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Different Shades of Working-Class: Examining Latino/a Parents' Decision-Making

Processes Regarding Enrollment in a Parent Academy

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Different Shades of Working-Class: Examining Latino/a Parents' Decision-Making

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the little girls in the Valley who have big dreams and to their families who support them on their journey, even when their little girls want to embark on a path that is foreign to the entire family. I am one of those lucky girls.

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First on my list of people to thank is my family. They have been supportive of everything I have done from Day 1. I know that I pushed boundaries and never quite fit the mold of what they expected, but nevertheless, they would always take a deep breath, exhale, and give me their blessing. Second, I need to thank my friends. I have been fortunate to have crossed paths with amazing people who I consider family. They are spread all-around the country, but despite the distance that often separates us, my friends have been my biggest cheerleaders, and I am forever indebted to all of them.

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I cannot fully repay all the kindness and support that has been shown to me by countless individuals, so my intention has been and will continue to be to pay it forward and be of service to others in my personal life and through the work I choose to do.

Different Shades of Working-Class: Examining Latino/a Parents' Decision-Making

Processes Regarding Enrollment in a Parent Academy

by

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Schools continue to struggle with increasing parental engagement with families of color from low and working-class backgrounds. Research has found that by building parents' capacity to effectively navigate school systems and advocate for their children, parents can increase their participation in school-related activities. Yet, scant research has examined the decision-making processes of working-class Latino/a parents when reconciling whether to participate or not in school-sponsored engagement programs. More research is needed to explore the reasons for parent engagement differences among Latino/a parents who belong to the same low-income SES. As such, the purpose of this study is to examine the factors that contribute to working-class Latino/a parents enrolling into a nationally recognized parent academy in a high-poverty, majority Latino/a school district located in South Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border

Using concepts from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's parental involvement model and community cultural wealth to guide the analysis, this study will examine three categories of parents in this district: parents who graduated from the academy, parents who did not graduate, and parents who chose not to enroll in the academy. Using a case

study design, I interviewed 36 parents (N=36), including 12 parents from each category, as well as collected document and archival data.

This study's findings highlight the existence of different dimensions of working-class parents. Not all Latino/a working-class parents are the same. That is, not every parent who fits this description shares the same background or experiences. In the United States, these parents might be grouped in the same category, but some of them come to the program with varying degrees of privilege, most notably in regards to education and family supports. The parents in this study with the most privilege were mainly in Group #1, parents who graduated from the program. Districts need to be aware of these privilege differences and recognize how they impact participation. It is necessary in order to avoid forming deficit assumptions of certain subgroups of parents and recognize that some parents have more constraints on their decisions than others. Therefore, districts must think about ways to address the diverse experiences and backgrounds of working-class Latino/a parents in order to avoid creating parental programs that are only engagement in name but involvement in practice.

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CHAPTER 1

Purpose and Rationale

Schools continue to struggle with increasing parental engagement with families of color from low and working-class backgrounds. Enlisting parents' participation in schools is important because partnerships between schools, families, and communities have been empirically shown to improve student achievement and outcomes (Bussing, Gary, Koro-Ljungberg, & Wilder, 2011; Crowson & Boyd, 2001; Epstein, 2001; Green, 2016; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Ishimaru, 2013; Wilder, 2014). Even the United States Department of Education has recognized the importance of parental engagement with schools. For example, a component of the federal regulations in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)[1] requires Title I[2] schools to create school-family compacts and parent involvement plans with parent input (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). In the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), funding for parental engagement has been expanded to provide $10 million in federal funding to reconstitute the Parental Information and Resources Center (PIRC)[3] into Title IV Statewide Family Engagement in Education Programs[4] (ESSA, 2015).

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[1] The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, enacted in 2002, was the previous version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The current version of the ESEA is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed on December 10, 2015 by President Obama.

[2] Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides financial assistance from the federal government to the state and then to the district and school. The amount of money a district receives depends on the number and percent of students in poverty. The amount of money a school receives depends on enrollment in free and reduced price meal programs and decisions the district makes.

[3] The Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) program is a discretionary grant program funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) help implement successful and effective parental involvement policies, programs, and activities that lead to improvements in student academic achievement and that strengthen partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and other school personnel in meeting the education needs of children.

[4] Title IV, 21st Century Schools, includes a variety of programs to provide student supports, academic enrichment, extended learning and afterschool, charter and magnet schools, and family engagement programming. The grants for Statewide Family Engagement in Education Programs will be awarded to statewide organizations to establish statewide family engagement centers to: Assist parents in participating effectively in their children's education and

In addition, as the demographics of the United States change and minority populations continue to grow, the connections schools build with parents of color become even more important. This is especially relevant for Latino/as, which is one of the fastest growing demographics in the United States. In 2014, Hispanics accounted for 17% of the U.S. population and by the year 2060 nearly 29% of the United States is projected to be Hispanic—more than one-quarter of the total population (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Currently, in K-12 public school classrooms, Latino/as represent 24 % of school enrollment (NCES, 2015), which has naturally led to an increase in the number of Latino/a children being served by the public school system. As a result, for the first time in U.S. history, public schools in the United States are made up of a majority of students of color (Krogstad & Fry, 2014). It is therefore vital that school's parental engagement with low-income and working-class Latino/a parents be more substantial than just seeking to fulfill a government requirement. To be most effective, parental engagement activities should be anchored in culturally and linguistically relevant, and equity-centered practices (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernández, 2013; Galloway & Ishimaru, 2015; Green, 2017; Lowenhaupt, 2014; Mapp & Hong, 2010; Henderson et al., 2007).

Problem Statement

Traditional notions of parent involvement center on check-list activities that often fail to engender authentic school-parental partnerships (Anderson, 2009; Ishimaru, 2013; Lowenhaupt, 2014; Mapp, 2012; Olivos, 2012). Also, such involvement is often premised on white, middle-class models that do not challenge the historical, cultural, social, and power divides between parents of color and their schools (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Fine, 1993; Auerbach, 2009).

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helping their children meet state academic standards; Develop and implement, in partnership with the state, statewide policy to provide services that will help to remove barriers for family engagement; and Develop and implement parental involvement policies required in the ESSA.

Olivos (2006) explains, "The term parent involvement' has far too often been diluted in the professional literature and in practice to a laundry list of activities that the experts' feel good parents 'do' to blindly support the schools' agendas" (p. 13). Calabrese-Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George (2004) contend that although current research acknowledges that factors such as time, ability to get to school, among others, can constrain parents' ability to participate in school functions, in the end it is the participation in such functions that label a parent as involved or not. As a result, parents who do not fit the traditional parental involvement mold are often judged as uninvolved, apathetic, or as not valuing education if they fail to meet the traditional parental involvement expectations (Auerbach, 2009; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Scholars thus argue that parent involvement should be meaningful to all stakeholders and should be designed with racially, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse families in mind, such as low-income families, those led by single parents, and families for whom English is not the native language (Larrota & Yamamura, 2011). Such a design is especially relevant to schools serving large numbers of low to working-class Latino/a parents.

Similarly, the literature suggests that schools should recognize that various factors influence parental involvement, especially for Latino/a parents. Race, class, gender, culture, and language seriously impact parent involvement, as does how schools respond to diverse families, power differentials, and whether or not they take asset or deficit perspectives to families (Auerbach, 2010; Green, 2017). García & Guerra (2004) find that deficit approaches[5] to schooling begin with overgeneralizations about family background and when a family's sociocultural and linguistic experiences are not fully understood, schools fail to establish a strong connection with these families. Research thus shows that what matters most, with Latino/a families as with other parents of color, is bringing parents to the table in an authentic spirit of

[5] Perspectives that center on disadvantages and deficiencies.

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partnership to learn and work together for the mutual benefit of schools, families, and communities (Anderson, 1998; Auerbach, 2011; Ishimaru, 2013, 2014; Luet, 2015). However, most school rhetoric continues to call for traditional "parental involvement" strategies, which translate into school practices that do not account for the ways that Latino/a parents are involved in educating their children and assumes that Latino/a parents do not encourage their children to pursue high academic, social, and life goals (Lopez & Vazquez, 2006; Valencia & Black, 2002).

As a result of falling short of the expectations held by schools, Latino/a parents have been traditionally marginalized within school-family interactions. Yet, Latino/a parents are more likely to engage if schools welcome them authentically, honor their participation, identify their resources and talents, and offer activities attuned to their interests in a culturally responsive climate (Larrota & Yamamura, 2011; Mapp & Hong, 2010; Henderson et al., 2007). Instead of relying upon traditional parental involvement notions that put forth deficit constructions of this group of parents, there is a need to explore resources within the Latina/o community to improve family-school partnerships (Tornatzky, Lee, Mejia, & Tarant, 2003; Valencia, 2000; Yosso, 2005, 2006).

There is a rich body of research that examines the experiences of Latino/a parents in schools and how traditional parental engagement strategies are ineffective for this group of parents (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Delgado-Gaitán, 1992; González, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzáles, & Amanti, 1993; Larrota & Yamamura, 2011; López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Valdés, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002). While barriers affecting minority parents are well documented in the literature, Kim (2009) argues that such barriers are further magnified for families of color across various socioeconomic statuses (SES), especially for Latino/a parents from low-income backgrounds (see also Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). Kim

(2009) poses the question: "even though the schools' culture and agencies in the school have been changed to improve parental participation, why do [some] parents continue to resist school invitations" (p. 82)? Specifically, given the acknowledgement of barriers affecting working-class Latino/a parents, more research is needed to explore the reasons for parent engagement differences among Latino/a parents who belong to the same low-income SES (Kim, 2009). Furthermore, despite the calls in the literature for more culturally relevant parental engagement models (Henderson et al., 2007; Larrota & Yamamura, 2011; Mapp & Hong, 2010; Tillman, 2004; Tornatzky, Lee, Mejia, & Tarant, 2003; Valencia, 2000; Yosso, 2005, 2006), many schools continue to use participation in traditional events as the primary metric to gauge parental engagement (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004). Thus, research has focused on how Latino/a parents from low-income and working-class backgrounds persist in parent engagement at schools despite traditional models (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Larotta & Yamamura, 2011), but less research has examined how working-class Latino/a parents make decisions to become involved in programs offered by their child's school and their preferences for varied forms and levels of involvement (Hill et al., 2004; Marschall, 2006; Rodriguez, 2009). As Green and colleagues (2007) argue, "Although parental involvement is an important contributor to children's positive school outcomes, much less is known about the factors that motivate parents' involvement practices," as a dearth of research has explored these decision-making processes for working-class, Latino/a parents (p. 532). This study thus aims to address this gap in the literature.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that contribute to working-class Latino/a parents enrolling into a nationally recognized parent academy in a high-poverty,

majority Latino/a school district located in South Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border. To achieve this purpose, I address the following research questions:

1a. Why do working class Latino/a parents make the decision to become involved in parental engagement programs offered by their child's school?

1b. How do these parents decide to become involved?

2. What are the constraints of engagement as experienced by these parents?

3. How do these decisions and parents' experiences relate to the elements of the parental engagement program?

Using theoretical concepts from community cultural wealth and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model of the parental involvement process to frame this study and guide the analysis, I analyze the decision-making process of three categories of parents (n=36) in this district's parent academy: (a) parents who graduated from the academy, (b) parents who did not graduate, and (c) parents who showed interest initially but chose not to enroll in the academy. I examine the decision-making process of these parents because understanding "how" and "why" these working-class Latino/a parents decide to enroll or not will provide necessary context for schools trying to serve this population. In total, I conducted 36 semi-structured parent[6] interviews and three focus group interviews (four parents per focus group), including 12 parents from each category for a total of 36 parents. In the remainder of this introductory section, I discuss my connection to this research.

Personal Connection: Research as Mesearch

My research passion and interest in parental engagement stems from my experience growing up in a household in the Rio Grande Valley (in South Texas) where my parents valued

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[6] The term parent is used here to include any adult member of a child's household who is in a position to support his or her education. In the pilot study, one of the fifteen participants was a grandmother who had sole custody of her granddaughter after the child was removed from her mother's home by the state.

education very much, despite having only achieved a 6th grade education in Mexico. My parents spoke very little English, and I often served as my parents' translator at school events. Although they were supportive of my education, these challenges hindered their ability to authentically engage at my school, and they were unable to help me strategically navigate the educational system. Using traditional parental engagement standards, views of my parents would yield deficits and shortcomings, despite their many strengths. My parents' strong work ethic and their true belief that their children could achieve the "American Dream" through a good education would be ignored in many traditional parental engagement models.

Despite their support of academics, fidelity to tradition was also very important to my parents. I should go to college, but I should live at home with them until I got married. In their mind, going to college was a huge accomplishment in and of itself, so why not stay home where they could take care of me. Therefore, I turned down a full scholarship to study physics at MIT, and after much negotiation with my parents, I was able to convince them to let me move four hours away from home to enroll at Trinity University in San Antonio. For my parents, school and family are two very different and separate spaces, from grade school until today, the two spaces do not intersect. School and university spaces are foreign and uncomfortable for them. Calabrese Barton et al. (2004) highlight the "crucial importance that both *space* and *capital* play in the relative success parents have in engaging in the academic venue of schooling." (p. 3).

Once my parents were exposed to the reality of their daughter thriving at a university hours away from home, their perspective of academic possibilities expanded. I believe exposing low-income Latino/a parents early on to the various academic opportunities available to their child can make a positive impact. By offering parents the ability to gain a better understanding of the American educational system, parents can better assist their child as they navigate through it.

As Calabrese Barton et al. (2004) assert, "the basic unit of analysis for understanding parental engagement cannot be the individual actions of parents taken alone, but parents interacting with other parents, teachers, and other school- and community-based people within particular spaces" (p. 6). Research shows that low-income Latino/a parents have high aspirations for their children, but often feel unsure of how to interact with their child's school (Lopez & Vazquez, 2006; Valencia & Black, 2002). Given the changing demographics across the US, this study can potentially offer important findings for school districts nationally who want to improve parent-school partnerships, especially in districts with large and increasing Latino/a populations. By understanding the decision-making process the Latino/a parents in this study go through, I would like to provide insight into the opportunities and constraints of engagement as experienced by these parents, so schools serving working-class Latino/a parents, like mine, have the context necessary to establish stronger connections with these families.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I introduced this study as I discussed the current state of parental involvement in the U.S. and the disconnect that often exists between schools and Latino/a parents. As such, I highlighted the problem statement in this study, this study's purpose, research questions, and my connection to this research. In the next chapter (Chapter 2), I will discuss the existing research on parental engagement, Latino/a parental involvement and family-school partnerships, which forms the grounding and context for this study. I then describe how Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005) theoretical model of the parental involvement process and Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth lens conceptually shape and guide the data collection and analysis for this study.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature Review

Three strands of literature inform this research: (a) family-school partnerships, (b) parental involvement in schools, and (c) parental engagement of Latino/a parents. I review these bodies of research because they provide an empirical background for understanding Latino/a parents' experiences in school involvement. Within each literature strand, I discuss key research findings and limitations as it relates to this study.

My literature review analyzed studies published between 2000 and 2016 because I wanted to examine research over the last decade and a half to gain a rich understanding of this body of scholarship. I used the following databases: Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), Education Source (EBSCO), ERIC (EBSCO), PsycINFO (EBSCO), Dissertation Abstracts (Proquest), Social Services Abstracts (Proquest) and Sociological Abstracts (Proquest). Within these strands of literature, I discuss key research findings as they relate to this study. In seeking empirical studies to answer my research questions, I used various combinations of the following search terms: "parent school relationship", "family school partnership", "parent* school influence", "parent participation", "parent* n2 engag*", "mother n2 engag*", "father n2 engag*", "Latin* parent participation", "working class Latin* parent*", "Latin* parent engag*", "socioeconomic", "low-income", "education", "school", "academic achievement", "students" and looked for peer-reviewed literature in the databases stated above. These searchers initially yielded 409 sources. I only reviewed peer reviewed journal articles and excluded dissertations, book chapters, and policy briefs, because I only wanted to review literature with the highest empirical impact. However, from the journal articles, I first identified empirical studies, finding 104 empirical pieces. Of those empirical sources, I determined if they were germane to my study.

I excluded studies that did not focus on "parental involvement in schools," such as studies

dealing with parent involvement around healthcare, sports, disabilities, same-sex partnerships,

divorce, child protection services, co-parenting, child delinquency and welfare. In total, I

identified 38 studies out of the 104 and reviewed them in detail. My review identified three

literature strands from across the empirical literature on parental involvement: family-school

partnerships, parental involvement in schools and parental engagement of Latino/a parents.

Family-School Partnerships

By leveraging community resources, collaboration between families and schools can be

strengthened (Araujo, 2009). Often, there is a fundamental disconnect between what is designed

and offered and what families want or need (Curry & Holter, 2015; Gordon & Seahore Louis,

2009; Jackson & Remillard, 2005; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). Research shows

that many times it is the programs, practices, and policies that school personnel design that are

"hard to reach," not the families (Mapp & Hong, 2010). Culturally relevant parental engagement

programs might boost social capital by providing parents with insider information about the

school and about larger educational processes (Domina, 2005; McNeal, 1999). Low-income

parents and students can integrate themselves into authentic partnerships with schools only with

substantial supports both inside the schools and in the wider community (Henig & Stone, 2008;

Olivos, 2012).

As such, in this study, authentic partnerships are defined as respectful alliances among

educators, families, and community groups that value relationship building, dialogue, and power

sharing as part of socially just, democratic schools (Auerbach, 2008; Luet, 2015). The literature

has provided examples of what a school-family relationship addressing the needs of Latino/a

working class parents should incorporate. For example, Machado-Casas (2009) conducted

research in North Carolina with indigenous Latino/a immigrants and highlighted the importance of utility knowledge, or the knowledge and skills necessary for immigrant survival, skills that go beyond basic ones to those necessary in order to become active participants in today's society. She also found that families wanted to learn about technology, but many had children who could not be left at home alone while the parents attended adult programs. Furthermore, there were no programs available to them and their children at the same time that could help address a digital divide between Latina/o parents and their children (Machado-Casas, 2009).

Research in the area of assessing participation of Latino/a parents in after-school technology programs yields insight into the type of partnership that connects with parents and influences their decision to engage. For example, Duran, Duran, Perry-Romero, & Sanchez (2001) assessed how an after-school technology program designed for low-income Latina/o immigrant families enhanced computer awareness, basic computer skills, basic word processing skills, and multimedia and telecommunications familiarity. Latina/o parents involved in the program showed significant gains in every area of assessment over the course of the project. This study proved that parent and family integration in after-school technology programs can be beneficial. Overall, this study concluded that after-school technology programs for immigrant Latina/o parents and children are beneficial, as they connect family members, teachers, university students, faculty, and others from the community.

In another study, seven low-income families (elementary school students and their parents) of various ethnic backgrounds, including Latino/as, were recruited to participate in a pilot after-school program called "Learning Together" (Tartakov, Leigh, & Phillips, 2003). These students reported feeling excited about their new abilities to work independently on the computers and experiment with new programs (Tartakov, Leigh, & Phillips, 2003). More

recently, Machado-Casas, M., Sánchez, P., & Ek, L.D. (2014) explored the ways Latina/o families in an after-school technology partnership use technology to bridge an existing cultural and technological divide. They use a multi-generational community utility-based model to study the families' interactions. Their research highlights the digital divide that exists along racial and class lines. The studies above are examples of school-based adult education efforts focused on goals that are meaningful to the participants (Mapp, Johnson, Strickland, & Meza, 2008; Waterman, 2008). They highlight the need for Latino/a parents to have an environment that is conducive to their engagement (Auerbach, 2007).

With the purpose of identifying Latino/a families' cultural resources, several research studies in the last five years have applied Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model to studying Latino/a students and parents. The model highlights six forms of capital that communities of color possess: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant. Community cultural wealth shifts the view from a deficit perspective to the assets that communities of color acquire and utilize (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2012; Larotta & Yamamura, 2011; Luna & Martinez, 2013; Saathoff, 2015). Larotta & Yamamura's (2011) research is one study that applies the model to working-class Latino/a parents, while two studies apply the model to Latino/a students' educational attainment (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2012; Luna & Martinez, 2013). Saathoff (2015) applies the model to White pre-service teachers working with Latino/a students. In their study, Larotta & Yamamura (2015) analyze the community cultural wealth developed by a group of 10 Latina mothers in central Texas once enrolled in an after-school mom-child Literacy Project. They found that the family literacy project could promote Latino/a parental involvement that is meaningful to both the child and parent. The studies above are examples of school-based adult education efforts focused on goals that are meaningful to the

participants (Mapp et al., 2008; Olivos, 2012; Waterman, 2008). Parents need an environment that is conducive to their engagement (Auerbach, 2007; Olivos, 2012). According to Calabrese Barton et al. (2004), parental engagement is more than an object or an outcome. Engagement is a set of relationships and actions that cut across individuals, circumstances, and events that are produced and bounded by the context in which that engagement takes place.

In sum, we know from the rich literature on parental involvement of Latino/a parents that Mexican immigrant parents place a high value on education and are strongly motivated to support their children's success in U.S. schools (Delgado-Gaitán, 1992; González, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzáles, & Amanti, 1993; López et al., 2001; Valdés, 1996). However, Latino/a parents' engagement is often overlooked with traditional models of parental engagement (Larrota & Yamamura, 2011; Valencia & Black, 2002). In addition, when schools pursue meaningful parent-school partnerships, they enhance social capital in struggling communities and expand opportunities for students, their families, and neighborhoods (Auerbach, 2009; Mapp et al., 2008).

The literature provides few studies depicting what culturally meaningful partnerships in action with parents look like (Auerbach, 2011). Furthermore, limited research has examined how working-class Latino/a parents reconcile these offerings and decide to enter a parent-school partnership. Next, I discuss the literature on parental involvement in schools.

Parental Involvement in Schools

According to Dorfman and Fisher (2002), partnerships among schools, families, and communities positively affect student achievement. Research shows that parental involvement supports many dimensions of student achievement, such as helping children earn higher grades and test scores, improve school attendance, increase graduation rates and foster positive attitudes

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about school (Bussing, Gary, Koro-Ljungberg, & Wilder, 2011; Epstein, 2001; Fuller & Olsen, 1998; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Popular in the parental involvement literature is Epstein's (1992) *Six Types of Involvement* framework which provides a variety of practices of partnership, including the following strategies for involvement: assisting with parenting, communicating with parents, organizing volunteering activities for parents, involving parents in learning at home activities (such as homework), including parents in decision making, and collaborating with community. Research on parental involvement has highlighted the visibility of the parents in the school as an important factor in children's academic achievement, and it has viewed parental involvement in the school as more important than parental involvement at home (Kim, 2009). Though useful, this framework often fosters individualistic and school-centric approaches to parental involvement (Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009). The Epstein typologies do not engage the intersections of race, class, and immigration, which are relevant to the experiences of many parents from non-dominant backgrounds (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013).

Parental participation in schools is strongly shaped by perceptions of parents' background and of the roles expected of them by school administrators and teachers and by the organizations (whether local or federal) that fund family literacy and parent involvement programs (Auerbach, 2002; Barton et al., 2004). The expectations of schools regarding parental involvement are more matched to middle-class White parents' beliefs, capacities, and involvement styles than those of the minority middle or working class (Lareau, 1987, 1996; Li, 2006). Whether purposefully or unintentionally, many schools support the involvement of the middle class and expect working-class parents to gain similar social resources or capitals in order for their children to succeed in school (Lareau, 1987; Li, 2003, 2006; Nakagawa, 2000).

Fantuzzo et al. (2000) defined school-based involvement as "activities and behaviors that parents engage in at school with their children" (p. 371), such as volunteering, fundraising, and accompanying school field trips. Homework, or the request for students to do academic work at home, is an example that showcases the teachers' notion of parental involvement at home (Epstein, 1996). In a study of high-performing Hispanic elementary schools, the teachers defined parental involvement as a way of supporting children's academic achievement, whereas parents described it as a way to support the well-being of children (Scribner, Young, & Pedoza, 1999). Good parents, according to such school criteria, reduce the teachers' burden of heavy academic load rather than act as partners, motivators, role models, and supporters of the children's overall, social, emotional, physical, and cultural learning and development (Edwards & Warin, 1999; Lareau, 1987; Wilder, 2014; Pena, 2000). When teachers and schools define the concept of parental involvement at home differently from minority parents, defining the concept of parental involvement can become more complicated (Kim, 2009).

Traditional research on parental involvement neglects the ways in which parental engagement is a social practice, sustained through active participation and dialogue. Parental involvement in this form is linear, unidirectional, and not particularly tied to other external factors (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Luet, 2015). Barton et al. (2004) find that:

> Parental engagement is a desire, an expression, and an attempt by parents to have an impact on what actually transpires around their children in schools and on the kinds of human, social, and material resources that are valued within schools…this is different from traditional descriptions of parental involvement, which requires the activation of traditional forms of capital within school-authored spaces (p. 11).

Traditional models of parental involvement fail to connect with many of the families of children currently being served by the United States' educational system, and the number of Latino/a students will only continue to grow, therefore, it becomes vital that parental involvement practices be reimagined to meet the needs of this population. Next, I discuss the literature on parental engagement of Latino/a parents.

Parental Engagement of Latino/a Parents

Deficit theories continue to be widespread in schools, and especially around notions of Latino/a parental engagement (Baquedano-López et al.,2013; De Gaetano, 2007). These beliefs hold that parents who are immigrant, low income, and/or from communities of ethnic or racial minorities "don't care about education" and may hold back their children's schooling rather than support it. Although deficit theories have been examined and repudiated by scholars such as Valdés (1996) and Valencia and Black (2002), they remain an active part of the beliefs enacted in school practice (McClain, 2010).

Valdés (1996) studied Mexican-American families experience with school parental involvement activities and found that it entailed parents receiving information about schools, working at schools, volunteering at schools, or working with children at home. In addition, the literature typically defines parental involvement as either supporting student academic achievement or participating in school-initiated functions (Lopez et al., 2001). Participating in school-initiated functions, however, overlooks differing perceptions on the part of parents from low socioeconomic status and populations of color regarding parental involvement and educational responsibilities, since often these parents' work schedules do not align with scheduled school activities (Martinez et al., 2013; Nieto, 1987; Yamamura et al., 2010). To the contrary, parents of color exhibit parental involvement in a variety of nontraditional ways such

as providing nurturance to their children, instilling cultural values, and talking with their children, which do not align with traditional forms of parental involvement, as defined by schools (Scribner et al., 1999). Parental engagement is generated through relationships and actions that are grounded in the context in which the engagement takes place, therefore the goal is not to achieve a one-time result, but to establish a foundation where these relationships can be sustained (Barton et al., 2004).

Latino/a families tend to respect the role of the school and teacher and are therefore less likely to contact the school regarding potential problems, especially when English is not their first language (De Gaetano, 2007). Immigrant families, for whom English is not a first language, often rely on their children to translate for them when trying to navigate the necessary dialogue between parents and schools (Orellana, 2003) and although helpful, this might not lead to the most fruitful conversations between parents and schools. In the traditional notions of parental engagement these language constraints faced by Latino/a parents are often missed, and instead these parents are classified as detached or uninvolved.

For example, researchers have investigated the individual variables that prevent minority parents from participating in their children's school, including: language barriers (Daniel-White, 2002; Sohn &Wang, 2006); less education (Daniel-White, 2002; Pena, 2000); low self-esteem (Davies, 1993); low socioeconomic status (SES; Li, 2003; Pryor, 2001; Coleman, Schiller, & Schneider, 1993; Tapia, 2000); differences in child-rearing practices (Lareau, 1987; Schneider & Lee, 1990); physically demanding jobs (Finders & Lewis, 1994); lack of social networks (Lareau, 1987; Pena, 2000); and uncomfortable feelings toward schools based on negative previous school experiences (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Huss-Keeler, 1997).

Multiple studies document that Mexican immigrant parents place a high value on education and are strongly motivated to support their children's success in U.S. schools (Delgado-Gaitán, 1992; González, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzáles, & Amanti, 1993; López et al., 2001; Trumbulll, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz, 2001; Valdés, 1996). Yet, many schools that serve high numbers of children from Latino/a families report low levels of parental involvement (Ruíz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). Their low level of involvement could be a result of these schools approaching the families they serve with personal assumptions about appropriate cultural outcomes and deficit thinking (García & Guerra, 2004; Luet, 2015). The openness of the school environment, the caring attitude of school staff, positive interpersonal relationships, a simple smile, a friendly gesture, and respect lead parents to become partners in the challenging task of educating their children (Scribner et al., 1999; Wilder, 2014).

Critical to discussions of Latino/a parent engagement in schools is the impact of class status on academic achievement and opportunity. Lareau (2000) details the school experiences of working-class and upper-middle-class parents to highlight the pivotal role of social class in parent involvement. She examines how school structures and practices are aligned with middle-class culture and how precisely through serving the middle-class agenda, schools privilege upper-middle-class parents who draw on their own social assets or cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) to secure advantages over other people's children. Baquedano-López et al. (2013, p. 160) find that the "continued exclusion of the social and cultural resources of working-class parents magnifies the stratification of parent involvement practices and increases the educational inequities parent involvement policies are purportedly working to neutralize." Brantlinger's (2003) study of middle-class families lends support to the notion that schools are shaped by intentional class dominance. For the families in her study, social class is reproduced through the

securing of advantage and privilege for one's own children. By disregarding educational inequities affecting others, many middle-class parents come to understand the school success of their children as a consequence of "they earned it".

There have been important research efforts to identify knowledge and practices in immigrant communities traditionally left out by school institutions, such as the ways families engage in complex practices of translation (Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003; Orozco & Orozco, 2009; Valdés, 2003; Zentella, 1997). Notably, there has been a wealth of literature addressing and expanding on the notion of engaged social networks in the *funds of knowledge* approach to bridging home and school contexts of immigrant families (N. González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). This literature also reports an increased focus on parental agency in family–school connections (McClain, 2010; Curry, Jean-Marie, & Adams, 2016) that bridges relationships between immigrant families and schools (Dryden-Peterson, 2010; N. González, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999).

Research shows that for working-class Latino/a families to be involved, the social, economic, and physical needs of families must be addressed (López et al., 2001). Ishimaru (2014) finds that community organizations seeking to build nondominant parent leadership may need to begin by cultivating relationships among parents and building their knowledge and skills at navigating the existing system. Bauch (1992) finds that some of the obstacles encountered by Latina/o parents include failure to understand school operations, a language barrier, and their own lack of formal education. The educational opportunities offered to parents should involve drawing out the knowledge that parents bring, and building on that knowledge—as opposed to a more common approach attempting to "teach" parents what they "don't know" and "need to

learn," without any awareness of their existing knowledge, skills, and questions (Freire, 1970; Larotta & Yamamura, 2011; Yamamura et al., 2010).

It is important to consider the barriers that impede many Latino/a immigrant parents, especially those created by language (Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillett, 1998; Delgado-Gaitán, 2001; Diaz Soto, 1997; Orozco & Orozco, 2009). Research has demonstrated that transcending these barriers is essential to increasing communication and collaboration between immigrant parents and schools (Waterman, 2006). Delgado-Gaitan (1990) argues that parent education programs for Spanish-speaking families need to facilitate understanding of the school system in the United States by regarding Latino parents as producers (and not just consumers) of critical knowledge.

Similarly, research finds parents would be more willing to participate in school-supported programs that sponsor small-group discussions (Halsey, 2005), social activities (Desimone et al., 2000; Huss-Keeler, 1997), and programs based on the particular needs of parents, such as connecting with mentors; delivering parental involvement orientation in their native languages (Pryor, 2001); providing workshops about community resources (Desimone et al., 2000); and offering classes on Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED; Davies, 1993), English as a Second Language (ESL), U.S. laws, and U. S. citizenship (Moosa et al., 2001).

In sum, we know from the scholarship on parental involvement of Latino/a parents that working-class Latino/a parents place a high value on education and are strongly motivated to support their children's success in U.S. schools (Delgado-Gaitán, 1992; González, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzáles, & Amanti, 1993; López et al., 2001; Orozco & Orozco, 2009; Valdés, 1996). However, Latino/a parents' engagement is often overlooked with traditional models of parental engagement (Larrota & Yamamura, 2011; Valencia & Black, 2002), because their life and cultural context differs from the white middle-class school-based

norm; Latino/a engagement and the transfer of values tends to be more home-based. Furthermore, there is scant research examining the decision-making processes of working-class Latino/a parents when reconciling whether to participate or not in school-sponsored engagement programs.

Given this gap in the literature, in this study, I sought to understand the enrollment decisions of the working-class Latino/a parents. To do so, I understood that I would need to be deliberate in choosing frameworks that would recognize the role race and class played in parents' decision to engage with school-based programs. I next describe the two frameworks that I utilize to frame my study.

Theoretical Framework

The literature on Latino/a parental engagement provides substantial evidence validating parents' desire to support their child's education despite the many constraints these parents encounter. The research, in turn, calls for schools to utilize more culturally relevant approaches when trying to engage working-class Latino/a parents, and acknowledge the strengths and assets that these parents bring to schools. Moreover, there is a need to understand the "why" behind parents' decision to get involved. To do so, I draw on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005) theoretical model of the parental involvement process and Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth to better understand the psychological and contextual contributors to forms of parental involvement.

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model is grounded in educational, developmental and social psychology research. The model's intention is to explain the process of involvement and its influence on students (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). The model consists of five hierarchical levels: (1) psychological predictors, (2) parents' involvement

forms, (3) mechanisms of parental involvement's influence on child's school outcomes, (4)

tempering/mediating variables, and (5) student outcomes. Levels one and two deal with the

psychological factors underlying parents' involvement behaviors (see Figure 1), which can

directly help inform this study's purpose.

