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Best Practices: Promoting Parent-School Relationship To Increase Hispanic Parental Participation in Schools

Marlene R. Torrez-Graham

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Best Practices: Promoting Parent – School Relationship To Increase Hispanic Parental Participation In Schools

Marlene R. Tórréz-Graham, B.A.

Otterbein University

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in
Education degree.

Dr. Dee Knoblauch
Advisor

Signature

Date

Dr. Beverly Good
Second Reader

Signature

Date

Dr. Roberta Linder
Third Reader

Signature

Date

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By

Marlene R. Torrez-Graham

2020

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Dedicated to all the students who find themselves in a different culture,
who are learning a new language and norms;
students who push to succeed in schools despite of the challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my **parents**. Thank you for teaching me the value of education, hard work and compassion.

To my late **husband**. Thank you for believing in me and supporting all my initiatives.

To my **daughters**. Thank you for your constant support and encouragement throughout this process. You inspired me to learn about the education system in this country.

To Dr. **Beverly Good**, my mentor and friend. Thank you for listening with your heart, for your willingness to learn, and for relentlessly work on behalf of English learners.

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VITA

Teaching Experience

2017- Present

6th – 8th Grade Spanish teacher

Columbus City Preparatory School for Boys

Columbus City Schools

Columbus, Ohio

2016 – 2017

K – 8th Grade Spanish teacher

Saint James The Less Elementary School

Diocese of Columbus

Columbus, Ohio

Education

2020

Masters of Arts in Education

Curriculum and Instruction

Otterbein University

Westerville, Ohio

2016

Bachelors of Arts in Education

Spanish Language PK-12, Education

Otterbein University

Westerville, Ohio

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to find the factors that affect Hispanic parents' decision to engage in their children's education, while they attend public schools in the United States. At the same time, I wanted to find model practices and programs that encourage parental engagement and compile this information to create a manual that can be used for professional development and as a reference for parents. I found that most of the researchers used Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model of parent engagement as a framework. I used the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model to organize the factors that affect Hispanic parents' decision for participation, and compiled the information in challenges and opportunities to create the educators' manual. The manual gives helpful and practical examples that can be applied by educators who want to start or increase Hispanic parent engagement in their school.

SECTION ONE

Introduction

Parent participation and engagement in the education of their children is a determining factor for their success in school (Reynolds, Crea, Medina, Degnan, McRoy 2015). This positive impact of parental involvement is even more critical for language minority students and English learners (ELs). Even though this is not a new concept, it became critical in the state of Ohio in the last decade due to the relevant increase in the number of EL students. Schools have been faced with the challenge an increased number of EL students. Educators would like to welcome, instruct and motivate these students to success; however, due to multiple barriers they don't know how to accomplish this effectively. Therefore, since parental engagement is a decisive factor for students' academic success, there is an increasing and urgent need to elicit ELs' parental participation. Schools are working on reaching out to parents of ELs to elicit their participation and engagement in the education of their children, but do not have information describing cultural differences. For example, the respect and trust that most immigrant parents have for teachers and education in general, as well as the appreciation for personal touch that encourage parents' participation in schools.

To illustrate how some schools work to create a welcoming environment, I'd like to share how my family and I were welcomed at an elementary school in Worthington Ohio. When we relocated to Ohio, my husband, came ahead of us to complete school enrollment for my daughter. The school secretary contacted me to say they were excited to meet us when we arrived. She gave me her contact information and asked if I had any

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questions or suggestions to make my daughter’s transition into the school more pleasant. This was such a powerful gesture, and it helped ease any concern that we might have had as a family moving to another state. Because of this interaction, on the first day of school, I confidently went to the office, asked for her by name, and introduced myself. This was the beginning of very fruitful school-parent relationship that lasted five years. As welcoming as she was, the secretary was not the exception at that school; she was a product of the environment that radiated from this school. This first-hand experience illustrates the importance of creating a welcoming environment in the schools.

