in their senior year of study about college life and the college application process. While many

schools already have such resources in place, I question how schools might simultaneously educate parents on this topic so that parents would be able to anticipate the challenges that their child might face at college. In doing so, schools would operate as Latina/o families do—being sure that no one is left behind.

Higher education settings. Colleges and universities can also increase efforts to prepare students for post-secondary life. As a former college administrator who has raised the issue of pre-orientation programs before, I know that these ideas are met with resistance from influential faculty members who feel that to accommodate students of color is to “dumb down the curriculum.” I know that Latina/o college student can rise to—and surpass—the academic expectations of educational institutions, and I also realize that not every student has been afforded the same opportunity to prepare for college. As a participant at the SWC stated, elite institutions still operate as if they are only serving White, middle-, and upper-class populations. The increase in the number of Latina/o students by virtue of a booming Latina/o population suggests that as the complexion of the institution changes, so, too, must its understanding of and policies and practices that affect communities of color.

Sending home materials in various languages is not enough to establish a genuine commitment to inclusivity. Parent service programs must acknowledge that not all parents—regardless of race or ethnicity—are at the same starting point when it comes to knowledge about higher education institutions. Pre-orientation programs can also be held for parents of first-generation students to inform them of the challenges and experiences that their children will face at their college or university of choice.

Recommendations for students. While educational institutions need to be held accountable for providing a high quality of education and service for Latina/o students, students can also act as agents of change. Student organization leaders might consider using their networking resources to communicate with parents on what they know about college, enlist the assistance and guidance of supportive faculty members, and create publications that would be helpful for incoming students and their parents. This is not an invitation for educational institutions to place an additional burden on the shoulders of students. Rather, this is a message to students that they have the intellect, will, and power to create meaningful change for themselves and for the generations of students to follow.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study investigated how Latina/o parental messages regarding the value of education were utilized and engaged by undergraduate students at predominantly White institutions. The study further explored how, and under what circumstances, Latina/o students chose to engage with the six forms of capital (aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant) reported throughout literature on Latina/o parenting to be transmitted from Latina/o parents to their children (Auerbach, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 1997; Faulstich Orellana, 2003; Sólorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Using qualitative methods and employing grounded theory, I worked with 37 Latina/o students in three distinct settings: a highly selective women's college, a large co-educational university, and a small community college to explore the choices students made in employing, or not employing parental training regarding education.

As a social justice education student, my coursework and personal reflections on social justice education have trained me to ask the question, "Whose voice is missing?"

in considering how stories are told and who may have been omitted in the telling of those stories. In the case of this study, the “voice” that is largely absent is that of the male voice. At the selective women’s institution, none of the students identified as biologically male or as transgendered female to male (FTM) students. In the university setting, despite conscientious attempts to include men in the study, only two men responded to requests for individual interviews. A third man initially responded to the request and instead of participating in an individual interview opted to attend the focus group. At the community college, despite attempts to recruit men through targeted and snowball sampling, only one man was present at the focus group, and the same man consented to an in-depth interview. In this case, the findings within this study largely represent the Latina voice in regard to how parental involvement in Latina/o households was described and interpreted, how students used cultural messages taught by parents regarding the value of education, and how students utilized the six forms of capital. Additional research would need to be conducted to include the male voice to gain a more complete picture on Latina/o parental involvement as reported by college students.

An additional limitation of this study is that it was conducted solely in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Despite the large concentration of colleges within the region of Western Massachusetts where the study was conducted, the study is limited in its geography. This study was conducted on the east coast, specifically in New England and only represents one regional viewpoint. Therefore, a national study would need to be conducted in order to gain perspective on the unique stories of Latina/o college students who attend institutions in other regions of the United States with high concentrations of Latina/os for example southern states, southwestern states and the west coast.

It is unknown whether or not students who utilize the forms of capital move through their college and university experiences more rapidly, more successfully, or with greater ease than those who do not. If one were to research the ease with which a college student who utilized capital navigated college, one would have to conduct a longitudinal study, which this was not. This study also does not use a control group (i.e., students who do not use cultural capital), therefore the experiences of Latina/o college students who do not utilize cultural capital is unknown and would warrant further research.