Level one of the model consists of three constructs: (1) parents' motivational beliefs, (2)

parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others, and (3) parents' perceived life

context. Parents' motivational beliefs are defined as parental role construction for involvement in

children's education and as parental self-efficacy for helping the child succeed in school.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) definition of role construction is based on the

psychological and sociological literature that suggests that an individual's understanding of their

roles is essential to the productive functioning of the groups to which they belong. Specifically,

the authors define parental role construction as parent's beliefs about what they should do in

relation to the child's education. Self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capability to act in ways

that will produce desired outcomes and has been identified as a significant influence on people's

goal selection, effort, persistence, and ultimate goal accomplishment (Bandura, 1986, 1997). In

this model, understanding parents' behavior requires understanding the beliefs that support and

guide their actions.

Parents' perception of invitations for involvement from others is the second construct in

level 1 and it has three components: perceptions of general school invitations, perceptions of

specific child invitations, and perceptions of specific teacher invitations. Researchers have

suggested that parents' perceptions of general invitations for involvement from the school

influence parents' decisions to become involved (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein, 1986).

Similarly, other researchers have found that general child invitations are likely to contribute to

parents' decisions to be involved, because they convey to the parent a need for his or her active involvement (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). The model also takes into account invitations from teachers, given that research finds specific teacher invitations are a motivator of parent involvement (Epstein, 1986, 1991; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1995).
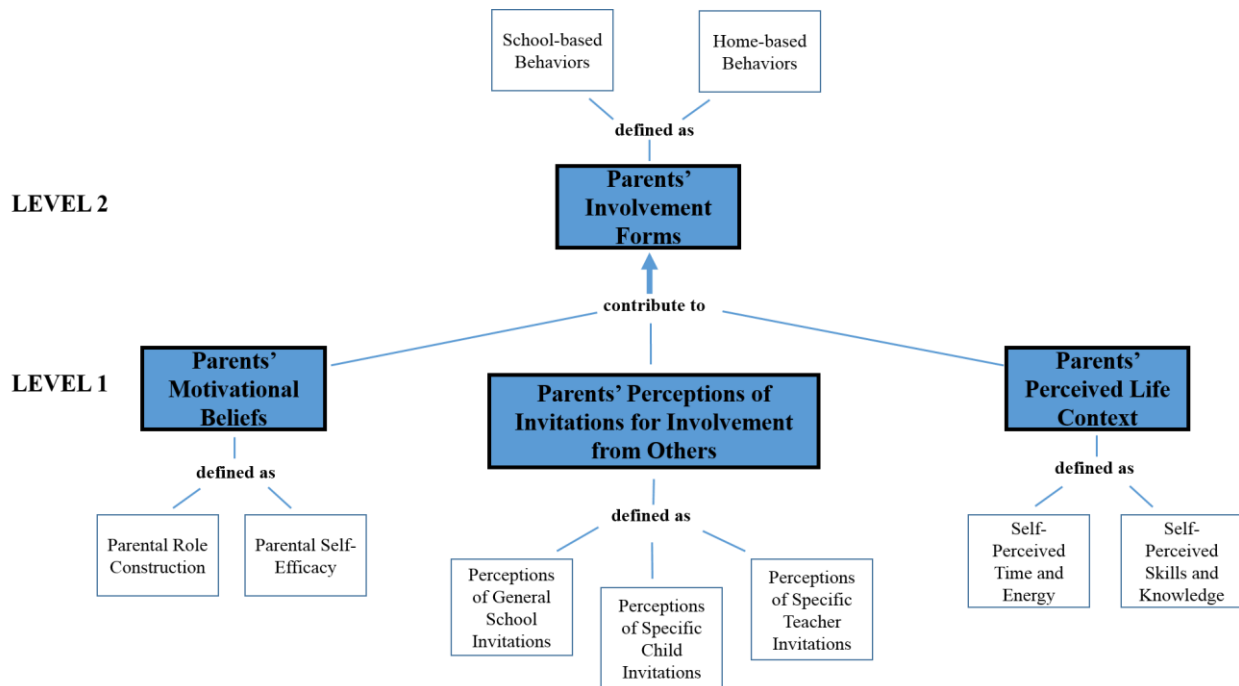
Figure 1. Levels 1 and 2 of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model of the parental involvement process (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005).

The third construct in level 1 of the model is parents' perceived life context. The authors operationalize this construct by breaking it up into two scales: (1) self-perceived time and energy and (2) self-perceived skills and knowledge. The model's authors hypothesize that parents' perceived life context "moderates the relation between other broad level 1 constructs (i.e., motivational beliefs and perceptions of invitations for involvement from others) and parents' forms of involvement" (Walker et al., 2005, p. 96). In their model, six items were developed to

assess the parents' time and energy for involvement and nine items were developed to assess

skills and knowledge for involvement (three items related parents' knowledge of events and six

items related to parents' knowledge or skills for engaging in specific activities or events).

The three constructs in level 1 are the predictor variables of the parent involvement

process. In other words, level 1 of the model looks at the psychological factors they believe

underlie parents' involvement behaviors (parents' motivational beliefs, parents' perceptions of

invitations for involvement from others, and parents' perceived life context). The model has two

dependent measures in level 2, that is, the model predicts that the three psychological

factors/constructs will contribute to the type of involvement forms exhibited by parents (school-

based or home-based). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler developed the parents' basic involvement

decision scales based on work by Epstein and Salinas (1993). Through principal component

factor analyses, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler confirmed the presence of home- and school-

based distinctions (Walker et al., 2005). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's final scale assessed

parents' decisions to become involved. Specifically, instead of asking parents to indicate how

likely they were to participate in a range of home- and school-based activities, they asked them

to indicate how frequently they had engaged in those activiites during the school year (Walker et

al., 2005). In level 2 they wanted to be able to assess parents' actual involvement behavior,

which they operationalize as the dependent measure: parents' choice of involvement forms.

The publications documenting the evolution of the scales assessing constructs in Hoover-

Dempsey and Sandler's original and revised theoretical models span from 1992 through 2010.

The participants in Walker et al. (2005) were parents of children enrolled in a socioeconomically

and ethnically diverse metropolitan public school system in the mid-south of the United States.

Thereafter, Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler (2007) further examined the capacity of

hypothesized constructs to empirically predict parents' self-reported involvement in education-related activities based at home and at school. The participants in this study were 853 parents of first- through sixth-grade children enrolled in a socioeconomically and ethnically diverse metropolitan public-school system in the mid-southern United States.

Researchers have investigated how the model and its constructs work among Hispanic, African-American, and Caucasian families. Chrispeels & Rivero (2000) found that concepts about a parent's role, based on cultural traditions brought from Mexico and prior experiences, can limit the range of types and level of involvement and can affect how parents interpret a school's invitations and opportunities to participate. Additionally, Closson, Wilkins, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey (2004) compared the questionnaire results of two groups of parents (response rate of 37%) in Nashville, Tennessee - Spanish- speaking Latinos (n=105) and Anglo-Americans (n=107) and found that Latino parents had a lower sense of self-efficacy for helping the child succeed in school. Their study also found that the parent role construction of Latino parents had a more school-focused role construction (i.e. schools carry more of the responsibility), because they had a lack of understanding of what role they played in their children's education.

More recently, Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2011) published the findings of their study examining the ability of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler theoretical model to predict Latino parents' involvement in their children's schooling. Their sample consisted of Latino parents (n=147) of grade 1 through 6 children in a large urban public school district in the southeastern United States. The sample of Latino/a parents, almost all of whom were first-generation immigrants primarily from Mexico, was drawn from five schools in the system: three elementary schools (first through fourth grades) and two middle schools (fifth and sixth grades). The model predicted 55% of the variance in their reported home-based involvement and 49% of

the variance in their reports of school-based involvement. The Latino parents' active role construction manifested itself mainly as partnership-focused beliefs and actions (i.e. they and the school share primary responsibility for the student's school outcomes). In addition, specific invitations for parents' involvement from the teacher, specific invitations to involvement from students, and families' life context realities regarding time and energy were found to be important factors in engaging and sustaining Latino parents' involvement in their children's schooling.

Walker et al. (2011) suggest future investigations might use their initial survey findings in a systematic discussion with groups of parents—Latino or other groups—to discern families' experiences with the school, their understanding of the roles they should play supporting their children's learning, and their ideas about what skills, information, and consideration they might need to participate even more effectively in their children's school success. Additionally, given the strong endorsement of partnership-focused role construction, Walker et al. (2011) suggest future studies examine more deeply the contributions of many Latino parents' cultures to understandings of their role in their children's learning and their preferences for school support.

With my study, I contribute to their findings in three ways. First, I interview parents who are not only actively engaging with the school, but I interview parents who are not participating (which their study did not capture). Second, I had discussions with three different groups of working-class Latino/a parents to discern their various experiences, which in turn enhance Walker et al.'s initial survey findings. Third, my qualitative study seeks to deeply examine how these Latino/a parents' culture influences their role construction.

Of special interest to this study is the role culture plays in shaping working-class Latino/a parents' motivational beliefs around involvement (i.e. self-efficacy and role construction –

psychological factors in *Level 1 - Parent Basic Involvement Decision level*). When considering the motivational beliefs around involvement, taking into account social context is essential due to the understanding that self-efficacy and role construction are socially constructed (Tekin, 2011; Walker et al., 2005). Curry et al. (2016) combined the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1995, 1997; Walker et al., 2005) and Lin's (2001) social network theory to gain a better understanding of social factors that influence parent motivation for involvement. Specifically, their quantitative study looked at a random sample of 5th grade parents (N=680; response rate = 41%) in a large southwestern urban school district serving a diverse population of approximately 42,000 students with 83% of the students qualifying for the federal lunch subsidy. They found that combined parent social network and school outreach accounted for approximately 10% of the variance in parent motivational beliefs. Yet, Curry et al. (2016) call for more research to understand the specific life context variables that influence motivational beliefs, more research to understand the influence of parent social networks in a variety of settings (especially among parents who are less involved in their children's education), and a qualitative study that explores more in-depth what factors inform parent motivational beliefs for involvement.

Building on Curry and colleagues' (2016) work, I combine the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011) model with a second lens that highlights specifically the role social factors play in the parental involvement decision-making process of working-class Latino/a parents. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model recognizes that sociological factors influence family-school interactions (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Curry et al., 2016), yet this model provides a strictly psychological perspective on parents who *are* involved in children's schooling (Walker et al., 2005). Literature related to "uninvolved parents" has been qualitative in nature, with very small sample sizes (Jackson & Remillard, 2005; Lawson, 2003). Further, Walker et al. (2011) find that

reliance on volunteer participants and a low response rate are representative of a central

methodological challenge to studies of the parent involvement process; uninvolved parents are

difficult to study (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Carlson, 1993).

Therefore, I also draw on Yosso's (2005) notion of community cultural wealth (CCW) as

a lens for understanding the role social and cultural factors play in influencing Latino/a parents'

decision-making. Community cultural wealth, as defined by Yosso (2005), is an array of

knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by communities of color to

survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression. Communities of color cultivate cultural

wealth through at least six forms of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial,

and resistant capital. Community cultural wealth shifts the view from a deficit perspective to the

assets that communities of color possess and acquire (Yosso, 2005). In contrast, current

educational policies stem from homogenizing practices that continue to place Latino/a students at

an educational disadvantage and view students and their families as intellectually and culturally

inferior (Mapp, 2012; Martinez, 2013). Resisting such notions, community cultural wealth

includes an array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts of socially marginalized

groups that usually go unrecognized, acknowledged or celebrated (Yosso, 2005). These concepts

are important to this study, because they help illuminate the nuances that influence Latino/a

parents' decisions regarding participation in the academy.

Theories Behind CCW

The CCW model draws on Bourdieu & Passerson's (1990) work which seeks to provide a

structural critique of social and cultural reproduction. Although not originally intended,

Bourdieu's (1986, 2011) theory of cultural capital has been used to assert that some communities

are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor. According to Bourdieu, capital can be

acquired in two ways, from one's family and/or through formal schooling. The CCW model

further draws on Oliver & Shapiro's (1995) idea of wealth as the total extent of an individual's

accumulated assets and resources, which the researchers differentiate from income or the dollars

received from salaries, wages, and payments. In addition, Raey (2000) finds that cultural and

social capital (material constraints), as well as social perceptions, distinctions and self-exclusion

(Bourdieu & Passerson, 1990) all influence the process of choice. A community cultural wealth

lens highlights the capitals and social perceptions communities of color possess (Yosso, 2005),

which in turn can inform what role these capitals play in working-class Latino/a parents'

decision-making.

CCW Capitals

The Community Cultural Wealth lens asserts that communities of color use various forms

of capital fostered through cultural wealth to survive and resist oppression and discrimination

(Yosso, 2005). These various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather they

are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth (see Figure

2).

Figure 2. A model of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005).

Community cultural wealth identifies the interconnectedness of the six forms of capital families

of color possess. Following is a short description of each of these forms of capital (see Table 1

for a summary).

Table 1. Tenets of Community Cultural Wealth

Social Capital - knowledge and understanding that are nurtured and passed on through networks of people and community resources
Navigational Capital - the skills needed to navigate through social institutions
Familial Capital - knowledge and understanding that are nurtured and passed on through relationships with family networks
Aspirational Capital – having high expectations, staying focused on one's goals and remaining resilient regardless of perceived barriers and real hardships
Linguistic Capital - the skills and tools developed through communication experiences in more than one language
Resistant Capital - values, knowledge, and tools used to nurture oppositional behavior that challenges and stands in opposition to inequality

Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even

in the face of real and perceived barriers. This resiliency is displayed in those who allow

themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances, often

without the objective means to attain those goals. *Linguistic capital* includes the intellectual and

social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style

(Faulstich Orellana, 2003). This aspect of cultural wealth is derived from over 35 years of

research about the value of bilingual education and emphasizes the connections between

racialized cultural history and language (Anzaldúa, 1987; Cummins, 1986; Darder, 1991; García

& Baker, 1995; Gutierrez, 2002; Gutierrez et al., 1995; Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999). *Familial*

capital refers to cultural knowledge nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998, 2002). This form of cultural wealth engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a more broad understanding of kinship. Isolation is minimized as families 'become connected with others around common issues' and realize they are 'not alone in dealing with their problems' (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001, p. 54).

Similar to *familial capital*, *social capital* can be understood as networks of people and community resources. These social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions (see Gilbert, 1982; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). *Navigational capital* refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Navigational capital acknowledges individual agency within institutional constraints, but it also connects to social networks that facilitate community navigation through institutions including schools, job market, health care, and judicial systems (Williams, 1997). Lastly, *resistant capital* refers to knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Maintaining and passing on the multiple dimensions of community cultural wealth is also part of the knowledge base of resistant capital.

Limited research has examined in-depth the decision-making process of working-class Latino/a when deciding to enter a family-school partnership through participation in a school-based parent academy. This study, therefore, aims to address this gap by using Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's parental involvement process model and Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth lens as frameworks for understanding working-class Latino/a parents' choice process. My purpose in combining these two frameworks to inform my analysis is two-fold: (1) I examine how the model's three psychological constructs influence three groups of Latino/a parents' who

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share the same socioeconomic background but exhibit different types of level 2 involvement forms, while (2) also capturing how the influence of culture and community are or are not different for each group. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model recognizes that community and cultural capital play a role in influencing parents' decision-making, but their model strictly focuses on the psychological factors. Yosso's (2005, 2006) CCW framework allowed me to discern how working-class Latino/a parents' cultural and life context factor into their personal decision to get involved or not.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the existing research on parental engagement over the last 16 years, Latino/a parental involvement and family-school partnerships, which forms the grounding and context for this study. I then described how Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005) theoretical model of the parental involvement process and Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth lens conceptually shape and guide the analysis for this study. Next, in Chapter 3, I will detail the research design and methods of this study, which includes a description of design, participants and sampling, methods for data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, and I conclude with a discussion about this study's limitations.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methods

Research design, according to (Yin, 2008) is "*a logical plan for getting from here to there*, where *here* may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and *there* is some set of conclusions (answers) about the questions" (p. 26). To examine the factors that influence working-class Latino/a parents' decision to enroll or not into a nationally recognized parent academy, I employ a case study design (Klassen, Creswell, Plano Clark, Smith, & Meissner, 2012). A case study is a type of method that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Capturing the experience of parents can provide the insight necessary to understand their decision-making processes. In this section, I describe my sampling techniques, participant selection criteria, site selection, data sources, procedures, and analysis process.

Qualitative Design

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2009). According to Van Maanen (1979) qualitative research is "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomenon in the social world" (p. 520). A central characteristic of qualitative research is that "individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds" (Merriam, 2009, p. 22). Meaning however "is not discovered but constructed. Meaning does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it …Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are

interpreting" (Crotty, 1998, pp. 42-43). Given this and the purpose of this study, qualitative research is most fitting for this project for several reasons. First, my overall purpose is to understand how these working-class Latino/a parents make sense of their lives and experiences. I seek to understand the processes by which these parents arrived at their enrollment decision and what factors influenced their decision. Second, I uncover and interpret how these processes differ across these three groups of parents who share many common attributes (e.g., race & ethnicity and SES status), but yet arrive at different decisions. Therefore, an in-depth qualitative analysis provides the best opportunity to richly understand the nuance and context of their experience.

Positionality

The concept of positionality includes the researcher's given attributes such as race, nationality, and gender, which are fixed or culturally ascribed (Howard, 2006). A researcher's self-reflection and awareness of their interpersonal insights is essential. To more deeply understand others, individuals must first understand themselves (Howard, 2006). As a first-generation Latina college student who is a native of South Texas and attended schools in the district where this study takes place (Kindergarten through 8th grade), it is important that I disclose my positionality. My parents are both retired custodians who were employed most of their careers by the school district where this study takes place. My upbringing in South Texas and my educational journey have shaped my insights and my understanding of the parents who are the focus of this study. It humbles me to be given the opportunity to study the lives of families in my community, and it is a responsibility I take very seriously. I am aware that being a South Texas native gives me credibility in the eyes of the parents participating in the study, and by teaching three sections of the parent academy's adult computer literacy class during spring 2016, I have gained the trust of the parent academy staff. Therefore, throughout the data

collection process I took great care to honor the trust parents and staff offered me. To mitigate my biases, I used several of the tools highlighted by Van Heugten (2004) including: stream of consciousness writing, interviewing oneself, speaking with others about the experience to create distance and deconstructing the familiar world (I will discuss these strategies in more detail later in this chapter).

Case Study Design

A case study is a type of methodology that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1994, p. 13). There are various types of case studies, such as descriptive, heuristic, and particularistic (Merriam, 2009). A descriptive case study means that "the end product of a case study is a rich, "thick" description of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). A heuristic case study means that the "case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 44). Particularistic case study, on the other hand, "focus on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). In addition, a single case study may have subunits or subcases within (Merriam, 2009). For this study, I chose to utilize a descriptive case study approach, because I seek to understand the interactions at play and the factors influencing parents' decision-making, and only through "thick" description of their context can I answer my research questions.

A descriptive case study is useful for this study for several reasons. In this study, I study three groups of working-class Latino/a parents. A total of 12 parents were recruited for each group (n=12). There are three groups for a total of n=36. For example, the decision-making processes of the parents within the group of parents who stayed enrolled and graduated will help inform the decision-making process and factors influencing their decision. Within the group of

parents who graduated, I produced an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 2009, p. 46). I conducted the same type of intensive analysis of the two other groups of parents, thereby producing a subcase for each of the three groups. The enrollment outcome was different for each group, therefore by studying them individually and then across subcases, I developed strong themes and it strengthened the precision, validity, and stability of my findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Participants and Sampling

For this study, I interviewed a total of 36 working-class Latino/a parents. These parents belonged to one of the three groups I studied: (1) parents who graduated from the academy, (2) parents who did not graduate from the academy, and (3) parents who chose not to enroll in the academy.

Sampling and Selection Criteria

To identify a site for this study, I employed purposive sampling to find a representative case of a high poverty, majority Latino/a school district offering a nationally acclaimed parent academy (Klassen et al., 2012). A purposive sample employs a set of selection criteria that are considered essential to choosing the people or sites to be studied (Merriam, 2009). In addition, I wanted to find a school district (a) serving a majority Latino/a students, (b) located along the US-Mexico border, and (c) where lack of parent involvement had been an issue in the past. Through a purposive sampling technique, I deliberately and non-randomly selected a case through which "the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). As such, I chose a school district in South Texas whose academy has received national recognition, such as being named a Bright Spot in education by the White House; this district is an "information rich" case that can provide a wealth of data to answer my research questions (Klassen et al., 2012).

Parents are the unit of analysis for this study. Specifically, participants for this project will span three categories: (1) graduated, (2) left without graduating, or (3) signed up but never enrolled in the academy (Yin, 2008). These categories of parents were chosen, because they will allow me to answer what factors influenced the parents' decisions regarding enrollment for the three cases. To be included in this study, parents in each of the three categories will have to meet the following criteria: (1) self-identify as Latino/a, (2) have a child enrolled in the district, and (3) have at least signed up to attend a semester long class at the district's parent academy. These selection criteria were selected for two reasons: (1) Latino/a parents are the main population the district's academy serves and (2) this is the demographic whose decision-making process this study focuses on.

To identify participants for the study, I utilized snowball and networking sampling (Merriam, 2009). These forms of sampling involve "locating a few key participants who easily meet the criteria you have established for participation in the study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 79). I worked with the academy's program director, Ms. Olivia Benford, to locate parents who fit these criteria. By asking a "number of people who else they talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases" (Patton, 2002, p. 237). The program's main office has a database of all the parents who have participated in the program or minimally have signed up to get information about the program. I asked the academy's program director to contact the site managers of the three main parent community centers where the classes occur and share the list of potential participants with them. They, in turn, reached out to parent graduates and parents who had been enrolled at their center but did not finish the course. The managers asked eligible parents if they would be willing to share their experiences with me. In

regards to parents who had signed up but never enrolled, the program's main office took the lead in contacting those parents over the phone. If the phone was no longer in service, I moved on to the next parent on the list.

Once I recruited 12 eligible parents from each of the three categories, the parent center site managers stopped taking names. For example, I interviewed eight parents who graduated from the program, eight parents who attended classes but did not graduate, and eight parents who signed up to attend classes at a parent center, but never showed up to begin the class. I conducted a total of 24 individual semi-structured interviews. In addition, I conducted a focus group interview with parents from each of the three enrollment categories. There were four parents in each focus group, for a total of 12 parents. Incorporating a focus group interview allowed me to corroborate and/or contradict some of the themes that arose from my individual semi-structured interviews. There was a total of 36 parent participants in the study.

Data Collection

I will use a general qualitative approach to data collection involving interviews, and archival and document review (Klassen et al., 2012). I will gather data throughout the fall of 2016 until December 2016, for a total of five months and 100 hours of data collection.

Interviews. A total of 24 Latino/a parents will be selected to participate in individual, semi-structured interviews that will last between 30 and 45 minutes. Semi-structured interviews follow a general framework but are open, allowing new ideas to arise during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says (Bernard, 1988). According to Fylan (2005), "the flexibility of semi-structured interviews makes them well-suited to answering a 'why' question" (p. 66). All interviews will be digitally recorded with participants' consent. The interviews will be bilingual, as parents will be given the option to respond to the questions in English or Spanish, using the

language they feel most comfortable with. To get a representative sample of parents, I will only interview parents who enrolled or had planned to enroll at one of the three full-service centers. The district serves three cities, and there is one full-service center per city offering classes in the morning, afternoon and evening. Therefore, parents from each of the three cities will be part of this study.

For the three groups of parents, during the interviews I will ask questions regarding how they first heard about the academy and what about the program caught their interest. For the group of parents who graduated, I will ask questions pertaining to what convinced them to enroll, their overall experience within the academy, and to what do they attribute their success in completing the academy (see Appendix A). For the group of parents who did not graduate, I will ask about the factors that influenced their decision to enroll in the academy, their overall experience within the academy, as well as what factors impacted their decision to leave the academy before graduating. And lastly, for the group of parents who showed interest but did not enroll in the academy, I will ask them questions pertaining to the factors that ultimately influenced their decision to forego participation. Since this group of parents did not enroll in the academy, the district's parent centers might not be locations they feel comfortable having the interview at, therefore I will give them three options for interview location: (1) the parent center nearest them, (2) me going to their home, or (3) letting them suggest a different location.

Following the completion of the 24 individual parent interviews, an additional 12 Latino/a parents will take part in three focus group interviews (four parents per focus group, one focus group per category) where they will share their decision-making process regarding enrollment. Focus group is an interview on a topic with a group of people who have knowledge of the topic (Krueger, 2008). According to Macnaghten & Myers (2004), "focus groups work

best for topics people could talk about to each other in their everyday lives – but don't" (p. 65). The questions asked during the focus group interviews will be the same questions asked during the individual semi-structured interviews.

Pilot Study

In October 2015, I conducted a pilot study with three parent focus groups in the school district where this study takes place. I obtained IRB approval from both the school district and the University of Texas at Austin. To be part of the pilot study, parents had to meet the following criteria: (1) self-identify as Latino/a, (2) a parent with a child enrolled in the district, and (3) the parent had to have been enrolled in the academy at least two consecutive semesters. It was important for the parents in the pilot study to have been enrolled for at least two semesters, for it meant they decided to return after their initial semester. Parents who met this selection criteria would also have at least two semesters to draw upon when reflecting on their decision to enroll in the program, their experience within the academy, as well as how their experience has impacted their relationship with their child.

A total of 15 Latino/a parents participated in the focus group interviews, 12 females and 3 males. There were four females and one male per focus group, which is reflective of the parent participation in the program. Verbal consent forms were used in the pilot study; they were available in English and Spanish (see Appendix B). The age range of the participants ranged from 22 to 62 years old. All the participants had at least one child or grandchild in the school district and all had been enrolled in the academy at least 2 semesters or one full school year. The district has three main full-service parent centers, one in each city it serves. One focus group interview was conducted at each center. The semi-structured interviews were between 60 and 90 minutes long. The interviews were bilingual, as parents were given the option to respond to the

question in English or Spanish, using the language they felt most comfortable with. Parents mostly answered in Spanish. The focus group discussions were digitally-recorded, fully transcribed (all Spanish words were translated to English). The interview protocol consisted of six questions: (1) How did you find out about the parent academy? (2) Why did you decide to enroll? (3) How did you decide what class period to take (morning, noon, or evening)? (4) Can you talk to me about your experience taking these classes? (5) Describe your experience volunteering at your child's school. (6) How has participating in this academy helped you with the academic relationship you have with your child?

After the interview, we spent time debriefing about the interview. Based on the pilot interviews and feedback from participants, I made a number of changes to my protocol, including asking participants to tell me more about themselves in the beginning of the interview (the one-on-one format will make this easier than doing it as a group), no longer asking what class they were enrolled in, but focusing more on the factors that attracted them to the academy and who (if anyone) they spoke with as they processed making their choice. I made these decisions, because establishing a more personal connection with the parent at the beginning of the interview helped as I delved into their personal decisions around enrollment. Moreover, in order to answer my research questions, I needed to focus on parents' choices and the factors that influenced them. If class offerings played a role, then it will come through as a factor as the interview progresses.

Archival and Document Data. I collected current and historical documents that reference the development of the parent academy. The presence of documents does not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator sometimes can (Merriam, 2009). Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) believe there can be a disconnect between what people say and

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what people do, therefore a researcher should not rely only on interviews to provide insights into patterns of and motives for individual or institutional behaviors. Merriam (2009) uses the term "document" as the umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study whose existence predates the research at hand. The documents included newspaper articles, grant applications, district publications, agreements with community partners, training for academy staff, and any documents regarding parent outreach by the academy. These data were useful to this study because they helped me triangulate with interview data, and I used these data to develop subcase descriptions of each group of parents (Bogdan &Biklen, 1998). Additionally, Ms. Benford included me on newsletter email lists.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam (2009, p. 175), "making sense out of the data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning." The constant comparative analysis method is an iterative and inductive process of reducing the data through constant recoding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A defining rule of the constant comparative method is that while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category.

As such, I utilized the six steps from Glaser's (1978) constant comparison method of analysis: (1) begin collecting data, (2) look for key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories for focus, (3) collect data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus with an eye to seeing the diversity of the dimensions under the categories, (4) write about the categories that you are exploring, attempting to describe and account for all the

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incidents you have in your data while continually searching for new incidents, (5) work with the data and emerging model to discover basic social processes and relationships, (6) engage in sampling, coding, and writing as the analysis focuses on the core categories.

The first step of the constant comparative method is to collect the data. Therefore, I transcribed my field notes as well as the 24 individual, semi-structured interviews and the three focus group interviews (all Spanish words will be translated to English). I am fluent in speaking, reading, and writing Spanish, and paid special attention to linguistic differences between oral speech and the translation in written text (Patton, 1990). I analyzed interview data by interview question. I examined interview questions for emerging themes within cases. Second, I examined the emerging themes against my field notes and the theoretical frameworks for this study. For example, I asked questions such as: "what constraints do parents mention and what role do the parents assign these constraints when making their choices?" In employing the constant comparative method of comparing an incident with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category, the interviews were coded for themes within parent groups and then across-groups. Yin (2009) advocates a replication strategy, when a framework is used to study one group of parents in-depth (parents who graduated), and then the subsequent groups of parents (parents who did not graduate and parents who did not participate) are examined to see whether the patterns found in the other groups match the patterns in the first case.

I then clustered themes by topic areas that aligned with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005) model constructs (i.e. parents' motivational beliefs, parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others, and parents' perceived life context), Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth tenets (i.e., aspirational capital, familial capital, social capital,

navigational capital, linguistic capital, and resistant capital) and by parent group (three groups) using NVIVO 11 qualitative coding software. I used the constant comparative method to test the emerging categories throughout the data analysis to generate conceptual themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Ethical Considerations

Mertens (2010, p.12) argues that regardless of the paradigm, "ethics in research should be an integral part of the research planning and implementation process, not viewed as an afterthought or a burden." The ethical principles outlined by Louis, Lawrence, & Keith (2007) regarding non-maleficence, beneficence and human dignity will guide my work. Therefore, I committed to staying vigilant and mindful of these principles throughout the research process. Throughout the study, I remained reflective and will protect participants from any harms or risks, such as keeping their personal information secure. I provided them with a consent form (see Appendix C) prior to beginning the interview and explained to them what their participation entails. The forms were provided in both English and Spanish. I made sure to answer any questions they had before, during, or after the interview.

Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness of the findings is essential for any qualitative study. Lincoln & Guba's (1985) definition of trustworthiness involves establishing: (1) credibility - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings, (2) transferability - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts, (3) dependability - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated, and (4) confirmability - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. Given this, I took several steps to ensure the trustworthiness of my findings. Guba (1981) suggests several

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techniques that may be employed to establish credibility: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member checking. Guba (1981) also recommends thick description to facilitate transferability. Given the nature of a descriptive case study, the end product should be a rich "thick" description of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009). I provide a literal description of the case and portray the interaction of as many variables as possible.

As a first step, I triangulated my data from multiple sources, including interviews with parents and document review (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Triangulation refers to "the researcher's use of multiple sources, methods, investigators, and theories" (Denzin, 1978, as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305). In triangulating these data points, I showed if there was convergence amongst independent sources. If there was not convergence, then I contacted participants again to make sure that my interpretations of the findings reflected their experiences. Second, I conducted "member checks" by sharing my preliminary interpretations with parent academy staff, teachers, and parents to make sure that my interpretation reflected participants' experiences (Maxwell, 2008). Third, I was honest about my positionality as a Latina who grew up in the community I was studying and honored the trust and access given to me by the participants (Miles et al., 2014). Van Heugten (2004) emphasizes that an insider researcher's subjectivity must be "open to intensive scrutiny" and "challenged on an ongoing basis" (p. 208). Furthermore, I employed self-reflexivity making sure to take into account my own consciousness (Van den Hoonaard, 2002). To further increase trustworthiness, I engaged in peer debriefing, and thereby exposed myself to a "disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308).

Additionally, immediately after every interview I conducted, I wrote an analytic memo. I used the memo as part of a summary process, to articulate my interpretations of the interview in a more concise format. The memos created an important extra level of narrative: an interface between the interview data, my interpretation and wider theory. Having to describe the interview and the participant helped me with comprehension. Most qualitative research does not follow a linear structure, it is iterative, and these memos were no different. I revisited and reviewed them as my analysis progressed. I looked for changes in thought, or wider patterns that emerged. Writing the memos helped me record my reflexive process, and how I might be introducing bias in the interpretation of the data. Further, in my effort to increase trustworthiness, detailing in these memos my decision making process helped to illustrate how I worked things out and helps me in justifying my choices to others.

Moreover, steps were taken to protect the privacy of the parents who chose to participate in the study. After the interviews were transcribed and translated, the voice recordings were destroyed. The parents who participated in the study were provided with a complete description of the project, intent of the research, and a description of additional measures that were taken to minimize participant risk and safeguard individual identities. All notes, audio recordings, transcripts, and research files were kept in password protected files accessible only by me. Pseudonyms were used for every parent. The audio recordings were labeled by combining the pseudonym, date of interview and name of the parent center to which they belonged.

