

The Indirect Influence of Parental Involvement on Latino High School Student Academic  
Performance

By

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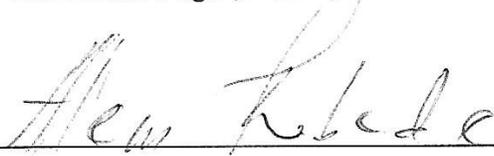
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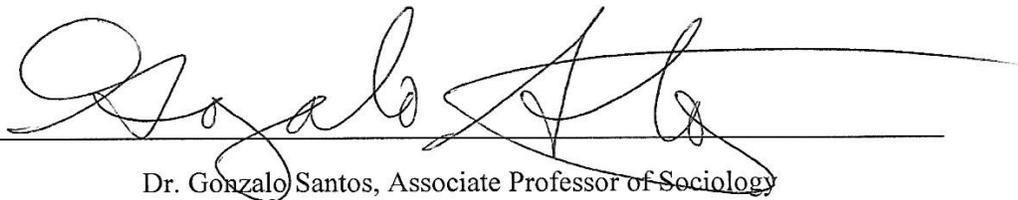
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## **Abstract**

*Parental Involvement in student education has been studied by scholars for many years, focusing on key features, such as, race and ethnicity and socioeconomic status, that have been found to affect parents participation in their child's education, the amount of parental involvement students receive, and the effect it has on student academic performance. White parents are often found to be involved at a higher rate than their counterparts, while Latino parents are found to be involved the least. As a result of poor Latino parental involvement, Latino parents are frequently perceived as not valuing their child's education. In addition, students from the White population are often found to benefit academically from parental involvement more than Latino students do. In this study, I explore parental involvement among Latino students at the high school grade level to answer the following research questions: 1) Is there a relationship between parental involvement and Latino high school student academic performance? 2) If so, does parental involvement positively or negatively affect Latino high school students' academic performance? Or is there no effect at all? and 3) How does parental involvement make Latino students feel? In particular, are students who receive more parental involvement more satisfied than those who receive less, or even no parental involvement at all? A qualitative approach is taken, utilizing in-depth interviews. Findings suggest that there is no relationship between formal parental involvement and Latino high school student academic performance based on student Grade Point Average (GPA), as students tended to perform well in school whether or not their parents were involved. However, additional findings, such as language barriers and parental education attainment were found to be the most important reasons why Latino parents are uninvolved, helping to break the misconception that they don't value their child's education. These findings are consistent with what have previously been found in the literature on Latino parental involvement. Limitations of the study are discussed along with suggestions for further research to expand on additional potential barriers for Latino parents in student education.*

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Parental involvement in children's<sup>1</sup> education has been a focus for many scholars in the past decades. As a result of numerous studies, there have been differentiating outcomes pertaining to the relationship of parental involvement and student academic performance. Some studies have found that parental involvement enhances student achievement (Yan and Lin 2005; Alfaro, Umaño-Taylor and Bámaca 2006) while others have found a negative effect or even no measurable effect at all (Domina 2005; Fan 2001). However, it is important to note that parental involvement has been conceptualized differently across multiple studies, contributing to the inconsistencies across various findings. Studies (McNeal 1999; Altschul 2011; Fan 2001) have discovered multiple associations between parental involvement and student academic performance, and many of these results are due to the different dimensions of parental involvement that have been examined by researchers. Since there have been various ways that researchers have operationally defined parental involvement, leading to inconsistencies within the literature, it makes it difficult to determine whether or not there is a valid or reliable relationship. Researchers note that, "Parent academic involvement is often operationalized as volunteering at school, parent-teacher contact or communication, involvement in academic-related activities at home, and the quality of parent-teacher relationships, especially in studies of elementary school students," (Hill, Castellino, Lanford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, and Pettit 2004: 1491). For middle and high school students, parent discussions with teachers and school administrators and discussions between parents and adolescents about school and plans for the future are often included in the definition of parent involvement (Hill et al. 2004; Hill and Taylor 2004). Other studies such as Yan and Lin (2005) conceptualize the term parental involvement as

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<sup>1</sup>The terms *children* and *adolescents* will be used interchangeably throughout this study.

family obligations (e.g. attending PTA meetings and school programs), parent information networks (e.g. parent- teacher relationship), and family norms (e.g. family rules, educational expectations, and parent-teen relationship). Others have defined it as parents attending school events such as back to school night/open house, athletic events, science fairs, and other extracurricular activity events. (Bogenschneider 1997; Domina 2005). The areas of homework assistance, volunteering inside the classroom, and attending parent/teacher conferences have also been examined (Altschul 2011; Patall, Cooper and Robinson 2008), while other scholars have focused on the distinction between involvement in school and inside the home (Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack 2007). Not only have dimensions of parental involvement been viewed as a factor in determining relationships, but also the methodologies used by researchers (surveys/questionnaires versus interviews), as well as the types of groups examined (i.e. age, student grade level, and racial/ethnic groups), and how achievement was measured (e.g. letter grades, Grade Point Average, and achievement test scores). These are all factors that contribute to contradictory results discovered in previous research.

Moreover, there is a significant amount of research that has been done on this topic in regard to multiple demographics such as gender (e.g. Muller 1998; McBride, Dyer, Brown, Hong, and Liu 2009; Alfaro et al. 2006) and race and ethnicity (e.g. Lee and Bowen 2006; Feuerstein 2000). However, there is paucity in the literature regarding Latino parental involvement, specifically at the high school level. So in turn, the objective of my study is to focus solely on Latinos at the high school grade level and to examine whether or not a relationship exists between parental involvement and Latino high school student academic performance. While exploring this topic, I included some of the dimensions of parental

involvement in my study that previous scholars have utilized (e.g. Domina 2005; Bogenschneider 1997; Altschul 2011).

I chose to explore this topic because Latinos are a fast growing population in the U.S. and represent a large and growing proportion of the student population in public schools, particularly in California (Alfaro et al. 2006; Huber, Huidor, Malagón, Sánchez and Solórzano 2006; Garrett, Antrop-González and Vélez 2010). For example, in the year 2006, this racial/ethnic group comprised almost half of the K-12 population in California (Huber, et al. 2006). Although this group is growing tremendously and represents a substantial amount of students in public schools, they have been reported to have the highest level of high school dropout rates since 1972 (Altschul 2011; Alfaro et al. 2006; Huber et al. 2006), with Mexican and Puerto Rican teens alone, comprising a large percentage of the Latino high school dropout rate (Altschul 2011). Moreover, high school graduation rates are disproportionately lower for Latinos than for other racial/ethnic groups (Huber et al. 2006). Perhaps parental involvement may have some influence on motivation for Latino students to do well and to stay in school. If it is discovered that a relationship exists, does parental involvement positively or negatively affect Latino high school students' academic performance? Or is there no effect at all? And how does parental involvement make Latino students feel? In particular, are students who receive more parental involvement more satisfied than those who receive less, or even no parental involvement?

To collect data for my research, I employed a qualitative approach in which in-depth interviews were utilized to help determine whether or not there is an existing relationship between parental involvement and Latino high school student success, as well as finding out the patterns and experiences of Latino high school students. If Latino high school student academic performance is related to parental involvement, then this would be a finding that could be used to

encourage Latino parents to become involved in their adolescent's education to increase their academic performance and to possibly encourage their students to stay in school and graduate. Findings can also be used to encourage educators to promote Latino parent involvement in Latino student education to help improve academic achievement, which in turn assists in minimizing the achievement gap, and consequently, increase high school Latino graduation rates. Therefore, the intent of this study is to expand on the limited research focused on Latino parental involvement at the high school level. Additionally, this research will make an impact in the following substantive areas: sociology of education, the sociology of racial and ethnic minorities, and Latina/o sociology.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter will review relevant literature regarding parental involvement in children's schooling and will provide a broad review of existing literature in regard to parental involvement among multiple racial and ethnic groups at various grade levels, and then will be narrowed down to focus on Latino parental involvement in children's education. The chapter will be organized into sections dealing with the following topics: Race, Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Status and Parental Involvement, Latino Parental Involvement, and Cultural and Language Barriers of Latino Parental Involvement.

### **Race, Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Status, and Parental Involvement**

Scholars in the field of education have been studying the role of parents' involvement in children's academic success since the early 1980s, and the empirical research still continues to grow. A reoccurring theme in the review of existing literature is the significance of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES). It is important to note that these three demographic characteristics may be considered interdependent upon each other (e.g. one's SES may relate to one's racial and/or ethnic background). Moreover, findings may vary according to the populations that are examined. Although the impact of parental involvement on academic achievement overall is significant among children from all racial/ethnic and income groups, some studies suggest that effects are moderated by demographic characteristics (Lee and Bowen 2006). For instance, Domina (2005) asserts that the effect of parental involvement may be conditional upon parents' race. In addition, Yan and Lin (2005) suggest that parental involvement varies across racial and ethnic groups, since not all groups may perceive parental involvement in the same ways. Some racial/ethnic groups may find parental involvement very important and may put a significant emphasis on their child's education whereas other

racial/ethnic groups may not find parental involvement as important. For instance, differing definitions of parental involvement play an important role in the debate about whether Mexican-American parents are involved in their child's academics (Altschul 2011). However, it has been questioned whether or not Mexican-American parents actually show an interest in their child's education, and results illustrate that they actually do show interest and care deeply about their child's academic achievement (Altschul 2011). Yet, others such as Yan and Lin (2005) suggest that White parents (or often referred to as European Americans in the existing literature) seem to show more of an interest and engagement in their child's education than minority parents do.