Statement of Significance

The intent of this capstone project is to identify the factors that affect parents’ decision to participate in their children’s school; as well as which schools’ practices and policies influence parent participation. The outcome of this capstone is a manual with suggestions for policies and practices to promote Hispanic parent involvement as a resource for professional development.

The primary purpose of this capstone is to elaborate on the practices that encourage or discourage parent participation and engagement in the academic education of children who are learning English as a second, third, and sometimes fourth language. The research centers on the Hispanic or Latino population, because, according to the United States Department of Education (2017) they make up 75% of the EL population in the United States, and in Ohio the 81 % of children currently enrolled in the public schools are Hispanic (OCHLA, 2019).

The first section of this capstone discusses the characteristics of the EL population, the challenges and opportunities facing schools, the challenges and

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opportunities facing Hispanic families, the home environment and language practices, and the motivations for parent involvement in their children's school. Next the capstone focuses on research findings about Hispanic parents and schools working together, and how this process can be empowering and important to student's success. Furthermore, with guidelines based on existing research, I will produce a manual with suggestions for policies and practices to promote Hispanic and immigrant parent involvement that schools could use for professional development. The manual will present important suggestions, guidelines, and practical examples of best-proven practices to reach out, elicit, and engage Hispanic parents' participation in schools. It is my hope that this manual will help teachers, school staff and administrators better comprehend the Hispanic culture, and the parents' paradigm of their role in education. For only when we fully comprehend where people are coming from and what is expected of us, we can reach out, share our expectations, and start collaborating to reach a common goal, which is to improve all children's academic achievement.

SECTION TWO

Literature Review

Characteristics of the EL and Hispanic Population

The Federal and Ohio Department of Education’s (ODE) partial definition of English Learners (ELs) is “ English learners are students whose primary or home language is other than English who need special language assistance in order to effectively participate in school instructional programs” (ODE, 2019). It is important to note that ODE identifies ELs as any student Pre-K-12 who has a family member in the household who speaks a language besides English. Once the student is identified, s/he is assessed for English Language Proficiency in the modes of listening, reading, writing and speaking, by a qualified screener (ODE, 2019).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2017) estimated that about 58.9 million Hispanics live in the United States, representing 18.1% of the total population of the country. Among Hispanic sub-groups, Mexicans rank as the largest with 66%, South Americans (from different countries in South America) with 13%, Puerto Ricans with 9.4%, Cubans 3.9% and people of other Hispanic origins with 7.5%. In 2016, Hispanics numbered 57.5 million (17.9%), making them the largest ethnic minority in the United States. According to the United States Department of Education (2017), the population of English learners (ELs) has increased 40 percent in some states between the 2009-10 and 2014-15 school years. ELs represent 10% of the total K-12 student population in the United States.

The ethnicity of ELs is very diverse. More than 75% of ELs were Hispanic or Latino, 11% were Asian, and 6% of the students were white. Over 4,800,000 ELs were enrolled in United States’ schools in 2014-2015. According to the Ohio Department of

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Education (2019), there are 61,472 ELs enrolled in schools in 2019. This is an increase of more than 90% since 2006. Fifty percent of the ELs attend city schools, and about 45% are Hispanic (ODE, 2019).

Cultural Insight into Hispanics in the United States

Hispanics in the United States include any person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central America, or other Spanish culture of origin, regardless of race (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). Hispanics identify themselves by their nationality, not by race. The term Latin America refers to countries in the region where the official language is one of the “romance languages” derived from Latin. This includes Spanish, Portuguese, and French (English.stackexchange.com); hence, Latinos are people of Latin-American descent including Brazil and Haiti. However, many Latin Americans dislike being combined indiscriminately into a big group, since they identify themselves by their nationality, like Mexicans, or Peruvians, or Cubans (AHA, Does “Latin America” Exist? 2018). People who identify as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino may be of any race like black, Caucasian, Asian, or Native. For the purpose of this capstone, I am using the term Hispanic because it is the term widely accepted by both, Hispanic and Latinos, without controversy.