Finally, as this research deals largely with the issue of Latina/o parental involvement and educational advancement for their children, additional research needs to be conducted on second- and third-generation Latina/o college students. It would be interesting to observe how the forms of capital are retained as generations are invited to assimilate into mainstream American culture.

Conclusion

There is much to be learned from the assets that Latina/o parents offer their children and how they can assist with developing a new model for parental involvement. Parents, teachers, and school administrators can do much if they work together using authentic dialogue to bring about lasting and inclusive change in American school systems. By examining what is unknown about the largest growing ethnic group in this country, what then needs to be learned about other races and cultures and the contributions they have to offer? This dissertation is only one small step toward this examination.

It is my hope that this dissertation amplifies the voices, experiences, and narratives not only of the individual students who shared them, but of the community

carried within these narratives. Hope means precious little for a community that is barraged with negative stereotypes and government sanctioned policies that silence their counter-narratives unless this hope is actualized.

APPENDIX A

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS LETTER

Latina/o College Students and Parental Involvement in Education Study

Dear Participant:

My name is Jennifer M.D. Matos, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Social Justice Education Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I am conducting research that seeks to understand how Latina/o college students describe and interpret Latina/o parental involvement.

As a participant, you would be asked to complete a brief 10 question survey, take part in a 2 hour audio taped focus group, and one audio taped 90-120 minute personal interview. The audio tapes will be transcribed and coded for data. Prior to conducting my research, you will be provided with written assurance that details how your identity will be protected and your confidence maintained. Based on your final responses in the interview, you may be invited to a second interview to ensure that I have correctly recorded your responses.

Due to the fact that my research is on Latina/o college students and their understanding of Latina/o parental involvement, I am specifically looking for college students who identify as Latina/o and who were raised by a Latina/o parental figure.

If you are interested in participating in this study, I can be reached by email at jmatos@educ.umass.edu or by phone at 413.242.4748. My research is in compliance with Institutional Review Board protocol at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Should you have any questions about my research, please contact my Advisor, Dr. Bailey W. Jackson, III by email at bailey.jackson@educ.umass.edu or phone at 413.545.2421. I would also appreciate if you would forward this email to others whom you think may be interested in participating and who meet the criteria for the study.

Thank you for your time and consideration in participating in this important research!

Sincerely,
Jennifer M.D. Matos
Ed.D. Candidate
Social Justice Education Program
University of Massachusetts Amherst

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Latina/o College Students and Parental Involvement in Education Study

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study. This questionnaire determines your eligibility to participate in this study and provides me with some background on you, as a potential participant. If you do not receive an email from me within two weeks this indicates that you will not be pursued further as a research study participant and information you provided will be shredded.

Name _____

Name and Location of Your College/University _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

1. What is your gender?

_____ Male

_____ Female

_____ Transgender

2. How do you identify racially?

_____ White

_____ Black

_____ Latina/o

_____ Asian

_____ Native American

_____ Bicultural/Multiracial (please list) _____

_____ Other racial category _____

3. How do you describe yourself ethnically? (i.e, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, etc.)

4. Were the people who raised you (parents, guardians, other family) Latina/o?

_____ yes _____ no

5. How many semesters have you been at your current institution?

_____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3-4 _____ 5-6 _____ 7-8

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Latina/o Student Narratives on the Impact of Parental Involvement on their Academic Engagement

Principal Investigator: Jennifer M.D. Matos

Purpose of the Research: My name is Jennifer M.D. Matos and I am a doctoral candidate in the Social Justice Education Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I am conducting this research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my doctoral dissertation. This research study will examine the ways in which Latina/o college students describe and interpret Latina/o parental involvement and how, if at all, they utilize parental training regarding education.