In their study that focused exclusively on race and parental involvement, Sy, Rowley, and Schulenberg (2007) interviewed Asian American and European American parents of kindergartners and discerned that European American parents were more likely than Asian American parents to have volunteered inside their child's classroom, attend a school event (e.g. open house/back to school night), and a parent-teacher conference. European American parents were distinguished as having a higher rate of participation in their child's education than that of their counterparts. However, Asian American parents were identified as endorsing early academic skills (e.g. counting to 20 or knowing the alphabet) and holding higher educational expectations for their child than did European American parents. Asian American parents also engaged in more home involvement activities related to helping their child develop early academic skills (e.g. taking their child to the library or a museum). Feuerstein (2000) goes further to illustrate this relationship between race and parental involvement by arguing that being a Black student is positively associated with greater parent involvement in parent-teacher-organizations (PTOs), whereas being an Asian American student is negatively associated with this type of parent involvement. However, in their study on African American, Hispanic, and

European American third through fifth grade students, Lee and Bowen (2006) found significantly higher academic achievement among European American children than among Hispanic and African American students in relation to parental involvement. On the other hand, they also discovered that African American students had higher academic achievement than Hispanic students did in regard to parental involvement. Notably, although African Americans are a minority group and the extent of parent involvement for this group is less than whites, this racial group still holds a higher rate of parental involvement than Latinos do.

A great amount of scholarship illustrates that parental involvement is generally deemed as more effective for white students than for minority students (McNeal 1999). Among white populations, parents are represented as having a higher percentage in volunteering at their child's school. Pomerantz, et al. (2007:375) asserts, "Volunteering in school is less common among Hispanic and African-American parents than their European-American counterparts," as there was a smaller percentage among minority groups than whites in this dimension of parent involvement. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2006), in the year 2003, Hispanic parent volunteerism was at 28%; African American parents were at 32%, and white parents with a 48% lead. Pomerantz et al. (2007: 375) go on to state that, "volunteering at school is less common among less educated parents." Parent educational attainment is a characteristic that has been linked to student performance in school. Scholars such as Davis-Keane and Sexton (2009:286) argue that "parents' educational success has been shown to be particularly influential in predicting children's achievement." Whites commonly hold middle to upper class status, which is associated with higher education; therefore they are distinguished as having a higher rate of parental involvement in their children's education. Moreover, middle to upper class families are frequently able to work within schools' framework by participating in parental

involvement opportunities such as Parent-Teacher Association meetings and volunteering in the schools (Gonzalez, Borders, Hines, Villalba, and Henderson 2013).

Furthermore, McNeal (1999) notes that parental involvement has more beneficial effects among affluent European American students than for students from families of a low SES (African American, Hispanic, and Asian American students). The impression of parental involvement being more effective for some students than for others can be attributed to the SES of families and the availability and/or access to resources; such examples are the ability to provide resources such as a computer, internet access, trips to the library, or even trips to a museum. Davis-Keane and Sexton (2009:286) argue, “Families from lower SES backgrounds may not have access to the types of resources that are available for creating a stimulating and warm home environment and may be at higher risk for lower achievement.” Members of minority groups might be limited to these types and amounts of resources (Davis-Kean and Sexton 2009). Moreover, both income and education have important influences on a family’s ability to provide a stimulating environment in the home that eventually contributes to successful outcomes for children. (Davis-Keane and Sexton 2009). Once again, income and parent education are two socioeconomic features that have been found to be associated with children’s academic achievement. Crosnoe (2001:213) states, “Social advantages, in the form of intact families, parental education, and ethnic majority status, tend to predict greater involvement. Such parents are more knowledgeable about educational systems, more confident about intervening, and have more time to take an active role.” Furthermore, McNeal (1999) explains the moderation effects of race and ethnicity are due to the social and cultural capital that affluent white families possess (i.e. understanding the school process, contact with the school, and networking) that allows them to engage in an extensive amount of parent involvement than their counterparts.

Unfortunately, for Latinos, cultural capital is limited, especially if they are immigrants. Limited education often affects school participation because parents do not voice their concern nor are they able to help their children in school because of their limited knowledge based on their educational level. (Peña 2000). This is a finding that emerged in Pena's qualitative work on Mexican parents and the influencing factors of parental involvement. She found that many Mexican parents had minimal formal education or even no education at all in the U.S. or in Mexico (Peña 2000). Parents were unable to help their children with homework because they did not comprehend it, or they had limited literacy skills. In addition, in her work that specifically focused on Mexican American families and parental involvement, Altschul (2012) discerned that higher parent educational levels were positively correlated with parental involvement and student achievement.

While these studies provide a good deal of insight about the amount and types of involvement parents from different racial/ethnic backgrounds provide for their children, there is more to the issue on the impact that SES makes on parental involvement that needs to be further examined. For example, it needs to be taken into consideration that for some minority groups, it may be an economic hardship on the parent(s) to volunteer at their child's school. Some parents cannot afford to miss hours at work due to the needed compensation to pay bills and provide for the family, or their boss just simply won't allow them to leave early. Additionally, transportation to and from school events may also be an issue for parents from minority groups. Mena (2011:492) demonstrates this by affirming, "Some parents may not have access to transportation, childcare, and/or they may have jobs that offer little or no flexibility in their work schedule." In addition, Lee and Bowen (2006: 198) argue that "some working-class or low-income parents may be less able to visit the school for conferences, volunteering, or other activities as a result of

inflexible work schedules, lack of child care, or lack of transportation. Hispanic/Latino parents may face the additional barrier of unavailability of translation services.” Scholarship on Mexican-Americans notes that economic circumstances are frequently a cited barrier to parental participation in that parents must direct most of their energies toward providing basic needs, leaving little time for involvement in education (Lopez 2001; Tapia 2000). These are aspects that need to be addressed to help further understand why minority parents are less involved in their child’s education. Furthermore, because there have been mixed findings on parental involvement in regard to race, researchers need to consider the differences among these groups, such as the difference in SES and other barriers such as English proficiency for minority groups.

### **Latino Parental Involvement**

Since Latino parental involvement occurs at a lesser extent than other racial/ethnic groups, it often leads to the belief that Latinos do not show concern for their child’s education. “The poor outcomes of Latino students combined with the tendencies to judge them more negatively and to interpret a lack of involvement as a lack of concern may lead many to conclude that Latino parents do not value education,” (Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, and Nero 2010: 392). Due to low achievement and low rates of parental involvement, there is the perception of Latino parents not valuing their child’s education. However, scholars (Gonzalez et al. 2013; Altschul 2011) have argued that Latino parents do value education and are involved; however, they demonstrate this involvement in other ways that are not commonly viewed by schools as “legitimate” forms of parental involvement. Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011:411) argue that “most Latino parents value education, hold high educational aspirations for their children, and believe that supporting their children’s education is very important, although, the forms of involvement they choose may not be among those that are typically

expected or observed by schools and teachers in many communities.” Latino parents are more likely to engage in home-based activities with their children than school-based, such as discussing school-related issues inside of the home. A primary reason for Latino parents’ engagement in more home-based involvement can be attributed to two key features that existing literature has commonly discussed: culture and language.

### **Cultural and Language Barriers of Latino Parental Involvement**

The knowledge of what and how parents need to negotiate with schools to support their children’s academic achievement is often culturally bounded (Delgado-Gaitan 2012). However, for Latinos it is difficult to advocate for their child’s education inside the school due to cultural and linguistic reasons. Many Latinos in the U.S. are foreign-born, which makes an impact on their lifestyle and adjustment to American culture. “Immigrant Latino families may have greater needs as they adjust to a new culture, new types of work and schools, and possibly a new language,” (Gonzalez et al. 2013: 186). Latino parents have to familiarize themselves with the structure of the U.S. educational system. The U.S. educational system emphasizes parental involvement primarily through school-based activities (i.e. back to school night/open house and volunteering inside the classroom). Latino immigrant parents then face this challenge of having to learn the new rituals and routines of American schools.

Among the many reasons of the low interaction of Latino parents with schools is the dramatic difference of what is expected of parents in the United States and in the parents’ country of origin (De Gaetano 2007). Dotson-Blake (2010) supports this statement in her ethnographic research on family, school, and community partnerships in Mexico and in the U.S. She discerned that U.S. family-school-community partnerships consisted of the schools taking on the role of the leader in the partnership where Latino parents are primarily invited to school

events (i.e. parent-teacher conferences) where they mostly receive instructions from their child's teacher about how to improve their efforts to help their children with schoolwork. U.S. Latino participants described the family-school-community partnership as focusing only on school-centered involvement, which is directed by the schools (Dotson-Blake 2010). She also discerned that in Mexico, family-school-community partnership was reported to be more collective. She found that families were more engaged in educational systems in Mexico and parents were more comfortable because they shared cultural values in regard to student success. Families from Mexico believed that schools were significant in maintaining a strong community and culture and that parents should have an active role, but in the U.S., Mexican parents felt that schools were focused on academics and individuality, which is a core U.S. value. This led Latino parents to become uncertain about what role they could play (Dotson-Blake 2010). Additionally, Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010) studied barriers to academic achievement for Latino English language learners in which they interviewed immigrant parents from Mexico and found that cultural clashes and a lack of support systems for families transitioning to a new environment and culture, were barriers to academic achievement for Latino English language learners. When parents were asked about cultural barriers, they expressed a loss of cultural identity and cultural foundation when they emigrated from Mexico to the United States. These parents did not feel connected to the new culture in the U.S., the school culture, or community culture and described a loss of control. Many Latino parents that emigrate to the U.S. struggle with the relationship with schools because they are unfamiliar with the school system, which is different from the school system in their country of origin, especially in regard to the relationship between parents and teachers. As a result, there is a clash of cultural practices, values, and ideas about education that occurs.

Aside from a strong value of a collective relationship with schools and the community, many Latino immigrants have strong cultural values which emphasize *respeto* (respect). Villalba (2007) explains that *respeto* is one of the cultural values that Latino immigrants hold in common, which includes high esteem for adults and professionals in the community. Therefore, Latino parents may be uninvolved in student education because of their cultural value of respect for authority figures, and they may purposely choose to avoid formal school participation out of respect for their children's teachers (LeFevre and Shaw 2012). They frequently follow their cultural script by respecting the authority and structure of the school (Gonzalez et al. 2013). Their way of showing respect to educators is by "letting them do their job" as educators inside the school, while as parents, they are more actively involved in the lives of their children within the home. Such ways may include parent-child discussions about school related issues or educational expectations expressed to their child.

