Ethnic Studies Independent Study

Parent and Community Involvement in Chicana Education

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Annotated Bibliography

1. Adger, C. (2001) School-Community-Based Organization Partnerships for Language Minority Students' School Success. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR).* 6: 1-2, 7-25.

This article focuses on partnerships between schools and community-based organizations (CBOs) to run programs designed for language minority students. It discusses the three different types of CBOs that partner with schools – these being ethnic organizations, special-purpose CBOs, and multipurpose CBOs. Adger outlines what it takes to run these programs successfully: knowledgeable staff, flexible funding, and suitable space and supplies. She then analyzes responsiveness of design (cultural appropriateness, accessibility/comfort, and building on abilities of those involved). Most significantly, Adger points out that within the current framework, schools simply cannot take on all of the work essential students' academic success, and concludes that human capital and flexibility are the key ingredients to creating more effective school-CBO partnerships.

2. Campos, R. (2008) Considerations for Studying Father Involvement in Early Childhood Among Latino Families. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences.* 30: 133-160.

This article addresses the question of why there is a lack of literature regarding Latino father involvement and suggests a framework for future research in this area. Campos discusses the problematic use of contextualizing paternal behaviors within a maternal framework, and propones a quality-over-quantity mindset, as opposed to a present or not-present view. He finds that despite logistical obstacles to involvement (like working several jobs or discriminatory practices in schools), Latino fathers give advice and inspire their children, especially through sharing of family narratives. Campos discusses *machismo*, noting that most researchers focus on its negative effects instead of positives like protectionism and providing for the family. Campos

suggests further research into the culture of parenting before ambiguously assigning meaning to the phrases 'parental involvement' and 'father involvement.'

3. Cassity, J., & Harris, S. (2000) Parents of ESL Students: A Study of Parental Involvement. *National Association of Secondary School Principals.* 84; 619, 55-62.

This article focuses on the motivators and inhibitors to parental involvement, specifically with parents of ESL students. Cassity identifies the main components of effective parental involvement programs as: bridging the language and culture gap, expanding family involvement (i.e. helping parents create home environments that are conducive to academic success), and restructuring the school setting so that parents can make use of social capital. The article discusses the importance of using native languages in engaging parents for parental involvement training, and places a lot of emphasis on the equation for academic success (school + home = education). Main inhibitors to involvement were lack of time and transportation. Main motivators were the opportunity to ask about children's behavior and the desire to demonstrate the family's commitment to education.

4. Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1991) Involving Parents in the Schools: A Process of Empowerment. *American Journal of Education.* 100: 1, 20-46.

This article emphasizes the fact that conventionality in regard to parental educational involvement is simply not a method that works for the Latino population. Instead, the author asserts that balance of power/power sharing and empowerment are the best ways to engage Latino parents. She discusses cultural knowledge as power, a power that can in turn *em*power parents to understand the school system, their rights as parents, the rights of their children as students, and each party's responsibilities. Delgado-Gaitain gives examples of conventional involvement (open houses, parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in schools) and follows with examples of unconventional programs (bilingual preschool and a migrant program). Because

systematic isolation of groups leads to resentment, the author argues that the best method for increased involvement is empowering parents and involving them in decision-making and critical reflection processes.

5. Deschenes, S., & Malone, H. J. (2011) Year-Round Learning: Linking School, Afterschool, and Summer Learning to Support Student Success. *Harvard Family Research Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education.*

This article focuses on the importance of changing the model for thinking about what 'time' is for learning. Traditionally, 'school' in the United States is from 8am to 3pm, Monday through Friday, August through June, but this article points out that learning happens in and out of the classroom, 24 hours per day, every day of the year. For that reason, the authors suggest intentional, community-based efforts to educate children in and out of school. Most importantly, the efforts should focus on the learners (the students) and *not* on what the benefits are to the other parties involved. Creative collaboration is a key, and the article states that flexible funding, supporting shared data, and keeping engagement are important to creating long-lasting and effective partnerships that benefit the students directly, all year long.