Criteria and Protocol: You have been asked to participate because you meet the criteria of someone who is a college student, identifies as Latina/o, and was raised by a parent, guardian, or other family member who identifies as Latina/o. In agreeing to participate in this study, you are consenting to participation in a 2 hour focus group and one 90-120 minute personal audio taped interview. The questions asked both in the focus group and interview will be in regard to your description and interpretation of Latina/o parental involvement as well as your utilization of any of the messages you received from your parents/guardians/other main caretaker regarding education. Based on your final responses in the interview, you may be invited to a second interview to ensure that I have correctly recorded your responses.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Your confidentiality will be maintained by assigning a pseudonym in place of your real name and removing any identifying factors from any and all documents in this research. All of the materials that I gather (i.e., audio tapes, transcriptions, notes, codes, etc.) will be kept in a locked file cabinet to which only I have access.

Participant Rights: You have the right to refuse to answer any question or to terminate your participation in this study at any time. You also have the right to review any of the materials to be used in the study and to request a summary of the research findings. Additionally, you have the right to contact the Chair of my Dissertation Committee, Dr. Bailey W. Jackson, III, at any time should you have questions that I am unable to answer.

Benefits and Risks: As with any research study, a potential for risk exists. You will be asked questions about your family and upbringing that may result in feelings of discomfort and vulnerability. There are also benefits in participating in this study. The

benefit of your participation is that you will be taking part in a study that will contribute to the existing literature on Latina/o parental involvement and its impact on Latina/o college students. You will not be offered nor will you receive any compensation in the form of gifts, monies, etc.

Statement of Voluntary Consent: You will be given two copies of this informed consent. If you are willing to participate, please sign both copies. You will keep one copy for your reference and records, and I will keep one copy for mine. In signing this form, you are consenting to participation in this study; permission to use results of this study in my dissertation, at academic and conference presentations, in manuscripts for publication in academic and professional journals; permission to share the results of the study with members of my dissertation committee for the purpose of completing my dissertation and fulfilling partial requirements for the completion of my doctoral degree.

Questions: If you have any questions please feel free to contact me by email at jmatos@educ.umass.edu or by phone at 413.242.4748.

This research is in compliance with University of Massachusetts Institutional Review Board protocol. Should you have any questions about this study, you are invited to contact the Chair of my Dissertation Committee, Dr. Bailey W. Jackson, III, by email at bailey.jackson@educ.umass.edu or by phone at 413.545.2421.

If you wish to contact someone who does not have direct involvement in this study, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Dr. Sharon Rallis at sharonr@educ.umass.edu.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form, and you understand and agree to the terms and conditions of participation in this research study.

Participant's Printed name

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's printed name

Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX D

LIKERT SCALE QUESTIONS

For each question, please circle which response best suits your answer.

1. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caretaker(s) are the reason I am in college.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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2. I would say that I am a “successful” student.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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3. I have some form of contact with my family often.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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4. I am solely responsible for my academic success as a student.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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5. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caretaker(s) were “strict” when it came to school.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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6. My family calls/emails/texts, etc. me a lot to ask how I am doing in school.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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7. I am disciplined in how I approach my studies.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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8. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caretaker(s) valued education.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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9. I follow a routine in how I study, take notes, and prepare for classes.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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10. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caretaker(s) taught me how to be a student.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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APPENDIX E
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. **Opening question:**
 - a. What's your name and class year?
 - b. What is your favorite class this semester?
2. **Introductory questions:**
 - a. What made you decide to attend (list name of college/university)?
 - b. Did you always know that you were going to be a college student? Why?
How?
 - c. Was there anything in particular important in that decision?
3. **Transition questions:**
 - a. What's it like to be a Latina/o student at this school?
 - b. How is this environment similar/different to the environment you grew up in?
4. **Key questions:**
 - a. What keeps you going here? How do you stay motivated?
 - b. Who do you lean on for support or to share accomplishments?
 - c. When does your Latina/o identity "come up"? (i.e., when do you notice your ethnicity?)
 - d. How, if at all, does your family play a role in your school life?
 - e. How did you learn what resources are available to you on campus? Is this a trusted source? Why?
5. **Closing questions:**
 - a. When the environment here at (list college/university name) gets to be challenging, what do you do to overcome those challenges?
 - b. If you met a first-year student who was struggling here, what advice would you give to him/her?
 - c. Is there anything you would like to add that wasn't asked?