Research has shown that Latino parents in the U.S. also participate in their child's education by offering moral support, educational encouragement, and monitoring their school related tasks, such as homework (Mena 2011). The moral support and educational encouragement that they provide for their children can motivate Latino students to perform well in school. For instance, in her study on ninth grade Latino students, Mena (2011) aimed to better understand the role that parents played in the formation of students' intentions to complete high school. Results illustrated that home-based parental involvement practices (monitoring, support, and educational encouragement) motivated students and had an impact on student academic persistence even if their parents were unable to attend school-based activities. Providing moral support and encouragement for their child are part of their cultural strengths and are available to them [parents] even if they are still acquiring English or do not understand the structure of the

school curriculum (Gonzalez et al. 2013). Thus, Latino immigrant parents can at least offer moral support and encouragement to their children even though they lack the English language skill and are not familiar with the U.S. educational system. This type of support was found to be positively correlated with Latino student academic performance. In their study, Carranza, You, Chhuon, and Hudley (2009) discerned that student academic performance and educational aspirations among Mexican American adolescents was influenced by students' perceptions of parental educational expectations and encouragement.

Furthermore, Cooper, Denner, and Lopez (1999) discovered that Latino parents frequently include moral learning as a foundation for other learning, whereas Caucasian non-Latino parents rate cognitive qualities as more important in their children's academic development. Lopez (2001) examined parent involvement in education among recent immigrants from Mexico and found that parents also invest in their children's education and operationalize this investment by involving children in life lessons, such as the introduction to hard labor, which in turn demonstrates the value of education. These are ways in which parents become involved but are not typically expected or observed by schools. Even if direct forms of school involvement are not visible to school personnel, it is important to remember that Latino parents of adolescents engage in discussions about school, learning, and future expectations that play a major role in the academic success of adolescents (Hayes 2011). Not to mention, Latino parents have strong aspirations for their children as well. For instance, in their qualitative study on Latino families where they interviewed Spanish-speaking Latino parents, Gregg, Rug, and Stoneman (2011) found that parents often spoke about the aspirations they had for their children. These parents hoped for their children to get an education and to achieve more than what they had as parents; "Parents wanted a different path for their children than the one the parents

themselves had taken,” (Gregg et al. 2011). Many Latino parents may not have been able to accomplish educational goals due to economic reasons (e.g. having to work at a young age), so they have hopes and dreams for their children to further their education and to become more successful than they have become.

Although not physically involved inside of the schools, Latino parents still become involved in their child’s schooling by way of their culture. They extend education to areas beyond school-based activities such as moral learning because they believe that moral learning is the foundation for all other learning (Drummond and Stipek 2004; Cooper et al. 2009). Latinos tend to confine their role in their children’s education to the home, ensuring that their children are fed, clothed, and provided with moral support and educational encouragement to motivate them to stay in school while they [parents] respect the teacher’s job to instill knowledge in their children (Chavkin and Gonzalez 1995; Shah 2009). Latino parents often support teachers instead of intervening with their child’s education.

Language has been cited as another significant barrier between Latino parents and schools. Schools operate on the basis of communication, whether verbal or written. Delgado-Gaitan (2012:306) asserts that “how schools operate comprises a type of literacy that parents need to understand to successfully participate in their children’s schooling.” Due to many Latino immigrant parents being monolingual Spanish-speaking, many schools are unable to effectively communicate with them or vice-versa. This in turn affects the type and amount of involvement parents are able to offer their children. In their qualitative study on Latino English language learners (ELL), Good et al. (2010) interviewed Spanish speaking mothers of Mexican origin who had ELL students in elementary school, middle school, or high school. Teachers who had at least three years experience in teaching ELL students were also interviewed. Good et al. (2010)

discovered that there were communication gaps between teachers and parents. Parents acknowledged that they lacked the English language skills that were necessary to communicate with teachers about their child's academic performance. Parents did indeed want to work with teachers to help their children with homework and other studies, but their limited English skills got in their way (Good et al. 2010). Additionally, Gregg et al. (2011) also discovered that language was a barrier when it came to parents communicating with their child's teachers. The parents in this study were not able to communicate with their child's teacher about their child's performance and their behavior inside the classroom (Gregg et al. 2011). The lack of English speaking skills interferes with Latino parents' abilities to become involved in their children's academics, which frequently depicts Latino parents as not caring about their child's education. Altschul (2011: 160) asserts, "for parents who experience economic, social, cultural, and linguistic barriers to engaging with schools, such involvement may be much more challenging, if not altogether impossible (for example, when language translation is not available)." If translation for monolingual Spanish-speaking parents is unavailable, parents may feel unwelcomed in schools (Mena 2011). Additional scholarship has identified language as a determining factor of types of parental involvement Latino parents participate in. For example, Peña (2000) directly observed and interviewed Mexican parents at school events, which included monolingual English-speaking parents, bilingual speaking parents, and monolingual Spanish-speaking parents. She found that monolingual Spanish-speaking parents believed their attendance at parent meetings was unnecessary due to meetings being held entirely in English. Parents felt that since they did not understand what was being discussed in the meeting, there was no point in attending them anymore. In addition, Peña (2000) also observed parents' confusion at a Back to School Night event, where Mexican monolingual Spanish-speaking

parents did not understand what was going on due to the language barrier, so when the parents were dismissed from the cafeteria by the principal to go visit their child's classroom to speak to the teachers, many parents left, perceiving the event was over. Not being able to speak English often leads Latino parents to become very confused with school events. Sometimes parents may even have to choose which activities they are able to participate in because of their linguistic ability with English.

In sum, the decades of research has resulted in multiple outcomes regarding parental involvement and student academic performance, with a significant amount of research signifying that parental involvement is a positive influence on student academic outcomes for students who come from more affluent families (e.g. White) with a higher SES. Furthermore, some scholars have brought attention to language and culture as being critical factors in Latino parents becoming involved in their child's education. It is important to bring awareness to these barriers because it allows one to understand reasons why some Latino parents are not involved in children's schooling in ways expected by schools. In addition, a large amount of literature focuses on the formal dimensions of parental involvement, while home-based involvement such as parent-child discussion about school, moral support and encouragement is studied to a minimal degree. Scholars who have brought attention to these barriers provide alternative ways in which Latino parents become involved in their child's schooling, which helps change the misconception of Latino parents not caring or valuing education.

Furthermore, a large portion of research focuses on the elementary and middle school grade levels (e.g. Griffith 1995; Domina 2005; Peña 2000; Hill and Taylor 2004; Sy et al. 2007), leaving a gap in literature for high school grade levels. Additionally, studies have examined different racial and ethnic groups but there are few studies that focus on Latinos, specifically at

the high school level. In this study my goal is to find out if there is a relationship between parental involvement and Latino high school student academic performance, along with discovering students' feelings about parental involvement.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

This study was driven by the interest of the growth of the Latino population in Kern County, specifically in Bakersfield. Additionally, my research was motivated by the limited amount of literature that exists on the Latino population at the high school grade levels. Before the collection of data began, it is important to note that I obtained approval from my institution's Institutional Review Board.

### Conceptual Definitions

Drawing from several scholars (Domina 2005; Bogenschneider 1997), I defined *parental involvement* as parental participation in school-related activities at their adolescent's school such as: attending back to school night/open house events, attending parent-teacher conferences, and attending other extracurricular events (e.g. sporting events and school concerts), as well as participating in school related tasks inside of the home such as: helping their adolescent to select elective courses to enroll in, helping their adolescent with homework, and helping with studying for tests. Parents must participate in at least two or more of these activities on a regular basis for it to count as parental involvement. *Academic performance* is defined as how well a student performs in school and is measured by reported student Grade Point Average (GPA). GPA seems to be a more valid measurement of performance. Grades were taken into consideration if students did not know their current GPA. *Socioeconomic status* (SES) is based on parent's education level, as parent income would have been difficult for students to report.

### Procedures

This qualitative study was conducted from February through May 2013 at three high schools located in Bakersfield, CA. I originally planned on conducting research at four high schools in Bakersfield, but in the end, I was only able to conduct my research on three of the

campuses due to one school not granting permission for me to access students. I first categorized all the high schools pertaining to their geographical location in Bakersfield (North, East, South and West sections of the city). A simple random sample was then conducted to select one high school from each of the geographical categories. Once the four high schools were selected, I contacted the superintendent of the high school district to receive permission to visit the four campuses to access potential participants. Once I received permission from the superintendent, I then contacted each high school principal to get permission to conduct research on their campus. I provided a condensed outline of my research for each principal to review so s/he could get an overall idea of the purpose of my research. I gained permission from three of the four principals (one principal located at the high school in the west part of town denied access to the campus. I then randomly selected a second school on the west side of town but access was denied to this school as well). I originally chose to study four quadrants in Bakersfield so I could get a representation of parent involvement among high school Latinos based on geographical location and because of the possibility of findings varying due to students coming from different neighborhoods and differences in family socioeconomic backgrounds. This approach of going out to the high schools to interview Latino students seemed most effective because it allowed direct access to a specific location where high school students attend, rather than trying to locate students outside of the school setting. This approach was the most efficient way to locate my sample. Regardless of my sample size of participants, I found patterns that exist that may have not been possible to find through the use of surveys.

After permission was granted to access the three high schools, I recruited five students from each high school by the use of flyers. Students who were interested contacted me (my telephone number was provided on the flyer) or their school's office to obtain a consent form.