6. Floyd, L. (1998) Joining Hands: A Parental Involvement Program. *Urban Education.* 33,123-135.

This article analyzes Joining Hands, an example of a parent-community partnership in Cleveland, OH. It suggests that society must do away with the myths and stereotypes of Latino parents as uninterested or uncaring, and take alternative approaches to traditional forms of involvement that simply are not effective with this population. Goals of the research were parent training and staff development, which ultimately resulted in increased parent involvement, better communication between parties, and trusting relationships built through valuing of ethnic backgrounds. This article emphasizes the importance of flexibility in partnerships between schools, parents, and community members.

7. Ginorio, A., & Huston, M. (2001) ¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can: Latinas in School. *American Association of University Women Educational Foundation.*

This is one of the few articles that does break down the Latino population by gender, country of origin, etc., and includes a discussion of the lack of research concerning the effect of siblings. It also discusses the notion of possible selves – noting that most academically successful Latinas name one pivotal person in their lives who helped them succeed. The article also addresses the centrality of family in Latino culture (familismo) and the idea of cultural capital – power driven by cultural knowledge and experience. Many Latinas perceive education as a ticket to a better life, whereas in most Anglo families, even higher education is expected. The article also deals with the issues of respect and education, and discusses briefly the difference between education and the Spanish *educación*, which involves a moral element. Most importantly, this article addresses the importance of identity, self-esteem and self-efficacy in Latinas' educational experience. Finally, the article concludes that a key to getting more Latinas in higher education (and succeeding in elementary and high schools) is demystifying the school system and college.

8. Lopez, G. (2001) The Value of Hard Work: Lessons on Parent Involvement from an (Im)migrant Household. *Harvard Educational Review.* 71: 3, 416-437.

This article discusses how involvement in education by Latino parents lies outside of 'traditional' models, and gives the example of the Padilla family. Mr. Padilla used narrative as a means of instilling the value of education in his children. By taking them to work with him in the fields, he showed them what their future employment might be if they didn't focus on succeeding in school (in essence, giving them a 'real life' lesson). Lopez's argument is that this sharing of narrative in itself is a form of parental involvement in this community, although it would not be considered involvement traditionally. The Padilla children did seem to have registered this value

of education; they said they focused on academic achievement because they wanted to have different jobs than their parents.

9. Lopez, G., Scribner, D., & Mahitivanichcha, K. (2001) Redefining Parental Involvement: Lessons From High Performing Migrant-Impacted Schools. *American Educational Research Journal.* 38: 2, 253-288.

This article is unique in that it focuses on meeting parental needs about all other considerations. The fact that this type of program is rarely implemented in traditional involvement efforts is interesting, since it is logical that parents would be unable to focus on being involved in their children's education if their fundamental needs are not met. This article focuses on migrant schools and families, but the need to create awareness of and affirm parents' needs is universal. Schools and communities must provide parents with the physical resources and psychological support to meet their basic necessities before any level of extra involvement can be expected. Through the aid given by the schools and community to migrant families in this example, deep relational bonds were formed and trusting relationships resulted. The schools and community saw 'parent education' as an end in itself, instead of simply a vehicle to improving involvement for the children's sake, and this view made all the difference in the program's success.

10. Quijada, P. D., & Alvarez, L. (2006) Cultivando Semillas Educacionales (Cultivating Educational Seeds): Understanding the Experience of K-8 Latina/o Students.

This article centers on the question of how to improve education for Latino students and considers many factors, from residency to enrollment to language. It notes that Latino parents feel school are not invested in *their* children (as compared with those of other ethnic groups). The article also mentions the importance of communicating in the parents' choice language, and describes how this effective communication will lead to a trusting relationship between parents and schools. Finally, the article gives short lists for family, teachers, and administrators of suggestions for how to strength-based approach to supporting Latina/o students. Importantly,

many of these recommendations focus on including culture in the education of these children – a notion that seems more radical than it should, since culture should be a consistent aspect of education already.