Limitations

Like all research, this study has limitations. The first limitation involves my positionality as a local who was born and raised in the community I am studying. Yet, I will take the steps mentioned in the previous section to mitigate this. Second, sample size is not large enough for

generalizations, but my intention is not to generalize my findings, but rather I aim to develop a rich, empirical account of the factors that influence the parent involvement decisions of working-class Latino/a parents. A third limitation is that I focus only on the voice of parents. Other voices also play an important role in influencing the parental involvement of these parents, but I choose to focus on these three sets of parents, because their personal experiences, described by them, is missing from the literature. My purpose is to understand their decision-making process and the factors that influence their enrollment decisions in a school-based academy; therefore, they must be my primary unit of analysis.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the research design and methods of this study, which included a description of design, participants and sampling, methods for data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, trustworthiness, and limitations. In the next chapter, I provide background and context of the region where the school district for my case study is located: South Texas along the Texas-Mexico border.

CHAPTER 4

Context of the Study

In this chapter, I provide background and context of the region where the school district for my case study is located: Texas along the Texas-Mexico border. Throughout this chapter, I refer to the Rio Grande Valley as the Valley, and do not use a pseudonym to describe it or its four counties, because the area covers over 4,872 square miles it is geographically unique to Texas and the U.S.-Mexico border (See Figure 3 for a map of the area). But, to protect the identity of the participants in my study, I do use pseudonyms to refer to all the Valley cities, people, and places within the district, because locally, communities are very tight-knit, and I want to protect people's anonymity.

As such, in what follows in this chapter, I will first describe the origins of the school district, highlighting the history of the City of Smith[7] (the city where the district is located) to better situate the lives of the parents in this study. It is important to discuss this context because unlike other regions across the country with high Latino/a populations, this region is majority Latino/a and in very close proximity to the country of origin of many families living in the area. This proximity has heavily influenced the daily lives of the parents in this study. To do this, I take a macro to micro level perspective where I discuss the region, school district, and city. Then, I discuss the economy of the Valley because it informs the financial circumstances families and districts experience on a daily basis. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the district's current demographics and parental engagement program.

The Valley

This area of South Texas is referred to as the Rio Grande Valley (RGV), or the Valley for short. The Rio Grande Valley is made up of four counties: Starr County, Hidalgo County,

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[7] This is a pseudonym for the city where the study is situated.

Willacy County, and Cameron County, with a total of thirty-nine school districts serving the

region. According to U.S. Census Bureau (2014) data the majority of these counties are

comprised of Hispanic/Latino/as. The Census Bureau estimated that 86 percent of Cameron

County, 90 percent of Hidalgo County, 97 percent of Starr County, and 86 percent of Willacy

County are Hispanic (see Figure 3 for location of the counties). The regional growth of the

Valley has skyrocketed over the last forty-five years. The region went from having

Figure 3. Regional Map of the Rio Grande Valley.
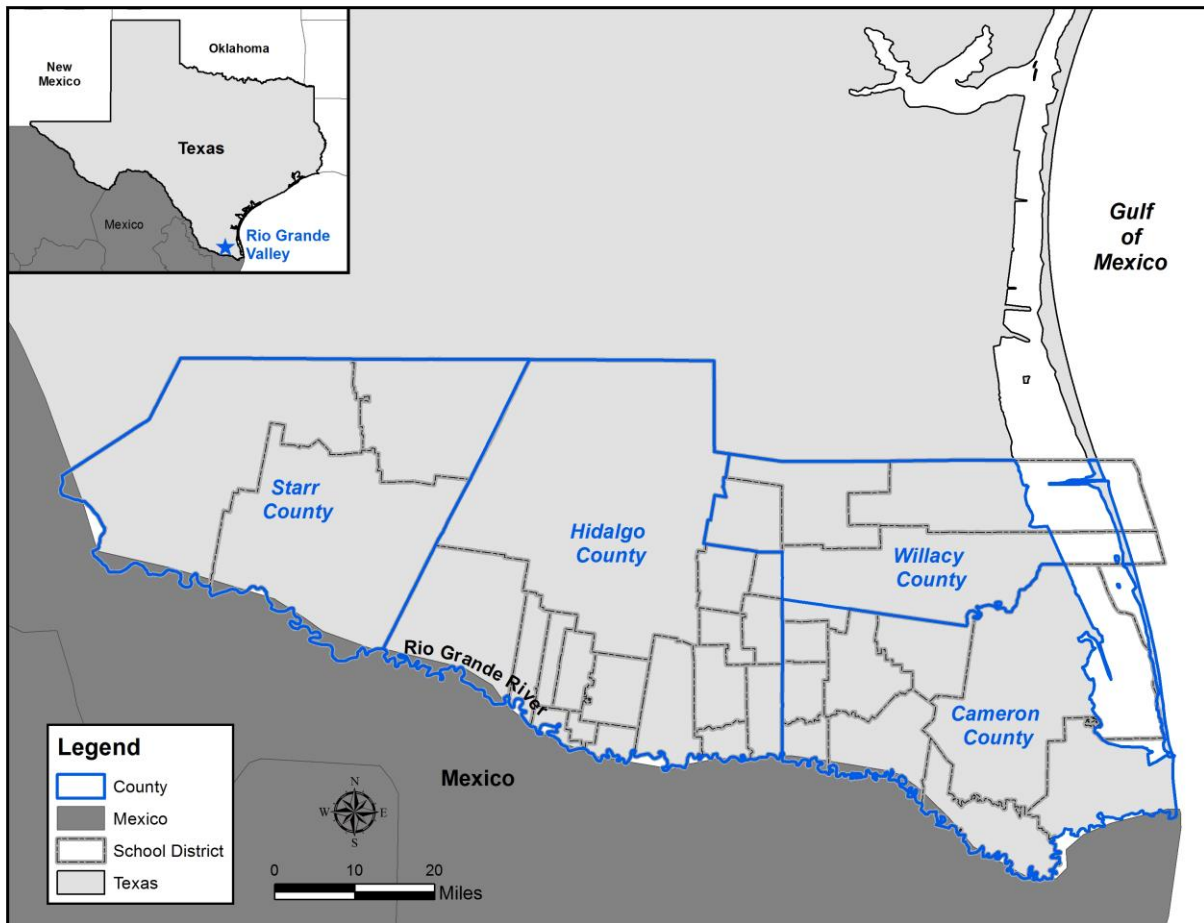
approximately 325,000 people in 1969 to over 1,300,000 people in 2014. The largest city in the

Valley is Baxter with a population of 183,823, followed by Miller with a population of 142,212.

To more fully understand the contemporary conditions of the Valley, I heed Soja's (2000) admonition that it is essential to consider space, history, and social dimensions in the analysis of regions. Therefore, I discuss the Valley's historical context of war, conquest, and international treaty to better situate its current realities of a gateway between two countries – one 1st world and one 3rd world, whose population is an amalgam of both. The Rio Grande Valley was at the center of the debate between the Republic of Texas and Mexico from the moment it was separated from Mexico as a result of the 1836 Texas Revolution (Arispe, 2009). According to Suárez-Mier (2007), when Texas decided to become a part of the United States in 1845, it accelerated the onset of the Mexican War. The United States defeated Mexico, which led to Mexico's loss of the northwestern Mexican territories through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 (i.e., "Manifest Destiny"). A few years later, the Rio Grande Valley was the site of the last battle of the American Civil War, the Battle of Palmito Hill. While it has been shown that war and international treaties created the border between Mexico and the United States, this region also demonstrates a continued interwoven, mutually beneficial relationship with the northern Mexican states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon, through trade and commerce.

The former Mexican citizens, who became American through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, came to occupy what can be understood as a "Third Space" in the borderland area, when the Texas-Mexico border line was moved south to the river. The Rio Grande Valley represents a third space in many ways as it is symbolically separate from Mexico and the United States. Suárez-Mier (2007) writes,

> For all the differences between Mexico and the United States, the border region
> forms an unbreakable bond between two countries. The communities that lie
> along and frequently straddle it, enjoy a unique symbiosis that impels them to

work together to address common problems: legal and illicit trade, pollution and

management of water resources, crossings of people who work on one side but

live on the other side and endless other exchanges that make them far more

attached to each other than with other towns in their own countries. (p. 17)

The Valley's location has thus impacted the historical, political, economic, and social/cultural

experience of the people living both south and north of it. Valley residents are a hybrid who live

in the U.S., but are closer in distance and are impacted daily by their Spanish speaking neighbor

to the south—Mexico. People in the Valley also come in contact with Mexican nationals on a

daily basis, on the street, in a store, or in a restaurant, and they do not see them as "foreign,"

instead they view them as neighbors. The San Mateo[8] school district is located in the City of

Smith.

City of Smith's History and Its Schools

In 1915, the City of Smith's population was estimated at 600, and by that year schools

had opened; however, they were racially and culturally segregated. Mexican students attended

classes at the six-grade East Juárez School (no black families lived in the area at the time

according to Census records) and white students attended the city's other schools. When the site

for the East Juárez School was moved, it became known as the San Mateo Grammar School for

Mexican Children. Separate facilities for junior and senior high school students were not

provided because Mexican children were not expected to get beyond grammar school (Wallace,

2008).

In 1919, the San Mateo school district was officially formed. During its inception, the

school district had an enrollment of 143 students, with 12 teachers and a graduating class of nine.

In 1925, Mexican students requested that they be allowed to attend high school with the other

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[8] San Mateo is a pseudonym.

children, yet schools would remain segregated until the 1960s. After desegregation, white and Mexican children attended the same schools, but Mexican children made up the majority of students in the district. A majority of white families eventually moved out of the district and went over to a neighboring city with a higher population of white families. The ranching and farming industries is what brought to South Texas the ancestors of many of these Anglo[9] families.

I next describe the City of Smith's history with racially segregated housing.

Racially Segregated Housing in the City of Smith, 1950s-1970s

The history of racially segregated housing, like its schools, in Smith plays an important role in the demographics of schools and neighborhoods in the city. Between the 1950s and 1970s, Anglos in the City of Smith generally lived on the south side of town and Mexican-Americans typically lived on the north side, which lacked adequate lighting, paved roads, and water service. The railroads divided the city between north and south. North of the railroad tracks in Smith there existed poor living conditions for its residents. It was awash with cantinas (bars), prostitution, and drugs, and the city was doing nothing to help clean it up. Historically, Mexican Americans had very little success in challenging the South Texas social order. Elected officials in the area were mainly Anglos.

In 1962, the City of Smith elected T. Barrow, an Anglo, as mayor, and "many who lived in Smith during the 1960s and early 1970s refer to Barrow as being a political boss . . . someone who was able to exert control through various agencies including the police department, the water department, the tax department, and other agencies" (Kearney, Knopp, & Zavaleta, 2005, p. 119). He ruled with an iron fist. There was discontent and frustration among Mexican

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[9] Historically, the term was commonly used by Valley residents. The name is generally used in contrast to Americans for whom Spanish is their native language, or people whose ancestry is from Latin America.

residents in Smith with the unequal treatment they experienced and the city's substandard

delivery of city services to Mexican neighborhoods (on the north side) in comparison to Anglo

neighborhoods (on the south side). The tensions came to a boiling point under T. Barrow's

watch.

The civil unrest that occurred across the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s, made its way to

South Texas. Black protests in the South surged from 1961 to 1963, which also energized similar

activism in the cities of the North and southwest. The demonstrations against southern

segregation also prompted a mobilization in support of fighting local discrimination (Orfield,

1988). This type of activism made its way to the Rio Grande Valley in the early 1970s. White

flight occurred in the City of Smith when Latino/a residents reached a critical mass in the south

side of the community which caused Anglo homebuyers to perceive the community as in decline,

and soon white residents moved away. Today, the south side of Smith is overwhelming

Mexican. With the influx of Mexican-Americans into historically white neighborhoods, racial

tensions escalated through the years and reached a tipping point in 1971. As a result, the schools

on the south side began to see their white student population decrease.

The City Elections of 1972

The City of Smith experienced significant change following its 1972 city elections,

whereby the citizens of Smith elected the first Mexican-American mayor in Smith's history. In

interviewing my father, who moved back to Smith in May 1971 after being laid off from a

factory job in Milwaukee, he tells me that he worked on the campaign of the Mexican-American

candidate who won the election. He says they canvased the entire Mexican-American side of

town, held neighborhood meetings in people's homes, and did aggressive radio outreach. My

father also served as a poll watcher at the polling station. He says tensions ran high, but 90% of

the people turned out to vote; quite the difference from previous elections where Mexican-American voter turnout was very low. The makeup of the San Mateo School board was also impacted. Mexican-American candidates successfully running for the school board became more commonplace.

While Anglos once comprised the Rio Grande Valley's leadership, Mexican-Americans dominate the region's elected offices today. The three Texas U.S. representatives from the Valley are Mexican American. The eleven members of the Texas state legislature, 39 of the 43 mayors, and 90 percent of school board members in this region are Mexican Americans. Today, male Mexican-Americans hold all the seats on the City of Smith's city commission and the San Mateo school board. Residents see leaders that look like them on boards, but today, the difference between Smith residents and their leaders is one of class. The prevalent issue during every election is whether the politicians running for office can relate and understand the issues facing their constituents.

Although gains have been made in electing Latinos from the area to local, state, and national office, the officials elected are often from a small pool of families. Politically, it is common for families to be elected to office and stay in power over generations. Often, family members from the same family hold office on the school board, on a city commission, and at the county level, all at once. It's all about relationships, and someone who is not from the Valley must expend a lot of time and resources to build and foster those relationships. This translates into other sectors as well. Arispe (2009) writes,

> A serious review of south Texas higher education, especially in Baxter [County],
>
> will find that young and talented administrators, academicians and researchers
>
> were driven away by arbitrary and incestuous human resources policies that

rewarded incompetents, because they were literally family, loyal to the leadership

or had been "one of us" for decades. South Texas will only become a magnet for

talent if it is perceived as an awesome place to live, work and raise families. The

practice of employment and promotion patronage must cease to exist otherwise it

will undermine the sustainability of sorely needed talent in south Texas higher

education.

It is not easy to breakthrough into some of the longstanding networks that exist at every level of

government in South Texas, especially for someone who is new to the area. Given the area's

history, the enduring preconceived notions about the area held by people who have never visited

the Valley, and the region's long physical distance from leaders in Austin or D.C., locals are very

protective of their "Third Space", but so much so, that it can be counter-productive in regards to

letting new people and ideas in (Garza, 2008). New ideas and new possibilities can be a catalyst

to growing the Valley's economy.

The Valley's Economy

In the nineteenth century, most of the South Texas economy was based on cattle

ranching. This changed at the beginning of the twentieth century when row-crop agriculture

began to dominate the South Texas economy. This continued through the 1990s. Work in

agribusiness or large-scale farming no longer required a permanent workforce since the work

was seasonal. Mexican Americans were employed only part of the year and then let go after the

crops had been harvested and shipped. They had no choice but to migrate to other areas of the

country where other agricultural work was available. These continual migrations further

alienated Mexican Americans socially, politically and financially from Anglo-American society

(Garza, 2008). This disconnect is still felt today between the region as a whole and the rest of the country.

Since the 1980s the RGV has witnessed an explosive population growth that continues to this day, mostly due to trade with Mexico and tourism, which have become anchors of the local economy. However, despite this, in 2014, the two Rio Grande Valley metropolitan areas were ranked #1 and #2 on a list of "America's Poorest Cities" by the website *24-7 Wall Street*. They used data on income, poverty rate, median home price, and health insurance from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), as well as unemployment numbers. These realities impact school districts' budgets directly because in Texas, districts depend heavily on property taxes. This is important in Smith because many families rent or live in neighborhoods with low median home prices, which means the amount of property taxes raised is not enough to support the services the population needs, even when the district's tax rate is at the maximum level. Therefore, poorer communities with less of a property tax base may have higher tax rates, but still raise less funding to support the local school district. This can often mean that children that live in low-income communities with the highest needs go to schools with the least resources, the least qualified teachers, and substandard school facilities.

Research suggests that the biggest indicator of prosperity is not how much employment any given city has, but what kind of jobs. Richer cities have a lot of high-tech, finance and information workers, while lower-income metro areas tend to have lots of low-tech manufacturing, agriculture, retail, food service, and hospitality positions. This is the case of the Rio Grande Valley, where retail trade accounts for 15% of the industry and hospitality accounts for 10%. Agriculture accounts for 5%. These industries are typically the ones employing parents such as the ones in my study, mainly because they do not require a college degree or being fluent

in English. The proliferation of low-paying service jobs in the Valley means that many Valley workers earn low salaries and those low salaries place a significant portion of the population below the poverty level (LEAD, 2015), thus resulting in many students living in poverty.

A unique industry found in border areas is maquiladoras. Gilmer and Cañas (2005), in their report for the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, cite the economic significance of maquiladoras industries to both sides of the border through their observation that:

> there is strong economic interaction between border city pairs, apparent from a
> count of auto, truck, and pedestrian traffic crossing the bridges that connect them,
> from the number of Mexican license plates on autos parked in U.S. malls, or the
> many service and good suppliers in the U.S. border cities that support
> manufacturing located in Mexico (p. 3).

Three of the four counties in the Rio Grande Valley provide eight bridges as points of entry to northern Mexico. These eight bridges facilitate one of the Valley's other major economic drivers, the retail industry, which relies on the Mexican consumer to shop on the Texas side of the border. Baruca and Zolfagharian (2013) report that on average, Mexican nationals spend around $4.5 billion per year in Texas border retail, and Mexican national spending accounts for 35-40% of Miller's and 30-35% of Baxter's retail business.

Economic prosperity, sustainable development, and accessing opportunities are linked to literacy, education, and training (Hargrove & Smith, 2006). In the case of border students, Soden (2006) believes that:

> students in border counties, compared to their counterparts in non-border
> counties, disproportionately face the choice between education and work based on
> family and personal income needs. One result is that completion of college takes

longer since the role of full-time student is an unaffordable luxury. Federal

support of programs to keep students in college in border counties may be

necessary to accelerate the regional demand for a college educated work force.

Education may be the greatest challenge facing the southwest border counties,

regardless of level. It may be the area that also requires the most innovation to

develop educational strategies that will reduce drop-out rates, enhance completion

at all levels, and support "catching-up" remedial activities in community colleges

and universities that have proven to be a key factor in college completion. (p. 132)

In addition, the parents of these students often face the same choice between work and their

family.

Since many students decide to stay local after graduation, thereby putting more onus on

districts to provide them with a K-12 education that will prepare them to succeed at local higher

education institutions. In recent years, partnerships between the local community college and

local school districts have blossomed. The purpose is to help students earn college credit while

still in high school, in an effort to help transition first-generation students to college and into the

workforce sooner.

A Unique Culture

Although district and city pride exist throughout the Valley, the unifying factor amongst

all the people who live in the Valley is the history and culture. Given the region's history, the

culture here is an amalgam of American and Mexican traditions. This area shares a history with

its neighbor to the south; it has never felt as us versus them. Should a concrete wall replace the

iron fence currently in place, the border will continue to be a permeable, living and breathing

reality for all who live here.

Aside from having great Mexican food, another staple in the Valley is the Spanish language. Latino/a parents in the Valley who only speak Spanish can successfully get through their daily routine without speaking much or any English, because there are many Spanish friendly establishments (i.e., grocery stores, restaurants, churches). Often the exception to the rule comes when Spanish-speaking parents have to deal with government entities, educational institutions, and the legal system, communication traditionally requires reading and speaking in English. To be clear, people do speak English in the Valley, there is a coexistence of both languages (English and Spanish), and a speaker fluent in only one of the two languages can go about a normal day with fair ease. There are enough adults who speak and understand both languages at establishments throughout the region, and they effectively serve as intermediaries.

For many, however, the Valley is a comfortable place to live, work, and shop. There is no need to move outside one's language comfort zone. A parent in this study described the Valley as a place where many people speak Spanish. In her opinion, since one can get by with only speaking Spanish, then there is no real sense of urgency to learn English. Consequently, many of the parents in the district speak only Spanish, and the Spanish language dominates the community spaces they inhabit or frequent. Therefore, for real dialogue to occur between schools and parents and the community, it works best when the communication happens in both languages, English and Spanish. But, not utilizing Spanish creates a disconnect between the schools and a large segment of the population. As it is, there is already a divide between how the Valley sees itself and how others from the outside perceive it.

National and State Rhetoric About the Valley

Perceptions of the Valley in the mainstream press are that undocumented immigrants, drugs, and violence are overrunning the southern border (Robbins, 2014). For example, the

southern border (the Valley) was also a subject of discussion during the 2016 presidential campaign, when then Republican Presidential Candidate Donald Trump, remarked that "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending the best. They're not sending you, they're sending people that have lots of problems and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bring crime. They're rapists… And some, I assume, are good people." National and state rhetoric about the southern border does not often depict the region in the best light. Local policymakers invite state and national leadership to visit the Valley for a few days in order to gain an appreciation for the region, but typically, their tour is just a few hours long.

The Valley is at the epicenter of the conversation regarding immigration issues. As a result of the rhetoric coming from non-Valley policymakers, communities living along the border have to invest in counter-storytelling and try to push back and reframe the conversation. Yet, it is the politicians speaking from the more powerful pulpits who shape the rest of America's perception of the border and enact policies with direct impact on these border communities. Many of the families in the Valley have relatives who are Mexican immigrants, therefore, immigration policies at the national and/or state level directly impact these families and their children. Public schools in the Valley are tasked with providing quality education to all children, regardless of their immigration status or that of their families. Consequently, schools must educate these children and help them transition to English. The demographics of the San Mateo Independent School District are a reflection of this, which I next describe.

Current School District Demographics

Currently (as of the time of this writing in 2017), the San Mateo District serves over 32,593 students. There is a total of 42 schools in the district: 25 elementary schools, eight middle schools, five high schools, three special purpose campuses and one early start program.

According to the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) 2016 Snapshot report, the student body at the district is 99% Hispanic, and 87.7% are considered low-income. With the district's proximity to Mexico, 43.7% of the students are considered Limited English Proficient (LEP) with Spanish being the language spoken at home. The annual dropout rate for grades 9-12 during the academic year 2014-15 was 1.2%. This is an improvement considering that in 2006, the state dropout rate in Texas was 8.8%, compared to 18.7% in the San Mateo District. The district implemented a College, Career, and Technology Academy (CCTA) that launched at the start of the 2007-2008 school year. The CCTA engages young people age 18-26 who either dropped out of school or who have reached the end of their senior year lacking high school credits or having failed the state's high-stakes exit exam.

According to TEA's 2016 Snapshot report of the district, 68% of the students are performing at the Level II Satisfactory Standard of the STAAR test (a series of state-mandated standardized tests), 62% for ELA/Reading, 68% for Writing, 74% for Mathematics, 74% for Science, and 66% for Social Studies. The 2015-2016 TEA school report cards by district found that of the 42 campuses in the district, 40 have a 2016 accountability rating of "Met Standard". Two of the district's special purpose campuses were rated as "Improvement Needed".

In 2016, the total teacher full-time equivalent (FTE) for the district was 2,059.3. Of these, 47.9% were teachers, 28.1% were auxiliary staff, 10% were professional support staff, 9.7% were educational aides, 2.8% were school administrative staff, and 1.5% were central administrative. The percent of teachers with 5 or fewer years of experience was 30.1%, and the teacher turnover rate was 10.3%. Of the teachers working in the district, 93% identify as Hispanic, 5% identify as white, and 1.6% identify as other. In the case of San Mateo, the student and teacher racial demographics are similar, majority Hispanic. To this end, these rich and

diverse demographics make for a rich site to conduct this study, as well as its award-winning parent engagement program.

Current Parent Engagement Program

Prior to 2013, low participation numbers defined parental engagement activities within the San Mateo District. According to the district's website, low participation was due to a high incidence of only-English communication and activities that created a divide between parents and the district. Given that English is not the first language of many parents and activities were scheduled during the work day, high engagement was not fostered. Activities such as volunteering in the classroom or hosting bake sales, were not activities that really connected with immigrant families and their life-context. In 2013, after many years of minimal parental participation in parent meetings held by schools across the district, the administration decided to send out a survey to all parents to try to better understand why they were not attending. The survey's results highlighted three major issues. First, one of the main reasons for parents not attending was that they did not know how to read or write in English, and majority of the district's communication was in English. Therefore, when parents would go to school, they would not understand what they were being told. Although teachers and staff might explain things in Spanish, the handouts given out by the school were in English.

Second, the findings from the survey revealed that parents when would go to their child's school, they would not understand what credits were or what the requirements were for graduation. They felt confused about how to effectively advocate and navigate the educational system for their children. In addition, parents were talked down to and told what to do. For example, teachers would tell parents to send their children to bed early and to give them a good breakfast to get ready for a test, but they would not know what the test was about or how it

involved them and their child. Third, parents were not attending meetings because of a lack of reliable transportation. As a result, San Mateo's administrators attempted to address these issues and decided to redesign their parent-district compact. To do so, the administrators held town hall meetings across the district and invited parents to share their ideas regarding what the district could offer that would help them better support their child and feel more connected to their school. Parents requested classes in English as a Second Language (ESL), General Education Development (GED), and computer literacy.

The district embarked on an outreach campaign to let parents know that they would start to offer the classes parents had requested starting the fall of 2013. The parent educators at every campus (i.e., staff whose job is to reach out to parents) spread the word to parents who came to campus. In addition, they also set up information tables at local grocery stores and at community events. Initially, the classes were offered at three parent centers located at across the district. Currently, the school district offers these semester long classes at eight different parent centers across the district at various times throughout the day and week. The parent centers are located on school campuses owned by the district but no longer enrolling students; due to overcrowding, these campuses were replaced by newer, larger campuses. Many sat abandoned, therefore, refurbishing them and utilizing them as parent centers gave them a second purpose.

Any course offered by the program takes place twice a week (i.e. Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday), either in the morning or the evening, for a total of 10-weeks per semester. In addition to the three core classes offered, the district also offers classes such as: welding, citizenship, nutrition, arts and crafts, and security guard certification. In the last two years, the District has also extended class access to employees who work in the District's cafeteria, custodial, maintenance, and transportation departments. In exchange for free tuition, each parent

is asked to volunteer 10 hours at their child's school over the course of the semester. Over 7,000 parents have participated in the parent academy between Aug. 2013 and May 2016. As such, the South Texas district is ideal for this study, for it serves a majority high poverty, working-class families and offers a parent academy that has been successful at achieving high enrollment numbers. It can therefore shed light on the factors influencing a working-class Latino/a parent's choice to enroll despite constraints.

The average amount of time the parents in this study have lived in the Valley is 13 years. It is about the same across all three groups. They have lived in their comfort zone for a long time, but the parent program and their new class offerings enticed them enough to engage with the district.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the history of the region and the City of Smith, the Valley's unique culture, its economy and these impacts on schools. Understanding this context is critical for making sense of the lived-experiences of parents in the district's engagement program. In the next chapter, I will describe the findings from my interviews with 36 parents who signed up to attend one of the three core classes offered by the district.

CHAPTER 5

Findings

In this chapter, I present my case study's findings. First, I broadly discuss the overall themes that emerged for all three research questions across all three groups of parents, followed by a detailed discussion of the findings for each group. As a reminder, I have situated the three groups of parents into the following categories: parents who graduated from the academy, parents who did not graduate, and parents who chose not to enroll in the academy, which reflect the different types of working-class Latino/a parents present in the San Mateo School District. Through my findings in this chapter, I address the following research questions: (1a) Why do working class Latino/a parents make the decision to become involved in parental engagement programs offered by their child's school? (1b) How do these parents decide to become involved? (2) What are the constraints of engagement as experienced by these parents? and (3) How do these decisions and parents' experiences relate to the elements of the parental engagement program? Finally, as an important reminder, in this chapter, in quoting parents directly, I first provide the Spanish quote, followed by the English translation of the quote. I do this because it is important that participants' voices come through directly for English-only readers.

Overall Themes Across All Three Parent Groups

My findings suggest the parents in this study have two main factors in common when initially deciding *why* to become involved with the parental engagement program: (a) an interest in the class offerings with free tuition, and (b) an eagerness to learn how to navigate US systems for social, familial, and economic mobility.

Interest in the Class Offerings and Their Mobility Value

The majority of the parents in the study (30 out of 36) became aware of the program's existence through someone in their social network, a family member, a neighbor, a co-worker or a friend of a friend. The social tie at times was not incredibly strong, and the information was often acquired by happenstance. For example, the topic of the program came up during a coffee break at work when one of the mothers in the study happened to overhear a conversation her co-worker was having with someone else. Or another mother shared that she found out about the program while attending a birthday party at her cousin's house and one of her cousin's friends was talking about the program. In short, someone within the parent's social circle facilitated the transfer of information. This information a resonated for a couple reasons.

A common theme for why all of the parents (36 out of 36) got involved in the parental program was because it addressed a specific interest for them. First, the classes offered covered topics they had interest in, thought were relevant, and saw value in taking. Furthermore, the parents in this study made the decision to join the program because the classes were free, which made them financially accessible. Many of the parents (31 out of 36) stated that in years past they had inquired about classes available in the private sector that covered topics such as the ones being offered by the district, but the price was too expensive.

For them, learning to speak, read, and write in English without asking someone to help them translate was something they aspired to and felt would help them more successfully navigate through the Valley, and life in the United States. They expressed an eagerness to learn how to navigate US systems for social, familial, and economic mobility. And for many of them, they viewed losing their apprehension to utilizing technology as a necessary step to moving forward.

Therefore, parents saw the district's classes as an opportunity to gain access to social capital free of charge. One mother, for example, said "tomando clases de inglés puedo agarrar un mejor trabajo y, pues, sabiendo después de computación un poquito más… porque es la tecnología lo que viene, es el futuro." In English she said, "I associate attending the English classes with being able to get a better job, and later I can gain computer skills... because technology is what's coming, it's the future." Nearly all of the parents associated taking a course with improving their economic and/or social mobility. For the parents learning to speak English, use a computer, or getting a GED could help them at their job or with future job searches. Understanding *why* these class offerings appealed to the parents informs *how* these parents arrived at their decision to sign-up for the classes. It is important to note that at times the decisions for *why* and *how* these parents enrolled in the program blended together and was difficult to untangle, as they viewed how and why somewhat inextricably linked. I however attempt to untangle these, when possible, to answer my research questions.

How parents decide to become involved

My findings reveal that parents took three steps when deciding *how* to join the program. The process to arrive at a decision included: (a) discussing the opportunity with a trusted person in their network, (b) getting their family's support to enroll and commitment to help them with logistics once the program commenced (which calms their anxiety over returning to school), and (c) being warmly greeted by a staff member (i.e., a positive initial meeting) at the parent center when they called or visited the center to get class information. Once the parent had found out about the program (whether through a strong or weak tie), most of the parents (31 out of 36) discussed their interest in the program and intention to enroll with a trusted person in their network (often family), be it could also be a friend or co-worker. Getting support from the person

they trusted (be it moral support or in-kind support in the form of childcare or transportation) gave the parents validation before moving forward. Many of the parents (30 of 36) admitted to feeling anxiety when considering their enrollment decision; anxiety in regards to their age, language, and/or academics. For example, participants made comments like, "maybe I'm too old, I will not be able to retain anything;" "I don't know a drop of English, everyone will know more English than me;" and "I only have a 4th grade education in Mexico, I don't know if I can keep up with people who have more education than me." The Valley is a place, as described in Chapter Four, where if you want to stay in your comfort zone and speak only Spanish, then it is possible to do that and still function in the community. For many of them, it had been many years since the last time they had been students in a classroom. For the parents, hearing the encouragement from someone in their network and getting their commitment to be an ally in their endeavor (mainly verbal), helped reassure them, calmed their anxiety enough to seriously consider enrollment.

Convinced that they would be able to successfully add enrollment in the program to their list of responsibilities, parents would call or visit the parent center they had been referred to by their contact. Parents inquired about class times at the parent center to determine what dates and times worked best with their family schedule (i.e. childcare availability, child's after-school activities, transportation availability, work schedule). They all described their first interaction with program staff as being positive, warm and reassuring. For the most part, the majority of the parents described the process of signing-up as simple and painless. Next, I describe some of the constraints within the program experienced by parents in, which addresses research question number two.

Constraint Elements within the Program

The findings from this study suggest that these parents faced two main constraints within the parental engagement program, including: (a) strict program rules (in particular regarding absences), and (b) insufficient time because of family obligations. These constraints actually hindered a group of parents from completing the program. In meeting with and interviewing the 36 parents, it is clear that the type of classes being offered (GED, ESL and computer literacy) and the option to take the classes either in the morning or in the evening strongly appealed to the parents. Yet, according to participants, the program's structure, although probably well intended, was limiting to parents who could not conform to the firm rules around absences and class make-up days. In other words, the staff wanted to enroll parents who could fulfill the program's requirements and felt they could demand it, because they had long waiting lists of interested parents.

With such strict demands, it became an unintended institutional barrier to some parents' matriculation through the program. For example, one mother said, "Tengo un niño especial y como lo operaron este año por eso también se me complicaron las cosas, y me dijeron en la escuela que no podía estar faltando, o perdería mi lugar." In English she said, "I have a child with a disability who had surgery this year and that's why things got complicated for me, and they told me at the parent center that if I did not stop missing classes, I would lose my spot in the program." She was being asked to choose between her son and her class, which for her, was an easy decision, she chose to care for her son. This mother, like other parents in this group, when faced with limited time and the choice of attending to their family obligations or attending class, they prioritized their family.

Another mother shared that she is a single mom who works during the day, and that finding childcare in the evenings can be difficult. She shared in Spanish,

Como te digo, soy mama soltera. Tengo que trabajar de día. En las tardes, a veces no tenía quien me cuidara los niños, así que no asistía a clase. Pero luego me daba ansiedad pensar que recibiría una llamada del programa diciéndome que no faltara porque había alguien más que quería mi lugar.