Potential participants could be enrolled in ninth through twelfth grade. I targeted participants that are in high school because they are able to express themselves better than younger age groups would be able to. They may also be able to reflect back on previous years in school to recall whether or not their parents were involved in their education. In addition, potential participants also had to identify as Latino. A limitation in my research was the amount students that participated. I originally planned on interviewing 20 Latino high school students altogether, however, one school did not permit me access to the campus. So, my sample consists of 15 Latino students.

My sample includes seven males and eight females in grades nine through twelve, with the youngest participant being 14 years old and the oldest being 18 years old. Students identified their families as having a low SES and middle SES based on parent's education. I did not use income as a measurement of SES, as this would have been difficult for students to determine. Students also identified themselves as Mexican, Salvadoran, Honduran, Puerto Rican, and Nicaraguan, with more than half of the participants identifying as Mexican. In regard to immigrant status, more than half of the students could be identified as second generation immigrants; six could be identified as third generation, and only one student identified as 1.5 generation immigrant from Mexico.

My project employed face to face in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews rely on open-ended questions to develop a comprehensive picture of the interviewee's background, attitudes, and actions (Chambliss and Schutt 2006). I chose this method because a substantial amount of literature utilized surveys and questionnaires, which are useful, but at the same time, they limit responses. In-depth interviews allowed me to obtain genuine responses from participants. Participants were able to express how they felt about parental involvement with no limitations.

Interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. Before individual interviews were held, each student had to return both a signed consent and assent form from their parents if s/he was under the age of 18. Consent forms were provided in both English and Spanish. All interviews were held in a private room in each school's main office to ensure confidentiality of interviewees. The rooms were provided by the office staff, school counselors, and/or principals of the schools. Interviews were held during each student's lunch period so it would not cut into their class time. Before each interview began, I explained the purpose of my research and information on the consent form again with each participant. I then asked each participant if s/he had additional questions and ensured them that their interview data would be kept private. All interviews were conducted entirely in English and were audio taped at the consent of the participants. Furthermore, copies of each student's consent form were issued to them for their records.

## **Measures**

In order to obtain information about key concepts, I developed one semi-structured interview protocol and used it for all interviews. The developed interview consisted of seven sections that asked participants about (a) demographics (b) school and class experiences, (c) homework and study habits, (d) school events, (e) extracurricular activities, (f) academic performance, and (g) feelings about parental involvement. I developed an eighth section for use when students reported that their parents were not involved in their education. Sample interview questions include, "Do your parents help you every time you do your homework? Or only when you have a question?" and "Do you feel like you do better in school if your parent(s) help you with your homework and/or study? Why or why not?" The initial interview protocol was composed of a few close-ended questions in regard to demographics and 48 open-ended

questions, followed by probes, if necessary, to obtain further information or clarifications in regard to the response students gave. (For the complete in-depth interview schedule see Appendix A.) Due to the nature of interviews, participants were able to express themselves more openly and honestly about their concerns and feelings towards their high school experiences and parent involvement.

## **Data Analysis**

I began data analysis after all in-depth interviews were completed. An inductive approach was utilized, which Leedy and Ormrod (2013) describe as qualitative researchers scrutinizing the body of data in search of patterns that the data reflect. All audio taped interviews were transcribed verbatim. I verified all of the transcripts against the audio tapes to ensure accuracy. Once I completed this, the coding process began.

### **Coding**

In order to establish some general patterns or themes that emerged around parental involvement, I analyzed all 15 interviews. During the first part of analyzing the data, I read through each individual interview once, and then a second time to familiarize myself with the data and to extract meaning. During the second reading of interviews, I began to make notes or memos around important thoughts that I had while I was reading the interviews so I could come back to them later to analyze them again to help in expanding these ideas during the coding process.

After reading through all the interviews and familiarizing myself with the data, I began the open coding phase, which is “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss and Corbin 1990:61). In this phase, I examined each transcript individually and took any response that sounded significant and made notes next

to the response. Any responses that appeared to be imperative were taken into consideration during the open coding phase, which helped in labeling phenomena. As I re-read the data, I grouped concepts together that pertained to the same phenomena. For example, anytime I came across a student response that was related to their parents not knowing how to speak English, the note “language” was used. Therefore, anything that pertained to language was placed in this category. In addition, when parent’s level of education was referenced, I simply noted “parent education.”

Furthermore, all data was analyzed by school location so I would not become overwhelmed with analyzing all schools at once. For example, I began coding participant interviews attending the school on the East side of town, and then coded participant interviews who attended school on the West side of town and so forth. Breaking the process down like this not only helped me from becoming overwhelmed, but it also allowed me to have a better understanding of what patterns were occurring at each school location, as this was one of my goals: to explore whether there were any differences in emerging patterns among all schools and their locations (e.g. area and neighborhood characteristics.) As I read through the interviews by school location, I wrote out emerging themes on a separate sheet of paper for each school, so therefore I had three different sheets of paper with emerging themes that stuck out while I was reading interviews. Once all interviews were coded, I laid all three papers out and compared all three schools to find similar themes that emerged. I looked to see if there were any connections across the three high schools. Furthermore, as I was coding interviews by school location, I also copied and pasted responses that all pertained to the same phenomena into a *Microsoft Word* document and saved it under its coding name. For instance, any response from students that referenced language were all put into one *Word* document and saved as “Language.” This helped

with the coding process because all student responses from each school were placed into one *Word* document, which made it easier to identify emerging themes and also allowed me to compare responses by school location.

After the open coding phase was the selective coding phase, in which I re-read all the interviews one by one using the notes/memos that were taken during the open coding phase. As I read through the interviews and came across reoccurring phrases, I started to assign categories. For example, when I came across frequent phrases from students talking about their parent's not knowing how to speak English, I labeled this "language barrier." Other frequent references students made were about their parent's level of education. Any reference to this issue was placed in the category I labeled "parent educational attainment." As I continued to re-read the data, I continued to label categories. After all the data were analyzed and labeled, I had four emergent themes, in which a few were unexpected; however, they were very significant in that they provided explanations as to why some Latino parents were involved and why some weren't. These themes are: 1) Language Barrier, 2) Parent Educational Attainment, 3) Moral Support, Encouragement, and Pressure, and 4) Student Perceptions of Parental Involvement.

### **Ethical Concerns**

There were some concerns that some participants may possibly experience discomfort during their interview due to the sensitive nature of this topic, especially for those who may not receive parental involvement in their education at all. Some questions may also be personal and thought-provoking, or personal in nature. To assist with minimizing potential negative emotional responses, I informed participants during the consent process that they could withdraw from the study at any time, even during the interview process. Since interviews were audio-taped, I also informed participants that they could request to have the recorder turned off at any time, and I

would just take hand written notes. Prior to interviewing participants, I clarified that their participation in the study was not affiliated with their school or grades. In addition, I informed participants that at any time they may choose to not answer a question and we would move on to the next one.

If a participant became distressed during the interview, the interview would have stopped and additional time would have been taken to discuss these feelings. Should a participant needed further assistance with residual emotional feelings after the interview, I was available to assist with contacting the school counselor and lead the way to his/her office. If a school counselor was unavailable then I would refer the participant to the Kern County Mental Health (KCMH) hotline number, which is staffed 24/7, so participants may call whenever they would like to. This information was also on the consent form each student received a copy of. Fortunately, none of the interviewees indicated that they needed further assistance after responding to all interview questions. To further protect the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used when reporting data in this study to ensure anonymity.

## Chapter Four: Findings

The focus of this study has been to find out whether or not there is a relationship between parental involvement and Latino high school student academic performance. While my research makes no attempt to generalize about all Latino high school students, at the least in Bakersfield, this study does address the SES of Latinos and parent involvement based on the location of the high schools these Latino students attend in Bakersfield. I wanted to find out if the difference in SES and neighborhood made an impact on the amount of parental involvement Latino high school students receive in their schooling. This chapter is organized by a brief analysis of the findings, followed by personal narratives of the interviewees to demonstrate the following themes: 1) Language Barrier, 2) Parent Educational Attainment, 3) Moral Support, Encouragement, and Pressure, and finally 4) Student Perception of Parental Involvement.

After carefully scrutinizing the data, there were differences in family SES based on school locations. For example, all but one student (the one who reported his/her family to have a low SES) attending school on the Northern side of town reported that they came from a middle SES family, whereas the majority of the students attending high school on the East and South sides of town identified their families to possess a low SES. Although there were differences in SES and school location, the data indicate that there are no significant distinctions in the amount of involvement Latino parents spend in their adolescent's education based on school location and/or SES. For example, students who attend high school located on the east side of town did not receive less parental involvement than those students attending high school in the north and south sides of town, or vice versa. There was no difference in parental involvement among all three high schools, as findings demonstrate that students who reported to receive no parental involvement had an achieved Grade Point Average (GPA) ranging from 3.0 to 4.0. Students who

reported that their parents were involved in their schooling (such as attending their athletic events, open house, and/or helping them with their homework), reported GPAs ranging from 2.4 to 4.5.

When examining the data, it was also found that there was a relationship between parental involvement and Latino high school student academic performance; however, the forms of involvement that were found were more informal and home-based than those that have been typically viewed by schools and discussed in previous research. This type of involvement was not included in my conceptual definition of *parental involvement*. The type of parental involvement that was revealed in the data was informal and consisted of parents providing their child with moral support and educational encouragement, which in turn motivated students to perform well in school. So, parents were involved in their child's education, it just wasn't "formal parental involvement," as defined in formal educational settings.

Along with discovering that parental involvement had a significant impact on Latino high school student academic performance, there were a variety of reoccurring themes and patterns students mentioned during the interviews. These emerging themes help to explain why some parents were uninvolved with their child's education. Students who reported to receive no parental involvement had voiced similar reasons why their parents were uninvolved in their educational experience. Additionally, students that reported to have their parents involved in their education expressed frustration and a sense of pressure due to the amount of involvement that they receive from their parents. Therefore, in this section, I will focus on the analysis of the common four themes that were mentioned above. These four thematic patterns interrelate and may overlap with one another, but I will discuss each theme independently. Furthermore, student

narratives (with pseudonyms) were pulled from the data to illustrate student experiences, feelings, and/or attitudes of parental involvement in their education.