11. Tang, S., Dearing, E., & Weiss, H. B. (2012) Spanish-speaking Mexican-American families' involvement in school-based activities and their children's literacy: The implications of having teachers who speak Spanish and English. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly.* 27, 177-187.

This article emphasizes the importance of bilingual teachers. It states that because learning occurs both in and out of the classroom, a teacher is a moderating role between what children learn in school and at home. The article finds that having a bilingual teacher leads to more parent involvement from Latino parents (and, in turn, more successful students). It is important to note that this article is using the term 'involvement' in the traditional way (i.e. attending functions at the school, volunteering in classrooms, checking students' homework, etc.), unlike many of the other articles. This article also addresses the advantages of having bilingual teachers to students directly, as in the fact that low literacy ESL Kindergarteners caught up by 3rd grade if they consistently had a bilingual teacher. Most importantly, the article discusses the conflict between viewing culture as an obstacle to understanding and collaboration versus viewing culture as an enhancement and opportunity.

12. Weiss, H. B., Mayer, E., & Kreider, H. (2003) Making It Work: Low-Income Working Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Education. *American Educational Research Journal.* 40: 4, 879-901.

This article addresses the question of working mothers' involvement in their children's education (it does not, however, focus on the Latino population specifically, although many of the attributes of working mothers can be inferred as applying to this population). Interestingly, the article reports that working is both an obstacle to involvement in education, and an opportunity.

Mothers who work part-time are more involved than both full-time working mothers and mothers who do not work outside the home. It raises the concept of 'time poverty,' or the idea that earning a lot of money means working a lot, and leaves little time to devote to other parts of life. The article states that where there are positive structural features of work (such as flexible hours or child care available), working leads to more involvement in education. It also discusses the social capital aspect of this concept; if a mother's boss is particularly sympathetic to the issues working mothers face, or if the worker has a close working relationship with the boss, the mothers are likely to be more to be involved in their children's education. Finally, the article raises policy questions, such as the fact that the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) applies only to businesses with 50+ employees, and excludes many smaller organizations where part-time mothers may work.

13. Pamphlets/Brochures

Hughes, S. (2011) Investing in a Bright Future for All of Colorado's Kids: The Importance of Providing Early Childhood Care and Education to Children in Immigrant Families. *Colorado Children's Campaign.*

Roybal, P., & García, D. T. (2004) Engaging Mexican Immigrant Parents in Their Children's Education. *Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition.*

Roybal, P. (2004) Ensuring the Academic Success of Our Children. *Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition.*

The Education Trust. (2004). Improving Your Child's Education: A Guide for Latino Parents.

The Education Trust. (2012). Los Padres Quieren Saber.

Five pamphlet/brochure sources were read and synthesized. They were published by three nonprofit organizations: The Education Trust, Colorado Children's Campaign, and the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition. Common themes in these sources are the No Child Left Behind Act, information on parents' rights in the United States' public education system, discussion of

education as a tool toward upward mobility or a better life, and school-community-home partnerships as empowering use of social capital. All of these materials center on the theme of parental involvement, though not all are written with parents as the target audience. Importantly, several of the pamphlets outline expectations for parental involvement in education in the United States, highlighting the cultural differences in Anglo and Latino attitudes toward education (namely, that Latinos treat teachers and administrators as educational experts and rarely offer criticism or contact school personnel). Pamphlets and brochures of this kind use language accessible to parents who may have lower levels of education, making them an indispensible source for this investigation.

Summary

Introduction

Public education in the United States today is as controversial a topic as one could choose to study. Issues surrounding elementary education have become increasingly debated among politicians, educators, parents, and students themselves.