Demographically, Hispanics are a young population, compared to the rest of the population in the United States. On average they are 34 years old or younger (US Census 2008a). Children in PreK-12 are a big part of most family households. In 2008 there were 10.4 million Hispanic family households in the United States, 62% included children younger than 18 years (U.S. Census, 2008a). Seventy percent of Hispanic children lived with two married parents (U.S. Census, 2008a).

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Cultural Elements

Cultural elements are “categories of things and ideas that identify the most profound aspects of cultural influence” (Smith, 1996, as cited in Fridinger, n.d., p. 13). These categories of cultural elements are: material culture (things and ideas), social institutions (schools, government, religious organizations); belief or faith systems (ideas about individuals and the universe); aesthetics (art, dance, music, theater); language (verbal and nonverbal communication systems). According to the authors mentioned, we acquire these elements through enculturation. Enculturation is the process by which people learn the dynamics of their cultures, the values and norms appropriate or necessary in that culture, and are passed from generation to generation.

Schools are usually the first authentic social institution with which immigrant families interact when their children start attending school. Before children are of school age, most immigrant families, including Hispanic families, interact within their cultural circle. They go to international grocery stores, beauty salons, and places of worship. It is only when the families have to register their children in school that they are forced to step out of their comfort zone and approach an institution that may or may not be prepared to respond culturally appropriately to their needs, as we will see in the following paragraphs.

Challenges and Opportunities Facing Schools

Schools are experiencing a change in the demographics of their student populations due to the influx of diverse ethnicities. Most schools are not prepared to deal with the variety of values, norms and beliefs of students who are part of these new demographics.

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Multiple researchers have shown that students and parents need to see themselves reflected in the faculty of the schools to feel a part of the school community. One of these studies was the mixed methods case study of parent involvement in an urban high school serving minority students; Reynolds, Crea, Medina, Degnan, and McRoy (2015) based their research on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parental involvement. According to this model, psychological motivators such as parent's role construction and sense of self-efficacy, as well as contextual motivators including school, teacher, and student invitations, predicted the level of parent involvement. Parent involvement is multidimensional and includes emotional and personal aspects as well as school related activities. Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011) have also used Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model of the parental involvement process to explain Hispanic parental involvement behavior. In the study led by Walker (2011), a sample of 147 Hispanic parents with students in grades first to sixth, in an urban school, participated in a three years long study to assess the model based predictors of involvement that included personal psychological beliefs (role construction), contextual motivators of involvement (school environment), perceived life-context variables (self-efficacy, time, energy) as well as levels of home and school-based involvement.

Parents recorded high levels of support for all the motivators included in the model (personal psychological beliefs, contextual motivators, perception of life context variables). Findings showed that parents were actively engaged in supporting their children's learning; this contradicted the perception of deficit in Hispanic parent involvement in the education of their children. Their home-based involvement participation was higher, because the opportunity of involvement at home appeared daily

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and at any time. However the school-based involvement was limited by the hours when events organized by the school took place. For some parents this schedule could conflict with work and other obligations that limited their ability to participate. Parents responded to different forms of involvement, but contextual motivators (invitations) played an important role in defining the behavior of parents who were involved. Reynold's et al. (2015) study supports the importance of invitations and indicated that Hispanic parents responded to invitations more than any other group of parents, likely because they saw themselves represented in the faculty members of the school that reached out including teachers and office staff who were Hispanic.

Antunez (2000) summarized practices that schools have had to overcome in order to support ELs' parental involvement. For example, schools' policies and teachers' practices aren't normally designed with ELs or Hispanic parents in mind (Antunez, 2000). Likewise, there is lack of respect for cultural diversity and active efforts to strengthen the native language in the home. To address these challenges, family literacy programs and bilingual education are very effective strategies to promote parent involvement, facilitate family communication, connect parents to their children's learning experience and increase student achievement.