## **Language Barrier**

Often cited by scholars (Good et al. 2010; Mena 2011; Peña 2000), language is a significant barrier that becomes a disadvantage for many Latino high school students in regard to parental involvement. During the interviews, students were asked if their parents attended any school functions, such as open house or back to school night or if their parents ever helped them with homework or with studying for upcoming tests. Students frequently replied that their parents were unable to help due to not knowing how to speak English. Juan, who is a junior attending high school on the east side of town, responded:

My parents can't help me with my homework. They don't get it. They won't understand it because of the language. My mom tells me to do my homework, but she can't help me with it because she doesn't know any English.

Juan's parents are from El Salvador. His mother is a monolingual Spanish speaker and is the only parent inside the home all day. Juan's father returns home from work late at night and is unable to help Juan with his homework. Juan reported that even if his father was home, he still wouldn't be able to help him with his homework because his father doesn't know English very well either. Maria's experiences are similar when it comes to getting help with her homework. Maria is an 18 year old senior who attends high school on the south side of Bakersfield. Her father, who is from Mexico, was deported in 2002, so she currently lives in a single-parent household. When she was asked if her mother ever helped her with homework, she commented:

My mom can't really help me with my homework if I asked her to. Well I mean when I was younger, I would say third grade or something, she would, but it would only be math related and with math she has like a really low level in math. Just general math I guess she knows. For English, well she doesn't understand it. Spanish she does, but even that, she's limited, so she hasn't really developed her full skills and everything else I don't think she'd be able to help.

Students were also asked about school functions on campus and whether their parents attended any of these events. Open house/back to school night seemed to be one of the biggest events of the year among all three high schools. This event is for parents to go to the high school to discuss their child's progress in each of their classes with teachers. When 18 year old Juliana was asked about the open house/back to school night event at her high school, she remarked:

We never come to my back to school night. We don't go because of the language barrier. My parents won't understand anything. So we just never come.

Although open house is an event where parents are able to converse with teachers to see how their child is doing in school, for Juliana's parents, it is the opposite. They would not be able to communicate with the teachers nor understand what is going on due to being monolingual Spanish speakers. Juliana's parents not knowing English kept them from attending open house throughout her high school years. An overlapping theme that often emerged in the data along with language was parent's education, which is another factor that scholars have often cited as an impediment to parental involvement in student education (McNeal 1999; Crosnoe 2001; Pomerantz et al. 2007).

## **Parent Educational Attainment**

Regardless of school location, when students were asked if their parents were involved with their school tasks at home such as homework or studying for upcoming quizzes or tests, many students stated their parents didn't assist them in these areas. Although language barrier was the reason why monolingual Spanish speaking parents couldn't assist their children with these tasks, for bilingual parents, students expressed that it wasn't because their parents did not want to help, but rather it was due to them not comprehending their homework. Many students thought that one of the reasons why their parents could not help them with their homework or with studying was due to their parent's educational level. The data illustrated that 80% of parents

(both mother and father were accounted for) earned a high school diploma or less. Of this group of parents, 54% were reported to have dropped out of high school or only completed up to the fourth or sixth grade in their country of origin (i.e., Mexico and El Salvador). Parent's minimal education greatly affected their ability to assist their children when it came to involvement with homework. Seventeen year old Elena experiences this obstacle when she is in need of help with her homework:

The last time my parents helped me with my homework was when I was in elementary school. Now that I'm in high school, if I don't know the answer to a question I can't ask my parents for help because they're not going to understand it. It's because of their education.

Elena's parents are both from Mexico. Her mother is a monolingual Spanish-speaker, but her father is bilingual. Both her parents only completed the sixth grade in Mexico. Elena expressed that even though her father knows English, he cannot help her due to his educational level. Once again, the language and educational barriers effect parental involvement in activities such as homework. Likewise, 16 year old Cecelia who is a sophomore, does not receive help with her homework either. Cecelia is assigned math homework on a daily basis and reported that her mother, who knows English cannot help her. Cecelia explained:

Well, I do ask my mom for help but since she doesn't like to help me because she doesn't get it, I ask my friends. When I was little my parents would always help me, well mostly my mom, but not anymore because they don't understand it.

Instead of turning to her parents for assistance, she goes to friends at school for help. In addition, Cecelia admitted to procrastinating on her homework because it is sometimes too complicated for her. Cecelia's father didn't complete high school, but her mother did. Although her mother is a high school graduate, she reportedly doesn't like to help Cecelia with homework due to the fact that she does not understand the work.

Although many parents were reported to have barriers when it comes to being involved in their child's education, especially when it comes to homework assistance, students still reported that their parents are involved in other ways. These ways are what schools do not typically observe as parental involvement because schools commonly see school based involvement as the primary form of parent participation in student education. Students frequently talked about how their parents motivate them with moral support and encouragement.

### **Moral Support, Encouragement, and Pressure**

Moral support and encouragement from parents were very common experiences for both groups of students whose parents were involved and uninvolved. Since many students reported that their parents did not speak English and had minimal education, students voiced that their parents still provided them with moral support when it came to activities such as studying for tests, doing homework, and choosing elective classes in school. Although not physically involved at school functions, Latino parents still motivated their children to make good decisions that would help benefit them in the future. Maria spoke about how her mother, who is a monolingual Spanish-speaker, is very supportive with her education and motivates her to make good choices. Although her mother does not know English or does not understand the American school system, she still tells Maria to choose elective courses to take that will help her "in the long run." Maria commented:

It's not that my mom doesn't show an interest; it's that she doesn't really understand how... I mean she knows there's math and that there's English, but she doesn't understand that there's a higher course and how that affects school and stuff. She tells me that if it will help me in the future then to do it. She wants me to choose classes that will help me later on in the future.

Juliana also shares her experiences with receiving support and educational encouragement from her parents who are both from Mexico. She comments about how even

though her parents are unable to help her with homework due to the language barrier, they still motivate her by reassuring her that she will do well in school. Juliana stated:

My parents are um...they're very encouraging parents. Even though they don't understand what you're talking about sometimes when you're talking in English or if they're looking at my homework, they don't comprehend it. They do more moral support like telling me, "You'll do good," and things like that. My parents are straight up from Mexico, so they don't really understand all the education here and how it works. It's really hard for them to be involved. My parents encourage me to do better though. All my siblings are really smart too even though our parents didn't pass grade school. They encourage us so much to try to better ourselves so we can have a better future than what they have. So even by giving us moral support, it's great.

Juliana further expresses herself on the idea of her parents' capability of being more involved in her schooling, but understands her parents' circumstances. Both her parents are immigrants from Michoacán, Mexico. Her mother and father did not complete grade school.

I wish they could be more involved but honestly I understand because they're not really, well they didn't get the chance to further their education so I'm kind of satisfied with what they have given me and how much they have helped me with all of the moral support.

Seventeen year old Javier discusses how his parents who are really involved are always encouraging him to "be somebody." Javier's parents are bilingual and both have a Bachelor's degree, attend school functions, and help him with homework. Javier commented:

My parents really want me to succeed. They want me to be better than them; they want me to be someone. They've always been telling me that since I was younger, that they want me to be someone. You know they did way better than their parents because their parents, you know, were born in Nicaragua and my other parent, their parents were born in Mexico and you know they're doing way better than them and now they're encouraging me to do way better than what they have done.

Juan similarly says that his parents are very supportive with other tasks such as assisting him with visual tasks for school projects and taking him to school every day:

Even though my parents can't help me with homework and other school stuff I like that they support me in other ways. I don't have a car so like my mom is the one who gives me a ride to practices and school.

Moral support and encouragement is a form of involvement that was discovered to be very common among the students and their parents. It wasn't surprising that students whose parents have linguistic and educational barriers to being involved in their child's education were very satisfied with the moral support they receive from their parent(s). What came across as surprising, however, were student responses about their parents who were able to, and did, participate in their schooling. A sense of frustration and feeling of being pressured emerged from responses.

When speaking to students about how they felt about their parents being involved with activities at school and at home, it was discovered that some students find it more of a battle with parents because of the pressure they feel from them. When asked about how he felt when his parents attend his soccer games, Carlos expressed:

My dad's always there. He's always on me. If I messed up just once in a game he's like, "Oh you messed up. You passed it a little too far back," and I'm like "come on now." He always tells me my mistakes. He'll never tell me if I played really good.

Javier expressed how he gets frustrated with his parents and how they push him, especially his father who has a Bachelor's degree and is a corrections officer. He feels that his father's role as a corrections officer interferes with his attitude when helping him with his homework.

Sometimes I get so frustrated to where they get on my nerves and then I get very upset and we start arguing. I mean I know they're there for a good cause but once in a while they push too hard and they make me think a little bit too much and then that gets me upset. I'll tell them to stop and they'll be like, "okay we'll stop," but then maybe give it three days and they'll start doing it again. When it comes to my dad, he has that um, that correction officer mode. They're used to like harsh things and they're used to saying things not as friendly. Yeah I might not have it [the answer] right off the bat but he wants me [he starts snapping his fingers] to have it like right there in my mind and if I don't, he just starts yelling and yelling and I'm like, "oh my gosh." It's like "cállate" [he starts laughing]. It's like I

shouldn't have even asked you for help. I don't even really like asking him for help. Once in a while he'll just come up and be like, "let me quiz you right now," and I'm like, "I'm doing my homework," and he'll keep telling me to let him quiz me. If I don't know the answers, I'm in trouble. He puts me on the spot like that.