Having grown up in Nederland, CO, a small rural town where the village raised the child whether it was needed or not, my education was strongly influenced by my relationship with the community, and by my parents' relationship with my schools. This gave me an incredible appreciation, once I began attending the University of Colorado – a division one institute – for how much personalized attention I received and how much my parents and my community supported me throughout my education. Having also studied the Spanish language for several years, and having a love for the people who speak it, I decided to integrate Chicana/o Studies into my Spanish degree at CU. Ultimately this resulted in me taking the Survey of Chicana/o History and Culture class in spring 2012, whereby I became fascinated with issues facing

Chicanas in education. With the intersection of my experience of parent and community support and my love for the Spanish-speaking population of the U.S., I decided to study the effects of parent and community involvement on Chicana elementary education.

The following sections outline key findings throughout my research and make suggestions for improvement, identify holes in the current body of literature, and finally, summarize my recommendations for future investigations.

Key Findings

The concept that the education of children is dynamic – occurring concurrently at home, at school, and in the community – has been widely accepted for some time. It has been empirically proven time and again that children whose parents are 'involved' in their education are more successful academically (Campos, 2008, p.135). But what does 'involvement' really mean? Does it occur at home? At school? In the form of community engagement? This investigation attempts to frame these and other questions.

In studying a minority group, it is important to identify what characteristics differentiate it from the mainstream and widely studied population. With regards to the differences between Latino and Anglo families and communities, among the most profound are language (Tang, Dearing, & Weiss, 2011, p. 185) family structure and values (Quijada & Alvarez, 2006, p. 9), and experience of institutional ethnocentrism (i.e. systemic barriers to involvement) (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, p. 21).

The Deficit Method

Most literature published before the 1990s addresses Latino parental involvement in elementary education from a deficit perspective (i.e. breaks from 'normative' family involvement are seen as underperformances). This deficit method begs the question, what *is*

'normative' in the United States today? As a country principally known for its melting pot of cultures and languages, and as Latinos will soon make up more of the population than Anglos, it's unclear what 'normative' really means. Because the deficit method does not speak to cultural differences, it is not evident in the sources used for this investigation; indeed, research using it was was consciously avoided. Most recent literature (from the mid 1990s to present) addresses the shortcomings of the deficit method and focuses on framing Latino parental involvement in a more culturally sensitive way (Campos, 2008, p. 147). In many cases, studies specifically tackle the issue of how Latino parents are involved in their children's education, consciously avoiding the question of whether or not this involvement meets society's expectations for 'normal.'

Language

Language has far-reaching effects on parental and community involvement in Chicanas' elementary education. Many Latino parents find the United States' public education system intimidating in general – curriculum in Mexico is nationalized, so the idea that parents can become involved down to the district and town levels in their children's education is new to many immigrant families ("Engaging Mexican Immigrant Parents," p. 2). Many nonprofit organizations aim to inform parents of their rights and responsibilities within the U.S. public education system, but dissemination of this information has not been entirely successful. Even if parents are aware of their rights and responsibilities, language barriers can make it difficult for them to become involved. A primary issue is that many monolingual Spanish-speaking parents, in encouraging their children to learn and practice English, create separate linguistic realms for home and school. This gap is difficult to bridge, but hiring bilingual teachers is a way schools can stimulate involvement from these monolingual parents, to whom the school would realistically be inaccessible otherwise. If a parent can communicate with teachers and other

school personnel in their choice language, it becomes much easier for them to inquire about their student's performance, attend school events, and learn how they can augment at home what their child is learning in the classroom (Tang et al., 2011, p. 179).

In a more abstract sense, when language is taken as a fundamental aspect of culture, it is evident that most public schools in the U.S. do not validate Spanish-speaking parents' cultural experience (Quijada & Alvarez, 2006, p. 9). Due to a lack of bilingual school personnel, parents may feel uncomfortable in attempting to become involved, or may believe they cannot be helpful in the school (for example, volunteering in a classroom) because of language barriers (Tang et al., 2011, p. 185). When teachers and other school personnel are bilingual, however, cultural validation (through a shared language) translates into trusting relationships, which in turn generates higher involvement ("Engaging Mexican Immigrant Parents," p.11).