Other challenges facing schools are the lack of bilingual teachers and school staff that can provide that personal touch of face-to-face communication that promotes trust and because written flyers or notes sent home are ineffective (Antunez, 2000). Educators don't have a good idea about what ELs' parents expect from each meeting organized by the schools and how they can benefit and improve their role as parents raising children in a foreign culture. Additionally, strong leadership and administrative support is needed to

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create flexible policies, innovation and adaptation as well as a welcoming environment.

Moreover, there is an urgent need for professional development that will help school staff understand fundamental qualities of Hispanic culture and how it impacts the students' behavior, learning styles, and parents' expectations for their children's education.

Furthermore, schools need to identify and coordinate with community based organizations that are able to provide opportunities for out of school experiences that will enrich children's lives, keep them safe, healthy, and provide opportunities for productive use of their free time (Antunez, 2000).

Hispanics are the largest ethnic group of students Pre-K – 12 in the United States with a projection of 133 million Hispanics by the year 2050. However, these students' reading proficiency (in English, there is no evidence in Spanish) is very low and the school dropout rate is high. Many Hispanic students also struggle with undiagnosed mental and behavioral health challenges. To address these additional behavioral challenges school-based intervention and parental participation are recommended (Clarke, Wheeler, Sheridan, Witte, Sommerhalder and Svoboda, 2017). Clarke et al. recommend a joint behavioral consultation (CBC), which is an evidence-based indirect intervention that focuses on improving the social behavioral and educational outcome for individual students, as well as enriching the relationship and partnership between homes and schools.

One of the opportunities that schools have to reach out to Hispanic parents are the personal invitations that teachers and students could send to invite families to participate in school activities and to become a part of the school community. This practice has proven to be effective (Bradley, 2018).

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By creating a curriculum and programs with Hispanic parents in mind, schools also have the opportunity to expose their non-Spanish speaking students and staff to a new culture and language without having to leave the country consequently enriching the experience of the whole community. As Bermudez and Márquez (1996) explain, there are three stake holders in education: parents, schools and community, when two of these three links are strengthened, the other links automatically strengthen as well. Therefore it is worth the time and effort to create bridges and facilitate the communication between the schools and parents to form a strong community. The more schools do to facilitate the parents' participation, and acclimation to their new communities, the greater impact on students' academic success.

Challenges and Opportunities Facing Families of Hispanic Students

According to Bradley et al. (2018) Hispanic families face more discrimination than other minority groups, and they are more likely to live in poverty, which affects their family life and limits the exposure of their children to enriching experiences.

Discrimination and lack of opportunities are some of the challenges that many Hispanic families living in the United States face.

Delgado-Gaitan (1991) stated that, other studies have shown that the culture of the schools differs from the home culture of underrepresented children. However, “where there is a sociocultural congruency between home and school settings, children have a greater chance to succeed” (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, p. 21). When a student from a culture different from the predominant group enters school in the United States, the school experience becomes a discontinuous process for multiple reasons that include language, values, and practice differences. Delgado-Gaitan noted that ethnically diverse

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families living in poor socio-economic conditions face sustained isolation from school culture, which may lead to miscommunication and mistrust. Systemic isolation occurs when schools establish activities and ideas that require specific cultural knowledge and behaviors of the mainstream group, about the school as an institution. Systemic isolation is conducive to resentment, apathy and alienation. Parents who know the schools' expectations and the way schools operate, are better advocates for their children, than the parents who lack that information.

Another important challenge facing Hispanic families is the over identification of ELs as children with special needs. As per the report of the United States Department of Education, the specific learning disabilities include speech or language impairment. About 10% of students with disabilities were also identified as ELs, but 14% of all ELs were students with disabilities, compared to 13 %, of the overall student population. “ELs with disabilities were more likely to be classified as having a specific learning disability, or with speech or language impairment” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). In Ohio, the number of ELs reported as having a disability is 16% (ODE, 2019).