Although parental involvement was viewed as a positive influence for students in school, sometimes a little too much involvement causes some students to feel frustrated, overwhelmed and pressured by their parents. This is the case for the two male students who expressed their frustration above. Findings illustrated that this pressure was from fathers and it only occurred for male students. Some students felt the pressure from their parents because they wanted them to perform well in all aspects of school. Like Carlos had mentioned above, having his father at every soccer game put pressure on him to play well because if he didn't, his father was always nagging him for the minor mistakes that he made in the game. Javier often wished he had never even asked his parents for help with his homework because he felt they were too pressuring, especially his father. So, findings indicate that for some students who receive parental involvement, sometimes it is very overwhelming for them due to the unwanted pressure they receive along with the support from their parents.

### **Student Perceptions of Parental Involvement**

After discussing parental involvement in their high school experiences, students expressed what they thought about it and how it made them feel. When Daniela was asked how she felt about her parents being involved with her education she commented:

It makes me feel like they give me the attention that I want, instead of like ignoring me and just not caring about my education because if they didn't then I wouldn't care about my education because why should I if they don't?

Eduardo also likes his parents participating in his education and sees it as motivation to perform well in schools so he can make his parents proud of him. When explaining how he feels about parental involvement he expressed:

It's amazing. It's a blessing. I feel like the support has really driven me to be the best I can be because I want to make them proud.

On the other hand, when asked about how he felt about his parents not attending any school events, Francisco explained:

It hurts. It really does hurt because like I said, being a middle child it just kind of sucks on its own and when you have a lot of things going for you, when you've been accepted into like 12 out of the 14 universities that you applied to and every little thing, it just wasn't enough. I wasn't an athlete and even when I got into some universities, I would say, "Hey dad, I got into this school," and he would be like, "Oh, that's nice," or "Oh, that's really expensive, I wonder how you're going to pay for that." Things like that. So, I wish my parents, well because I know they love me, but I wish they understood what it was to be me on a daily basis or see things through my eyes, but they won't and I don't think they ever will.

Francisco's parents are both first generation immigrants from Mexico and are completely uninvolved and were reported to have never provided moral support or encouragement for him throughout his high school years. Now that he is a senior and has been accepted to almost all of the universities he applied to, he wishes that his parents were supportive and understood the importance he placed on education. Regardless of his parents not being involved, it did not deter Francisco's performance, as his GPA was a 4.0 and as mentioned, he was accepted into almost all the universities he applied to. Additionally, when Alejandro was asked about how he felt about his parents not being involved in his schooling, he remarked:

It's, I mean, I don't wanna say it's bad, but it's not good at the same time, but um...I don't know. I guess I kind of don't really pay attention to it. As long as you're keeping up with everything you're doing, everything is planned, and you know you're keeping up with your grades and whatever you're involved in, I guess it all works out. It doesn't have like a big impact, you know.

Furthermore, when he was asked if he thought he would perform better in school if his parents were involved Alejandro responded:

Not really. I mean, I guess in a way, 'cause I have some friends whose parents help them out more than what my parents do, but I mean, it's no big deal. I mean yeah it helps, but you don't really need their help so I don't think it would make a difference. I think it [academic performance] would stay about the same... Yeah, I believe it would stay the same.

Alejandro feels that parental involvement doesn't have an impact on his academic performance. Although he has acknowledged that some of his friends have parents who are involved, Alejandro thinks that parental involvement doesn't make a difference on his academic performance and that he doesn't really need his parents to be involved in order for him to earn good grades. What is interesting about the findings on perceptions and feelings towards parental involvement is that students whose parents were involved had less to say than for those whose parents were uninvolved with their schooling. For some participants it was obvious that receiving no parental involvement effected them psychologically (i.e. Francisco) rather than effecting their academic performance. Others whose parents were involved were satisfied.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore whether or not there is a relationship between parental involvement and Latino high school student academic performance. After examining all data across the three high schools located in the North, East, and South quadrants of Bakersfield, findings indicate that parental involvement had no significant effect on Latino high school student academic performance. There was no effect based on GPAs that were reported by students. There was no significant difference in GPA for those students whose parents were involved and for those students whose parents were uninvolved in their education; thus, parental involvement did not lead to better GPAs, nor did the lack of parental involvement lead to poor GPAs. Students whose parents are uninvolved in their education are still performing well in school. A possible explanation for this result is acculturation. These students are second generation immigrant children and may be accustomed to the American values placed on education, or they may have adapted to the value of “hard work.” As scholarship has found that immigrant parents from Mexico invest in their children’s education by involving them in life lessons, including the introduction to hard work, which in turn demonstrates the value of education (Lopez 2001). Even the one student who identified as 1.5 generation excelled in school with a high GPA. This student’s achievement in school could also be due to acculturation. Although not born in the U.S., he has adapted to the American values placed on education; and as Portes and Rumbaut (2001:281) state, “the passage of time brings about greater acculturation.” This student came to the U.S. with his family at a young age and as time has passed, he has acculturated to the core U.S. values. Furthermore, second generation immigrant children may have a smooth transition into the mainstream society or, their integration into

mainstream society is more rapid than it is for their first generation immigrant parents (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

Although findings suggest that parental involvement had no effect on academic performance, there were still important explanations as to why some parents were not involved that are important to discuss. To provide a general understanding of why some Latino parents are not involved with their adolescent's education, the findings from the interviews provided a firsthand account from Latino high school students to explain why their parents weren't involved with their education. The voices of these Latino students shed light on continuous barriers that create difficulties for Latino parents to engage in their child's education, as language and parent educational attainment were significant explanations as to why their parents were unable to attend back to school night/open house events, help them to prepare and study for tests, or help them with homework. These barriers lead to the existing misconception of Latino parents being disinterested or not valuing their child's education (Ryan et al. 2010). Although findings on language barrier and parent educational attainment already exist in the literature, the findings in the current study provide new information regarding parental support in the form of moral encouragement. Nevertheless, it is still important to discuss all patterns though, as they contribute to findings in the existing literature and are consistent with primary reasons why Latino parents are not able to participate in their child's education. This discussion will be organized into sections according to themes.

## **Language Barrier**

Based on student interview data, the primary barrier that contributed to the lack of parental involvement was language. Many parents were immigrants from Mexico and other Spanish speaking nations and only spoke Spanish, making it extremely difficult for them to

become involved in their child's education. Students reported that their parents were unable to attend open house/back to school night events or parent-teacher conferences because they are not able to communicate with the teachers, so parents did not attend these types of events. This finding is similar to what Peña (2000) found in her study that examined Mexican parents where she discovered that monolingual Spanish-speaking parents felt it was unnecessary to attend PTO meetings since they were conducted in English; these parents saw no reason in attending because they would not understand anything. As mentioned earlier in my findings, 18 year old Juliana explained to me that her parents did not attend her back to school night events because they wouldn't understand anything, so they just never went. Like in Peña's study, students expressed that since their parents did not understand what was going on or what was being discussed, their family would not attend these events.

Latino immigrant parents lack linguistic capital (as part of their overall cultural capital) that is a major source necessary to communicate with the schools and what Bourdieu (1991) notes is a type of wealth. Bilingual Latino parents may even lack linguistic capital. For instance, Latino parents cannot go to the schools to speak to teachers because first, not only do some lack the English language skill, but they may also be incapable of understanding what teachers are talking about in terms of curriculum. Lingual competence relates to one's social status in society and being a minority in the working class, Latino parents may not have the education and knowledge that gives them the ability to speak in a manner that fits the circumstances and objectives in the school setting (Bourdieu 1991). Bourdieu states, "Speakers lacking the legitimate competence are excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required or are condemned to silence," (Bourdieu 1991: 55). This relates to how Latino parents are in fact, excluded from the schools because they lack lingual competence, therefore, some are

silent (especially Latino immigrant parents) when it comes to advocating for their child's education.

In addition, teachers occupy authoritative positions in the educational field, which in turn may intimidate Latino parents because they do not understand the school jargon (e.g. certain terms teachers might use when discussing curriculum). So not only are some Latino parents lacking the English language skill, but they are also unable to present themselves to teachers in a way that could advocate for their child's education. Parents may lack the self-confidence when presenting themselves to teachers because they might not comprehend the school jargon that is utilized when discussing students' progress in certain subjects in school or simply because they just don't understand English in general.

Corresponding with Delgado-Gaitan (2012), Latino parents need to understand the primary language that schools use in order for them to be able to successfully participate in their child's education. Lacking the English language keeps Latino parents unaware of what is going on in their child's school, let alone keeping them from physically participating in events that the schools host. English proficiency is needed to interact with their child's school. Schools are unable to effectively communicate with Latino Spanish-speaking parents and vice-versa due to this barrier. This communication gap in turn affects parents' capability of assisting with school tasks inside of the home (i.e. homework). As findings in this study illustrated, parents were unable to assist their children with studying for tests or with their homework. Without full acquisition of the English language, Latino immigrant parents are unable to offer assistance with these types of tasks and are unable to communicate with the school regarding their child's academic performance. This is consistent with the study done by Good et al. (2011), in which parents acknowledged the fact that they lacked English language skills to effectively

communicate with their child's teacher regarding academic performance. Limited English skills block Latino parents from many areas in the educational arena. Although there are programs within schools trying help bridge the communication gap between teachers and parents (e.g. Drummon and Stipek 2004), there is still much more that needs to be examined in regard to what schools are doing to help bridge the communication gap in regard to limited English language speakers.

### **Parent Educational Attainment**

As findings indicated, another reason why Latino parents were uninvolved with their adolescent's education, particularly with homework assistance, was because of the level of education they had obtained. The majority (80%) of the parents in this study were reported to have earned a high school diploma or less, with over half (54%) of these parents dropping out of high school or only being educated up to the fourth or sixth grades in Mexico. This had a significant impact on their ability to help with homework. However, findings indicate that students who received no assistance with homework were not negatively affected because these students continued to complete their homework and perform well in school.