APPENDIX F

LIKERT SCALE RESULTS

Table 7: Likert scale results by percentage, combined for all three schools.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) is/are the reason I am in college.	-	-	-	16	24	60
2. I would say that I am a “successful” student.	-	-	4	12	44	40
3. I have some form of contact with my family often.	-	-	-	-	20	80
4. I am solely responsible for my academic success as a student.	16	-	-	12	40	32
5. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) were “strict” when it came to school.	-	12	-	16	24	48
6. My family calls/emails/texts, etc. me a lot to ask how I am doing in school.	-	8	8	12	20	52
7. I am disciplined in how I approach my studies.	-	8	-	32	20	40
8. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) valued education.	-	-	4	8	12	76
9. I follow a routine in how I study, take notes, and prepare for class.	-	-	12	28	24	36
10. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caretaker(s) taught me how to be a student.	4	8	-	32	28	28

Table 8: Likert scale results by percentage for SWC.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) is/are the reason I am in college.	-	-	-	9	27	64
2. I would say that I am a “successful” student.	-	-	-	9	36	55
3. I have some form of contact with my family often.	-	-	-	-	18	82
4. I am solely responsible for my academic success as a student.	27	-	-	-	45	27
5. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) were “strict” when it came to school.	-	9	-	18	45	27
6. My family calls/emails/texts, etc. me a lot to ask how I am doing in school.	-	9	-	9	36	45
7. I am disciplined in how I approach my studies.	-	-	-	9	36	55
8. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) valued education.	-	-	-	-	18	82
9. I follow a routine in how I study, take notes, and prepare for class.	-	-	-	9	36	55
10. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caretaker(s) taught me how to be a student.	9	-	-	36	45	9

Table 9: Likert scale results by percentage for CC.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) is/are the reason I am in college.	-	-	-	14	43	43
2. I would say that I am a “successful” student.	-	-	14	14	43	29
3. I have some form of contact with my family often.	-	-	-	-	43	57
4. I am solely responsible for my academic success as a student.	-	-	-	14	57	14
5. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) were “strict” when it came to school.	-	14	-	29	-	57
6. My family calls/emails/texts, etc. me a lot to ask how I am doing in school.	-	14	29	14	-	43
7. I am disciplined in how I approach my studies.	-	29	-	29	14	29
8. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) valued education.	-	-	14	29	14	43
9. I follow a routine in how I study, take notes, and prepare for class.	-	-	29	43	-	29
10. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caretaker(s) taught me how to be a student.	-	29	-	14	-	57

Table 10: Likert scale results by percentage for UNI.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) is/are the reason I am in college.	-	-	-	29	-	71
2. I would say that I am a “successful” student.	-	-	-	14	57	29
3. I have some form of contact with my family often.	-	-	-	-	-	100
4. I am solely responsible for my academic success as a student.	-	-	-	29	14	57
5. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) were “strict” when it came to school.	-	14	-	-	14	71
6. My family calls/emails/texts, etc. me a lot to ask how I am doing in school.	-	-	-	14	14	71
7. I am disciplined in how I approach my studies.	-	-	-	71	-	29
8. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caregiver(s) valued education.	-	-	-	-	-	100
9. I follow a routine in how I study, take notes, and prepare for class.	-	-	14	43	29	14
10. My parent(s)/guardian(s)/main caretaker(s) taught me how to be a student.	-	-	-	43	29	29

APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 11: Participant ethnicity by percentage.

	Combined	SWC	CC	UNI
Bi-Cultural	12	18	14	-
Brazilian	4	-	-	14
Columbian	16	18	-	29
Dominican	24	27	-	43
Mexican	24	36	14	14
Puerto Rican	20	-	71	-

Table 12: Participant class year by percentage.

	Combined	SWC	CC	UNI
First Year	16	18	29	-
Second Year	36	45	43	14
Third Year	24	18	29	29
Fourth Year	24	18	-	57

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