In English: Like I told you, I'm a single mom. I have to work during the day. In the afternoons, sometimes I could not find childcare for my children, so I would not go to class. But, then I would get anxiety thinking that I'd receive a phone call from the parent program telling me that I shouldn't miss class because someone else wanted my seat.

Her intention was to enroll, and stay enrolled, but when faced with choosing between her children's well-being and class (because she doesn't have access to reliable childcare), this single mother chooses her children. The findings suggest that after the parent makes his/her class and schedule selection; parents have little flexibility to accommodate some of the real-life circumstances they face in their daily lives.

As part of the program, parents commit to attend classes twice a week for 10 weeks every semester. They have to sign-in every time they show up for class, and if they show up consistently, they will get a certificate at the end of their 10-weeks. It checks off the district's federal requirement box, but it does not take into consideration the larger family, social and economic constraints that could hinder a parent from attending every class, especially working-class parents who have intense work schedules, it also does not guarantee whether the parent learned anything during that semester, whether the teacher utilized age relevant pedagogy, or

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whether the instruction level met the need of the students in the classroom. For example, one mom explained in Spanish:

> Yo no sé manejar, y ya con llegar al trabajo es suficiente esfuerzo, y el encontrar un *ride* a la escuela fue más difícil de lo que me imaginaba… sí es importante la escuela, pero ahorita, este, para mí, más importante es mi trabajo, porque yo dependo de mi trabajo.
>
> *In English*: I do not know how to drive, and just getting to my job is hard enough, and finding a separate ride to get me to school was harder than I imagined...yes, school is important, but right now, for me, my job is more important, because I depend on my job for my livelihood.

She shared that she does not know how to drive and she already has a hard-enough time getting to work, that getting a ride to school had been more challenging than she had expected, and that even though school is important, her job is more important, because her livelihood depends on her job.

In this manner, the district's parent engagement program is similar to the traditional parental involvement model because the full onus of parents' success in the program still lays mainly with them. Thus, the program design does not account for the larger constraints that parents face. An instructor told a parent that she needed to fulfill a certain number of hours and that if she has a certain number of absences regardless of whether they were warranted, she would not get credit for any of her hours. In Spanish:

> me han dicho en las clases que tantas horas debemos cumplir y que si ciertas faltas tenemos, no importa que la razón por la falta sea justificada, no recibiremos crédito por las horas que si hicimos.

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In English: I've been told in class how many hours we have to complete and that

if we have a certain number of absences, regardless if the reason is justifiable, we

won't receive credit for the hours we completed.

This parent's understanding was that she needed to abide by their rules, or she would be

penalized. Parents who meet these requirements are in some ways viewed as "good parents and

students of the program," but those who do not are lacking in some respect, they did not try hard

enough (McClain, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002).

Parents' Experiences and the Elements of the Program

Between 2013 and present day, parent interest in the San Mateo parent program has

grown exponentially. The district's website states their parental engagement program model was

developed to significantly increase the number of parents engaged in their child's education. The

mission of the program is to develop powerful, strong relationships with family, school and

community partners, to help strengthen schools, improve student achievement and increase

opportunities for families to become actively engaged in their child's learning. With the

assistance of additional local non-profit groups and educational institutions, the district's goal is

to help parents fulfill their educational needs, as well as, acquire more knowledge in careers and

employability skills, entrepreneurship and computer literacy.

The goal of the program resonated with parents, for their interest in the classes was

twofold, parents wanted to enhance their own educational skills and also be better equipped to

help their children academically. The popularity has had some unintended consequences. A

major finding across the two groups who enrolled in the program (Group #1 and #2) expressed

their dissatisfaction with the program's strict enforcement of attendance rules. Staff would tell

parents that strict enforcement was necessary, because they had long waiting lists for each class,

and they wanted the seat in class to go to someone who would not miss. The program center would not show leniency when parents offered legitimate reasons for missing a class. In this aspect, the parent engagement program was engagement in name but more traditional involvement in practice.

The district's website highlights the rapid expansion of the district's parental engagement program, yet, there is no evidence regarding how this expansion has impacted the quality of their program delivery (i.e., doing more with the same funding). It has grown from three centers in 2013 to eight centers in 2016. In regards to program delivery and adequately helping parents fulfill their educational needs, parents' experiences within the program did not always align with what the program set out to do. An example of this is the computer literacy course offered at one of the parent centers. The computer lab at the center has 18 computers of which only 14 worked, but the instructor's roster had 20 parent names on it. On the first day, all 20 parents showed up, but there were not enough computers for each one of them. So, the instructor taught the first two classes of a 10-week semester course by giving a lecture and students would not use a computer until the third class. One parent shared that this experience drove her to decide to stop attending the computer class; there were too many people in the class for one teacher, not enough computers for everyone and she cannot learn how to use a computer by looking at a chalkboard. In Spanish she said:

> Para serte sincera, me llevó a tomar esa decisión porque éramos demasiada gente para una sola maestra, no había suficientes computadoras, uno no aprende a usar computadoras no más con ver un pisaron y la maestra no nos podía poner atención a todos. Y por esa razón fue que yo mejor ya no fui.

In English: In all honesty, it drove me to make that decision because there were

too many people for just one teacher, there wasn't enough computers, one can't

learn how to use a computer by only looking at a chalkboard and the teacher

couldn't give us all attention. And that's the reason why I decided to stop going.

Other parents shared their experiences with being in classrooms where the English fluency of

parents ranged from basic to advanced, and the ESL teacher was tasked with teaching all of

them. Being placed in this situation was counterproductive for some parents, it failed to create a

strong attachment between the parent and the program (especially for those parents whose

fluency in English was basic, if that). Parents were asked to provide their feedback regarding the

program at the end of the semester. According to the program's mission, they were striving for

the establishment of an authentic partnership between the district and their families, through

value relationship building, dialogue, and power sharing. Yet, when it came to feedback,

dialogue and power sharing between parents and the program, once enrolled, did not really take

place.

How and to what extent the factors described above, in combination with other factors

specific to each of the three groups, influenced the decision-making of parents regarding

enrollment in the academy, will be discussed in the sections that follow. With an understanding

of the overall findings that emerged across all student groups, I next provide a detailed

discussion about how these findings played out within the three parent groups. I first however

describe the parents within each group before discussing my findings to the research questions.

Describing the Three Groups of Parents

I have assigned a group name to each set of parents: secondary traders, in-between

traders, and primary traders (Table 2). I arrived at these names after closely examining each

group's responses to my interview questions. In agreeing to sign-up for the academy, *time*, and its availability, underpins and shapes the parents' enrollment decisions. The parents in the three groups chose to allocate and trade their time differently, mainly because of the social, economic, and familial contexts in which they lived that constrained their decisions. Time is money (a capital), and each parent possessed a finite amount of it. In deciding how to invest their time, parents had to choose which needs they would prioritize. Some parents' enrollment decisions were based on making sure their family's primary needs, such as food, security, shelter, etc., were covered, while parents who already had their family's primary needs covered as well as stable support systems, could invest and trade their time to pursue personal growth (a secondary need). For each group, I will describe what parents prioritized in allocating their capital, their time.

The initial goal of all 36 parents was to successfully complete the program and increase their social and economic mobility and capital through learning how to navigate US systems (i.e., earn a high school diploma, learn English, or learn how to operate a computer), which entailed completing the various semesters/levels of a class (anywhere from three to four semesters) to graduate. Yet, different circumstances, timing, and resource availability impacted parents' decision-making to complete the classes. In what follows, for each group, I describe how this plays out. At least six of the 12 parents within a group needed to share a common experience for me to consider it a theme. By using this metric, I contend that the finding was common among at least half of the parents in the group. While I applied this threshold, there was a case where I included a finding in Group #2 where five of the 12 parents specifically associated having more than one English-speaking child at home as a factor influencing their decision to stay enrolled in the academy. This finding is a sub-theme within a larger theme, but one I felt

was important to highlight. Overall, the majority of the parents within each group had experiences that closely aligned.

At the beginning of each group section, I provide a vignette section detailing the decision-making process of a parent from the group that is representative of the typical experience of parents in the group. I start with a discussion of the findings about the group of parents that I refer to as the secondary traders; that is the parents who graduated from the program.

Table 2. Description of parent group names.

Parent Group	Group Name	Description
Group #1: parents who graduated from the academy	Secondary Traders (because they have their primary needs covered and can focus on secondary needs)	With their family's primary needs covered, they had the privilege to prioritize allocating and trading their time to addressing their secondary needs (achievement, personal growth, and self-actualization)
Group #2: parents who stopped attending the academy	In-Between Traders (because their time availability changes given their socioeconomic context and circumstances)	These parents operate in a space where they consistently negotiate how to allocate and trade their time, deciding between primary and secondary needs
Group #3: parents who signed up but decided not to enroll in the academy	Primary Traders (because they are consistently unsure whether their family's needs will be met)	These parents' decisions were most constrained as they had to negotiate whether to allocate and trade their time to provide for family's primary needs (food, shelter, health, and safety)

Group #1 – *Secondary Traders* (Graduated)

In this section, based on my research questions, I discuss *how* and *why* parents who graduated from the program made decisions to become involved in parental engagement programs offered by their child's school, the opportunities and constraints of engagement as

experienced by these parents, and how do these decisions and constraints relate to the elements of the parental engagement program. The twelve parents in this group shared similar experiences and decision-making journeys from signing up for a class, staying enrolled at least three semesters and graduating from the program. Of the three groups of parents, the 12 parents in this group were the easiest to recruit and interview (Table 3). When I reached out to them via phone and told them about my study and my interest in interviewing them, they were quick to agree to participate. For them, their preference was to meet at the parent center where they had taken classes, because it was conveniently located and in the process, they could say hi to staff and other students. This was the only group where all the interviews took place in person. Since their enrollment decisions do not occur in isolation, I looked at the factors informing the decision of these parents to stay enrolled over the course of several semesters and eventually graduating, unlike parents in Group #2 and #3.

This group of parents consists of eight females and four males, all of which racially identify as Latino/a including one participant who was born in the U.S., but raised in Mexico and graduated from a Mexican university. Although still considered working class, the parents in this group were overall more privileged than the other parents in terms of formal education; access to transportation and reliable childcare, and at times, these parents embraced notions of meritocracy. As mentioned, this group of parents had more overall formal education compared to the other groups of parents, which I find buttressed their ability to complete the program. For example, five of the parents in this group had earned a college degree in Mexico, one parent attended high school in the U.S., one attended high school in Mexico, and the other five received a middle school education in Mexico before eventually immigrating to the United States. The majority of these parents have familial networks that were supportive of their pursuit of the

program, as eleven out of the twelve parents in this group are married, which was the highest of all three groups. In what follows, I provide a vignette section detailing the decision-making process of a parent from this group that embodies the typical experience of a parent in Group #1.

Table 3. Parents in Group #1.

Pseudonym	Class	Male	Female	# of Children in District	Race	Time in the Valley (yrs)	Education Level	Type of Interview
LA	GED	X		3	Mexican	7	HS (MX)	in person
CC	GED		X	2	Mexican	16	Univ. - nutrition (MX)	in person
LC	GED		X	2	Mexican	15	HS - didn't graduate (US)	in person
MA	ESL		X	3	Mexican	10	middle school (MX)	in person
MA2	ESL/Computer		X	3	Mexican	16	7th grade (MX)	in person
PN	ESL/Computer		X	e	Mexican	10	6th grade (MX)	in person
LJ	ESL	X		6	American Citizen	18	Univ. (MX)	in person
TI	ESL		X	2	Mexican	18	6th grade (MX)	in person
RA2	ESL/Computer		X	1	Mexican	15	Univ. (MX)	in person focus group
RR	Computer	X		1	Mexican	20	Univ. (MX)	
BO	GED	X		3	Mexican	1	Univ. (MX)	
GN	GED		X	2	Mexican	18	6th grade (MX)	

Vignette

To provide some context into the decision-making process of parents who graduated from the program, I share a brief vignette of a mother who is representative of the other parents in this group in terms of demographics, attitude, and experience of the program. In spite of moments of self-doubt during her time in the program, this mother described how she persevered, earned her GED, and is now in the process of getting her college degree from Mexico reviewed by a credential evaluation service so that she may receive credit for the classes she already took and have them count towards a degree in the United States. Working class Latino/a parents who come to the program with a degree of privilege, like those in Group #1, are better able to

successfully navigate the program, because they have resources at home and past experiences that are conducive to completing the program (based on how it is currently structured). Below, I share the details of Ana's experience to inform the factors that mattered in her decision-making process.

Ana: Strong Family Support System. Ana is the mother of two (ages 9 and 18) who immigrated to the United States from Mexico with her husband almost 17 years ago, with the vision of improving their quality of life and in search of opportunity. When she came to the U.S., her citizenship papers were in the process of being completed. Her husband had his residency paperwork in order, so he was able to work in an H.E.B.'s[10] meat market. After her son was born, she stayed home, but once he enrolled in elementary school, she decided that she needed to do something with her life. Around twelve years ago, since she was still not legally able to work, she decided to approach the district as a parent volunteer. She knew from her time in Mexico how important it had been for her parents to be involved in her schooling. This not only created an opportunity for her to be at school and close to her child, but "aparte colaborar con la comunidad, aprender, enrolarme en las costumbres, en la forma de trabajo, todo; y fue un excelente medio de integrarme a la comunidad, de aportar a la comunidad." Aside from being close to her child, she saw it as an "opportunity to collaborate with the community, learn, engage in the customs, navigate the systems in place when it comes to jobs and everything; and it was an excellent way to integrate myself into the community, and contribute to the community."

She volunteered for seven years, and once she received her residency and subsequently her American citizenship, she decided to move forward with her education. She had earned a college education in Mexico, but it was not of use to her in the U.S. if she did not first go through the process of getting her degree evaluated by an evaluation services company.

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[10] H.E.B is a Texas-based grocery store chain.

Therefore, a few years ago, when she found out at her child's school about the district's new parental engagement program and the courses they would be offering. In her own words:

Traté de acceder al que más fuera de beneficio para mí, en este caso el inglés, entonces una vez que me muestran las opciones de programas que había en ese momento que yo fui a preguntar, el que más me llamó la atención en ese momento fue el GED en inglés, hablé con mi familia, traté de que no alterara tanto nuestra forma de vida o nuestros horarios y de todas maneras, pues, siempre pidiendo apoyo en casa, ¿verdad?

In English: I decided to get access to the class I believed would be most beneficial to me, in this case English. Then when I go to the center and they show me the current class options, the class that appealed to me the most was actually the GED in English class. I talked to my family, I tried to make sure it would not alter our family's life or schedule too much and overall, like always, I asked for their support at home.

Ana knew that whatever class she chose, she would have her family's support.

When I asked Ana why she chose GED class over ESL, she explained that she saw earning her GED as critical to her being able to take the next step, which was applying for a job with a document and certification that would mean something to an employer. She could continue looking for a job for a long time, but without a certification she felt she would remain stuck in place. In her own words:

Pues, sinceramente te lo digo, la necesidad de obtener el título. Yo sabía que, si no obtenía ese GED, no podía dar el siguiente paso, que era tratar de aplicar a un trabajo con un documento más que pudiera presentar, con una certificación que

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pudiera presentar. Podía seguir intentando buscar trabajo por mucho tiempo, pero

sin esa certificación iba a quedar en el mismo punto donde había empezado.

In English: Honestly, I'll tell you, the necessity of getting a degree. I knew that if

I didn't earn the GED, I couldn't take the next step, which was to try to apply to a

job having another document I could present, with a certification I could present. I

could continue to try to look for a job for a long time, but without that

certification, I was going to stay in the same place where I started.

Ana saw getting a GED as a way to move up and improve her job opportunities.

According to Ana, getting through the program successfully over the course of several

semesters is the sum of many decisions. She feels it is good to know, as a student, that you have

a host of options, such as if you are struggling making it to class at a certain time or having

trouble understanding a certain teacher, you are not stuck. Her explanation in her own words:

Sí, mira, por ejemplo, te enteras que esta San Mateo en unión o alianza con el

colegio o con el centro de educación, tomas tu decisión, eso significa tanto en

horarios como en dónde voy a obtener mi certificado o qué maestro es el mejor

para mí, entonces sí se vuelve un conglomerado de cosas en el que tú puedes ir

tomando decisiones, porque si yo veo que estoy batallando con un horario, pero

estoy batallando también con el maestro, etcétera, etcétera, hay opciones.

In English: Yes, you see, for example, you find out that San Mateo in partnership

with the college or with the educational center, you make decisions, from what

time slot to what parent center or what teacher, so it becomes a conglomerate of

things in which one makes decisions, because if I'm struggling with a time slot,

but I'm also struggling with the teacher, etc., etc., there's options.

Ana was determined to make the situation work for her, and speaking up came easy to her.

Furthermore, in speaking with her teacher and the manager of the parent center, Ana found out a teacher at the community college was teaching a GED class on Saturdays. They suggested to her that, if she was interested, she could audit the class. She points to necessity and her desire to succeed, as the reasons why she decided to audit. She wanted to advance in a shorter period of time, and it was because of this audit experience that she learned differences in instruction existed between the community college and education service center teachers.

Platicando con mi maestra y con la persona que maneja el centro, me dicen, "en el colegio está una persona el sábado dando una clase, puedes ir de oyente, no te van a dar certificado, no te van a dar nada, pero puedes entrar de oyente", entonces decidí hacerlo para avanzar y ahí fue donde me di cuenta de diferencias en instrucción, ¿verdad?...la necesidad y las ganas de querer avanzar y en tanto tiempo, en un menor periodo de tiempo, pues, tomé la decisión.

In English: Speaking with my teacher, and with the manager of the parent center, they told me that at the college there was an individual on Saturdays giving a class, that I could go audit the class, that they wouldn't give me credit, but you can listen in. So, I decided to audit the class so that I could advance and that's where I found out that differences in instruction delivery exist, right...necessity and the desire to succeed and doing it within a certain amount of time, lesser time, is why I made the decision [to also audit].

Ana, like many of the other parents in this group, had three important resources in seeking out extra classes: time, transportation and family support.

For Ana, having a family life that allowed her to invest the time into accomplishing her goal was significant to her being able to attend the program for four consecutive semesters and earn her GED. In the time since then, she applied for and was hired as a substitute teacher, and she is currently going through the process of getting her college degree from Mexico evaluated to find out how many of her college credits can be transferred to an accredited four-year university in the United States.

Ana's experience was representative of the experiences of other parents in Group #1. Like Ana, parents in this group came to the program with existing supports that ultimately helped them successfully complete the course even though they were low-income and working class. In the sections that follow, I will further describe the various themes that emerged as important factors in the decision-making process of parents in this group.

Decision to Enroll

In addressing my first research question, I found that the reasons *why* parents in this group decided to enroll in the program were: (a) access to knowledge on how to navigate U.S. systems (education, language, workforce, etc.), (b) reliable family supports, and (c) flexible in their time availability for the program. To enroll in the parental academy, one must first be aware of the program's existence. In this group, ten parents shared that their decision to become involved in the program was informed by their network's knowledge of the program. These parents noted that they became aware of the program offerings through someone in their social network, specifically a friend, family member, or co-worker. Ana and another parent found out about the program during their time as a parent volunteer at their child's school. All of the participants described the process of signing up as easy and painless. Once they found out the classes are offered and discuss the opportunity with their family, the parents call or make their

way over to the Parent Center they were referred to and ask to sign-up. Their first impression was positive, they all describe the staff at the parent centers as welcoming. The staff informs them about the class selections for the upcoming semester, and the parent chooses the class section with the date and time that best fits their availability. Of this group, not one parent referenced having transportation issues prior to or during their time in the program.

Access to Knowledge to Navigate Systems

A reason why parents in this group enrolled in the program was because they wanted to access knowledge to US navigate systems. Seven of the 12 parents in this group had previously successfully navigated educational and governmental institutions in Mexico and understood the importance of knowing how to interact within these institutions to get ahead. They understood that the same concept applied in the U.S. Therefore, learning to navigate systems and gaining capitals (i.e., language and technological skills) influenced their decision to enroll in the program. Ten out of the 12 parents in this group emphasized the importance they saw in learning to navigate educational, cultural, and employment systems in the United States, for they saw it as a means to assimilate into the "Third" space they now inhabited (i.e. the Valley), a hybrid of their previous home and their new country. They saw the classes being offered by the program as providing them with this very important knowledge. One parent commented that she and her husband believed it was a good idea for her to enroll, because then she would have proof that she has American credentials [GED], and this would be helpful to her when she meets with a lawyer to start her American citizenship paperwork. In Spanish, the parent said:

> Entonces yo por eso [con el apoyo de mi esposo] hice eso de inscribirme y todo
>
> para yo tener, yo tener la confirmación de que yo tengo papeles de aquí. Yo estoy

estudiando para poder yo ya hablar con un abogado ya con dinero en la mano para

poder arreglar.

In English: That's why [with the support of my husband] I signed up and

everything, so that I could have the confirmation that I have credentials from here

[the U.S.]. I'm studying so that I can then talk to a lawyer, once we have the

money, and start my citizenship paperwork.

Similarly, a mother with a college degree from a university in Mexico described why and how

she enrolled and shared that she consulted with her husband and explained to him her reasons.

She believed enrolling in the classes would allow her to collaborate with the community, learn

English, engage in American customs, learn about the workforce, and she said that, for her, it

indeed turned out to be a great way to integrate into the community. In Spanish, she said, "le

explique a mi marido que ingresar en la academia me ayudaría a colaborar con la comunidad,

aprender a enrolarme en las costumbres [americanas], en la forma de trabajo, todo; y así fue, fue

un excelente medio de integrarme a la comunidad." In English, "I explained to my husband that

enrolling the academy would help me to collaborate with the community, learn to engage in the

American customs regarding work and everything, and it was a great way by which to integrate

myself in the community." She explained to her husband that enrolling in the program would

help her navigate her new home he within the Valley's "third" space.

Based on these parents' past experiences, they recognized that their ability to navigate the

local job market would benefit from being fluent in English, from knowing how to use a

computer, and/or from having a GED certification. One mom said that education must be

cultivated, it is not something you are born with, we must cultivate it, because it opens doors. In

Spanish she said, "la educación se debe de cultivar, no es algo que nazcas con ella, sino que hay

que cultivarla… porque abre puertas." In English, "education should be cultivated, it's not something you are born with, you have to cultivate it...because it opens doors." And another mom explained that she was willing to invest the time to gain the skills necessary to compete better in the work force, because she has seen that at work there is often preference for friends or based on certain skills. Therefore, she believes that if she prepares herself, and gets the nursing certification she wants [which is why she took the GED class], she will not have to continue to clean tables and sweep.

> Por lo mismo quiero prepararme, porque hay mucha preferencia por ciertas amistades o le dan más el trabajo a otra persona que a otra, y cosas así. Entonces yo digo, si me preparo y tengo una preparación, vamos a decir para trabajar en un hospital, no va a ser lo mismo porque voy a tener una preparación, ya no voy a tener que venir a limpiar mesas, a barrer.

> *In English:* That's why I want to prepare myself, because there's lots of preference for certain acquaintances or they give more hours to one individual over another one. Therefore, I think that if I prepare myself and have the training, let's say to work at a hospital, it won't be the same because I'll have the preparation, and I will no longer have to come clean tables or sweep.

For a mom who works at Macy's, she saw the opportunity to increase her fluency as a way to be better at her job, because as a sales floor associate she often comes across customers who do not speak Spanish, "en mi trabajo en Macy's lo requiero." In English, "in my job at Macy's, I need it." She, like other parents in this group, came to the program with a foundation and resources that parents in the other two groups do not have. Similarly, one mom shared that, she wants to work, but she wants to work Monday through Friday, and those jobs are hard to come by if you

do not have a degree or a certification. Therefore, when she learned through her neighbor about the classes being offered, she talked to her husband about investing her time and enrolling for the three to four semesters, so that afterwards she could apply for the type of jobs she wants. In Spanish she said,

> Yo quiero trabajar, pero de lunes a viernes, pero aquí ocupo más estudio sino está muy difícil...Entonces lo consulte con mi esposo y le explique que quería aprovechar y meterme a la escuela un año o dos mientras yo encuentro un trabajo como yo lo quiero.

> *In English:* I want to work, but from Monday to Friday, but here [in the Valley] I need more education otherwise it is very difficult...so I talked it over with my husband and I explained to him that I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity and enroll in the classes a year or two in the meantime, as I try to find the type of job I want [admin].

Yet, another mom described why she enrolled in the ESL class as serving a dual purpose, she was gaining fluency but also learning about American customs, processes, which she feels is different from how they do things in Mexico. In Spanish she said, "yo siento que no nomás voy aprendiendo inglés, voy aprendiendo la forma en que los que viven aquí, los americanos, quieren que tú hagas las cosas. No es la misma forma que lo que te piden en México." In English, "I feel that I am not only learning English, but I'm learning how people who live here, Americans, want us to do things. The processes are different in Mexico."

Several mothers and fathers in this group wanted to join the program so they could gain fluency in English and thus be better able to navigate within their child's school environment. One mom shared that she wanted to be able to accompany her daughters to school and not have

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them be embarrassed by their mom's inability to speak English; she wanted to be bilingual, so that she could interact in whatever language a situation required. Her daughters were very happy when she told them that she would be taking classes to learn English. She said that she had noticed her daughters being embarrassed when their friends, white classmates, would find out their mother did not speak English. She wants to be able to navigate within this country and for her children to be proud of her ability to speak English. In Spanish she said,

> Yo quiero poder ir a la escuela con las niñas y que ellas no se avergüencen de su mamá, porque a ellas les da mucho gusto, "mami, vas a aprender inglés!" y antes decían, "mami…" y les daba como pena que yo no hablaba inglés, "mami, yo te ayudo, yo te ayudo", y luego le hacían así, uno mira, y a ellas como que les da pena que sus amiguitos vean que su mamá no habla inglés…quiero poder navegar dentro de este país por mi sola.

> *In English:* I want to be able to go to my daughters' school and not have them be embarrassed of their Mom, because they were so happy [when I told them about my classes], "Mommy, you're going to learn English!" and before, I could tell they were embarrassed that I couldn't speak English; "Mom, I'll help you, I'll help you" and then they would make an uncomfortable face, I could see it, they were embarrassed that their friends would see that their Mom didn't speak English...I want to be able to navigate within this country on my own.

Having the support of her children and spouse enabled her to stay motivated and focused on completing her class. In addition, her husband had a steady landscaping job that provided for the family, thereby giving her the flexibility to dedicate time to her studies.

In the next section, I discuss the influence of familial supports on *how* and *why* parents enrolled and were able to stay enrolled.

Reliable Family Supports

The parents in this group had a benefit the parents in the other two groups did not, they had enough stability at home and a strong enough support network that they could weather setbacks and could consistently allocate their time capital to their class over the period of several semesters. Their sense of security, and even privilege, produced a sort of confidence that came through in the interviews, as nine out of 12 parents had incredibly outgoing personalities. They saw this opportunity as essential to accomplishing their goals; it was a means to an end (i.e., self-growth, self-actualization, secondary needs).

Seven out of twelve parents mentioned their spouse as being their partner in this educational venture, whether their spouse enrolled with them or were supportive from home. For example, one mom said that her husband has a small landscaping company, and he wants her to learn English so she can help him advertise and acquire more clients. In Spanish, she said, "mi esposo tiene su propia compañía de *landscaping*, y a él también le interesa que yo aprenda inglés para que le pueda ayudar a conseguir trabajos." In English, "my husband has his own landscaping company, and he is also interested in me learning English so that I can help him book more jobs." Another mom shared that she and her husband have a small flower shop they run from home, and together they decided to enroll in the English classes because they have a flexible schedule and want to gain fluency, for it will benefit them with their business. Her exact words in Spanish were: "Pues lo decidimos juntos, nos pusimos de acuerdo los dos, entonces vamos a estudiar, vamos a aprender un poquito del idioma, tenemos el tiempo y nos ayudara con nuestro negocio, una florería." In English, "well, we decided it together, we were both in

agreement, we're going to study, we're going to learn more English, we have the time, and it would help us with our small business, our flower shop."

Similarly, a father had the same idea, but it was in regards to his college degree in Mexico. He earned an accounting degree and wants to be able to practice in the U.S. In Spanish, he said, "Mi propósito de aprender inglés, es porque quiero ejercer mi título que tengo [contaduría], porque yo pienso que la educación es mundial… mi meta es aprender inglés para poder trabajar en lo que yo estudié." In English, "my goal is to learn English because I want to be able to use my accounting degree from Mexico, because I believe education is global...my goal is to learn English so that I can work in the field that I studied." A fellow mom in the group shares his same goal, she wants to earn her GED, because she wants to go to college, earn a degree, and have a professional career. Her husband works in the oil fields, but supports her decision, especially since she has the time. She goes to class in the morning and is home by the time her daughter comes home from school.

The benefits of the social capital the parents in this group possessed helped them stick to their enrollment decision, and they used their capitals to gain more capital. Although low-income and working-class, the parents in this group benefited from the social capital they acquired in Mexico and the various forms of capital that were available through their social network. As a result of this social capital, they possessed a high confidence level and persistence, and would readily admit that the process had been challenging, but stopping had not cross their mind. An example of this is the case of a mom who had jotted down her name at parent center and had been told she would get a call back when classes resumed. When she had not received a call-back after a week, she looked for a phone number on the flyer she had received and called them

up. She describes herself as an impatient person, but it worked out for her because it turned out registration had just opened. In Spanish:

No me hablaban y no me hablaban y tenía el folletito en el baño y dije "ay, voy a volver a hablar porque ya es mucho." Yo bien desesperada. Y me dicen, "ay, no, Ms., puede venir aquí, que mire que ahorita estamos anotando y ahorita la puedo anotar, ahorita mismo", no, pues, que me arrancó.

In English: They wouldn't call and they wouldn't call, and I had the flyer they had given me, so I said to myself, I'm going to call them because it's been too long. I was super impatient and then they answer and to my surprise, they tell me that enrollment is open and that they can sign me up. I take off immediately and head to the center.

This mother, although working-class, had the time and flexibility to jump in her car and go, which is not necessarily the case for all the parents in this study.

There was a tendency by some of the parents in this group to not acknowledge some of the supports that enabled their ability to stay enrolled, and would look down on other parents who might not have such supports. For example, one parent, who embraced a meritocratic perspective, shared that she does not understand why certain people put limits on themselves, she considers the U.S. a land of opportunities, because in Mexico these types of opportunities do not exist. In Spanish, "O sea, estás en un país de oportunidades, en México no hay estas oportunidades. En México hay, pero para el que tiene dinero…Aquí está, es un campo abierto, ¿por qué te pones límites?" In English, "This is a country of opportunities, in Mexico these opportunities do not exist. There are opportunities in Mexico, but only for those with money...here [in the U.S.], it's an open field, why put limits on yourself?"

Similarly, another parent enthusiastically commented, that she wanted to succeed and learn. Yes, it is complicated, she says, but she is confident that she will be able to achieve it. In Spanish:

> Quiero superarme más. Quiero aprender. No le hace que me tarde cuatro o cinco años maestra, pero quiero tratar de aprender más… esta complicado, pero yo sé que si lo voy a poder lograr. A través de los meses, o de los días, o de los años, yo voy a hablar más, más, y mas.
>
> *In English:* I want to better myself. I want to learn. It doesn't matter how long it takes, four or five years, but I want to try to learn more...it's complicated, but I know that I'll be able to achieve my goal. Through the months, or the days, or the years, I will learn to speak more, more and more [English].

Time capital or the lack of it, is not something this mother worries about; she is a stay-at-home mother and her husband has a steady job in the oil fields. Lastly, a Dad in the group said that he had not struggled in the GED class at all, because he had a college degree from Mexico, "no he batallado, porque yo creo que con la educación que tengo [nivel universitaria]…no se me dificulta." In English, "I have not struggled in the class, because I believe that with the education I have [college level in Mexico]...it hasn't been difficult for me."

In concluding this section about parents in Group #1, a major finding and distinguishing factor between parents in this group and parents in Group #2 and #3 is that the majority of the parents in this group held meritocracy and capitalistic views which informed their interest, navigation, and experiences in the program. They were willing to invest and trade their time on the premise that they were investing in their personal growth, and they hoped to see great returns on their investment. Their premise held, because they had several forms of social capital,

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whether they acknowledged it or just took it as a given, propping them up and securing their primary needs. For example, having previous exposure to navigating a college institution in Mexico, or having family members who provide them with childcare assistance, or having a spouse who can help carry the load while they attend classes. Even when their experience in the classroom was not ideal (i.e., there were various levels of fluency within a class), parents in Group #1 saw the opportunity, as something is better than no class at all.

Flexible in Their Time Availability for the Program

Program instruction inconsistency was a theme that arose in addressing research question number three about how do these decisions and parents' experiences relate to the elements of the parental engagement program? Seven out of twelve parents found some flaw with the quality of the instruction (i.e. teacher pedagogy or too many fluency levels in the same classroom) or with the program's strict absence and sign-in policy, yet, although not always ideal, in their opinion, the classes were good enough and better than not having them. For example, one parent felt that several of her teachers only wanted to focus on the more advanced students in the class. According to the parent, the teachers did not want to waste their time on the students who were struggling. But, she did not let it dampen her resolve; she tried her best, and put in extra time at home (because she had the time). She still learned a lot and overall, had a good time. In Spanish:

> Los maestros como que no querían batallar, ellos nomás con las más aplicadas, "tú, fulanita" y ya respondía, y las que no sabían, pues, ahí bien olvidadas, no querían perder tiempo ellos, ellos querían sacar su clase y ya. Pero bueno, hice lo mejor que pude. Y se me hizo muy interesante y muy bonito, aprendí muchas cosas.