These challenges offer opportunities to foster parental involvement and were noted in Delgado-Gaitan's research (1991). In a four-year study of a school district in southern California, parental involvement activities and how these activities encouraged Spanish-speaking parents to participate in their children's education were observed. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) who led this research, observed parent-involvement activities and found that the conventional opportunities to participate in parent-involvement activities in the schools were closed to many Hispanic parents who didn't possess specific cultural knowledge, which in itself constitutes a lack of power. On the other hand,

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nonconventional activities encouraged parents' participations in their children's education through culturally responsive communication. The nonconventional activities were the outcome of a cooperative work between stakeholders of a community interested in Hispanic children's education through cultural responsive communication. The first steps taken by the school were to form relationships between the school and Hispanic families, to make parents aware of the conditions of their children's education, their rights as parents to connect with others with similar experience, and to collaborate with the schools creating policies to improve programs that will foster dialogue between schools and parents. Some of the nonconventional activities that resulted from this cooperative work were a Bilingual Preschool Parent Involvement Program; an annual open house event where teachers shared with parents how to help their children in the home based on daily activities, like measuring solids and liquids while cooking, to support their development. Other monthly meetings were held in the evenings, with childcare provided; parents decided the topics that they wanted to learn about; the teacher and her assistant coordinated a presentation for each meeting. Some of the topics for these meetings were disciplining with care, communicating with children, and reading to your child, to name a few. Parents visited the school to observe their child whenever they could, and organized committees to help care for the classroom, providing snacks, carpet cleaning and other chores that were needed. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) pointed out that the pre-school teacher participating in the study made her goal to educate parents about the pre-school curriculum, she designed the curriculum in a way that parents learned to be co-teachers, the families' native language was used to explain the school curriculum, family food were recreated, parental stories, occupations, and natural home activities

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were used to teach children cognitive concepts. This way students would have the opportunity to learn in two cooperative settings. At the same time, parents regarded the meetings and their support as very important because they had made a personal investment, and they were valued. This kind of cooperation empowers the parents, the students, and the teachers. Hispanic parent representatives, who were elected each year to be a part of the decision making team with the principal, formed a school-site council, and jointly made decisions on many issues, including, the school budget, fundraising and curriculum.

Home Environment and Language Practices

Hispanic social norms highlight the importance of verbal and none verbal communication in their interpersonal relationships (Salimbene, 2000; Smith, 2000). Many immigrants speak English regularly, and the younger ones usually make it their preferred language of use. Some of the youngest Hispanic children abandon the use of Spanish entirely (Rodriguez-Reiman, Perry, Reiman, Gallegos, Olmedo, 2004). When the parents' home language is limited, they are not strong role models for children acquiring the language. The loss of home language can also have "serious negative impact on the parent-child relationship" (Wong Fillmore, 1991, as cited by Antunez 2000, p. 4). Therefore, school programs like the Bilingual pre-school, and the parent education program promoting literacy in the parents' and child's native language creates and opportunity for parents to maintain the family's language and fosters good parent-child-school relationship (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

Theories suggest that the environment in which we grow up determines the capacities that we, as individuals, develop to function in the society (Lerner, Johnson, &

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Buckingham, 2015, as cited by Bradley, 2018). Bradley’s study focused on the relationship of two aspects of home-life, companionship and investment, modeling and encouragement, plus three modes of self-efficacy: enlisting social resources, independent learning, and self-regulatory behavior. Although the study addressed three groups of underrepresented adolescents (i.e., Native American, African American, and Latino), for the purpose of the capstone, I am going to focus on the findings about the Latino adolescents.

According to Bradley (2018), environment is a major factor that determines the capabilities that individuals need to function well in society. Many Hispanic families, as part of the underrepresented groups, face discrimination, have limited resources, and face considerable instability. The challenging context in which Hispanic parents raise their children were aggravated even more by the dramatic shifts in life that technological advances and increased mobility have had in the last decades. They have changed the way individuals communicate, how information is exchanged, how tasks are accomplished and how we interact with each other. Therefore, Hispanic parents may find it more problematic to provide their children the experiences that they need to develop the skills to have a productive and fulfilling adult life

Bradley (2018) conducted a study to document the strength of relation between two aspects of home life and three kinds of efficacy beliefs in youth ages 16-20 who belong to the three minority groups previously mentioned. The second aim was to “examine those relations controlling for four important family risk factors such as: parent education, household income, single-parent status, household crowding” (p. 420). However, the goal was not to make comparison between the groups, because at the time

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of the study, there was too little research to inform hypotheses about differences concerning the relations between the aspects of home life and areas of efficacy considered for the three ethnic groups of the study.