This finding contradicts a study done a few years ago on Mexican American middle school students. The author of this research suggested that in Mexican American families, socioeconomic factors (e.g. parent education levels) were positively related to children's academic achievement (Altschul 2012). Higher levels of educational attainment by parents were positively correlated with academic achievement. However, in my study parent educational attainment did not have an effect on student achievement. This inconsistency may be due to the method of data collection that was used, since Altschul (2012) collected data from both parents and students. Altschul argued that parents are more likely to report accurate data because SES

variables are better answered when coming from a primary source (e.g. parents know their income and educational levels, to where students may not know and report inaccurate information). Additionally, the study was quantitative and included a larger sample than my study did. Although, another indication Altschul (2012:26) asserts that may be of importance in my study is that “lower income is associated with less time spent assisting students with homework and engaging with children in enriching activities, which may be the result of parents’ stress in response to economic hardship or could be associated with a lack of resources, specifically leisure time.” More than half of the students in my study reported their families to be lower SES, thus implying that they come from a low-income family that may be unable to invest in more resources in their child’s education (e.g. taking their child to libraries or museums) and/or invest in their own education. Additionally, in relation to Alstchul (2012), perhaps the Latino parents in my study could have been more involved if they had earned a higher educational level and were more proficient in English. Although some parents were high school graduates, it may be fair to state that high school curriculum has changed and advanced since the time these parents have graduated, leading to parents not comprehending assignments. Not to mention, for those parents who are first generation immigrants, the U.S. school system is unfamiliar to them, and therefore, they are not able to comprehend what is expected from their child due to cultural differences in regard to education. Furthermore, in congruence with the language barrier, parents with low levels of education may be less involved at their child’s school because they feel less confident about communicating with school staff due to a lack of knowledge of the school system, a lack of familiarity with educational jargon, or their own negative educational experiences (Lee and Bowen 2006).

## **Moral Support, Encouragement, and Pressure**

Although most Latino parents were unable to be physically involved in school events (i.e. open house), the data provide a possible explanation for why students continue to perform well in school; this could be due to parental aspirations and support that is provided for students by their parents. Latino parents provide educational encouragement to their children which, in turn, motivate students to perform well in school. Students explained that their parents provided moral support for them even though they were unable to attend school-related events or help with their homework and studying routines. In this study, practice of moral support emerged as a way of parents providing their child with words of encouragement to perform well in school in lieu of attending school events. This finding was consistent with those found in Mena's study on ninth grade Latino students and the role that parents played in the formation of students' intentions to complete high school. Mena (2011) suggested that monitoring, support, and educational encouragement motivated students to do well in school and had an impact on student academic persistence even if their parents were unable to attend school-based activities. Students' interview comments revealed that parental support and educational encouragement motivated them to excel in school. As the data indicate, students whose parents were uninvolved performed rather well, attaining at minimum a 3.0 GPA, with the highest GPA being a 4.0. The participants of this study stated that they commonly received words of encouragement by their parents, which in turn motivated them to perform well in school. Parent aspirations were also expressed to students such as, "I want you to do better than what I did." There was this sense of wanting to "break the cycle", as it was a pattern in many of the interviews that students felt they needed to succeed in school because their parents wanted them to do better than what they had done in their educational career. (Many students expressed they were first generation college students in

their family). It is very common for Latino parents to want their children to live a better life than their own. Latino parents aspire for their children to achieve academically so they can live content lives with a better job and income.

Identified as a minority group, Latinos have a small amount of cultural capital in regard to educational contexts. In Lee and Bowen's (2006: 198) study where they used Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital as their theoretical framework, they described cultural capital for parents in relation to the educational system as knowledge gained from experience, connections to education-related objects (e.g., books, computers, academic credentials), and connections to education-related institutions (e.g., schools, universities, libraries). In contrast, individuals with less cultural capital encounter constraints that result in unequal access to institutional resources." Lee and Bowen (2006: 198) state, "This type of cultural capital is the advantage gained by middle-class, educated European American parents from knowing, preferring, and experiencing a lifestyle congruent with the culture that is dominant in most American schools. Advantage accrues from enacting the types of involvement most valued by the school or most strongly associated with achievement." Many Latino parents in my study were uninvolved because their culture and lifestyles were different from the culture of the school's as well as having a low educational attainment differing from credentialed teachers at the schools. According to Lee and Bowen (2006:210), in their study "involvement at school occurred most frequently for those parents whose culture and lifestyle were most likely to be congruent with the school's culture: parents who were European American, whose children did not take part in the school lunch program, and whose educational attainment was higher and more similar to that of school staff." Unlike Latinos, Whites possess more cultural capital, allowing them to participate in student

education because they share the same culture and lifestyle as American schools (i.e. the teachers), and are perceived as having a higher educational attainment (Lee and Bowen 2006).

Students explained that their Latino immigrant parents had not had experiences with the U.S. educational system. Not knowing how the schools system works, along with limited (if any) English proficiency can make it very intimidating for Latino parents to go to their child's school to speak to a teacher, counselor, or school official. Not being proficient in English might perhaps lower their confidence in communicating with their child's school and/or they may feel intimidated. Bilingual parents may even be intimidated due to their minimal education level. Less privileged parents lack confidence in their interactions with the education system and usually defer to teachers' expertise (Lee and Bowen 2006). Or, Latino parents may just be following their cultural script in which they show *respeto* (respect) to the authority figure, not wanting to interfere with the educator's role in the school.

Furthermore, in the U.S. Latinos hold a different economic background than their White counterparts, in which many are unable to attain success in the educational arena due to economic reasons, therefore not having the opportunity to obtain credentials (to build upon their cultural capital). This in turn relates to their ability to assist with their children's schooling. Due to this, Latino parents display different forms of involvement than what is usually seen by the schools. Instead of going out to the schools to talk to teachers or volunteering in PTOs, Latino parents provide moral support and educational encouragement for their children inside of the home. This type of involvement is often overlooked by scholars. A significant amount of literature focuses on school-based involvement where parents actually visit the schools. This is why Latinos are perceived as not valuing their children's education. Due to these barriers, they are not able to become involved in the ways that teachers would like them to be or expect them

to be; however, they are still providing moral support and educational encouragement, which in turn encourages students to succeed and want to “break the cycle.” However, in some cases, too much support can lead students to feel pressured by their parents.

For some students, excessive support frustrates or makes the student feel pressured because the support turns into expectations. As this was the case with the two male students mentioned earlier. Their fathers took the act of showing support to the extreme. These students felt parental expectations are sometimes too much for them to handle to where they become frustrated and wish they had never even asked their parents for help, as this was the case for Javier. Although parent support and expectations may be overwhelming for some students, my findings illustrate that they still perform well in school. Students may want to please or make their parents proud of them for “breaking the cycle,” that their parents often express to them. This finding is consistent with the qualitative study done by Gregg et al. (2011) because parents in this study held high aspirations for their children to get a good education and do better than what they had done in school. However, scholars suggest that parents should take caution when helping their children with school tasks at home to ensure that students do not feel increased pressure (Epstein and Becker 1982). In addition, students may also become embarrassed or stressed when they feel that they are not performing as well as they would like to for their parents (Epstein and Becker 1982). There is paucity in the literature regarding parental pressure on student achievement; therefore, this is an issue that needs to be further explored.

### **Student Perceptions of Parental Involvement**

In regard to Latino students’ feelings about parental involvement, students who received more parental involvement reported to feel happy and satisfied that their parents were involved with their education. There were mixed feelings reported by students whose parents were

uninvolved. For example, Francisco felt emotionally hurt, while Alejandro stated that he didn't think his parents being involved made a difference and that he was satisfied with the way things were. Overall, there were obvious differences in feelings and perceptions towards parental involvement based on the two groups (those whose parents were involved and those whose parents were uninvolved). Students who received parental involvement seemed to be more satisfied than those who didn't receive parental involvement at all.

Research is limited on student perceptions of parental involvement, however, the few studies that have been done have found that student academic performance and educational aspirations among Mexican American adolescents are influenced by students' perceptions of parental educational expectations (Carranza et al. 2009). In addition, student perceptions of parental involvement, school monitoring, and parent-child communication about school were found to not significantly impact students' performance in school (Carranza et al. 2009). Findings in my study are consistent with this, as many students in this study still performed well, regardless of how they perceived parental involvement. Findings illustrated that parental involvement did not have a significant impact on student academic performance. Instead, students perceptions of parental expectations made them want to make their parents proud. This relates to the moral support and educational encouragement that parents provided for their adolescents even if they were unable to attend school events. Students whose parents are involved and uninvolved both perceive parental involvement as having no effect on their performance in school. Rather, it is the moral support and educational encouragement that students perceive as motivation for them to excel.

Furthermore, research by Barge and Loges (2003), contradicts findings in this study regarding student perceptions of parental involvement. While parental attendance at parent-

teacher conferences, PTA meetings, and attendance at school activities such as sports and school plays all made an impression on students in their study, this was not so much the case in mine. Barge and Loges (2003) noted that the children in their study took note when parents missed school functions such as these. However, in my study, students reported that they understood their parents circumstances as to why they were unable to attend school events and that it wasn't a big deal whether they were involved or not. These findings may be inconsistent due to grade levels. Barge and Loge focused on middle school grades where parental involvement may still be perceived as a significant factor to students, to whereas in my study, which focused on high school grade levels, students seemed to express a sense of autonomy and didn't really care if their parents were able to attend school events. Crosnoe (2001) similarly notes that the decline in parental involvement during the high school years may be due to the desire for more autonomy as the student grows older. Rather than having their parents at their schools, students accepted moral support and encouragement instead. Zarate (2007) similarly found this in her study. She states, "Students placed significant importance on the emotional support and motivation that their parents provided and felt that it was more important than having their parents volunteer at the school or participate in the PTA." Overall, Latino students in this study acknowledge parental involvement as an important factor in their education, however they did not necessarily perceive it as something that they "must" have in order for them to perform well in school. Regardless of whether or not their parents were involved in their education, students perceive moral support and educational encouragement as the primary motivator for achievement. Hearing their parents express to them that they want them to do better than what they had done in school is what made them want to "break the cycle" and to excel in school.