In English: It was as if the teachers didn't want to struggle, they only paid attention to the more advanced students, and the ones who didn't understand, would be forgotten, they didn't want to spend their time on them, they wanted to get through the class and that's it. Oh well, I did the best I could. It was still interesting and very pretty, I learned a lot of things.

Another mother expressed a similar concern, she said that all the teacher wanted was for the students to come to class, sign-in, and if you learn, great, but if you do not, then oh well. She says that they give them a certificate at the end of every semester, whether they learn or not. The benefit this mother had was that her in-laws were retired schoolteachers from the San Mateo District, so they would tutor her on the weekends. Therefore, given this parent's access to supplemental capital she was able to navigate the program successfully, regardless of quality. In Spanish she commented, "no, pues es que te dan diploma y no aprendes, o el maestro nomás quiere que vengas y firmes, si aprendes bueno y si no, pues no." In English, "they give you a diploma even if you don't learn during the semester [it's based on attendance], or the teacher just wants you to come to class and sign your name, and if you learn, great, but if you don't, well you don't." Her specific situation is an example of her social capital bolstering her up, even if she, herself, does not recognize it.

Another mother complained about having too many levels of English proficiency in the same classroom and that it was keeping her back, because class was not moving fast enough. She explained that the reason for the mixture of levels was that there were not enough teachers to teach two different sections, so they put all the students in one classroom. In addition, another mother added that her teacher neither had the experience nor the patience to teach adults. Their teacher was retired and had only ever taught elementary aged children. This mother felt as if her

teacher expected them to know much more than they did because they were adults. Yet, the point she stresses is that the teacher did not seem to acknowledge that many of the students had been out of school for many years. After a while, she stopped asking questions during the classes, and searched for outside tutoring on her own. In Spanish,

Pues, yo pienso que el maestro no tenía la… yo, a mi parecer, siento que no tenía la paciencia como para tenernos, porque es muy diferente a niños, es muy diferente a jóvenes, es muy diferente, yo pienso, a padres, ¿verdad? A lo mejor piensa que porque ya somos grandes, "ohh, tienen más capacitación, tienen que aprender y eso, lo otro", pero no, lo que pasa es que en nuestra cabeza hay muchas cosas… Le preguntaban algo y si te decía el maestro "pues, ya expliqué" y yo "ohh, okey", entonces ya mejor ni preguntaba nada, ¿para qué preguntaba uno? Al siguiente algo que no entendía o algo, pues, mejor me quedaba callada.

In English: Well, I think that the teacher did not have…I, in my opinion, think that he did not have the patience for us, because we're different from children, we're very different from young people, it's very different to teach parents, right? Maybe he thinks that because we are adults, "oh they have more education and can learn easily" but the reality is that we have a lot of things on our mind and it's not that easy…parents would ask him to clarify something and he'd respond that he had already explained it. So, with that type of response, I stopped asking questions. The next time I didn't understand something, I opted to stay quiet.

In class, this mother would feel discouraged instead of empowered.

A different mother shared a similar concern that her teacher treated them as if they were 4th graders. She was a retired elementary school teacher who had no experience teaching adults.

In Spanish, she said, "ella era jubilada, pero de escuela elemental. Y agarró este trabajo extra, y nos trataba como niños de cuarto." In English, "she was retired, but from an elementary school. She got the job [in the program] as something extra to do, and she would treat us as if we were 4-year olds." Overall, the majority of parents in this group came to the table with more existing capitals, such as a knowledgeable network that had institutional knowledge and navigational capital, educational capital, and supportive networks (i.e., families). Parents saw the program as a means by which to assimilate and better integrate into the U.S.

For this group of parents, in order for them to go to class and do their homework every week, the key was having resources such as a supportive spouse/family member or reliable childcare. Some of the issues faced by this group of parents are not dissimilar to those faced by parents in group #2 and #3, but what is different is their response to them. These parents' confidence and resiliency levels, even when struggling, remained high, because they knew they had a support system and their family's primary needs were taken care of. Most of the parents in this group came to the program with previous experience navigating post-secondary educational spaces, which facilitated their ability to navigate the parental engagement program, plus they did not experience the same family constraints faced by parents in Group #2 and #3. They asked for help from teachers and approached the program from the perspective that it needed to work for them; it was a means to an end (i.e., trading their time for secondary needs). They were outspoken, established dialogue with program staff, and overall felt content that their investment paid off. Their outcome aligned with the program's goal to successfully graduate parents from the courses they offered. This group of parents followed the rules, showed up, and successfully completed the program. Yet, these parents were aided by resource reservoirs they could draw from, be it their previous academic experiences or their immediate family's support (i.e.

emotionally, childcare, time flexibility, etc.). They did not always recognize this, but they assumed other parents in the program had the same facilities as them. This was not necessarily the case, especially for parents in Groups #2 and #3, which I discuss next.

Group #2 – *In Between Traders: Negotiating between primary and secondary needs* (Enrolled but did not graduate)

Overall, I found that the decision-making process of the 12 parents in this group relating to the why and how for their enrollment and their subsequent decision to leave the program was influenced by four factors, many of which were the same as Group #1: (a) wanting to be able to speak English with their children who expressed a preference for English, (b) wanting to be able to meet the requirements needed to file immigration paperwork, (c) being pushed out of the program through strict attendance rules (which I found to be an unintended consequence of the rules), and (d) being discouraged by inconsistencies in the delivery of instruction. Recruiting and interviewing the parents in Group #2 (Table 4) was challenging, many would only agree to an interview if I conducted it over the phone, at a time determined by them, and in Spanish. Busy schedules and little free time limited their flexibility. Eleven out of 12 parents in this group are female and enrolled in the ESL class, and six out of these eleven were single mothers, which significantly differ from those parents in group 1. Four out of the 12 parents had some college education in Mexico, while seven had a high school education in Mexico or less, and one was born in the U.S. but spent most of his childhood in Mexico before moving back to Texas to enroll in the local high school. In what follows, I analyze how these parents' experiences within the program influenced their decision to stop attending.

Table 4. Parents in Group #2.

Pseudonym	Class	Male	Female	# of Children in District	Race	Time in the Valley (yrs)	Education Level	Type of Interview
EA	ESL		X	2	Mexican	15	1yr. of Univ. (MX)	Phone
CB	ESL		X	2	Mexican	8	HS (MX)	Phone
QO	ESL		X	4	Mexican	6	2yrs. of Univ. (accounting)	Phone
GA2	ESL		X	3	Mexican	13	9th grade (MX)	Phone
RA	ESL		X	1	Mexican	15	middle school (MX)	Phone
EE	ESL		X	2	Mexican	16	middle school (MX)	Phone
PM	ESL		X	1	Mexican	10	9th grade (MX)	Phone
LA2	ESL		X	3	Mexican	14	9th grade (MX)	Phone
VI	Computer	X		2	American Citizen	43 (all his life)	HS (US)	in person focus group
RZ	ESL		X	4	Mexican	7	HS (MX)	
RP	ESL		X	1	Mexican	14	Univ. (MX)	
RM	ESL		X	1	Mexican	19	2yrs. of Univ. (nursing)	

Vignette

To provide some context into the decision-making process of parents who did not complete their course, I share a vignette from a mother, Norma, who despite her best intentions and resiliency was unable to successfully incorporate attending ESL classes into her workday. I share the details of her experience to illustrate the factors informing her decision-making process.

Norma: Schedule Conflicts. Norma is the mother of two (ages 10 and 21) who emigrated from Mexico and has lived in the Valley for 15 years. She grew up along the border, but on the Mexican side. She has some university capital (i.e., completed one-year of university in Mexico), before getting married. Within a year, she was pregnant. Although her husband lived with her in Mexico, his job as a mechanic was located in the Valley, therefore, he crossed the border daily. At first, she had no idea that he was actually an American citizen. He had been born in the U.S., but his parents raised him in Mexico. He had lived his entire adult life there. Yet, when he found out that Norma was pregnant, he told her that when the baby was ready to enroll

in school, he wanted them to move to the Valley. He wanted his child to get a good education and learn English, unlike what happened to him.

This was difficult for Norma, because she did not want to give up her job, her academics, and her dream of a career. But, she put her family's future first. Her son is now a student at Texas Tech University and her daughter is a 5th grader. She found out about the parent academy through two different friends who work for San Mateo, one is a custodian and the other is a cafeteria worker. They both told her about the classes when they found out about them, because Norma had mentioned to them over the years that she wanted to learn more conversational English, because she struggles with it. Norma's main motivator is her daughter. With her son, she never had an issue, he is fluent in both languages, he can translate very well, but her daughter is forcing her to have to learn English. Her daughter prefers English, she is not fluent in Spanish. So, her daughter is forcing her to have to learn more English. In Spanish, she said,

> Yo con el niño no tenía ese problema, porque el niño me traduce muy bien inglés
> y español. Y la niña fue la que me obligó, como quien dice, porque ella prefiere el
> inglés, ella no entiende mucho el español. A pesar de que sí lo habla y todo, hay
> palabras que dice, '¿Qué quieres decir con eso? No te entiendo'. Entonces le
> tengo que explicar más o menos en inglés, y ella me dice, 'ah, es esto', y yo le
> digo, 'bueno pues sí, es eso'… Ella fue la que más me obligó porque ella es como
> más inglés.

> *In English*: With my son, I didn't have the same problem, because my son can
> translate both languages very well. It's my daughter who is forcing me, because
> she prefers English, she doesn't understand Spanish that much. Even though my
> daughter can speak Spanish, there are words that she doesn't understand, so then I

have to try to explain to her somewhat what I mean in my broken English, and she

responds, "oh, that"…she is the one forcing me to learn more English.

Norma's daughter explicitly tells her that she prefers speaking in English, and Norma

points to this as a major factor influencing her enrollment decision.

Although Norma believes she raised both her children the same, she thinks that her son's

fluency in both languages is due to him spending more time interacting with relatives in Mexico

when he was younger. Once Norma's dad passed away, before her daughter was born, the family

did not go to Mexico as much. Therefore, she feels her daughter has grown up in a more English

environment, be it movies, her friends, and especially with technology (i.e. computers and cell

phones). The only Spanish exposure her daughter gets is at home or at church, but Norma feels

that it is not enough. For this reason, improving her conversational English is important to her.

Norma has worked as an adult home health provider for the last ten years, always with an

afternoon work schedule. Therefore, she signed up for the ESL morning classes, twice a week.

Her school/work schedule worked out well initially, but towards the middle of the semester it got

more complicated. For example, there was one month when she was having trouble going to

class in the morning, because her client's health was worsening. Norma shared that,

> Un mes por ejemplo se me dificultaba ir a la escuela en la mañana, a las clases de
>
> inglés, y me empezaban a llamar la atención, y me empezaban a decir ven, la
>
> asistencia, que la asistencia. Pues sí, pero no es que yo no quiera venir… estoy en
>
> el hospital con él; él no tiene familia… Yo lo acompaño en sus citas, y ya no es
>
> tan flexible porque a los doctores yo les decía, '¿me dan un justificante? Porque
>
> yo voy a la escuela'. Y yo pedía los justificantes y se los justificaba, pero aun así
>
> me regañaban.

In English: One month for example, it was difficult for me to attend classes in the

morning, to the English classes, and they started getting after me, and they started

to tell me that attendance was important. I understand that it is important, but it

wasn't as if I didn't want to go to class…I'm at the hospital with my client; he has

no family…I go with him to his appointments and the times weren't flexible. I'd

ask the doctors for a written excuse to take back to the program, but the program

would still get after me.

During that one month when she was struggling to go to class and the increased work hours she

was being asked to put in, she started receiving phone calls from the manager at the parent center

reprimanding her for her absences. Norma would try to explain to the manager that it was not

that she did not want to go to class, but that her client was in the hospital and he did not have any

family. She has to accompany him to his medical appointments and the times are conflicting with

her class.

For Norma, missing class was a difficult decision, but "no era que yo no quisiera ir, era

que de plano a veces yo no podía ir." In English, "it was not that I did not want to go to class, I

just simply could not attend sometimes." The breaking point arrived towards the end of the

semester. She received a phone call from the school telling her, "it's that you didn't come, you're

missing too much." She replied, "Oh my God, you know what? This month has been too

complicated at work, withdraw me from the class, I will not be going anymore, I don't want to

feel pressured that I need to be accountable to both my job and at school." And that's when she

stopped going to class. Norma's exact words in describing the interaction are below:

'Es que no viniste, estás faltando mucho'. 'Oh my God, no, ¿sabes qué? Mira,

como se me complicó mucho este mes con el señor, sácame, ya no voy a ir, para

no sentirme yo presionada de que tengo que responder en mi trabajo y tengo que responder en la escuela.' Y por eso ya no fui.

When placed in a situation where Norma had to choose between her job and her class, she chose her job because her job helps put food on the table.

The incessant calls and the vigilance were the main factors for her not completing her semester. Multiple times she did ask if there was any way she could make-up or recover the class she missed. But she was told no, "Si estás lunes y miércoles yendo a la escuela, es lunes y miércoles, o sea no puedes ir y reponerla el martes o el jueves también." In English, "if you are enrolled in a Monday and Wednesday class, then it's Monday and Wednesday, you can't replace it on a Tuesday or Thursday." If she is enrolled in the Monday/Wednesday class, then those are the only days she can attend. She cannot show up for the Tuesday/Thursday class.

Norma's experience in the academy is representative of other parents in Group #2, who also started the program but did not complete it because balancing work/family/school proved to be more challenging than she anticipated and receiving phone calls form the program staff only exasperated the guilt and stress she was feeling for being unable to attend class on various occasions. Unlike the parents in Group #1, most of these parents did not have the privilege of having a second income-earning adult at home, reliable childcare, or reliable transportation. In the sections that follow, I will further describe the various themes that emerged as important factors in the decision-making process of parents in this group: English-speaking children, ability to file immigration paperwork, along with being pushed out by strict attendance rules, and inconsistencies in program instruction.

Decision to Enroll

Eleven parents shared that they became aware of the class offerings through their networks such as via a friend, family member, or co-worker. One parent found out while attending an open house at their child's school. They all describe having an initial excitement at finding out about the opportunity available via the district. At first glance, when they discussed it with their families, it sounded doable. The time of day and class options made them think integrating the class into their schedule could be done. However, the findings suggest otherwise. In this section, I describe why these parents decided to enroll in the program which included: (a) wanting to be able to speak English with their children who expressed a preference for English, (b) wanting to be able to meet the requirements needed to file immigration paperwork, (c) being pushed out of the program through strict attendance rules (which again I found to be an unintended consequence of the rules, and (d) being discouraged by inconsistencies in the delivery of instruction.

Children with a Preference for English

Eight out of the 12 parents in this group associate their decision to enroll in the program with their desire to learn English. The viewed and connected learning English with wanting to foster better relationships with their children who speak more English than Spanish or to keep up with the English they are beginning to learn in school. One mom shared that her daughter has not retained much of the Spanish she taught her early on, and now with technology and everything being in English, she wants to be able to communicate with her and understand what her daughter is doing. Similarly, another mom shared that her children prefer to speak in English and she yearns for the day when she is able to join in on conversations her children are having in English. She says that she only understands the basics. In Spanish she commented,

Yo los escucho hablar a ellos y yo también quisiera hablar con ellos inglés, tener una conversación, lo que es normal. Sí les entiendo, pero les entiendo lo más básico, lo típico. Pero a mí me gustaría tener una conversación bien así hablando inglés con ellos.

In English: I hear them speak and I would also like to speak English with them, have a conversation, something normal. I do understand, but only the very basic, the typical. But I would like to have a good conversation with them speaking in English.

In addition, five of the 12 parents in this group associated having more than one English-speaking child at home as a factor influencing their decision to stay enrolled in the academy. In a household where there's two parents and one child, the child is still outnumbered, but once there's more than one English-speaking child in the household, then it starts to be more of a challenge. The children speak more English between themselves at home, including with their friends who come over to play.

These parents see that more and more, the homework their children bring home is in English, and they want to be able to understand it, too. One mom shared, in Spanish, "yo quiero ayudarles a ellos en las tareas de la escuela porque… entre ellos van más creciendo más creciendo pues ellos también necesitan ayuda de uno." In English, "I want to help them with their homework because…the older they get, they more help they will need from us." Similarly, one mom said she wanted to learn English because she wanted to show her daughter that it was important to work hard and in the process, offer her daughter a helping hand should she need help with homework. In Spanish, "para superarme porque quiero, quiero que, sentirme bien conmigo misma, saber que me estoy superando y que mi hija mire que superarse es bueno. Que

echarle ganas es bueno." In English, "I want to excel, I want to feel good about myself, knowing that I'm bettering myself and for my daughter to see that investing in ourselves and working hard is good." This mother wants to serve as a role model for her daughter and demonstrate that working hard is a good thing, it pays off.

Ability to File Immigration Paperwork

Another reason why parents in this group decided to join the program was to gain the necessary skills to file immigration paperwork. For seven out of 12 parents in this group, learning English was seen as a necessary skill in their goal to establish legal residency in the U.S. for themselves or for someone in their family. Specifically, three out of these seven parents were legal U.S. residents, and they saw becoming fluent in English as the first step in the process to apply for U.S. citizenship. One mom said that she wanted to get her U.S. citizenship, so it was necessary that she give her best to every class. In Spanish, she said, "Porque ocupaba sacar, por ejemplo, la ciudadanía, tenía que… era la necesidad, entonces si para mí eso era primordial, y, pues, le quería echar todos los kilos porque es una necesidad." In English, "I need to get my U.S. citizenship, it is a necessity, so for me, it is a priority, and so I wanted to give it my all, because it is a necessity."

The other four parents who associated gaining English fluency with immigration status were individuals who had the hope of attaining their green card via a family member who is already an American citizen (i.e., their sibling or their child). At the age of 18, an American citizen can request legal residency for their parent or their sibling. The process is longer if done via a sibling than if a child requests residency for their parent. Regardless, given the current political climate and the anti-immigrant sentiment in

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the country, these parents believed it was best to start making in-roads, and as they see it, being fluent in English is an important component of successfully completing the legal process.

The majority of the parents in this group recognized that getting their immigration status squared away would benefit them and their family. One father expressed that even though he has his green card, he sometimes feels he gets treated as if he was in the country illegally because he is not fluent in English. He said in Spanish, "ávido situaciones en las que gente parece cuestionar si estoy en este país legalmente, y eso me hace sentir enojo y frustración. Por eso quiero aprender inglés para hacerme ciudadano." In English, "there have been situations in which people have appeared to question whether I'm in this country legally, and that makes me feel anger and frustration. This is why I want to learn English and start the process of becoming a U.S. citizen." Similarly, one mother shared that Trump's campaign rhetoric about immigrants throughout the previous year as a presidential candidate, had influenced her decision to start thinking more seriously about becoming a citizen. She said in Spanish, "la forma en que Trump se refiere a gente inmigrante, fue otro motivo por el cual decidí empezar con las clases de inglés. En un futuro cercano quiero sacar mi ciudadanía americana." In English, "the rhetoric Trump uses when referring to immigrants was another reason for why I decided to begin taking the English classes. In the near future, I want to apply for U.S. citizenship." In the next section, I detail how parents' challenges within the program influenced their decision to stop attending the classes.

Pushed Out Through Strict Rules

An overarching challenge influencing the decision of parents in this group to leave the program was limited flexibility on two fronts: within their daily work/school/home schedule and within the program itself. I first focus on what the program's rules were and will then transition to how those rules affected the parents' lives and ultimately, led to the parent's decision to stop going to class.

Since the program only occurs over a 10-week long period and class meets only twice a week, the program places a great deal of emphasis on parents attending all 10 weeks. It is the program's policy to call students when they miss class and encourage them to attend. Students are required to complete the sign-in sheet every time they go to class. Students receive a certificate of completion at the end of 10-weeks if they attend most of the classes. Although this rule was created to be an effective way to keep parents accountable, there were unintended consequence of this that were especially felt by the parents in group 2. Many of the parents in this group (7 out of 12) expressed a dislike for these calls. The calls made them feel like slackers for not being in class, and when they would try to explain that they had a legitimate reason for not being in class, it was dismissed. The person from the center would remind them that if their attendance did not improve, they would not be kicked out, because they had a long waiting list. In addition, these same parents asked the center if it would be possible to go on a different day to make up the class they missed, but they were told it was not allowed.

A mother in this group, quoted below, talked to her husband about wanting to enroll in a morning English class at one of the parent centers, and he had been supportive of her. But once enrolled, she would be pulled away at times by her responsibilities at home with her children. For example, they would get sick, and she would have to take them to an appointment. The

manager at the parent center would call and ask about her absence and after a few absences, they told her that if she continued missing class, they would have to drop her from the roster. This made her feel bad, and she decided to stop going and instead decided to focus on her children and husband for the time being. Her ultimate decision to stop attending class was not only influenced by the strict attendance rule, but also by the shame associated with missing class. This Spanish excerpt details the mom's experience with missing class:

Mi marido me apoyó en que me inscribiera, pero después ya no pude por el tiempo, de que tenía que ir por los niños en la escuela, que tenía que ir por esto que… pues lo más común es que se enferman, algo así. Yo no podía estar faltando a clases porque me iban a sacar. Me dijeron que me iban a sacar, y tenían razón, porque mucha gente quiere entrar, y yo estoy ocupando a lo mejor un lugar de alguien que a lo mejor no falta. Y no es que yo faltara así, fui, pero igual ya no volví por lo mismo. Los niños. Como están… uno de siete años y otro de nueve, me necesitan. Por eso decidí no ir…

In English: My husband supported me in enrolling, but later I couldn't do it because of time, because I had to go pick them up at school, then I had to go for…well, the most common thing is that they get sick, or something. And I couldn't be missing class because I would lose my spot. They told me I'd lose my place, and they were right, because lots of people wanted to enroll, and I would possibly be taking up a spot someone who would not miss could fill. And it is not like I missed a lot, but regardless, I didn't return for that reason. The children, they are…one is seven and the other is nine, they need me. That's why I decided not to go anymore…

She conveyed that she believed the staff when they said that there were parents who would be happy to take her seat. But, she also could not disregard her responsibilities, so she made the decision to stop attending and free up her seat.

The program feels a focus on attendance is warranted, but such a strict stance does not leave too much flexibility for the circumstances some of these parents are experiencing outside of the classroom. Parents were left with a sense of guilt and embarrassment when they would hear from the center's staff that they were taking up a seat someone else wanted. In this group of parents there were some single mothers who worked during the day and were signed up for evening classes, but if their childcare fell through, they would miss class to stay home and look after their children. They, too, would receive a phone call inquiring about their absence and would receive a lecture from the staff. Instead of staying motivated, these experiences discouraged the parents and made them reconsider how they were allocating their time, which addresses research question #3.

Inconsistencies in Program Instruction

Program instruction inconsistency was a theme that emerged in addressing research question number three about how do these decisions and parents' experiences relate to the elements of the parental engagement program? The tension parents in Group #1 identified between themselves and the program was their issue with the variety of fluency levels within one classroom, but for them it was about being the more advanced ones in the class and feeling slowed down by people who were at a more beginner level. The findings suggest that for parents in Group #2, they, too, spoke about classes having a variety of levels within one classroom, but their tension with the program was the opposite, they felt "less than" when surrounded by

students who were further along in ability than them. One parent spoke of the stress she felt at being behind in fluency and comprehension than others in her classroom,

> Pues sí me mortifica, porque si tú sí sabes y yo no sé, me mortifico. Necesito aprender más, entonces ahí entra el estrés, como dije, entra el estrés de que, pues, necesito estudiar más, eso sí fue un detalle en la clase. Cuando me tocó entrar, pues, estábamos todos en un salón y todos estábamos en diferentes niveles de conocimiento.

> *In English*: Well, yes, it does worry me, because if you do know and I don't know [English], I worry. I need to learn more, and then the stress kicks in, like I said, stress creeps in, well, I need to study more. That was an issue in the class. When I went in, well, we were all in the same classroom, yet all of us were at different knowledge levels.

Another echoed her exact sentiment, she enjoyed the class overall, but did not feel it was fair to have all levels in one classroom:

> Ah sí, sí me gustaba la clase y todo, pero lo único que… pues lo que no me pareció justo fue que como todas las que iban ya estaban muy… demasiado avanzadas. Y este, y yo decía, "pues yo necesito empezar desde mero abajo para yo estar aprendiendo."

> *In English*: I liked the class and everything, but the only thing that…well the thing I didn't find fair was that most of the people in my class were very…too advanced. And, I would tell myself, "I need to start from the basic level in order for me to start learning."

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Unlike parents in Group #1, these parents tended to withdraw instead of look for a Plan B or seek outside tutoring. This group of parents neither demonstrated a sense of entitlement, privilege, nor did they have established outside resources they could draw on for support. In addition, for many of the parents in this group, participation in this program was their first venture into a classroom since they attended middle school in Mexico. It seemed to the majority of these parents that teachers would focus on the more advanced students. Aside from ESL classes with various levels of proficiency, two parents in this group had experience transferring from one center to another during the course of their semester as a result of moving homes. They both said they saw a difference in curriculum. Pamela shared the following comparison:

Sí, a mí me gustaba más en la Jackson porque nos ponían por ejemplo a escribir o lo que me gustaba más era que nos ponían en la pantalla y tú podías identificar las cosas. Me gustaba que la maestra se ponía con nosotros en la pantalla y nos decía ¿qué es esto?, y ya todos le decíamos si era pato o era gallina o… y palabras, o cómo podías relacionar una cosa con otra y la maestra te explicaba, de cómo lo decimos nosotros sin saber pronunciar el acento, y ya después cómo podías pronunciar para que se entendiera la palabra… Y entonces eso allá en la Lincoln nunca lo vi porque allá la pantalla ni siquiera funcionaba ni nada.

In English: Yes, I liked the Jackson center because they would make us write or what I liked was that they would put the lesson on the projector and all of us could follow along and identify things. I liked that the teacher would use the projector screen to lead the class and we did it together as a group. We would identify animals, a duck, a chicken, or…and words or she'd show us how to pronounce words without an accent and how to properly pronounce words…but at

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the Lincoln center I never experienced that because the projector screen didn't even work.

Pamela describes her experience at the Jackson Center as being more engaged, the teacher would show things on a screen, students could see what she was pointing at, and participate. Overall, she had a more enriching experience. Her experience at the Lincoln Center, by comparison, was a letdown, to start off with, the projector screen did not even work, plus the class focused more on memorization and following a book.

Students seemed to find the courses offered by the community college to be more engaging, while the courses offered by the education service center were more textbook based. This was something that Ana, from Group #1, also attested to. The district has to pay the college instructors for teaching a class, while classes taught by the educational center are free (e.g. the cost is covered through a grant).

Arriving at a Decision to Leave the Program

The parents in this group who did not graduate from the academy arrived at their decision through consultation with their family. For parents in this group, unlike most in Group #1, not all of them had a spouse at home, or access to reliable childcare, or the time capital to allocate to classes irrespective of circumstances that suddenly arise. Prioritizing time and resources was a balance act these parents had to negotiate.

The decision-making of parents in Group #2 to become involved with the program began with a genuine interest in the class they selected and consultation with their families. But, by midway through their semester, most began to feel the pressure of various constraints. Whether it was due to work, health issues or childcare scheduling conflicts coupled with limited flexibility regarding class absences, parents opted for stopping before completing the course. The

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program's attendance rule has disparate impacts on parents, especially given their familial situation.

For this group of parents, their decision around time allocation was a fluid process and required a reassessment as circumstances changed; they were operating between having enough stability to comfortably commit to attending class and the possibility of experiencing a setback in their personal life that would negatively impact their family. Many of these parents did not have the privilege of having the support of a 2nd income-earning partner in their house, extended social networks, or reliable childcare, like parents in Group #1 had.

They could either use their time to fulfill their personal secondary needs or they had to expend it on securing the primary needs of their family. In making their decision, they weighed the program's lack of flexibility in regards to absences with no opportunity to make up missed classes, plus for some, they were in classes where they did not feel comfortable with the different levels of fluency or the teacher's inexperience teaching adults, which speaks directly to research question #3. Under these circumstances, leaving the program made the most sense. For them, the decision was clear, instead of investing their time in a venture that was not being fruitful, they'd rather use it towards securing the basic needs of their family.

Group #3 – *Primary Traders* (did not enroll)

Overall, I found that the parents who signed up for a class, but who did not actually enroll or withdrew after a week in the class, share similar decision-making journeys. The eight individual interviews were conducted over the phone, at a time determined by them, and in Spanish. Scheduling the focus group interview was especially challenging, coordinating four parents plus agreeing on a location took time and several unsuccessful attempts. In the end, we ended up meeting at the local library. They preferred meeting at the library over a parent center,

because the center was not a space they felt comfortable showing up at since they were embarrassed that they had not actually enrolled. Since their enrollment decisions do not occur in a vacuum, I examine the ways in which these parents' initial decision to enroll for the program failed to materialize in actual enrollment. Most of the parents in this group had a middle-school education, and of the twelve parents, ten of them were mothers, and of these ten, five were single mothers. Given the demands and context of their daily lives, the 12 parents in this group were the most difficult to recruit and interview of the three groups (Table 5).

Table 5. Parents in Group #3.

Pseudonym	Class	Male	Female	# of Children in District	Race	Time in the Valley (yrs)	Education Level	Type of Interview
SZ	GED		X	4	Mexican	20	6th grade (MX)	Phone
RA	GED		X	2	Mexican	20	8th grade (MX)	Phone
GD	Computer		X	4	Mexican	19	6th grade (MX)	Phone
BA	GED		X	1	Mexican	2	6th grade (MX)	Phone
GF	ESL		X	4	Mexican	15	6th grade (MX)	Phone
VY	ESL		X	5	Mexican	13	6th grade (MX)	Phone
TY	ESL		X	4	Mexican	15	HS (MX)	Phone
FR	GED	X		3	American Citizen	16 (born in the US but raised in MX 26 yrs)	6th grade (MX)	Phone
AM	GED	X		4	Mexican	9	Univ. (MX)	in person focus group
BI	ESL		X	3	Mexican	4	HS (MX)	in person focus group
JT	ESL		X	4	Mexican	14	4th grade (MX)	in person focus group
GA	ESL		X	3	Mexican	19	6th grade (MX)	in person focus group

Vignette

To provide some context into the decision-making process of parents who signed up to attend a class at the parent academy but who due to various circumstances did not end up enrolling, I share a vignette from a mother, Gloria, who despite her best intentions, could not reasonably incorporate attending ESL classes into her workday. I share the details of her experience to illuminate the factors that mattered in her decision-making process.

Gloria: Family First. Gloria is a mother of four (ages 4, 12, 15 and 17) who emigrated from Mexico and has lived in the Valley for 16 years. She and her husband have both worked as field workers since they arrived. In Mexico, their education did not go beyond sixth grade. They both wish that they could have gone further, but lack of opportunity in their village prevented them from it. It is this sentiment that influences the aspirations they both have for their children. Gloria explains what she tells her children, "Mira si nosotros hubiéramos tenido la oportunidad de ustedes, pues, no anduviéramos en la labor, tuviéramos un trabajo mejor, verdad, no es que no sea mejor la labor, pero pues, pero tienes que andar entre el lodo, y aunque esté lloviendo, y todo aquí afuera, verdad, y pues, si tienes estudios, tienes la posibilidad de ganar un poquito más y sin andar afuera mojándote." In English, her message to her children was that "if we [she and her husband] had had the educational opportunities you all have, then we would not have to work in the field; we would have better jobs. Not that working in the field is a bad job, but one has to work in the mud even if it is raining outside and well, if you have an education, you have the possibility of making more money without having to work outside while getting wet."

Gloria found out about the program offered by the district when she showed up at her daughter's campus at the beginning of the school year to enroll her in classes. The campus' parent educator was passing out information about the classes offered for parents by the district as well as information on how to become a parent volunteer, information Gloria says "de cosas, verdad, que a veces hay y uno no sabe, verdad." In English, "so many things exist and that one does not even know about." The English classes really appealed to her, because "pues me ayudaría a mí misma mucho para, para que ellos [mis hijos] también empiecen a decir 'mi mamá también está haciendo este esfuerzo de aprender', verdad, para, para podernos comunicar todos, verdad, porque, pues, entonces ya aprendiendo ellos y nosotros no, pues, se nos hace, como se

nos ha hecho, verdad, complicado." In English, Gloria feels that the English classes "would really benefit me, so that my children can start to say that their mom is making the effort to learn and so that we can all communicate with one another. Because, if my children continue to learn English and my husband and I don't, then it will be, like it has been, complicated." Gloria shared an example of a difficulty they have encountered as a family,

> que a veces, que una carta o algo así, pues, queremos que nos la expliquen
>
> [nuestros hijos], pero a veces dicen 'mamá, es que sí lo puedo leer, pero no te
>
> puedo decir qué quiere decir en español,' este le digo, no, pues entonces, le digo,
>
> es que tienen ustedes que aprender cómo traducir las cosas para poder uno
>
> entenderlos, verdad, porque, pues, si no, pues, estamos quedando igual, y ustedes
>
> están aprendiendo pero nosotros no entendemos, les decimos y nos dicen 'mamá,
>
> es que ustedes deberían de ir también a la escuela,' y les digo sí.
>
> *In English:* sometimes when we receive a letter or something written in English
>
> we ask our children to translate the document for us, but they tell us that they can
>
> read the letter but do not know how to translate it from English to Spanish. I then
>
> tell them that they need to learn how to translate into Spanish so that we can
>
> understand them, because otherwise, we will continue to be in the same boat; they
>
> [the children] will continue to learn English and we will remain unable to
>
> communicate. My children's response is "mom, you and dad, should also be
>
> going to school," and I agree.