Family Structure and Values

Acknowledging differences in familial values is also central to creating home-school-community partnerships. The family structure of many Latino families is 'nontraditional.' Because of the high value placed on close family relationships in this culture (*familismo*), many Latino families have extended family structures, and when coupled with low socioeconomic status, young adults in Latino families may take on traditional 'adult' duties, and many Latino students live with extended family members spanning multiple generations (Quijada & Alvarez, 2006, p. 9). This fact is important for schools to consider and be sensitive to in efforts to increase 'parental' involvement; in some cases siblings, grandparents, aunts or uncles, etc. may have taken on some of the traditional 'parent' roles.

Latino culture's emphasis on family gives communication of personal narrative an important influence over what values are emphasized at home ("Engaging Mexican Immigrant Parents," p.

9). Lopez argues in "The Value of Hard Work: Lessons on Parent Involvement from an (Im)migrant Household" that storytelling and transmission of narrative can be considered forms of parental involvement. In this article, monolingual immigrant parents were interviewed about how they show their children the value of education. The father, who works as a day laborer in the fields, responds simply that he has "shown them what work is and how hard it is. So they know that if they don't focus in their studies, that is they type of work they'll end up doing" (p. 427). Since the reality of the situation (if you don't do well in school, you will have to work in the fields) is so much closer to home for Latino families (see the next section on Institutional Ethnocentrism), it is rational that parents would motivate their children in this way – and it works; the children interviewed in Lopez's study said they decided to work hard in school, and all attribute their academic success to the lessons in hard work learned from their parents (Lopez, 2001, p. 426).

Institutional Ethnocentrism/Systemic Barriers to Involvement

The greatest discrepancy between Anglo and Latino parental involvement is that the latter group experiences negative effects of institutional ethnocentrism (which creates systemic barriers to involvement) (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, p. 21). Latinos' cultural heritage has historically not been validated in schools, as is visible from the high percentage of students who are truant or drop out because their language, culture, and history are not usually represented in curriculum (Ginorio & Huston, 2001, p. 37). Latinos may become disillusioned with school and decide not to pursue higher education, leaving them to fill lower skill jobs and make up a large percentage of the lower socioeconomic status working class (Ginorio & Huston, 2001, p. ix). This is a vicious cycle – little education leads to low-skill jobs with low wages, which in turn leads to the

barriers to parental involvement (for example, working multiple jobs or jobs with inflexible hours) that may negatively impact the education of the next generation (Campos, 2008, p. 144).

It is not just parents who experience institutional ethnicism. In "¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can: Latinas in School," Ginorio and Huston explore the notion of "potential selves" and affirm that from a young age, children are sensitized to discussion of their potential, and will act according to what others expect of them and believe them capable of (p. x). Although Chicanas in elementary school do not experience the effects of talking with potentially ethnocentric college counselors, they do come into contact with adults who judge them based on academic and social skills, and it is important to identify the psychological effects that consciousness of these judgments may have on a child's academic success.

Suggestions

After analyzing a variety of sources (listed in the reference page at the end of this document, and outlined in the annotated bibliography in the beginning), it is clear that the ideal situation for a student's academic success in elementary education, regardless of ethnicity, is a collaborative and flexible partnership between home, school, and community.

Approach

Many of the articles used in this investigation mention in various contexts the importance of changing the framework for qualifying parental involvement. Culturally sensitive methods for analyzing involvement need to be developed; not all communities are alike in where their power comes from or what forms involvement can take in their lives. Simply because involvement looks different between different cultures does not mean it is any more or less significant in the academic success of children. Consideration of language barriers, nontraditional family structures and values, and institutional ethnocentrism and its effects will make research of Latino

parental and community involvement culturally sensitive, and home-school-community partnerships successful.