## Conclusion

The overall outcome of this study signified that a lack of “formal” parental involvement did not affect academic performance for Latino high school students. It was also discovered that family SES and school location (neighborhood) do not affect parental involvement and academic performance either. However, the findings brought attention to significant reasons as to why many parents weren’t involved. Although a few findings were not new (e.g. language barrier and parent educational attainment), they were consistent to what previous research has found, which can contribute to the consistency of these thematic patterns that have been brought to attention throughout the literature. New information regarding moral support and educational encouragement also contributes to literature to help demonstrate that Latino parents do not have to physically attend school events at their child’s school to be involved in their child’s education. Although moral support and educational encouragement were not conceptualized as parental involvement in my study, this is a finding that is rarely mentioned in the literature and has implications for future research in this area. In relation to moral support and educational encouragement, students’ perceived these two types of support to be more important to them than parent attendance at school events. In addition, parent and child immigrant generation status played an important role in parental involvement and academic achievement. This aspect is important to parental involvement and academic success and it needs to be further looked into.

Moreover, due to the nature of this study, being that it is qualitative and had a small sample size, findings cannot be generalized to the broader population of Latinos. Despite this limitation, this study still contributes to existing literature on Latinos at the high school level, which was a contribution this study aimed to attempt. This study contributed to the patterns within the literature on language barriers and low parental educational attainment among Latino

parents, and it also contributed to the small amount of existing literature in regard to moral support and educational encouragement provided by parents, which can be used as alternatives for parents who have barriers blocking them from becoming involved with their child's educational experiences.

### **Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research**

One of the limitations of this study was that the sample size was smaller than what I anticipated. Originally going into this project, I wanted to obtain a sample size of at least 20 Latino high schools students. In qualitative research using a phenomenological approach, a typical sample size ranges from five to twenty five individuals (Leedy and Ormrod 2013). I thought that 20 would be an ideal number for a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews, but I ended up with only 15 due to one of the schools not allowing access to conduct research on the campus. This then led to another limitation in my research which was the number of school sites that were studied. I had planned on gaining a representation from a fourth school located on the West side of Bakersfield to discover if there were any significant differences in parental involvement compared to the other three schools. Although research elicited a great amount of information in regard to Latino parental involvement, student academic performance, and student feelings and attitudes toward parental involvement, findings cannot be generalized to all Latino high school students in Bakersfield, or Latino high school students overall, as my research goal was to discover if there was a relationship between parental involvement and Latino high school student academic performance in just Bakersfield based on SES, and to seek common thematic patterns that occur between parental involvement and Latino high school students in Bakersfield.

The area of parental involvement and Latino student education is very interesting because of the varied circumstances as to why these parents are not involved. I would have liked to cover

a lot more on this topic, especially as themes brought attention to new ideas to research; however, this was beyond the scope of my study. Thus, I would like to suggest ideas for future research that could be done to bring awareness to other circumstances of Latino families in regard to student education.

In particular to my research, I would like to interview more Latino high schools students at additional high schools located in Bakersfield, along with interviewing parents of students, to obtain a better idea of how they feel about parental involvement and the reception they receive from their child's teachers/school. I would also conceptualize *Academic Performance* differently, using student standardized test scores to determine student achievement. Tracking is also another way that academic performance could be measured, since schools use tracking or ability grouping in which students are placed in courses according to their academic ability. This may also relate to student performance in school. Future research may also include other locations within the Kern High School District (outside of the Bakersfield city limits) to compare across the cities; for example, interviewing Latino high school students and parents in Arvin and Shafter, as these locations are well known for a large Latino population as well. Another consideration for future research to take into account is the length of time that Latino parents have been in the U.S. in relation to their ability to speak English, as this would be a significant factor when looking at the way Latino parents are involved in their child's education. For instance, a Latino immigrant who has lived in the U.S. for ten years may have been more likely to have learned how to speak English compared to a Latino immigrant parent who has only been in the U.S. for just a year or two. Moreover, future research could focus on what schools are doing to bridge the gap between schools and parents who are not proficient in English. Certain instances could include examining if schools are hiring more bilingual teachers or providing

translators at school events, such as parent-teacher conferences or back to school night events. This would help demonstrate what schools are doing help with the cultural and language dividers between Latino parents and the American school system.

A sociohistorical perspective of Latino/a education in the Southwest also needs be taken to study the struggle that Mexican Americans faced when fighting for educational equality. Furthermore, future research could take the direction in examining the relationship between parental involvement and students who were not academically successful (i.e., high school drop outs). Perhaps a lack of parental involvement played a role in why these students dropped out of school. Or, perhaps these students may have received parental involvement but structural issues within the schools are what “chased them out” (e.g. school biases among Latino and Black males), causing these students to “give up.” In addition, examining expulsion rates and interviewing parents of students who have been expelled from school and what their experiences were like when dealing with their child’s school would also be a great contribution to the literature on the structural issues within the school and the discipline codes that are put into place inside of the schools. Since language plays a significant role in Latino parental involvement, it is crucial to examine the expulsion rates along with parent ability to advocate for their child’s education, as monolingual Spanish-speaking parents may not be able to effectively communicate with the school on how to effectively improve their child’s education and getting them on the right track to help prevent them from being expelled from school.

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## Appendix A: In-Depth Interview Schedule

### Student Demographics:

1. How old are you?
2. What grade are you in?
3. What is your ethnicity?
4. Where were you born?
5. What is the primary language you speak outside of home? Why?

### Family/Home:

1. What language is spoken at home? Why?
2. Do you live with both parents? If not, with which parent do you live?
3. Where were your parents born?
4. Do you have any brothers and sisters? If yes, how many?
5. Which socioeconomic status best describes your family? (lower, middle, or upper)
6. What is your father's highest level of education and did he go to school in the U.S.? If not, where did he go to school?
7. What is your mother's highest level of education and did she go to school in the U.S.? If not, where did she go to school?

### School and Classes:

1. What do you like about school and why?
2. What don't you like about school and why?
3. How many courses are you enrolled in and what are they?
4. Do your parents help you select courses to enroll in, such as elective courses you're able to choose from?
5. Do any of your classes assign quizzes or tests?

### Homework/Study Habits:

1. Are you assigned homework on a daily basis? If so, for which classes?
2. About how many homework assignments do you have a day?
3. Where do you do your homework at?
4. How long do you usually spend doing homework in one day?
5. Is your homework easy or hard for you? Why?
6. Do your parents help you every time you do your homework? Or only when you have a question? And, how often is this?
7. Do they "make you" do your homework?
8. When a test is coming up do you study for it? If so, how long do you study for?
9. Do your parents help you study for your tests? If so how do they help you? If not, why don't they help?

10. Are there certain ways your parents help you with your homework and/or studying? (Such as flashcards, quizzing you, etc.) And how often does this occur?

#### School events

1. Does your school host a back to school night /open house event? (If answer is no skip to question 3).
2. Do your parents attend open house/ back to school night? Every year?
3. Does your school hold parent/teacher conferences? (If answer is no skip to Extracurricular Activities section).
4. Do your parents attend parent/teacher conferences? If they have how many times have they spoken with your teacher?

#### Extracurricular Activities:

1. Are you involved in any sports at school? If so, which one(s)? (If no, skip to question 3).
2. Do your parents attend any of your sporting events? How often?
3. Are you involved in any other extracurricular activities? (E.g. cheer, color guard, Associated Student Body, drama, band, etc.) If no, skip to Academic Performance section.
4. Do your parents attend any of your performances? If so, how often?

#### Academic Performance:

1. What types of grades do you earn on class assignments/projects?
2. What types of grades do you earn on homework?
3. What types of grades do you earn on tests or quizzes?
4. What grades do you earn on your report card?
5. What is your current Grade Point Average (GPA)?

#### Student Feelings about Parent Involvement:

1. Do you like when your parent(s) help you do your homework and/or study? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel like you do better in school if your parent(s) help you with your homework and/or study? Why or why not?
3. Do you regularly invite your parent(s) to attend school functions such as back to school night/open house? Why or why not?
4. Do you invite your parent(s) to your sporting events or extracurricular performances? Why or why not?
5. How do you feel about your parent(s) being involved with your education?

No Parental Involvement:

1. Why do you think your parent(s) don't get involved with your schooling?
2. Do you think your family size has anything to do with it?
3. Do your parents work long hour days? If so, about how many hours?
4. Do you think your parent's job interferes with parental involvement? Why or why not?
5. Can you recall the last time your parent(s) helped you with your homework?
6. Do you ask your parent(s) for help with homework or with studying? If no, why not?
7. Do you inform your parent(s) in a timely manner when school events are going to take place?
8. How do you feel about your parent(s) not being involved with your schooling?

## **Jessica N. Rodriguez**

Bakersfield, CA  
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### **Education**

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- 2014      **MA**, Sociology expected June 2014  
California State University, Bakersfield  
Bakersfield, CA
- 2010      **BA**, Sociology November 2010  
Minor: Psychology  
California State University, Bakersfield  
Bakersfield, CA

### **Areas of Interest**

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Race and Ethnic Relations; Sociology of Education

### **Teaching Experience**

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- 2013      Teaching Assistant for Sociology 100, spring 2013, CSU Bakersfield.  
Duties: graded written assignments and providing students with feedback, and imputed grades into an online learning system.
- Teaching Assistant for Sociology 100, winter 2013, CSU Bakersfield.  
Duties: graded written assignments and provided students with feedback, and imputed grades into an online learning system.

### **Research Experience**

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- 2013      Graduate research: Exploring the relationship between parental involvement and Latino high school student academic performance among high schools located in Bakersfield, CA.

### **Honors**

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Dean's List 2009-2011