Therefore, when Gloria found out about the classes being offered by the District, she went home and talked with her husband about them. They agreed that it was a good opportunity and that they should make the effort to attend together and support one another, especially since

she was told the classes were also offered in the evening. Their workday would not be impacted.

They were happy to share the news with their children and show them that they were trying to

take steps to address the language barrier, especially regarding written communication (i.e.

letters and paperwork), "les dijimos, verdad, que íbamos a tratar de ver si podíamos tomar unas

clases para, pues, para poder llenar papeles o para entender a veces las cartas que nos mandan."

In English, "we told them, right, that we were going to see if we could take classes, so that we

could learn to fill out paperwork and/or be able to understand the mail we receive."

Gloria and her husband had the best of intentions and were looking forward to enrolling

in the evening ESL classes at a parent center not too far from their home. When they signed up,

they had more flexibility in their schedule, because it was late summer and the main harvest

season had not yet begun. But, as their fall class was beginning, harvest time was also taking off.

And Gloria explains that when the harvest months begin, there is a great deal of work which

makes it very difficult to get away, because if they do not go to work, there is no money. They

had been hopeful that maybe the harvest season would be different this year, allowing the

addition of English classes to their evening schedule twice a week. Gloria assures,

> sí queremos aprender, pero pues a veces por falta de tiempo, pues, porque como
>
> andamos trabajando no da tiempo de ir a la escuela, verdad, a las clases … y pues,
>
> aunque quisiéramos no hemos podido ir, porque no habido tiempo para ir.
>
> *In English*: Yes, we want to learn, but sometimes for lack of time, because we are
>
> working there isn't enough time to go to school, right, the classes…and well, even
>
> if we want to, we can't make it, because there just hasn't been enough time to go.

Yes, they want to learn, but sometimes for lack of time and because they are still out working,

they cannot make it to the classes, and even though they want to go, there just has not been time.

The time they have free in the evenings is very little and once the children get home from school, they cannot really leave because they have to prepare dinner, attend to them, or take them to the doctor, there's just not enough time.

I asked Gloria what it would take for her to be able to do it all, given her struggle to successfully incorporate English classes into her schedule, and she replied,

cuando tenemos el tiempo es en junio, julio, hasta agosto, que no hay trabajo, así que si fueran [las clases] en el verano, pues sí. Se me hace que sí podría ir, verdad, porque es cuando el trabajo en la labor escasea, casi no hay. No es como ahorita [otoño] que hay trabajo todos los días.

In English: when we have more free time is in June, July, until August, because there is no work, therefore, if the classes were during the summer, then yes, I believe we could attend, because that's when field work is scarce. It is not like the fall, when we work every day.

When faced with the choice of financial stability vs. learning English (knowing it would improve their interactions with their children and with their children's schools), Gloria says that she and her husband will choose work and providing for their family.

Gloria's experience is representative of other parents in Group #3, the idea of being fluent in English or learning how to use a computer are things they aspire to, but the logistics of making it happen cannot be reconciled with their current schedule. Their life's daily responsibilities force them to prioritize the well-being of their family before any secondary need. Finally, in the sections that follow, I will further describe the various themes that emerged as important factors in the decision-making process of why or how for parents in this group.

Decision to Enroll

The parents in this group, similar to those in Group #2 and #3, found out about the program through their networks. Nine parents shared that they became aware of the offerings via a friend, family member, or co-worker. One parent found out while enrolling her daughter at the beginning of the new school year and two parents learned about it while shopping at their local grocery store (the program had set up an information table manned by program staff). As I described earlier in this chapter, all 36 parents broadly shared several of the same reasons for why the program appealed to them (e.g., social mobility, personal growth, convenient class times, desirable class offerings, etc.), but, in this section, I discuss the factors influencing the decision-making process of parents in Group #3 as they considered enrollment: (a) network support – enrolling with a friend, (b) seeking social mobility, (c) wanting to set a good example for their children. The factors that ultimately impacted their decision to not enroll, included: work-schedule conflicts, variable transportation, and family obligations.

Enrolling with a Friend

In learning about why parents in this group enrolled in the program, seven of the 12 parents noted that enrolling with a friend/family member in the academy played a role in their ultimate decision to sign-up for a class. One parent attributed her enrollment in the program to the support of her friend, "mi amiga me dice vamos juntas, y me consiguió el teléfono del coordinador de ahí, y ya le hablé y le dije que estaba interesada, y me inscribí." In English, "my friend tells me, let's go together, and she gave me the phone number to call the parent center's coordinator, and so I called, told them I was interested, and he enrolled me." Similarly, another parent said that his wife had heard of the academy through a friend and that she wanted to go. In Spanish:

nuestros hijos necesitan de nuestra ayuda con su tarea y todo esto, todo lo que

concierne, pues en, la mayoría a sus trabajos de escuela, yo no tengo esa, pues esa

capacidad de ayudarlos en cuanto al inglés entonces eso me obliga a aprenderlo.

Y como mi esposa no maneja, me pidió que nos inscribiéramos juntos.

In English: our children need our help with their homework and all those things,

everything that concerns their schoolwork, I don't have the capacity to help them

when it comes to English, therefore that forces me to learn it. And like my wife

doesn't drive, she asked me that we enroll together.

Having a partner within the academy was an important factor in their enrollment

decision, and while for some it was about finding support in a fellow novice within the program,

for others it was about joining and having the network support of a friend or co-worker they

knew who was already enrolled in the academy and was vouching for it. One parent said, "una

vecina que ya tenía un año en el programa me invitó a tomar clases, clases de inglés. Ella me dijo

que las clases estaban muy buenas, y que fuéramos juntas. Pues mi ilusión era aprender inglés

para poder comunicarme con la gente y poder ayudar a mis hijos. Por eso fui y me apunté." In

English,

My neighbor who had already been enrolled in the English classes at the academy

for one year, invited me to take classes, English classes. She told me that the

classes were very good and that I should join so that we could go together. My

dream was to learn English, because I want to be able to communicate with

people in English and be better able to help my children. And that's why I

accepted the invitation and signed up.

Similarly, a parent who was a custodian at a local high school, had a co-worker tell her that she would be starting her second semester in the program, and encouraged her to join, so that they could go together after work; the parent noted that knowing she would have support from someone who already had experience with the program influenced her decision to sign up for the English class:

> pues como le digo, yo decidí inscribirme cuando mi compañera me comenta que estará empezando su segundo semestre dentro de la academia, y me invita a que me inscriba, para así poder ir juntas después del trabajo…el saber que tendría el apoyo de alguien que ya tenía experiencia con el programa me animo.
>
> *In English*: Well, like I was telling you, I decided to sign up when my co-worker commented to me that she would be starting her second semester within the academy, and she invited me to enroll, so that we could go together after work…knowing that I would have the support of someone who already had experience with the program encouraged me.

In considering whether to complete the program, knowing they would have at least one supportive individual they knew personally within the program helped the majority of the parents in this group feel reassured about their decision to sign-up.

Seeking Social Mobility

Parents' desire for social mobility was a very strong theme influencing the *how* and *why* of parents' decision to become involved in the parental engagement program offered by the District. The parents in this group equated the acquisition of literacy skills (i.e. a secondary need – personal growth), be it in written, verbal or digital form, as crucial to social mobility. Eight out of twelve parents expressed their desire to be literate in the English language. Similar to the

parents in Group #2, parents in Group #1 wanted to be able to help their children with their homework, they want to be able to read and comprehend letters the school sends home with their children or that arrive in the mail, they want to be able to navigate the district's website (which is mostly in English), and they want to be able to have a conversation with individuals in their community who only speak English. One father explained that his decision to enroll was because he wanted to learn English. In his opinion, in the U.S., the challenge is the language, a language he does not understand, and he believes that even though it seems like it does not exist, there's a lot of racism. At least that's been his experience within Texas. There were three other parents who expressed the same sentiment. Besides, he says, what he has personally experienced is that there are people who see people with brown skin, like his, and purposefully only speak in English to them even if he tells them he does not understand. This makes him feel bad, and he wants to take steps to try to prevent this from happening anymore. In Spanish:

una decisión que yo tomé porque yo quería aprender inglés, lo que pasa... lo que me pasó a mí en este país el problema es el idioma, que uno no entiende, y parece que no pero sí hay mucho racismo. Aparte hay personas que lo ven a uno de... de color moreno y hablan puro inglés aunque uno les diga que no entiende, o sea, lo hacen a uno sentir mal y no le explican muchas cosas, bueno eso es lo que me ha pasado y quiero tomar pasos para que ya no me ocurra.

In English: Enrollment is a decision I took because I wanted to learn English, what happens…what I have experienced in this country is a problem with the language, that one doesn't understand it, although it doesn't look like it, there's a lot of racism. There's people who see us…with brown skin and speak to us only in English even though we tell them we don't understand them, in other words,

they make us feel bad and don't explain many things to us, in any case, that is what has happened to me and I want to take steps so that it doesn't happen anymore.

Another parent explained that she signed up for the English class, because she wanted to be able to communicate with her child's teacher, because even though the teachers speak Spanish, there are times when they say things in English and she is left confused. In Spanish, she said, "Pues, para poderme comunicarme con las maestras, bueno, todas hablan español, pero pues, hay veces que sí, pues, le dicen a uno en inglés y se queda uno nada más confundido, pero digo 'okay' y hago como que entendí." In English, "to be able to communicate with the teachers, many do speak Spanish, but there are times when they tell us things in English, and we feel confused, but I say 'ok' and pretend like I understood." Feeling at a loss when spoken to in English or when they receive paperwork written in English, is a sentiment shared by other parents in the group. One mother noted that it is this English necessity that has driven parents to request programs like the one the District provides, "Eso ha obligado a muchos de nosotros a pedir programas como este." In English, "this has forced many of us to ask for programs like this one."

In the case of another parent, she shared that the time had come for her to learn English, her children were in school, they needed her help, and they were verbalizing to her a preference for speaking English, even at home. She was embarrassed that despite her many years of living in the Valley, she had not taken advantage of the opportunities the district has been offering. In Spanish she said, "Porque ya basta. Mis hijos ahora están en la escuela y necesitan mi ayuda. Es una pena que con tantos años que yo tengo viviendo aquí [en el Valle], no he aprovechado todas estas oportunidades que estamos teniendo. La verdad sí, que hasta a mí misma me da

vergüenza." In English, "Enough is enough. My children are in school and they need my help. It's a shame that after living here so many years here in the Valley, I haven't taken advantage of these opportunities. The truth, even I'm embarrassed." This mother's experience aligns with sentiments expressed by other parents in this group, especially in regards to their children expressing a preference for speaking English over Spanish at home. Parents shared that it had been easier to keep the household only Spanish speaking when they had only one child in school, but now that they had more than one, their children wanted to speak more English and watch more TV in English. Parents were feeling outnumbered and wanted to keep up so that they could understand what their children were saying.

A fellow parent in this group shared the same sentiments as the parents above, but in addition to wanting to help her children and admitting that despite having been in the U.S. for many years she has not been proactive about learning English, there is now a job she really wants (i.e., home health provider) and being able to speak English is a requirement. In Spanish she said, "estuve perdiendo mucho tiempo realmente, esta vez lo necesito para un trabajo. Más que nada ahorita para un trabajo de [home health] *provider*." In English, "I wasted my time, if I'm being honest, but this time I need it for a job. I want a job as a home health provider." For these parents, there was a recognition that English fluency had gone from something they should acquire, to something they needed to acquire.

Setting a Good Example for their Children

The majority of the parents in this group, nine out of 12, were interested in bettering themselves and setting a good example for their children, especially given the academic growth they were seeing in their children. Aside from sharing this common desire, these nine parents

also shared a similar level of education in Mexico, middle school or less. One parent described this as:

> porque se me hace que como ahora que uno es mamá, puedo verlo todo diferente, no como antes cuando uno no tiene ninguna responsabilidad; y ahora el [su hijo] está viendo tus pasos, está observando todo lo que haces…para cuando él vea que su mamá, aunque no tiene una educación profesional y ya esté vieja, que sigue… ¿cómo se llama? estudiando, o practicando, para que tenga un buen ejemplo.

> *In English*: Because now that I am a mother, I see things differently, not like before when I did not have any responsibilities. Now, my son is watching my steps, observing everything I do... I want him to see that even though I am old and don't have a professional education, I continue...how do you say it? Studying or practicing, so that he sees me as a good role model.

A fellow mom shared the same goal, "incluso ya yo quiero, o sea, decirles a mis hijos, mira, si yo puedo sacar un, un, un certificado, ustedes también pueden, o sea, nada es imposible." In English, "in addition, I want to tell my children that if I can earn a certificate, they can too, nothing is impossible." She, too, wants to be able to tell her children that if she can earn a certificate at the parent academy, they, too, can achieve whatever they want, nothing is impossible.

Another parent is finding that more and more her children are speaking in English at home, and she is at a loss, because she does not understand what they are saying. She has four children ranging in ages from six to 13 years. She feels outnumbered and one of her main concerns is that they will use inappropriate language and she cannot discipline them, "pues es que mis hijos empiezan a hablar en inglés y este, y yo no les entiendo nada. Al último yo, como

quien dice, voy a estar este, oyendo que me digan, a lo mejor me van a decir una cosa que no me deben de decir y uno no sabe ni qué onda." In English, "my children start to speak in English and I don't understand anything. In the end, they might be telling me something that is inappropriate and I won't even know what's going on." She feels that she needs to be proactive and learn English, so that she can communicate with them, and in the process set a good example regarding education.

A father in this group shared that he and his wife enrolled together in the academy, because they wanted to set a good example for their two youngest children. He, himself, is an American Citizen, but grew up in Mexico. Despite being a citizen, he feels embarrassed that he does not have a high school diploma, so his main goal was to enroll in the GED classes offered. His wife enrolled in the English class. He said, "decidí inscribirme con tal de lograr el GED, pero le digo, mi esposa me dijo que de noche ella no puede, y yo de día no puedo por el trabajo, así que ella mejor agarró de día para ella estar con las niñas en la tarde." In English, "I decided to sign up with the goal of earning my GED, but like I tell you, my wife told me that she couldn't attend at night, and I can't during the day because of work, therefore she signed up for classes during the day, so that she could be with our girls in the evening." He signed up for the class in the evening because he works during the day, and his wife signed up for a class during the day in order to be home in the afternoon when the children come home. This couple was intent on doing what they could on their end to make the new arrangement work, all the while making their children the priority, but circumstances would change and enrolling would turn out to be a bigger challenge for him than anticipated. He was offered overtime hours at work and chose to make extra income over enrolling in the class; providing for his wife and children took priority.

False Start: Constraints to Program Completion

In the paragraphs above, I describe the initial sentiments informing the decision of parents in Group #3 when considering signing-up for one of the classes offered by the district. Between the time they signed up for a class and the first week of classes, these parents encountered a variety of challenges that led them to leave the program, mainly revolving around work schedules, transportation and family obligations. As such, I next address the findings around my research question about the constraints that these parents faced after enrolling in the program. The social, economic and family-based constraints experienced by this group of parents included: (a) conflicting work schedules, (b) variable transportation, and (c) family obligations.

Work-Schedule Conflicts

For these working-class parents, working and providing for their families was a non-negotiable responsibility because many of them were the sole earners in their households. Therefore, when work-schedule difficulties arise, which was the situation for six of the 12 parents, they prioritize their employment. Situations varied by individual, but the end result was the same, enrolling in the class they had signed up for eluded them.

For several parents, the situation they faced came down to there being a discrepancy between what they had hoped would happen with work and what really happened. In the excerpt below, a mother explains that she signed up for the class, but then as she tries working out the logistics, she admits that her schedule at her job [restaurant cook] changes often. She was also made aware by the program that she would need to have good attendance; otherwise she'd jeopardize her seat in the class.

> me apunté, pero pues como se me dificultaba por el horario del trabajo entonces
>
> ya no fui…como a veces me cambian el horario también del trabajo [soy cocinera

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en un restaurante] pues ya se me hace difícil y como me dijeron en la escuela que tantas horas debíamos cumplir y que faltamos mucho, perdemos el curso. Eso es lo que ha estado pasando.

In English: I signed up, but then it got difficult with my schedule at work so I didn't go...because sometimes they would change my shift at work [I'm a cook at a restaurant] so it gets difficult for me and they told me at the center that we have to complete a certain number of hours and that if we miss too much, we lose the course. That's what has been happening.

This mother took a step back, looked at her options, and determined that she could not jeopardize her job. She had been told missing class was not an option, therefore she prioritized her ability to contribute to her family's finances.

The work-situation was somewhat different for another parent. This father ended up changing jobs in the interim, and his schedule at his new job did not allow for him to make it to class on time, because his clocking-out time was later than at his previous job: "lo que pasa es que como me cambié de trabajo, y ya, ya el tiempo no me lo permitió…date cuenta que pues, salgo más tarde, y haz de cuenta que si llego allí, voy a llegar tarde." In English, "what happened is that I changed jobs and then time didn't permit it...understand that now I get out later, and if try to make it to class, I'll get there late." He knows that the school wants them there on time and for parents to keep absences to a minimum, so he does not feel right taking up a seat if he will not be able to take full-advantage of the class. Instead, he says that he'll work at his job for a few more months and once he is past the probation period, he'll ask and see if he can adjust his schedule to get out in time to make it to class.

Similarly, a mother shared that her exit time at work [custodian] was 7pm and classes begin at 6pm, but that although her employer had originally said she could adjust her schedule to end at 6pm, they backtracked on it at the last minute. It was not possible to enroll on this occasion, but she plans to ask her employer again next semester:

> las clases empiezan a las seis, y yo salía a las siete [limpieza] y pues le pregunte a mi jefe si podía ajustar mis horas para salir a las 6pm, y aunque originalmente me dijo que si, luego al último momento me dijo que no. Yo me pensaba apurar para ir a la escuela, pero no se pudo esta vez. Intentare de nuevo el semestre que viene.
>
> *In English:* The classes start at 6pm, and I would get out of my custodial job at 7pm, so I asked my boss if I could adjust my hours and get out 6pm, and although he originally told me, at the last minute he said no. I had planned to enroll, but it was not possible this time. I'll try again next semester.

Another mother had the same experience at her job. She cleans offices and has the night shift cleaning offices with her workday starting at 7pm. After finding out about the classes and the time offerings, she went to her employer and asked if it would be possible to start her shift at 8pm. Originally, her employer agreed, but when classes were set to begin, her employer retracted on their agreement. In Spanish, she said:

> Me iban a dar permiso en el trabajo de llegar tarde [8pm] hasta que terminara la escuela, pero ya no pude empezar porque luego no me dieron permiso. Entonces quiero agarrar un turno de día para poder estudiar en la noche…yo trabajo limpiando oficinas en Miller. Y temprano en la mañana, de seis a diez, hago limpieza en un *nursing* home.

In English: They were going to give me permission at work to get their late [8pm]

until I finished with the classes, but then I wasn't able to start because they did

give me permission at work after all. So, I want to get a day shift instead to see if

I can go to classes at night...I work cleaning offices in Miller. And early in the

morning, from six to ten, I am a custodian at a nursing home.

For these parents, the logistical issues of trying to incorporate class into their daily work-schedule proved to be more challenging than they had expected, and the program did not accommodate these everyday realities that parents faced.

Variable Transportation

For six out of the 12 parents, getting to and from class turned out to be a bigger challenge than they expected. For two parents, it was a matter of being down to one car, because their other car had been involved in a car accident and was out of service, while for two parents it was that their one car broke down and the entire family was struggling to figure out how to manage in the meantime. And for one mom who did not know how to drive, she was left in limbo when her friend who had agreed to drive her to the class backed out. Her home is too far from the parent center, so walking was not an option and neither was riding a bus, because no routes operate near her.

Below is an excerpt detailing the new day-to-day situation of a parent whose schedule was uprooted as a result her family being down to one car after the other one broke down. She first explains that her husband is very supportive of her going to classes, but given their current car trouble, she has had to put those plans on hold. In Spanish,

Mi esposo no me niega a que yo estudie. No me niega. Pero ahorita fue que

tuvimos un problema. Entonces uno de los carros se nos descompuso y nos

quedamos con un solo carro. Pero yo tengo que ir a dejar a los niños. Después voy

y lo dejo a él al trabajo. Luego vengo y al rato llevo lonche. Y este, no falta que

mis hijos tengan citas con el doctor y todo eso. Después del accidente todo se me

complico y no me metí. Porque ahorita nada más tenemos un solo carro.

In English: My husband doesn't keep me from me studying. He doesn't get in the

way. But right now, we had a problem. One of our cars broke down and we are

down to one car. But I have to go drop off the children. Then I go and drop him

off [her husband] at work. I come back home then later take him lunch. And then

there's always some medical appointment or something with the children. After

the accident, everything got complicated and I didn't enroll. Because now we're

down to one car.

In short, her mornings are no longer available for her to go to the class, and any future

enrollment will be determined by how quickly they can resolve their car trouble.

When discussing her inability to enroll in the class she signed up for, a mother shared that

she would still like to take the class, but she was recently involved in a car accident and she does

not have a functioning car at the moment, everything is now more complicated for her. This is

why she did not show up to the class. She went on to explain that they are down to one car in her

family, but her husband needs it to go to work. She is currently managing by asking a relative to

lend her a hand and drive her to various appointments, but going to class is not something she

can realistically accomplish in her current situation. In Spanish she said, "Me gustaría. me

gustaría tomarla, pero ahorita me chocaron, y no tengo carro… todo ahora se ve más complicado.

Por eso es que no he ido a clase." In English, "I would like to. I would like to take it, but right

now they hit me [car accident], and I don't have a car...everything now is more complicated.

That is why I haven't gone to class." The same goes for another mother whose family was down to one car, she would rather not go to class than take her son out of his after-school soccer classes. For these six mothers, in evaluating how the variable transportation impacts their family, they would rather such a circumstance impact them and what they would like to do for themselves, than have it negatively impact their children or their bread-winning spouse.

Family Obligations

Of the three main themes expressed as constraints to ultimate engagement in the district's program, family obligations, in various forms and contexts, played the biggest factor in influencing the decision-making process of parents in Group #3. Eleven out of 12 parents attributed their decision to postpone enrollment on a current situation adversely affecting their family or a change in their situation (at work or at home) that would adversely affect their family if they followed through on their plan to enroll in a class. Situations ranged from financial instability, a family member with health problems, caring for a family elder who fell sick, marriage instability, and going from a two-parent household down to one-parent. If parents are made to choose, they choose a job that provides for their family over their participation in the program. And if a mom is made to choose between caring for their child or an elder and going to class, then she chooses family.

An example of a parent who experienced a health-related incident during the timespan of signing up for a class and the first day of class is, Barbara. Her daughter fell ill and it turned out she has a heart problem that requires surgery. Her daughter's health became her priority, and everything else took a backseat. To add to her consternation, her daughter did not have health insurance. So, Barbara was spending all her time seeking out information on any health program out there that could help her daughter.

Ahorita se me complico todo un poco porque a mi niña le salió un problemita en

el corazón, entonces la están checando los doctores y todo eso. Estoy yendo

mucho a citas y todo eso… entonces es lo que, es lo que me trae ahorita un poco

tensionada y preocupada, verdad. Porque ando buscando aquí y allá ayuda para mi

hija.

In English: Right now, things got a bit complicated for me because my daughter

developed a little problem in her heart, so the doctors are checking her and all of

that. I'm going to a lot of appointments and all of that...so that's what, that's what

has me a bit stressed and worried right now, right. Because I'm looking here and

there for help for my daughter.

Another mother was also unable to attend because her son's physical therapy was scheduled for

the same time as the class she was signed up for. She expressed her sadness of having to

postpone enrollment, but her son's needs came first: "Me salí porque la terapia de mi hijo me la

pusieron a la misma hora que la clase y no podía asistir…me sentí triste, pero pue mi hijo me

necesita." In English, "I left the program because my child's therapy was scheduled for the same

time as my class, so I couldn't attend...I felt sad, but my child needs me." And yet another parent

chose to postpone enrollment, because her husband needed to have surgery and she did not want

to be seen as irresponsible for not being home to take care of her husband:

no me inscribí porque mi esposo se va a operar y entonces no quise, pues, faltarle

los días que, que se va a operar, dije, pues, no quiero verme como irresponsable,

entonces dije mejor no puedo, voy a ver otra vez la información a ver cuándo.

In English: I didn't enroll because my husband is going to have an operation, and

I didn't want to not be there for him the days he will have surgery. I didn't want

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to be seen as an irresponsible wife, therefore I decided not to go, I'll try again

down the road.

There was a parent who explained her decision to her children to accept a job over

enrollment in the academy as a simple financial decision, without a job to supplement their

father's paycheck [he had been getting less hours at work], they were risking financial instability.

Although her children had been very enthusiastic about her enrolling in English classes, both

parents see their main responsibility as providing financially for their children so that they can

succeed.

> Les digo [a mis hijos], 'no puedo ir a la escuela ahorita porque nuestra familia
>
> necesita dinero, tengo que trabajar, porque yo estudiando y sin trabajar, no vamos
>
> a poder proveer ni podemos ayudarlos a ustedes a salir adelante.'…hubiera sido
>
> muy difícil para mí cumplir con la escuela.
>
> *In English:* I tell my children, 'I can't go to school right now because our family
>
> needs money, I have to work, because me studying and not working, we won't be
>
> able to provide nor can we help you get ahead'...it would have been too difficult
>
> for me to meet the school's requirements.

A mother with a different family issue, divorce, also chose to postpone enrollment

because she felt that she needed to focus all her energy on getting through the divorce process

while providing stability to her children: "yo tenía problemas en mi casa, y mi mente no estaba

concentrada al cien, y por eso yo decidí no ir." In English, "I had problems at home, and

mentally I wasn't focused 100%, and that is why I decided not to go." In the same way, one

parent explained how a change in the number of family members living under her roof impacted

her decision to postpone enrollment. Her mother had a heart attack and was living alone at the

time. Her 89-year-old mother could no longer live alone, so she brought her to live at home with her and her family. Making the transition to taking care of her mother was absorbing a lot of her time, and she felt that she would not be able to do either well, not care for her mother or be a good student. Postponing her enrollment and reevaluating at a later time made the most sense to her.

For many of the parents in this group, their financial responsibilities and their duties as parents, as spouses, and as children (i.e., making sure the primary needs of their family were covered), took precedence and were placed at the top of their priority list. Their interest in the classes offered by the District had not wavered, but their decision-making was not occurring in a vacuum. Instead, the circumstances of their daily lives were very fluid, and they adjusted their decision-making based on the events occurring around them. For them, it was not a matter of *if* they would re-enroll in the future, but when.

Will Try Again

In the sections above, I described the challenges informing the decision of parents in Group #3 to not enroll after all or no longer continue past a week in the academy. Although this group of parents was interested in the parental engagement program's offerings, the fact that their enrollment did not materialize is not indicative of the parents' takeaways from the experience. They are just as ambitious and driven as the parents in Group #1. These parents did not enroll for personal reasons, but vocalized their intention to try again down the road when their personal situations get resolved.

The majority of the parents, 10 out of 12, expressed their intention to enroll again once they can resolve the circumstances preventing them from participating in the program. Their desire for mobility and the benefits they perceive they would achieve from becoming bilingual,

or earning their GED or learning how to operate a computer did not disappear. They believe the benefits would be impactful not only at the individual level, but also at the family unit level. Ultimately, the program and these parents share a mutual goal of improving the quality of engagement between each other (i.e., schools and families) and within families (i.e., parents and children). The following two quotes are examples that capture the attitude of parents towards the obstacles they encountered on their enrollment journey:

- "Pues la verdad si, o sea, yo lo que quería era seguir, pero no pude… digo se me atravesaron estos problemitas [marido tiene que tener cirugía], pero si, si en cuanto yo tenga la oportunidad de seguir, yo sigo."; "well, the truth is that, what I wanted was to continue, but I couldn't…like I said, these little problems got in the way [husband is having surgery], but as soon as I have the opportunity to continue, I will."

- "El común de esto, el decir 'lo conseguí'…y quiero seguir, ahorita, en este curso no entré [su esposo tuvo un accidente automovilístico y de momento solo tienen un carro], pero quiero seguir…nunca es tarde."; "the common theme here is to be able to say 'I did it'…and I want to continue. This semester I was unable to enroll [her husband had a car accident and they were down to one car], but I want to continue…it's never too late."

There is a common theme amongst the parents in this group, the majority do not see their inability to enroll in the program as a failure, but instead see it more as them hitting the pause button. Gorksi's (2013) definition of working-class parents encapsulates this group's situation,

> If an adult in a working class family is out of work for just a couple of weeks or experiences unforeseen car trouble, or if a child in a working class family is faced with an unexpected medical condition, the family can find itself suddenly in debt, trying to decide whether to see a doctor or pay the electric bill. (p. 24)

Parents in Group #3 also make a list of their responsibilities and prioritize according to their family's needs. In such a situation, they choose to forego enrollment in the academy in order to address the more pressing issues facing their family.

Primary Needs

For some parents, the idea of being fluent in English is something they've aspired to, but the logistics of making it happen cannot be reconciled with their current schedule. Nonetheless, they do not want to not try, so they sign-up for a program offering the course. Yet, soon afterwards, their daily-life, with all their responsibilities in-tow, catches up with them, and they are forced to prioritize the well-being of their family before any secondary need. Unlike parents in Group #1 and #2, these parents did not actually set foot inside a classroom; therefore, I am unable to empirically answer how their experience within the program would have differed from the other two groups.

Parents in Group #3 took that first step (enrolled), because they aspired to complete the program, a program requiring a long, consistent commitment from them. The majority of them had an education that did not go beyond 6th grade in Mexico, and it had been a very long time since they had been in an academic setting where they were the students. They did not have experiences and resources such as the ones parents in Group #1 had that they could draw on to buoy them as they navigated this new experience. Many pointed to having to quit school early in their childhood in order to be able to contribute at home. Now, in their adult life, they are still confronted with situations where it's school or family, when prioritizing their time. Therefore, their intention to enroll and their aspiration to complete the class of their choice is no different from parents in Group #1 and Group #2, but the amount of time capital they have at their

disposal for secondary needs is not fixed, therefore when life circumstances impact their family's primary needs, secondary needs, such as enrolling in a class, take a backseat.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have described the overall themes shared by all 36 parents in the study, followed by a detailed review of the particular themes specific to each of the three groups, parents who graduated from the academy, parents who did not graduate, and parents who chose not to enroll in the academy. Although they all began with the intention of investing three or four semesters to reach their proficiency goal (i.e., a secondary goal), two groups did not. They had to stop and prioritize the allocation of their time capital towards making sure their family's needs were taken care of. In the following chapter, I will discuss how these findings relate to the reviewed literature for this study as well as the theoretical frameworks for this study: Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005) model of the parental involvement process and Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth. I will also discuss the implications for existing practice and future research.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion and Implications

Scant research has examined the decision-making processes of working-class Latino/a parents when reconciling whether to participate or not in school-sponsored engagement programs. More research is needed to explore the reasons for parent engagement differences among Latino/a parents who belong to the same low-income SES. This study aimed to understand how working-class Latino/a parents make decisions to enroll in a school engagement program, the constraints of engagement as experienced by the parents, and how their experiences relate to the program's original intentions. In this chapter, I first discuss how the findings of my case study relate to the literature that I reviewed in chapter 2. In doing so, I discuss how and in what ways the findings from this study addresses the gaps that I highlighted in the literature. Second, I will discuss how my findings align with and in some ways, extend Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005) theoretical model of the parental involvement process and Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework.

Third, as a reminder, I examined the following research questions: (1a) Why do working class Latino/a parents make the decision to become involved in parental engagement programs offered by their child's school? (1b) How do these parents decide to become involved? (2) What are the constraints of engagement as experienced by these parents? and (3) How do these decisions and parents' experiences relate to the elements of the parental engagement program? Finally, I discuss the implications of this research for practice and future research. To begin, I re-present a summary of key findings.

Summary of Key Findings

This study's findings highlight the existence of different dimensions of working-class parents. Not all Latino/a working-class parents are the same. That is, not every parent who fits this description shares the same background or experiences. In the United States, these parents might be grouped in the same category, but some of them come to the program with varying degrees of privilege, most notably in regards to education and family supports. The parents in this study with the most privilege were mainly in Group #1, parents who graduated from the program. Districts need to be aware of these privilege differences and recognize how they impact participation. It is necessary in order to avoid forming deficit assumptions of certain subgroups of parents and recognize that some parents have more constraints on their decisions than others. Therefore, districts must think about ways to address the diverse experiences and backgrounds of working-class Latino/a parents in order to avoid creating parental programs that are only engagement in name but involvement in practice.

Comparison to the Literature

As such, the overall findings from this study align with the existing literature on parental engagement of Latino/a parents in highlighting working-class Latino/a parents' commitment to helping their children succeed academically and their preference for school-supported plans that sponsor programs based on the particular needs of parents (Desimone et al., 2000; Larotta & Yamamura, 2011; Waterman, 2006). In addition, the findings extend the research by providing in-depth accounts of not only parents who successfully completed the program, but also parents who are unable to complete or enroll in the program. Previous research finds that, traditionally, studying the decision-making process of parents who did participate in a school program are harder to study, because these parents are not readily available or present at the school (Anderson

& Minke, 2007; Carlson, 1993). In this study, one of the three parent groups decided not to enroll in the program (Group #3) and having them agree to interviews was more challenging, but their stories provided the opportunity to closely examine their decision-making process, thereby making this study's contributions richer.