Recognizing the importance of bilingualism of school personnel – and taking action accordingly – is a crucial step toward increasing Latino parental involvement in education. Increased effectiveness of communication between school personnel and parents will lead to more trusting relationships, and in turn, increased involvement. Acknowledging and accepting nontraditional family values and structures will also increase involvement; without first understanding *how* Latino parents value education and transmit that value to their children, schools and community-based organizations (CBOs) will not be able to work collaboratively with parents toward students' academic success. Latino parents know the value of education to their children because they have witnessed or themselves lived the realities of not being highly educated; what the literature needs to do in the future is realize the value in this real-life experience. Finally, future literature and partnerships must deal with the issue of institutional ethnocentrism in a tactful way. The cycle of disillusionment with education leading to lower academic performance and, in turn, inflexible jobs and lower socioeconomic status (which circles back around to the next generation in the form of systemic barriers to educational involvement) is a harsh reality for the Latino population. This entire cycle, however, has the potential to be reversed; when parents and school personnel reach outside their comfort zones, and when CBOs identify and fill educational needs, all parties become positively engaged and involved in students' education. Collaborative partnerships between these influential aspects of children's lives will positively affect academic success, chances of staying in school and earning higher degrees, and ultimately, perceptions of education in general, which will then be passed on to the next generation.

The way parents, schools, and communities frame the 'time' for learning needs to change. Learning doesn't just occur in the classroom, and as "Year-Round Learning: Linking School, Afterschool, and Summer Learning to Support Student Success" suggests, there needs to be a change in the perception of who can teach students – parents, community members, and teachers are *all* valuable, and all have access to children's impressionable minds at different times. Learning is a lifelong process occurring in all places at once, and acknowledgement of this fact is crucial to maximizing the impact of parental and community involvement. Many educational involvement programs are designed with the sole intention of benefitting the students they serve. While this is, admittedly, the ultimate goal of these programs, it is important to realize and promote the benefits to all parties involved (i.e. parents, schools, communities, *and* students) in order to expand who is involved, and how. Benefits to parents include increased social capital and empowerment; benefits to schools are a wider net with regards to active parents and higher performing students; benefits to communities are higher performing schools and more community-engaged residents; and benefits to students are increased academic performance, learning outside the classroom, and a reconciliation of home-school-community educations.

Policy

Although the United States' public education system is meant to satisfactorily serve all children, regardless of ethnicity, it falls short of this goal because of factors of socioeconomic status, institutional ethnocentrism, and a simple lack of equal access to information. State policies are already in place to promote parental involvement in education, such as the Colorado Basic Literacy Act, which requires all children to be reading on grade level by third grade, necessitating collaboration between home and school. However, almost no policies are in place to ensure that parents from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds have full access to the same

information, and this lack of policy allows some schools to do the bare minimum in keeping parents informed, such that Latino parents would have a difficult time becoming involved in the school, or in their child's education in any 'traditional' sense at all. While the No Child Left Behind Act attempts to put all students on an even playing field, it neglects to address the fact that not all students' parents are on an even playing field, especially in public education. Experts and knowledgeable nonprofit organizations have made recommendations for policy action, and in considering these recommendations carefully, new policies could be enacted that would make access to information more equitable across different populations and increase parental involvement in elementary education. Parents may already realize (and share with their children) that public education is a right in this country, but they may not realize that with that right comes a unique set of responsibilities.

Nonprofits

Nonprofit organizations have, for the most part, filled the community role in home-school-community partnerships. Nonprofits exist for parents, for students, for schools, for education, and for almost any ethnic community imaginable. Few exist, however, that link all of these elements together to create truly effective programs for increasing Latino parental involvement in their children's education. Those that do exist successfully are used as 'best practice' models for others, so that communities across the country can begin to implement programs that empower parents and schools and result in higher achieving students. Nonprofit organizations are a key element of what will continue to make parental involvement a known, accessible issue in education. Literature created by these organizations has the purest intentions – help parents help their children achieve academic success – and for that reason, they are an invaluable way of linking schools and parents and helping to empower them both for the good of Latino youth.

Unfortunately, it can be difficult for nonprofit organizations to reach their target audiences (parents). This issue will be discussed further in the following section.

What's Missing? and Recommendations for Future Research

The current body of literature is extremely useful in drawing general conclusions about Latino parental and community involvement in education. However, it does not demographically break down the population to a specific level (i.e. country of origin, single children v. siblings, gender, or socioeconomic status). I chose the subset of Chicanas in elementary education without realizing how difficult it would be to find literature dealing specifically with female students of a certain age. There is a great deal of literature dealing with Latinos in education, but each more specific subtopic links to less and less research, until at some point (for example, in using Chicana as a keyword), almost no search results appear. I expected there would be more specific information, especially regarding gender differences, and I believe this would be a good jumping off point for future research. It would also be interesting to determine if country of origin impacted parental and community involvement and/or student academic achievement, and whether having older or younger siblings, or being an only child, had any impact on academic performance. Above all, further research about whether socioeconomic status *within the same ethnic group* affects parental involvement and student academic success would be of value. Weiss, Mayer, and Keider's article about working mothers touched on these issues, but only on the surface, and deeper investigations into the topic may show that parental involvement (or lack thereof) is more of a class issue than an ethnic one.

Finally, research needs to be done and resulting suggestions implemented dealing with the best ways to disseminate information to parents about how to use social capital to become more involved in their children's educations. In Spanish, the phrase *me costó mucho* means something

alone the lines of "it took a lot out of me," and that is how I felt in doing this academic research. Articles were difficult to find at first, and all were found through an academic database or the University of Colorado itself. How are parents who might work multiple jobs supposed to find the time and resources to access this information? Nonprofits publish pamphlets and brochures that are (sometimes) easily understandable, but they are hardly more accessible than academic journals if parents and other community members are unaware that they exist. Research should be done to identify where, when, and how this information can be disseminated to parents most effectively.

Conclusion

In pulling together all of the information for this investigation, I have faced a couple of thought-provoking truths. Firstly, there is a lot of work to be done in the field of parental and community engagement, and in the research surrounding it. This fact can seem discouraging when taken out of context – the context that leads to the second truth I've realized: there are many, many people in the country who care deeply about the success of Latino students, and who dedicate their lives to ensuring that they receive quality educations. Finally, this research has resulted in a personal acknowledgement of my own privilege. I grew up with English as my first language in a community where I was in the majority and never experienced any negative effects of institutional ethnocentrism. I was blessed with a family structure that allowed my parents to teach me to read before I started school, to check my homework whenever I needed them, and to be at every school function imaginable – to be involved in my education in the traditional sense.

If I have learned anything from this research and spending time with Latino friends, it is that social capital is incredibly powerful. There is no truth to the myth that Latino parents aren't

invested in their children's education; in fact, it is not just parents, but also extended families, friends, community members, and exceptional teachers and administrators who care about these students. Researchers and society as a whole must move away from the stereotype that Latino parents are not involved because they don't care and focus on the questions, *what* are the systemic barriers that keep them from being involved in the traditional sense and *how* can those barriers be overcome? But, most importantly, *why* is involvement still framed in terms of 'traditional' versus 'nontraditional?'

Traditional involvement means classroom and teacher contact or whether or not a parent has taught their child to read by a certain time, among other questions of fact and numbers. What this investigation has shown me is that a redefinition of 'parental involvement' is essential in our diverse and ever-changing society. Involvement doesn't necessarily mean sitting down and helping a child with their homework. It means teaching a child the value of education – why they should not just go to school, but enjoy going. Parents can be involved in their children's education even if they don't speak the same language as the teacher or can never make it to back-to-school night. Despite what most of the research says on the subject, I ultimately argue that Latino parents *are* involved in their children's educations, and that we simply haven't found a suitable qualitative way of measuring it yet.

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