This study importantly illuminates the different dimensions of working class Latino/a parents that exist within the district's parental engagement program. While these Latino/a parents are all from the same low-income and working-class SES background—which is often spoken about as a monolith—this study informs our understanding about the diversity of experiences and factors that influence the decision making processes of parents within this category (Kim 2009). For two groups of parents, their decisions around enrollment in a parental engagement program are more impacted by constraints in their daily lives, such as inflexible work schedules or variable transportation and childcare (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Orozco & Orozco, 2009).

When these parents' time constraints are coupled with experiences within the classroom that retract from the stated goals of the program, not all, but a group of parents will decide their time is best utilized elsewhere. There are various dimensions to the participation of working-class Latino/a parents in parental engagement programs, not all working class Latino/a parents are the same. These parents come to the program with different experiences and can access privileges that others cannot. It was clear in my interviews with the parents that they all want what is best for their children and are heavily invested in their children's education.

Analysis of Findings in Light of the Parental Engagement Literature

The findings from this study align with existing research on parental engagement in two ways: (a) it documents that high value placed on education by working-class Latino/a parents, and (b) their strong motivation to support their children's success in U.S. schools (Delgado-

Gaitán, 1992; González, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzáles, & Amanti, 1993; López

et al., 2001; Orozco & Orozco, 2009; Valdés, 1996).

Acquiring Social Capital

Parents' high esteem for education and their desire to help their children succeed

academically was demonstrated in several ways. First, parents demonstrated this through

wanting to set a good example for their children by going back to school. Second, they wanted to

learn English or how to use a computer so that they can help their children with homework.

Third, they wanted to learn how to navigate the U.S. educational system to better support their

children. In addition, the enrollment of the Latino/a parents in the district's parental academy

supports existing literature which finds that parents would be more willing to participate in

school-supported plans that sponsor programs based on the particular needs of parents (Pryor,

2001), such as providing workshops about community resources (Desimone et al., 2000) and

offering classes on Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED; Davies, 1993), English as a Second

Language (ESL), and U. S. citizenship (Moosa et al., 2001; Waterman, 2006). Offering such

classes proved to be a big part of the decision why parents decided to get involved in the San

Mateo program (see Table 6 for a comparison of existing parental engagement literature and this

study's findings).

In addition, the individual variables other researchers have identified as being

participation barriers for low-income and working class Latino/a parents in their children's

school proved to be motivating factors for why the parents in this study wanted to enroll in the

district's parent academy, including: language barriers (Daniel-White, 2002; Orozco & Orozco,

2009; Sohn &Wang, 2006); less education (Daniel-White, 2002; Pena, 2000) and low

socioeconomic status (SES; Li, 2003; Pryor, 2001; Coleman, Schiller, & Schneider, 1993; Tapia,

2000). This study's findings extend the literature on working-class Latino/a parents by showing that the parents' enrollment in the San Mateo program was due to their interest in wanting to overcome previous participation barriers, most notably their dominance of the English language. When offered the opportunity to overcome the language barrier, parents responded favorably. The three groups of parents, regardless of enrollment outcome, had the desire and were motivated to enroll in a program that offered them courses they believed were resources to overcome their life-context barriers.

Prioritizing Their Family's Primary Needs

Previous research says little about the motivations of parents who did not complete a program or did not ultimately enroll. Their decision to sign-up for classes is confirmed in the literature that documents the increased focus on parental agency in family–school connections (McClain, 2010; Curry, Jean-Marie, & Adams, 2016) as a bridge between immigrant families and schools (Dryden-Peterson, 2010; González, 2005; Orozco & Orozco, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). The school district tapped into the parents' agency and their desire to overcome the language barrier, get a better job to provide for their family, and learn to navigate the education system to better help their children. Yet, in the case of the parents who stopped going to the academy or those who signed up but did not show up for class, addressing the social, economic, and physical needs of their family took priority over their agency for involvement (López et al., 2001). Districts cannot assume that a lack of participation means a lack of interest; instead they should investigate what barriers to enrollment parents face and take them into account when designing a program.

Table 6. Comparison Between Existing Literature and the Study's Findings

Existing Literature	This Study
Disconnect between what is designed and offered and what families want or need (Curry & Holter, 2015; Gordon & Seahore Louis, 2009; Jackson & Remillard, 2005; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001)	The parental engagement program in this study is offering classes working-class Latino families want or need (i.e., GED, ESL, and computer literacy).
Many times, it is the programs, practices, and policies that school personnel design that are "hard to reach," not the families (Mapp & Hong, 2010)	The policies of the program in this study, although engagement in name, were more involvement in practice, which acted as a constraint for parents in Group #2 and factored into their decision to withdraw from the program.
Low-income parents and students can integrate themselves into authentic partnerships with schools only with substantial supports both inside the schools and in the wider community (Henig & Stone, 2008; Olivos, 2012).	The life context and demands faced by working-class parents in this program, necessitated access to reliable childcare and/or transportation in order to attend classes on a regular basis. Without these supports, parents in Group #2 and #3, were unable to participate in the program.
Authentic partnerships are defined as respectful alliances among educators, families, and community groups that value relationship building, dialogue, and power sharing as part of socially just, democratic schools (Auerbach, 2008; Luet, 2015)	The program in this study aimed to create an authentic partnership with parents, but the policy design and implementation was less about dialogue and power sharing, and more traditional parental involvement in nature.
Latino/a families want to learn about technology, but many have children who could not be left at home alone while the parents attended adult programs (Machado-Casas, 2009).	Parents in this study responded very favorably to the computer literacy classes offered by the program. Parents expressed their desire to improve their digital literacy, but they, too, were faced with the constraint of not having access to reliable childcare.

This qualitative case study also supports the research on working-class Latino/a families in the U.S., in that Latino/a parents do care about their child's education and want to be involved, but it also contributes to the scant research examining the decision-making processes of working-class Latino/a parents when reconciling whether to participate or not in school-sponsored engagement programs. This case study offers an empirical example of how the decision-making process for enrollment plays out across three subgroups of working-class parents, in addition to

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exploring the constraints to engagement they encounter, and how their enrollment decisions are influenced by their experiences once enrolled in the program.

As such, the findings from this study contribute to four gaps in the literature. First, it provides more research to explore the reasons for parent engagement differences among Latino/a parents who belong to the same low-income SES (Kim, 2009). Second, it provides more research that examines how working-class Latino/a parents make decisions to become involved in programs offered by their child's school and their preferences for varied forms and levels of involvement (Hill et al., 2004; Marschall, 2006; Rodriguez, 2009). Third, it examines the role social factors play in the parental involvement decision-making process of working-class Latino/a parents (Curry et al., 2016; Walker et al.,2011). Fourth, it includes interviews with parents previous studies have found to be *uninvolved* parents, parents who do not end up participating in school-based events and who do not return researchers' surveys or agree to interviews (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Carlson, 1993; Walker et al., 2011).

My study contributes to these gaps by studying 36 low-income, working-class parents (i.e., shared the same SES background) who made different decisions in regards to participation in a program offered by their child's district. I examined the social factors that influenced parents to make one of three decisions: stay enrolled and graduate, leave the program before finishing the course, or not enroll in the program. Often studies have studied parents who successfully complete a school-based program (i.e., the success stories), but have not studied parents who did not complete or participate in said school sponsored program, because those parents are harder to track down. This contribution is important, because by not studying the entire spectrum of parents' realities, we are basing our findings on a subgroup and using broad strokes to describe an entire population.

In addition, my study's addresses Curry et al.'s (2016) quantitative study, which finds that social factors influence parent motivation for involvement. Furthermore, Curry et al. (2016) call for more research to understand the specific life context variables that influence motivational beliefs, more research to understand the influence of parent social networks in a variety of settings (especially among parents who are less involved in their children's education), and a qualitative study that explores more in-depth what factors inform parent motivational beliefs for involvement.

To begin, the key motivational belief influencing the working-class Latino/a parents in this study to enroll in the parent academy was the alignment of interests between the school and the parents. The school offered classes the parents wanted to take; they felt they would benefit from them, personally and as a parent. At the same time, the district benefited because parent interest in their program increased exponentially. In addition, the classes were free and offered at various times and at different locations, which for parents who are running households on a limited time and monetary budget, was a great incentive. This was the case for the three subgroups of parents in this study. In the end, it was the social context and life circumstances that played the biggest influence on parents not enrolling or not continuing in the program. Additionally, culturally and age relevant pedagogy by program staff and instructors was identified by parents as an important factor in creating an environment conducive to keeping parents engaged in the classroom.

The notion of an uninvolved parent is contextual, and literature related to "uninvolved parents" has been qualitative in nature, with very small sample sizes (Jackson & Remillard, 2005; Lawson, 2003). Further, Walker et al. (2011) find that reliance on volunteer participants and a low response rate are representative of a central methodological challenge to studies of the

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parent involvement process; uninvolved parents are difficult to study (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Carlson, 1993). In this study, interviewing parents in Groups #2 and #3 proved to be a challenge as well. While I was able to conduct in-person interviews with all 12 parents in Group #1, but for parents in Groups #2 and #3, the only in-person interviews I could arrange were the focus group interviews, the eight individual interviews in Group #2 and Group #3, respectively, were conducted over the phone. Their lack of availability could be seen as "uninvolved" or dismissive, but it was just an illustration of their time poverty (Allen & White-Smith, 2017). The parents apologized, but said that they had their hands full and could only squeeze me in between tasks. There was stress in their voice, speaking in a hurried manner. I made sure to accommodate them and work around their schedule.

The individual variables other researchers have identified as being participation barriers for minority parents in their children's school proved to be motivating factors for why the parents in this study wanted to enroll in the district's parent academy, most notably wanting to improve their dominance of the English language. This study extends the Latino/a parental engagement literature by illuminating the various dimensions that exist of working-class parents, and how previous and current life circumstances impact their enrollment ability. Furthermore, the study's findings provide a more nuanced understanding of the decision-making process of three subgroups, because not only the subgroup of parents who successfully complete a school-based program. Next, I will discuss how my findings align with and extend the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005) theoretical model of the parental involvement process and Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework.

Analysis of Findings in Light of the Theoretical Frameworks

In this study, I utilize concepts from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's parental involvement model and community cultural wealth to guide the analysis. I discuss how my findings align and extend them.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model

Various studies have utilized the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) model to understand Latino/a parental involvement. More recently, Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2011) published the findings of their study examining the ability of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model to predict the parental involvement of Latino/a parents. Their sample of Latino/a parents, almost all of whom were first-generation immigrants primarily from Mexico, is similar to my study. The model predicted 55% of the variance in their reported home-based involvement and 49% of the variance in their reports of school-based involvement. The Latino parents' active role construction manifested itself mainly as partnership-focused beliefs and actions (i.e. they and the school share primary responsibility for the student's school outcomes). In addition, specific invitations for parents' involvement from the teacher, specific invitations to involvement from students, and families' life context realities regarding time and energy were found to be important factors in engaging and sustaining Latino parents' involvement in their children's schooling.

Walker et al. (2011) suggested future investigations might use their initial survey findings in a systematic discussion with groups of parents—Latino or other groups—to discern families' experiences with the school, their understanding of the roles they should play supporting their children's learning, and their ideas about what skills, information, and consideration they might need to participate even more effectively in their children's school success. Additionally, given

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the strong endorsement of partnership-focused role construction, Walker et al. (2011) suggest future studies examine more deeply the contributions of many Latino parents' cultures to understandings of their role in their children's learning and their preferences for school support.

With my study, I contribute to their findings in three ways. First, I interviewed parents who are not only actively engaging with the school, but I interviewed parents who are not participating (which their study did not capture), thereby extending the spectrum of parents whose decision-making process around parental engagement is studied. Second, I participated in systematic discussions with three different groups of working-class Latino/a parents to discern their various experiences, which can enhance Walker et al.'s initial survey findings, since their model does not take into sociological and life-context variables in modeling parental engagement. Third, my qualitative study offers deeper analysis into how these Latino/a parents' culture influences their role construction.

My findings align with Walker et al.'s (2011) results pertaining to Latino parents' expressing partnership-focused beliefs and actions (i.e. they and the school share primary responsibility for the student's school outcomes). In addition, I also found that families' life contexts and realities regarding time and energy to be important factors in engaging and sustaining Latino parents' involvement in their children's schooling. However, our findings do not align when it comes to specific invitations for parents' involvement from the teacher and from students. The parents in my study do not make reference to these types of invitations as playing any role in their decision-making. I found that neither school, teacher or student invitations play a role, instead, it was their social network (i.e., relatives, friends, co-workers, and neighbors) who initiated the invitation/referral, and it was through consultation with their family network that the parent decided to get involved.

Group #3's enrollment decision aligns with Hoover and Dempsey's third construct in level 1 of the model, which is parents' perceived life context (i.e., self-perceived time and energy - time constraints). The authors operationalize this construct by breaking it up into two scales: (1) self-perceived time and energy and (2) self-perceived skills and knowledge. In their model, six items were developed to assess the parents' time and energy for involvement and nine items were developed to assess skills and knowledge for involvement. In this study, the parents' decision to not enroll after signing up had more to do with their self-perceived time and energy than their self-perceived skills and knowledge. This finding aligns with Walker et al. (2011) and other researchers work who find that families' life context realities regarding time and energy were found to be important factors in engaging and sustaining Latino parents' involvement in their children's schooling. Yet my finding, unlike Walker et al. (2011), I did not find specific invitations for parents' involvement from the teacher or specific invitations to involvement from students to be a factor in the decision-making process of parents. Rather, the invitation that proved to be the most successful in getting parents to enroll came from someone in their social network who had a positive review of the program. The social networks these working-class Latino/a parents were part of played a critical role in their decision-making, word of mouth proved to be a powerful agent, more so than school outreach. This highlights the importance of establishing strong partnerships between schools and the community they serve; plus offering programs that appeal to parents' interests.

The parents in Group #2 enrolled in the program yet stopped attending the classes without graduating, because of situations similar to those experienced by Group #3. For most parents in Group #2, life circumstances were also the main barrier to continued enrollment but their ultimate decision to stop attending was informed by their actual experience within the

program. In Hoover and Dempsey's model, parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others is the second construct in level 1 and it has three components: perceptions of general school invitations, perceptions of specific child invitations, and perceptions of specific teacher invitations. Although most of the parents in this study were invited to enroll in the program by someone in their social circle, not a teacher or the school or their children, these parents nonetheless had to interact with district staff and program teachers at the parent center once enrolled in the classes. The delivery of program services is equally as important as getting parents inside the door and enrolled. Staff needs to be pedagogically and culturally equipped to work with the parents they serve.

Community Cultural Wealth

The Community Cultural Wealth lens asserts that communities of color survive and resist oppression and discrimination by activating various forms of capital fostered through cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). These various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather they are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth. Community cultural wealth identifies the interconnectedness of the six forms of capital families of color possess.

In this study, I utilize Gorski's (2013) definition of working-class,

Working class people generally are able to afford their most basic necessities, but only at a subsistence level. They make just enough money to get by and, as a result, are unable to save money or accumulate wealth. This leaves working class people and families in a precarious position, balancing on the brink of poverty. (p. 16)

This definition technically applies to all the parents in this study, but working-class does not necessarily mean low educational attainment. In this study, 28% of the parents who participated possessed social capital that the other 72% did not (i.e., college education in Mexico and experience navigating educational spaces), while forty-four percent of the parents had an education below 9th grade level in Mexico. In regards to socio-economic level, these parents were in the same group, but the social capitals they had acquired and brought with them to the table covered a wide spectrum.

Despite the variation in their previous educational attainment levels, the psychological and contextual contributors informing the decision-making process of parents to enroll in the academy were initially similar for all three-groups. For the parents, the class offerings directly addressed their belief that gaining English fluency, computer literacy and/or a high school diploma, would directly impact their ability to advocate for their child at school, better interact with their child at home, and also benefit them personally in their social interactions and entrepreneurial pursuits, which speaks to the Level 1 construct, parents' motivational beliefs, in Hoover-Dempsey model and Sandler's model. The participating parents alluded to a trend they saw regarding their child's preference for speaking more or only English at home, which consequently was a motivating factor to learn English themselves.

For the majority of the parents, the invitation for involvement came as a referral from someone in their social circle (i.e., family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers), not the school, a teacher or their children. The Hoover-Dempsey model does not include sociological factors contributing to parental engagement, but community cultural wealth speaks to and recognizes the important role *social capital* and *familial capital* play in the lives of families of color. The parents make communal decisions; they are influenced by what's best for their family, instead of

making individualistic decisions. In addition, the program referral by their network is a transfer of *social capital*, they help one another gain access to spaces they inhabit (i.e., schools, their community, work, etc.). Once the parents in this study had been made aware of the opportunity offered by the district, how they made decisions regarding enrollment was quite linear for most of them. It basically consisted of four steps: (1) consult the opportunity with their spouse, children, and/or relative; discuss child care and transportation, (2) go to or call the parent center they were referred to and inquire about class options and schedules, (3) select the class section with the date/time that best fits their availability, and (4) make arrangements with their employer and/or family to fit the class into their existing schedule. It is important to note that when parents discussed the program opportunity in step one with their family, the potential for building or increasing their self-capital (i.e. personal capacity) was discussed and was a driving force behind their decision to enroll in the free program.

Self-capital is not one of the six capitals in Yosso's (2005) CCW framework, but I argue that those six capitals inform it. The motivation of the 36 parents in this study was two-fold, by going back to school and gaining new capitals they would not only be investing in themselves, but they would be in a situation to better help their children academically and financially. All the parent participants in this study, regardless of their previous educational background, possessed an immigrant entrepreneurial spirit: come to America the land of opportunity, work hard, find success and provide for their family. With the exception of one participant (he was technically born in the U.S. but grew up in Mexico), 35 of the 36 participants were Mexican immigrants. One mom describes the United States as a country of opportunity. In Spanish, she said, "estoy en un país de oportunidades, en México no hay estas oportunidades." She says that she is living in a country of opportunity and that in Mexico these same opportunities do not exist. *Aspirational*

capital could possibly inform this spirit, but this drive is more about action than just having high expectations, staying focused on one's goals and remaining resilient regardless of perceived barriers and real hardships.

All the parents in the study have high aspirations for their family, and acknowledge that turning their aspirations into reality requires investing in themselves (i.e. their self-capital), yet, some parents have more constraints impacting their enrollment decisions than others. Not all working-class Latino/a parents are the same, their past social, economic, and educational experiences inform their decisions, and some are more privileged than others. The varying dimensions of previous and current life experiences directly affect what these Latino/a parents can reasonably commit to.

These working-class Latino/a parents recognize that these classes, should they take them elsewhere, would be too expensive, which is why many of them had never taken them. Financially, enrolling in these classes makes a lot of sense to them, and this proves to be a pivotal factor in making the decision to enroll. Signing-up for the classes was definitely about wanting to help their children, but it was also about their own personal growth and mobility. In addition, researchers have found Latino/a parents are more willing to participate in school-supported programs also sponsoring social activities that build community (Desimone et al., 2000; Huss-Keeler, 1997). The San Mateo district attempted to create a sense of community at the various parent centers by providing activities, other than the academic courses. Such activities included Zumba classes throughout the week and on Fridays, the parent centers would offer entrepreneurship programs in nutrition, arts & crafts, sewing, cake decorating, jewelry making, knitting, cosmetology, floral arrangements, and manicures. The district hosts a market day at the end of the semester where parents are able to sell the goods they learned to make.

Several of the parents who participated in this study had also taken these entrepreneurial courses and were using the skills gained to make extra money on the side.

Although initially the parents all start out sharing a common purpose, to enroll in the program, enrollment decision differentiation amongst the three groups of parents begins after they have signed up but before the class semester begins. As stated above, working-class families are "in a precarious position, balancing on the brink of poverty" (Gorski, 2013, p. 16). For most of the parents in Group #3, parents who signed-up but did not enroll, their enrollment decision aligns with previous research which finds that the main barrier to enrollment is when parents are faced with limited time and they have to make a choice between attending to their family obligations or attending class; parents choose family (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Finders & Lewis, 1994). For some it was a family sickness, an employer going back on their word to allow the parent to come in earlier and leave earlier in order to make it to class, or a car accident that leaves the family down to one car. In their various scenarios, their lack of attendance to the program was not for lack of want, but because they prioritized the livelihood of their family over their own plans. For them, this was not something that needed to be discussed, it was a simple decision, and their family took priority.

The quality of these interactions can and did influence the decision-making of some of these parents when debating whether to stay enrolled or not, which speaks directly to research question #3. Some of these parents were recently single parents, others only had one car, others had their child or spouse need surgery during the semester, and some were stay at home moms who did not know how to drive. Initially, they wanted to make it work and were looking for a Plan B that would allow them to stay enrolled while still attending to their family's needs. It

proved to be challenging and stressful, so some parents decided to just stop going for the time being, and planned to re-enroll when things settled down.

Yet, for others who tried to persist despite the challenge to balance a full-plate, their experience with staff and inside the classroom was the ultimate reason why they decided to take a break. Although the staff meant well by reaching out to parents when they missed a class to remind them that attendance was mandatory and that there was a long list of parents who were on standby who would be happy to take their seat, it only served to add guilt and more stress to their already high-stress situation. Parents in this situation would consult with their families and share their reasons for wanting to no longer attend, but they would not tell the parent center. They would just stop answering the staff's phone calls. No feedback loop was established. According to the literature, it is important to consider the barriers that impede many Latino/a immigrant parents (Delgado-Gaitán, 2001; Diaz Soto, 1997), because transcending these barriers is essential to increasing communication and collaboration between immigrant parents and schools (Waterman, 2006). Parents in the program were only asked to provide their feedback about the program at the end of the semester, and by then, parents who had encountered constraints within the program and/or outside of the program (in their personal lives), had already left the program.

For other parents in Group #2 who were also struggling to juggle school, life and work, their experience in the classroom with their teacher and/or with the curriculum influenced their decision to stop attending. Parents shared their frustration with the arrangement in some of their ESL classes; there were parents whose English fluency ranged from beginner to advanced placed in the same classroom. There were not enough teachers available to teach different levels separately. The program had grown and teacher capacity was spread out thin. This was not ideal

for either group, the beginners felt embarrassed and stressed that they could not keep up and the advanced group felt frustrated that the class was not moving fast enough. Both groups felt they were wasting time they could not spare.

Again, in conjunction with their family, parents came to the conclusion that for the time being, they would put class on the backburner and revisit it down the road. They did not communicate their decision to the staff they just stopped attending. This highlights the need to establish dialogue beyond the initial interactions between staff and parents, otherwise a strong partnership cannot be sustained which is outlined in the literature (Auerbach, 2008; Barton et al., 2004; Luet, 2015). In addition, some parents shared they would have preferred having a teacher with experience teaching adults. They did not like it when teachers treated them like they were children in elementary. Parents would have preferred teachers utilize not only culturally but age relevant pedagogy (Scribner et al., 1999; Wilder, 2014).

The parents in Group #1, parents who successfully completed at least one course at the parent academy, also experienced some of the barriers faced by the parents in Group #2 and Group #3, such as busy lives and classrooms with diverse English fluency levels, but their social, navigational, and familial capital proved to be their biggest asset. One mother shared that her aunt offered to babysit her daughter while she went to class. In Spanish, she said, "mi tía se ofreció a cuidar a mi nena, y pues eso me ayudó mucho para no faltar a clase." In Engligh, "my aunt offered to help take care of my little girl, and well, that helped to a lot and allowed me not to miss class." This type of in-kind assistance from a family member was a key reason for this mother's successful completion of the program. Recognizing that reliable childcare is a major factor in a parent's ability to consistently attend class can help inform a parental engagement program looking to serve working-class Latino/a parents.

The parents in Group #1 were the most entrepreneurial of the three groups, but they were also the group with the most parents who had at least a high school degree in Mexico, seven out of 12 (five of which had a college education). They felt comfortable in the school setting, and they would speak out and asked to be moved out of a class if they did not feel they were learning. For the parents with some college education or a college degree, their driving force in staying enrolled was that they wanted to become fluent in English in order to then apply to receive college credit for their Mexican education. Even if they did not have some college education, most of them were married and both parents lived at home. Being married and having two cars provided a source of stability for these parents; as did having reliable child care, whether through a family member or because they were able to drive themselves to class in the morning when their children were at school. This is not to say that they did not have full-plates, they still had to be resourceful in planning their schedule around work and/or family, but during their time in the program, at least, they did not experience a life circumstance that strained resources to the point of necessitating they put their enrollment on hold.

When Walker et al. (2011) applied the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model to their work looking at Latino parents, they were utilizing solely a psychological lens, they did not take into account social networks. For parents in Group #1, it was the support of their social network that proved to be critical to their success in the program.

Gorski (2013) points out that,

if an adult in a working-class family is out of work for just a couple of weeks or experiences unforeseen car trouble, or if a child in a working class family is faced with an unexpected medical condition, the family can find itself suddenly in debt, trying to decide whether to see a doctor or pay the electric bill. (p. 17)

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There was a parent working full-time in every family who participated in this study, but their financial situation was not guaranteed to remain stable. They were hyper aware that their financial situation could be negatively impacted at any moment. When designing programs involving working-class Latino/a parents, their lived reality should be taken into account and assumptions should not be made in regards to their ability to be available for every class or have built-in flexibility in their schedule. When monitoring attendance, allowing for some flexibility is necessary (i.e., parents themselves offered to make-up the class they missed on another day, but they were told no), otherwise the program's design is no different from the Epstein (1986, 1991) typologies which do not engage the intersections of race, class, and immigration experienced by working-class Latino/a parents (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013). Finally, to conclude this chapter, I will next discuss how this study's findings may help inform parental engagement policy at the practitioner level.

Implications for Practice

School districts, especially those tasked with leading parental engagement efforts (such as school administrators, teachers, and district partners) should consider and benefit from the findings of this study, especially those whose district serves a large or rapidly-growing working-class Latino/a population. This study's conclusions offer several implications for a school district's design and implementation of a parental engagement plan: (a) host town halls, (b) recognize dimensions of privilege (i.e., parents' past and current experiences), (c) provide transportation for those parents who need it, (d) provide childcare on site at the parent center, (d) establish real-time feedback loops, (e) pedagogically and culturally equipped staff to relate to a diversity of low-income and working class Latino/a parents, and (f) build in flexibility into the program rules (see Table 7 for descriptions).

First, in redesigning their parental engagement program, the San Mateo district did not just conduct one annual meeting before moving forward with a revamp of the program. The district hosted town halls across the district in an effort to make sure the meetings were accessible to as many parents as possible. Advertisement of the town halls went beyond solely sending a flyer home with children. The outreach took place by also going to supermarkets and churches within the district, places frequented often by the district's parents. Outreach by traditional ways may not reach all parents; it should be adapted to the individual communities served by each district. Traditional parental involvement neglects the ways in which parental engagement is a social practice, sustained through active participation and dialogue (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Luet, 2015). Consequently, the town halls were advertised as meetings where administrators wanted to hear from their parents, instead of administrators speaking and parents solely listening.

Second, at the town hall, district administrators asked parents to share their viewpoints in regards to what they felt the district could do to facilitate engagement between schools and parents so that together they could help their children succeed academically. In the case of San Mateo parents, they expressed a need to learn English, be computer literate, and get their GED certificate. To them, by making gains in these areas, they would be able to better help their children academically, but would also invest in their personal capital. This factor was salient across all three groups of parents' decision-making process when considering enrollment in the parent academy. In designing a parental engagement program, it is vital that parents be consulted in regards to what they, the parents, see as barriers to better supporting their children (Daniel-White, 2002; Sohn &Wang, 2006). For those parents who are unable to attend, the district can provide a summary of what occurred at the town hall so that all parents are up-to-date with what

is being discussed. The comfort level of Latino/a parents with cell phone technology is greater

than it is with computers (Machado-Casas et al., 2014). Therefore, clicking on a link that will

take them directly to a bilingual website with information about the district's parental

engagement efforts will be more efficient (and economical) than mailing a memo home. The

phone numbers of parents do change, as was the case with parents in my study, but individual

teachers will likely have the most current phone numbers for parents rather than the

administration office. Teachers could be in charge of texting parents the link.

Table 7. Implications for a school district's design and implementation of a parental engagement

plan.

Town Halls – conduct town halls across the district; advertise them as parent-centric dialogue; reach out at community locations frequented by parents; for parents unable to attend, provide a link to a summary of what transpired at the town hall via text message.
Recognize Dimensions of Privilege - understand how privilege plays into people's life context (i.e., past and current experiences) and design the program with this in mind
Provide Transportation, if needed - some parents do not have access to reliable transportation and/or only have one family car
Provide Childcare at the Site, if needed - some parents do not have access to reliable childcare in the evenings (especially single, working mothers)
Feedback Loops – establish opportunities to strengthen trust between the district/program and parents throughout the implementation process; feedback should not occur at the end of the semester when the program has already lost some parents, instead, it should happen at the beginning of the semester, during the semester, and at the end of the semester.
Culturally, Age Relevant Pedagogy – treat parents with respect and as true partners from the initial interactions of recruitment through the implementation of the program and beyond; provide professional development for staff that builds their capacity to work with a diversity of working-class parents/adults.
Build Flexibility into the Program – account for the diversity of low-income Latino/a parents and the ranges of experiences and capitals that they bring to the program; recognize the legitimate barriers faced by some parents such as reliable transportation and/or childcare, and inconsistent work schedules, and family obligations (especially single parents).

This study's findings highlight the existence of different dimensions of working-class parents. Not all Latino/a working-class parents are the same. That is, not every parent who fits this description shares the same background or experiences. In the United States, these parents might be grouped in the same category, but some of them come to the program with varying degrees of privilege, most notably in regards to education and family supports. The parents in this study with the most privilege were mainly in Group #1, parents who graduated from the program. Districts need to be aware of these privilege differences and recognize how they impact participation. It is necessary in order to avoid forming deficit assumptions of certain subgroups of parents and recognize that some parents have more constraints on their decisions than others. Therefore, districts must think about ways to address the diverse experiences and backgrounds of working-class Latino/a parents in order to avoid creating parental programs that are only engagement in name but involvement in practice.

Some parents, legitimately, did not have access to reliable transportation and/or only had one family car. This negatively impacted their ability to attend class on a consistent basis, which consequently resulted in the parent receiving a phone call from the program asking why they missed class. Traditional parental involvement models put the full onus on parents and do not account for the larger constraints parents face in their life-context. A recommendation to help address the issue of some parents being unable to get to and from class on a consistent basis is for the program to provide transportation. A school district owns school buses, and the parental engagement classes take place when the buses are not being used to transport students to school (i.e., morning section – students are already at school or evening section – after students have been dropped off). The drop-off and pick-up for parents can be at their nearest neighborhood school. Walking to a neighborhood campus to catch a bus ride to the parent center would be an

accessible option for parents wanting to attend class, especially in a city where public

transportation is practically non-existent.

Similarly, access to reliable childcare in the evenings (especially for single, working

mothers), was a major factor influencing a parent's ability to consistently attend class. A parent

would prioritize childcare over attending class every time, therefore, if a parental engagement

program is to successfully engage parents and facilitate their participation, the program should

consider offering childcare on site. Not every parent will need to use it but offering the service

acknowledges that reliable childcare is a constraint to enrollment. Providing it at the parent

center would undoubtedly improve attendance consistency.

Establishing real-time feedback loops can help avoid some of the factors, which impacted

parents' decision to not stay enrolled in the program. It is important to get parent to enroll, but

establishing opportunities to strengthen trust between the district/program and parents throughout

the implementation process can help to keep parents enrolled. Feedback should not only occur at

the end of the semester, because by then, the program has already lost some parents. Instead,

feedback loops should happen at the beginning of the semester, during the semester, and at the

end of the semester. Positive word of mouth among the parents and their social circles led to the

high demand and rapid growth of the program. Yet, it also led to a strain of resources, as there

was a need to do more utilizing the same budget. Between the spans of four years, the number of

parent centers grew from three to eight. As a result, several English as a Second Language (ESL)

classes included parents whose English fluency ranged from beginner to advanced. Many parents

who were in such classes expressed their dislike for being placed in a situation where they felt

dumb because others were way more advanced. Or the other extreme, some parents felt

frustrated because the beginners were holding the class back. For some parents who were already

struggling with balancing work, family, and school, feeling frustrated at school was the determining factor in choosing to stop attending. Similarly, for some parents who encountered hurdles causing them at times to miss class, receiving phone calls from the program staff reminding them that they should not be missing class because others were on the waiting list and that they were taking up a seat, only created more anxiety for a parent already dealing with a very high-stress life. These experiences would influence their decision to stop going to class all-together and since they felt embarrassed for quitting, they would just stop answering the phone calls from the program. Implementing a feedback loop between the parents and the program staff at various points during the semester could help address some of the concerns that arise for parents. Waiting until the end of the semester is too late.

A parental program must employ pedagogically and culturally equipped staff. It is vital that a district treat parents with respect and as true partners from the initial interactions of recruitment through the implementation of the program and beyond. The district's staff involved in the day-to-day interactions with the working-class Latino/a parents in the parental engagement program must exercise culturally relevant pedagogy (Scribner et al., 1999; Wilder, 2014). Doing so will help to build an authentic partnership among the district, families, and community groups that value relationship building, dialogue, and power sharing as part of socially just, democratic schools (Auerbach, 2008; Luet, 2015). Staff includes the individuals doing the outreach on campuses and around the community, as well as the staff operating the parental engagement centers where the classes take place. Parental engagement is generated through relationships and actions that are grounded in the context in which the engagement takes place, therefore the goal is not to achieve a one-time result, but to establish a foundation where these relationships can be sustained (Barton et al., 2004). Getting parents to sign up is fundamental, but retaining the

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parents in the classroom is equally as important, and the parents in this study show that having

teachers in the classroom who have experience teaching adults becomes an important factor

influencing whether parents stay enrolled or eventually stop attending. In this regard, the

community college instructors who were teaching courses at the academy through a partnership

the district, seemed to connect better with the parents who were enrolled than those instructors

who were retired elementary school teachers.

A final implication from this study's findings is that in acknowledging privilege

differences between working-class parents, a program must also recognize that rule enforcement

within a program must be flexible. A parental engagement program must account for the

diversity of low-income Latino/a parents and the ranges of experiences and capitals that they

bring to the program. Some parents face legitimate barriers such as reliable transportation and/or

childcare, and inconsistent work schedules, and family obligations (especially single parents).

Therefore, punitive rules like strict attendance enforcement will only force to push parents out,

especially when parents express interest in making up the class at a later date/time, and they are

told it is not an option. This finding aligns with existing literature, which differentiates between

involvement and engagement; involvement is "done to" parents by the school program while

engagement is "done with" them (Auerbach, 2011; Mapp et al., 2008; Olivos, 2012). The goal is

to avoid creating a program that is only engagement in name but involvement in practice.

Implications for Future Research

This study offers implications for future research. First, given the unique geographic

location of this parental engagement program, studying working-class Latinos living in other

parts of the country would allow for a more nuanced understanding of this population. I

recommend further qualitative research of working-class Latino/a parents' who are living in

other areas of the United States with high concentrations of Latinos/as (i.e., gateway cities,

Southwest states, and more recently, emerging communities such as North Carolina), and

explore how they negotiate the boundaries of culture, history and life context when looking to

engage with their child's school.

Second, research might examine parental engagement of working-class Latino/a parents

in other communities along the 2,000-mile U.S.–Mexico border. The findings in this study

highlight that differences within working-class Latino/a parents exist, even within one school

district. Therefore, a more nuanced understanding of the similarities and differences between

working-class Latinos/as living in border communities could inform the state education plans

that border states (i.e., California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas), along with the other 46

states, must submit annually to the U.S. Department of Education. These states are recipients of

large amounts of federal Title I funds, therefore having a better understanding of what works best

in improving engagement between Latino/a families and school districts could directly impact

how these states utilize these funds.

In addition, more research is needed on how school districts in border communities can

effectively partner with a range of institutional and community stakeholders within their

proximity for the explicit focus of improving parental engagement in districts as well as

community outcomes. These border communities operate in a unique "Third Space," whereby a

partnership discussion should begin with a clear recognition and understanding of the area's

context, including the community's strengths and the challenges they face (i.e, economic,

political, educational, and immigration). Research shows that for working-class Latino/a families

to be involved, the social, economic, and physical needs of families must be addressed (López et

al., 2001). A school district alone may not be able to address all the needs parents have. As such,

a more holistic approach to engagement would be one that includes parents, the district and community-based organizations who can work together to develop a plan that recognizes the life context of families and what local stakeholders can reasonably agree to providing within a partnership. More research could explore how these border "Third Spaces" might vary across different border areas within Texas or across the other border states, and their impact on family-school-community partnership designs.

Lastly, future research might consider conducting a longitudinal study of the parents in Groups #2 and #3 of this study, to see if they ultimately re-enroll in the program and successfully complete it. This would help to better understand the lived contexts of these families and how it impacts their ability and/or desire to engage in a school based program, in the short-term and long-term.

Conclusion

The makeup of the United States is quickly becoming more diverse and schools are critical spaces that must adapt to best serve the needs of a diverse student population. According to the U.S. Census (Colby & Ortman, 2015), by 2044, more than half of all Americans are projected to belong to a minority group (any group other than non-Hispanic White alone). Therefore, how educational policy is implemented locally and how schools serve and successfully engage with Latino/a families will be crucial not only to the academic success of Latino/a students but for the United States' economy and global competitiveness.

U.S. policy has continuously regulated the parent–school relationship through a normalizing perspective based on middle-class values (Kainz & Aikens, 2007). Therefore, this study can inform how school districts and policymakers might establish more effective parental programs that resonate with working-class Latino/a parents. A better understanding of the nature

of Latino/a parental involvement will lead to a more collaborative partnership between schools and families, which can lead to the long-term success of parents' efficacy in the education of their children.

Given the anti-immigrant sentiment currently infusing the political climate nationally and at state levels, making sure that schools are seen as safe and welcoming spaces for all families takes on a heightened sense of importance. Traditional research on parental involvement has neglected the ways in which parental engagement is a social practice, sustained through active participation and dialogue (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Luet, 2015). According to Pew (2016), among immigrants who are lawful permanent residents, 66% say they are worried about deportation of themselves or someone close to them, while one-third (33%) of U.S.-born Hispanics say they are worried about deportation of someone they know. When schools pursue meaningful parent-school partnerships, they enhance social capital in struggling communities and expand opportunities for students, their families, and neighborhoods (Auerbach, 2009; Mapp et al., 2008). Schools are at the center of the lives of working-class Latino families across the country, therefore, establishing strong bonds at the local level with these families might be the best way to provide support to them in this current political climate. When we create welcoming spaces for these families, we allow for academic learning to take center stage.

Appendices

Appendix A

Parent Interview Protocols in English and Spanish

Parents who did graduate from the Parent Academy (Group #1)
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Goal: To understand the factors that influence a parent's decision to enroll in the academy and graduate (RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3)

RQ#1. How do working class Latino/a parents make the decision to become involved in parental engagement programs offered by their child's school?
RQ#2. What are the opportunities and constraints of engagement as experienced by these parents?
RQ#3. How do these decisions and opportunities/constraints relate to the elements of the parental engagement program?

Introduction
I. Hi, my name is Joanna Sánchez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin.
I'm studying the factors that influence a parent's decision to enroll in the academy and graduate. Thank you for agreeing to speak with me.

II. Participation and permission to participate - (Review the main points of the consent form)
- Here is a consent form that indicates that you agree to participate in the study and to be digitally-recorded. Reminder that I will use pseudonyms for all individuals, schools and the district.
- My notes and the interview audio file will be reviewed only by me, and if I get help with transcribing, your audio file and transcript will only be identified by a code. So, your identity will be protected.
- Please remember, you can decline to answer any question that you are uncomfortable answering or stop the interview at any time.
- This interview should take about 30 to 45 minutes. Do you have any questions before we get started?

III. Basic information and experience within the academy
1. Please tell me a little about yourself. Where are you from? How long have you lived here in the Valley?
2. Tell me a little about your educational experiences. In your opinion, what is the purpose of education? What role do you believe education plays in your child's life?
   How many children do you have? What are their ages? What schools do they attend? (Background/Context)
3. How did you find out about the parent academy the district offers? (Background/Context)
4. Why did you decide to enroll in the academy? (RQ#1)
   - Tell me about the process you went through when trying to arrive at your decision. Who did you talk to?
   - What opportunities were you offered as you engaged in the program?

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- What constraints did you experience in the program?
- How did these opportunities and constraints align with your original expectations for the program?
5. What role did the class options offered by the district play in your decision ? (RQ#1)
   - What role, if any, did the times classes were offered play in your decision?
   - Probe: Did anything else play a role?
6. Once enrolled in the academy, can you describe what your experience was like? (RQ#2)
   - What factors supported your completion in the program?
   - What was the hardest thing for you?
7. What informed your decision to persist to completion? (RQ#2)
8. Despite these challenges, what factors contributed to you completing the program? (RQ#2)
9. Can you talk to me about some of the benefits, if any, of graduating from the program? (RQ#3)
10. When comparing your original expectations of the program to what you actually experienced, how do you feel they aligned? (RQ#3)
11. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experience?

Madres y Padres que graduaron de la Academia de Padres (Grupo #1)
PROTOCOLO DE ENTREVISTA

Meta: llegar a comprender los factores que influyen en la decisión del padre/madre de inscribirse en la academia y graduarse (RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3)

Introducción
I. Hola, mi nombre es Joanna Sánchez y soy una estudiante de doctorado en la universidad de Texas en Austin.
Estoy estudiando los factores que influyen en la decisión de un padre/una madre de inscribirse en la academia de padres y graduarse.
Gracias por hablar conmigo.

II. Participación y permiso del participante - (Repasar los puntos principales del formulario de consentimiento)
- Aquí hay un formulario de consentimiento que dice que usted está de acuerdo en participar en el estudio y en que se grabe su entrevista en una cinta.
- Solo yo revisare mis notas y el audio de la entrevista.
- Por favor recuerde que puede no contestar cualquier pregunta que le resulte incomoda contestar o puede terminar la entrevista en cualquier momento.
- Esta entrevista debe tomar media hora a 45 minutos. Tiene alguna pregunta antes de que comencemos?

III. Información básica y experiencia dentro de la academia
1. Por favor cuénteme un poco de si mismo. De donde es usted? Cuánto tiempo lleva viviendo en el Valle? (Background/Context)
2. Cuénteme un poco sobre sus experiencias educacionales? Cuál cree usted que es el propósito de la educación? Que propósito considera usted que tiene la educación en la vida de sus hijos? Cuantos hijos tiene? Cuáles son sus edades? A que escuelas van? (Background/Context)
3. Como se enteró usted de la academia que ofrece San Mateo?
4. Porque decidió inscribirse en la academia? (RQ#1)
   - Cuénteme sobre el proceso que usted siguió pare llegar a su decisión de inscribirse? Con quien consulto para tomar su decisión?
   - Probe: Podría enumerar los 3 factores más importantes que influenciaron su decisión de inscribirse en la academia?
5. Que influencia tuvo en su decisión la selección de clases que ofrece la academia? (RQ#1)
   - Que influencia, si acaso, tuvo en su decisión los horarios en los que se ofrecen la clases?
   - Probe: Acaso hubo algo más que haya influenciado su decisión?
6. Ya enrollado/a dentro de la academia, cuénteme sobre su experiencia. (RQ#2)
   - En que encontró apoyo para completar el curso?
   - Que fue lo más difícil para usted?
7. A qué atribuye usted su perseverancia en acabar el curso? (RQ#2)
8. A pesar de los retos, que contribuyó a que usted terminara el curso? (RQ#2)
9. Cuénteme sobre los beneficios que usted cree resultan del graduar de la academia? (RQ#3)
10. Cuando compara sus expectativas originales del programa con lo que usted vivió, como cree usted que se alinean? (RQ#3)

11. Hay algo más que quisiera compartir conmigo sobre su experiencia?

Parents who enrolled but did not graduate from the Parent Academy (Group #2)
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Goal: To understand the factors that influence a parent's decision to enroll in the academy but not graduate (RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3)

RQ#1. How do working class Latino/a parents make the decision to become involved in parental engagement programs offered by their child's school?
RQ#2. What are the opportunities and constraints of engagement as experienced by these parents?
RQ#3. How do these decisions and opportunities/constraints relate to the elements of the parental engagement program?

Introduction
I. Hi, my name is Joanna Sánchez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin.
I'm studying the factors that influence a parent's decision to enroll in the academy but not graduate.
Thank you for agreeing to speak with me.

II. Participation and permission to participate - (Review the main points of the consent form)
- Here is a consent form that indicates that you agree to participate in the study and to be digitally-recorded. Reminder that I will use pseudonyms for all individuals, schools and the district.
- My notes and the interview audio file will be reviewed only by me, and if I get help with transcribing, your audio file and transcript will only be identified by a code.
- Please remember, you can decline to answer any question that you are uncomfortable answering or stop the interview at any time.
- This interview should take about 30 to 45 minutes. Do you have any questions before we get started?

III. Basic information and experience within the academy
1. Please tell me a little about yourself. Where are you from? How long have you lived here in the Valley?
2. Tell me a little about your educational experiences. In your opinion, what is the purpose of education? What role do you believe education plays in your child's life?
   How many children do you have? What are their ages? What schools do they attend? (Background/Context)
3. How did you find out about the parent academy the district offers? (Background/Context)
4. Why did you decide to enroll in the academy? (RQ#1)
   - Tell me about the process you went through when trying to arrive at your decision. Who did you talk to?
   - What were your original expectations for the program?
   - What opportunities were you offered as you engaged in the program?
   - What constraints did you experience in the program?
   - How did these opportunities and constraints align with your original expectations for the program?
5. What role did the class options offered by the district play in your decision ? (RQ#1)

- What role, if any, did the times classes were offered play in your decision?
- Probe: Did anything else play a role?
6. Once enrolled in the academy, can you describe what your experience was like? (RQ#2)
   - What factors supported your completion in the program?
   - What was the hardest thing for you?
7. Can you describe why you decided to stop attending the academy?? (RQ#2)
   - How much time passed before you decided to stop going to the academy?
   - Did you consult with anyone before making the decision to stop going?
   - How did you feel after you stopped going to the academy?
   - Probe: If you had to list the top three reasons that influenced your decision, what would they be?
8. What would need to happen for you to re-enroll in the academy? (RQ#2)
9. Did you obtain any benefit or newfound opportunities from attending the academy? If yes, what was it? If no, what was missing?(RQ#3)
10. When comparing your original expectations of the program to what you actually experienced, how do you feel they aligned? (RQ#3)
11. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experience?

Madres y Padres que se inscribieron pero no graduaron de la Academia de Padres (Grupo #2)
PROTOCOLO DE ENTREVISTA

Meta: llegar a comprender los factores que influyen en la decisión del padre/madre de inscribirse en la academia pero no graduarse (RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3)

Introducción
I. Hola, mi nombre es Joanna Sánchez y soy una estudiante de doctorado en la universidad de Texas en Austin.
Estoy estudiando los factores que influyen en la decisión de un padre/una madre de inscribirse en la academia de padres pero no graduarse.
Gracias por hablar conmigo.

II. Participación y permiso del participante - (Repasar los puntos principales del formulario de consentimiento)
- Aquí hay un formulario de consentimiento que dice que usted está de acuerdo en participar en el estudio y en que se grabe su entrevista en una cinta.
- Solo yo revisare mis notas y el audio de la entrevista.
- Por favor recuerde que puede no contestar cualquier pregunta que le resulte incomoda contestar o puede terminar la entrevista en cualquier momento.
- Esta entrevista debe tomar media hora a 45 minutos. Tiene alguna pregunta antes de que comencemos?

III. Información básica y experiencia dentro de la academia
1. Por favor cuénteme un poco de si mismo. De donde es usted? Cuánto tiempo lleva viviendo en el Valle? (Background/Context)
2. Cuénteme un poco sobre sus experiencias educacionales? Cuál cree usted que es el propósito de la educación? Que propósito considera usted que tiene la educación en la vida de sus hijos? Cuantos hijos tiene? Cuáles son sus edades? A que escuelas van? (Background/Context)
3. Como se enteró usted de la academia que ofrece San Mateo? (Background/Context)
4. Porque decidió inscribirse en la academia? (RQ#1)
   - Cuénteme sobre el proceso que usted siguió pare llegar a su decisión de inscribirse? Con quien consulto para tomar su decisión?
   - Cuáles eran sus expectativas originales de la academia?
   - Que oportunidades fue ofrecido/a al desarrollarse en la academia?
   - Que dificultades enfrento dentro del programa?
   - Como se alinearon las oportunidades y las dificultades con sus expectativas originales?
5. Que influencia tuvo en su decisión la selección de clases que ofrece la academia? (RQ#1)
   - Que influencia, si acaso, tuvo en su decisión los horarios en los que se ofrecen la clases?
   - Probe: Acaso hubo algo más que haya influenciado su decisión?
6. Ya enrollado/a dentro de la academia, cuénteme sobre su experiencia. (RQ#2)
   - En que encontró apoyo para seguir con el curso?
   - Que fue lo más difícil para usted?
7. Por favor describa las razones por las que usted dejo de ir a la academia? (RQ#2)
   - Cuanto tiempo paso antes de que usted dejara de asistir?
   - Hubo alguien con quien consulto antes de tomar la decisión de dejar de asistir?

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- Como se sintió después de dejar de ir a las clases?
- Probe: Si acaso tendría que enumerar las tres razones principales por las cual usted dejo de asistir, cuáles serían esas razones?

8. Que tendría que pasar para que usted se volviera a inscribir en la academia? (RQ#2)
- Obtuvo algún beneficio usted del haber asistido a la academia? Si acaso si, cual fue? Si acaso no, que fue lo que falto?

9. Obtuvo algún beneficio o una nueva oportunidad del haber asistido a la academia? Si acaso si, cual fue? Si no, que falto? (RQ#3)

10. Cuando compara sus expectativas originales del programa con lo que usted vivió, como cree usted que se alinean? (RQ#3)

11. Hay algo más que quisiera compartir conmigo sobre su experiencia?

Parents who did not enroll in the Parent Academy (Group #3)
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Goal: To understand the factors that influence a parent's decision to not enroll in the academy (RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3)

RQ#1. How do working class Latino/a parents make the decision to become involved in parental engagement programs offered by their child's school?
RQ#2. What are the opportunities and constraints of engagement as experienced by these parents?
RQ#3. How do these decisions and opportunities/constraints relate to the elements of the parental engagement program?

Introduction
I. Hi, my name is Joanna Sánchez and I am a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin.
I'm studying the factors that influence a parent's decision not to enroll in the academy despite showing initial interest.
Thank you for agreeing to speak with me.

II. Participation and permission to participate - (Review the main points of the consent form)
- Here is a consent form that indicates that you agree to participate in the study and to be digitally-recorded. Reminder that I will use pseudonyms for all individuals, schools and the district.
- My notes and the interview audio file will be reviewed only by me, and if I get help with transcribing, your digital audio file and transcript will only be identified by a code.
- Please remember, you can decline to answer any question that you are uncomfortable answering or stop the interview at any time.
- This interview should take about 30 to 45 minutes. Do you have any questions before we get started?

III. Basic information and experience with the academy
1. Please tell me a little about yourself. Where are you from? How long have you lived here in the Valley?
2. Tell me a little about your educational experiences. In your opinion, what is the purpose of education? What role do you believe education plays in your child's life?
   How many children do you have? What are their ages? What schools do they attend? (Background/Context)
3. How did you find out about the parent academy the district offers? (Background/Context)
4. What attracted you about the academy that you decided to obtain more information about it? (RQ#1)
5. Despite initially learning about the program, what contributed to your decision not to enroll in the academy? (RQ#1)
   - Tell me about the process you went through when trying to arrive at your decision. Who did you talk to?
   - Probe: If you had to list the top three reasons why you did not enroll, what would they be?

6. What factors impacted or constrained your decision not to enroll in the program? (RQ#2)
7. In the time since your initial decision to not enroll, have you considered trying again? (RQ#2)
   - What would need to happen for you to enroll in the program?
8. When you compare your original expectations of what you would gain from enrolling in the program to how you are currently involved in your child's education, how do you feel they align? (RQ#3)
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experience?

Madres y Padres que no se inscribieron en la Academia de Padres (Grupo #3)
PROTOCOLO DE ENTREVISTA

Meta: llegar a comprender los factores que influyen en la decisión del padre/madre de no inscribirse en la academia (RQ#1, RQ#2, RQ#3)

Introducción
I. Hola, mi nombre es Joanna Sánchez y soy una estudiante de doctorado en la universidad de Texas en Austin.
Estoy estudiando los factores que influyen en la decisión de un padre/una madre de no inscribirse en la academia de padres a pesar de haber indicado interés inicialmente.
Gracias por hablar conmigo.

II. Participación y permiso del participante - (Repasar los puntos principales del formulario de consentimiento)
- Aquí hay un formulario de consentimiento que dice que usted está de acuerdo en participar en el estudio y en que se grabe su entrevista en una cinta.
- Solo yo revisare mis notas y el audio de la entrevista.
- Por favor recuerde que puede no contestar cualquier pregunta que le resulte incomoda contestar o puede terminar la entrevista en cualquier momento.
- Esta entrevista debe tomar media hora a 45 minutos. Tiene alguna pregunta antes de que comencemos?

III. Información básica y experiencia con la academia
1. Por favor cuénteme un poco de si mismo. De donde es usted? Cuánto tiempo lleva viviendo en el Valle? (Background/Context)
2. Cuénteme un poco sobre sus experiencias educacionales? Cuál cree usted que es el propósito de la educación? Que propósito considera usted que tiene la educación en la vida de sus hijos? Cuantos hijos tiene? Cuáles son sus edades? A que escuelas van? (Background/Context)
3. Como se enteró usted de la academia que ofrece San Mateo? (Background/Context)
4. Que le atrajo de la academia que decidió obtener más información? (RQ#1)
5. A pesar de su interés inicial, que la/lo desanimo de inscribirse en la academia? (RQ#1)
   - Cuénteme sobre el proceso que lo/la llevo a su decisión? Con quien hablo?
   - Probe: Podría enumerar los 3 factores más importantes que influenciaron su decisión de no inscribirse en la academia?
6. Que factores impactaron o impidieron que usted se pudiera inscribir en el programa? (RQ#2)
7. En el tiempo que ha transcurrido desde su decisión inicial, ha considerado tratar de nuevo? (RQ#2)
   - Que tendría que pasar para que usted intentara de nuevo?
8. Cuando compara sus expectativas originales de lo que usted ganaría al inscribirse en el programa a como usted actualmente está involucrado en la educación de su hijo/a, como cree se alinean? (RQ#3)
9. Hay algo más que quisiera compartir conmigo sobre su experiencia?

Verbal Informed Consent
Study: Establishing an Authentic School-Parent Partnership: The Case of a South Texas Parent Academy

I am a doctoral student at the The University of Texas at Austin. I am conducting a study based on the experience of parents enrolled in San Mateo's Parental Engagement Program. In particular, I hope to better understand why parents enrolled in the classes and what type of impact these classes have had on them.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study, because I believe that in order to have a successful parental engagement program, it is crucial to have parents enroll and have a good experience so that they will continue to participate. By learning about your experience, you will help me understand the pros and the cons of the program.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and if you decide to involve yourself in our research, you will be one of 15 parents who will participate in focus groups.

Parent Focus Groups: Focus group sessions will last between 60 and 90 minutes. Each focus group will consist of 5 parents. If you grant verbal consent to participate in this research study focus group, I will audio record the discussion. The audio recording will be used to insure accurate dictation of the group discussion. Following the transcription and translation of the audio recordings, each participant will be given a pseudonym and general title and then audio recordings will be destroyed.

Any information gathered by the researcher will be kept confidential and secure. All notes, audio recordings (where appropriate), transcripts, and research files will be kept in password protected files accessible only by research team members. There will be no link to the contact information provided, your name, or specific professional title.

If at any time you have questions about the process or have doubts about participating, you have the right to withdraw from the study. Any notes or recordings related to your participation will be destroyed. There is no penalty for withdrawal.

There are no direct risks or benefits from your participation in this study. Several measures will be taken to minimize risk and maximize participant confidentiality and privacy protection. I hope you consider participating in my study to help me better understand the experience of parents enrolled in the parental engagement program.

With your verbal consent, you are stating that you have been informed about the purpose of this research study, procedures, and risks and benefits. Additionally, you are confirming that you have received a copy of this form, have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and know that you can ask further questions or withdraw consent at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in the study led by Joanna D. Sánchez with your verbal consent.

The above-described study has been reviewed by The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board and the study number is No. 2015-01-0042. For questions about your rights or if you have concerns about this study, you can contact the board, anonymously if you wish, by phone 1(512) 471-8871 or by email orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Principal Investigator: Joanna D. Sánchez – jds.gis@gmail.com

Consentimiento Verbal de Participación
Estudio (o investigación): Estableciendo una Autentica Asociación entre la Escuela y los Padres:
El Caso de una Academia en el Sur de Texas

Yo soy una alumna en un programa doctoral en la Universidad de Texas en Austin. Estoy
llevando a cabo un estudio basado en la experiencia de padres inscritos en el programa para
padres establecido por el distrito de San Mateo. En particular, me gustaría entender mejor porque
los padres decidieron inscribirse en las clases y que tipo de impacto las clases han tenido en
ellos/ellas.

Me gustaría invitarle a participar en este estudio, porque yo creo que para poder tener un exitoso
programa para padres, es esencial que los padres se inscriban y tengan una buena experiencia
para que sigan participando. Yo considero que es importante aprender sobre su experiencia,
porque usted me ayudara a entender mejor los pros y los contras del programa.

Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Si decide participar en el mismo, será parte de un
grupo de 15 padres de San Mateo que actualmente están inscritos en la academia de padres del
distrito.

Grupos focales con padres

Las sesiones de grupos focales tendrán una duración de 60 a 90 minutos. Cada grupo consistirá
de 5 padres. Habrá un grupo focal en cada uno de los 3 centros académicos del distrito. Si usted
accede verbalmente a participar en el grupo focal de este estudio, yo grabare el audio de la
discusión. El audio se utilizará para asegurar que la discusión del grupo sea fiel y exacta. Luego
de la transcripción y la traducción del audio, se identificará a cada participante con un
seudónimo. Además, el audio se destruirá luego de transcribirlo.

Cualquier información que obtenga la investigadora será confidencial y se garantiza la seguridad
de los participantes. Todas las notas, audio, las transcripciones, y los archivos de investigación,
se guardarán en archivos protegidos por códigos de acceso, los cuales serán accesibles solamente
a los miembros del grupo de investigación. No habrá forma de relacionar su nombre.

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este proceso, o tiene dudas sobre su participación en este estudio,
usted tiene derecho a retirar su participación en cualquier momento sin que incurra en ninguna
penalidad por retirarse del mismo. Todas las notas o grabaciones (audio) relacionadas con su
participación en este estudio serán destruidas. Su participación en el estudio no conlleva ningún
riesgo ni beneficio directo. Se tomará una serie de medidas para minimizar cualquier riesgo y
para maximizar la protección a los participantes.

Esperamos que usted participe en nuestro estudio y con ello me ayude a entender el programa de
padres.

Con su consentimiento verbal, usted indica que ha sido informado acerca del propósito de este
estudio (o investigación), así como los riesgos y beneficios. Asimismo, usted confirma que ha

recibido copia de este formulario, que se le ha dado la oportunidad de hacer preguntas, y que puede retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento que usted lo desee.

Con su consentimiento verbal, usted indica que está de acuerdo en participar voluntariamente en el estudio que dirige Joanna D. Sánchez.

La Junta de Revisión Institucional (Institutional Review Board, o IRB, por sus siglas en inglés) de la Universidad de Texas, en Austin, ha revisado el estudio descrito en este documento, y cuyo número es 2015-01-0042.

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos, o si tiene alguna preocupación sobre el mismo, sírvase comunicarse con dicha junta (de forma anónima, si así lo desea), ya sea mediante llamada telefónica al número 1(512) 471-8871, o mediante correo electrónico (email) a la dirección orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Investigadora Principal: Joanna D. Sánchez – jds.gis@gmail.com

Verbal Informed Consent
Study: Examining Latino/a Parents' Decision-Making Processes Regarding Enrollment in a Parent Academy

I am a doctoral student at the The University of Texas at Austin. I am conducting a study based on the experience of parents' knowledge of San Mateo's Parental Engagement Program. In particular, I hope to better understand why or why not parents enrolled in the classes and what type of impact these classes have had on them.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study, because I believe that in order to have a successful parental engagement program, it is crucial to have parents enroll and have a good experience so that they will continue to participate. By learning about your experience, whether you enrolled or not, you will help me understand the pros and the cons of the program.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and if you decide to involve yourself in our research, you will be one of 90 parents from San Mateo. There will be 3 groups, each with 30 parents: one group of parents who graduated from the academy, one group of parents who did not finish the program, and one group of parents who did not participate.

Individual Interview with Parents: The interview will last between 30 and 45 minutes. Each focus group will consist of 5 parents. If you grant verbal consent to participate in this research study focus group, I will audio record the discussion. The audio recording will be used to insure accurate dictation of the discussion. Following the transcription and translation of the audio recordings, each participant will be given a pseudonym and general title and then audio recordings will be destroyed.

Any information gathered by the researcher will be kept confidential and secure. All notes, audio recordings (where appropriate), transcripts, and research files will be kept in password protected files accessible only by research team members. There will be no link to the contact information provided, your name, or specific professional title.

If at any time you have questions about the process or have doubts about participating, you have the right to withdraw from the study. Any notes or recordings related to your participation will be destroyed. There is no penalty for withdrawal.

There are no direct risks or benefits from your participation in this study. Several measures will be taken to minimize risk and maximize participant confidentiality and privacy protection. I hope you consider participating in my study to help me better understand the experience of parents enrolled in the parental engagement program.

With your verbal consent, you are stating that you have been informed about the purpose of this research study, procedures, and risks and benefits. Additionally, you are confirming that you have received a copy of this form, have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and know

that you can ask further questions or withdraw consent at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in the study led by Joanna D. Sánchez with your verbal consent.

The above-described study has been reviewed by The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board and the study number is No. 2015-01-0042. For questions about your rights or if you have concerns about this study, you can contact the board, anonymously if you wish, by phone 1(512) 471-8871 or by email orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Principal Investigator: Joanna D. Sánchez – jds.gis@gmail.com

Consentimiento Verbal de Participación
Estudio (o investigación): Examinando los Procesos de Decisión de Padres Latinos/as en Relación a Inscripción en una Academia de Padres

Yo soy una alumna en un programa doctoral en la Universidad de Texas en Austin. Estoy llevando a cabo un estudio basado en la experiencia de padres con conocimiento del programa para padres establecido por el distrito de San Mateo. En particular, me gustaría entender mejor porque los padres decidieron inscribirse o no en las clases y que tipo de impacto las clases han tenido en ellos/ellas.

Me gustaría invitarle a participar en este estudio, porque yo creo que para poder tener un exitoso programa para padres, es esencial que los padres se inscriban y tengan una buena experiencia para que sigan participando. Yo considero que es importante aprender sobre su experiencia, ya sea que usted haiga participado o no, porque usted me ayudara a entender mejor los pros y los contras del programa.

Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Si decide participar en el mismo, será parte de un grupo de 90 padres de San Mateo. Habrá 3 grupos, cada uno con 30 padres: un grupo de padres que graduó de la academia, un grupo de padres que no termino el programa, y un grupo de padres que no participo.

Entrevista Individual con Padres: La entrevista tendrá una duración de 30 a 45 minutos. Si usted accede verbalmente a participar en este estudio, yo grabare el audio de la discusión. El audio se utilizará para asegurar que la discusión sea fiel y exacta. Luego de la transcripción y la traducción del audio, se identificará a cada participante con un seudónimo. Además, el audio se destruirá luego de transcribirlo.

Cualquier información que obtenga la investigadora será confidencial y se garantiza la seguridad de los participantes. Todas las notas, audio, las transcripciones, y los archivos de investigación, se guardarán en archivos protegidos por códigos de acceso, los cuales serán accesibles solamente a los miembros del grupo de investigación. No habrá forma de relacionar su nombre.

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este proceso, o tiene dudas sobre su participación en este estudio, usted tiene derecho a retirar su participación en cualquier momento sin que incurra en ninguna penalidad por retirarse del mismo. Todas las notas o grabaciones (audio) relacionadas con su participación en este estudio serán destruidas. Su participación en el estudio no conlleva ningún riesgo ni beneficio directo. Se tomará una serie de medidas para minimizar cualquier riesgo y para maximizar la protección a los participantes.

Esperamos que usted participe en nuestro estudio y con ello me ayude a entender el programa de padres.

Con su consentimiento verbal, usted indica que ha sido informado acerca del propósito de este estudio (o investigación), así como los riesgos y beneficios. Asimismo, usted confirma que ha recibido copia de este formulario, que se le ha dado la oportunidad de hacer preguntas, y que puede retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento que usted lo desee.

Con su consentimiento verbal, usted indica que está de acuerdo en participar voluntariamente en el estudio que dirige Joanna D. Sánchez.

La Junta de Revisión Institucional (Institutional Review Board, o IRB, por sus siglas en inglés) de la Universidad de Texas, en Austin, ha revisado el estudio descrito en este documento, y cuyo número es 2015-01-0042. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos, o si tiene alguna preocupación sobre el mismo, sírvase comunicarse con dicha junta (de forma anónima, si así lo desea), ya sea mediante llamada telefónica al número 1(512) 471-8871, o mediante correo electrónico (email) a la dirección orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Investigadora Principal: Joanna D. Sánchez – jds.gis@gmail.com

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Vita

Joanna D. Sánchez was born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV). After graduating from South Texas High School for Health Professions (Med-High), she enrolled at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. She majored in Geosciences and conducted her thesis' field research in Costa Rica focusing on tectonic movement and uplift along the Pacific Coast. She earned her Bachelor of Science in 2002. After a year of working in the private sector, Joanna moved to Denver, Colorado and pursued a Master of Science in Geographic Information Science at the University of Denver. After earning her degree in 2005, Joanna moved back to the Rio Grande Valley where she worked as a GIS professional for eight years, both in the private and public sectors. For four of those eight years, she was concurrently employed as a GIS instructor at South Texas College teaching evening classes. In 2009, Joanna and two fellow alumni from Trinity University established a non-profit, Odisea, with the purpose of helping students from the RGV and their families as they considered moving away to attend college outside of the Valley. Joanna's public service in the community through Odisea and with two organizations, the Gates Millennium Scholarship Association and the Hispanic Scholarship Fund (she is a recipient of both scholarships), inspired her move back to school. In the fall of 2013, she entered the Educational Policy & Planning program in the Department of Educational Administration at The University of Texas at Austin. Joanna has recently accepted a postdoctoral research associate position in K-12 STEM Education at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

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