The sample used for Bradley’s study was small, the Latino families being the largest sample with 159 families who participated; there were 131 African American families who were part of the study and 54 Native American families. About 25% of Latino parents had a high school degree or less, but 40% had a college degree or more. About 40% of Latino households had incomes under \$40,000 but nearly 15% had incomes greater than \$80,000. Each family was administered the Late Adolescence version of the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) inventory (Caldwell & Bradley, 2016). Two of the six LA-HOME domains were used for the study: 1) modeling and encouragement of mature behavior and 2) companionship and investment. Additionally, with items taken from the measure used in studies with the Early Adolescent version of HOME a 30-item measure of self-efficacy was constructed for the study. Three items clusters were examined for this study. 1) Self-Efficacy for Enlisting Social Resources, 2) Self-Efficacy for Independent Learning, and 3) Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulation. For four of the constructs (parent education, house hold income-to-needs, single-parent status, household crowding) and using research concerning cumulative risk and its relation to child development, Bradley (2018) constructed a household risk index based on information from the parent questionnaire used to enroll families in the study.

Bradley’s study (2018) indicated “adolescents from all three groups perceived themselves as having greater efficacy if they lived in a household where there are good

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models and encouragement of mature behavior and where there are high levels of companionship and investment in the adolescent” (p. 420). For self-efficacy and self-regulatory behavior, the Companionship and Investment dimension was significant for African Americans and Latinos. Findings also showed that living in a family with more household risk was associated with less self-efficacy. However, the study showed that parental modeling of productive social behavior and their effort to provide guidance in regard to mature behavior seems to foster strong efficacy beliefs especially for Latino adolescents. Bradley (2018) believed that it is possible that the modeling and guidance function as a protective factor in a community where life is uncertain, but there are strong cultural values as “familismo” (i.e., the value of family over individual or community needs) in the case of Latinos. Previous studies with Latino youth showed that adolescents spend more time engaged in productive behavior and less time engaged in negative behavior when parents were good role models, and when parent and adolescent keep ongoing communication.

While this study provides insight into the correlation between family relationships and self-efficacy of adolescents, there were few limitations: 1) sample sizes were modest; 2) the study was cross-sectional in nature, and 3) the data did not include information on other context factors, like school and neighborhood, which could have affected these findings. Nevertheless, one strength of the study derived from the fact that adolescents were not the only reporters on all paradigms (Bradley, 2018). In conclusion, findings from this study showed that, when it comes to home environment, many minority families are providing the kinds of experiences adolescents need to build the capacities needed to succeed in life. Consequently, schools should encourage the capitalizing on the

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cultural differences and values that Hispanic families bring to increase academic performance, healthy family relationships and better integration in to the community.

Motivations for Hispanic Parent Involvement in Their Children’s School

For decades, research has documented the importance and benefit of parental involvement in school for children’s academic success. The positive impact of parental involvement is even more critical for language minority students and English learners (ELs) (Antunez, 2000). Antunez also emphasized the importance of the community’s active participation in helping ELs and language minority students to overcome the challenges that affect their academic performance. Even though a great deal of research has shown that the active involvement of caregivers in the education of their children has positive outcomes, there is little research and understanding about what are the motivating factors that influence the level and ways of parental involvement. In an exploratory study Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2011) have used Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s theoretical model of parental involvement process, to explain Latino parents’ degree of involvement. They consider that it is important for educators to understand the motivating factors to maximize the positive outcome of the school’s efforts to involve parents in the education of their children. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler theoretical model proposed three main categories to explain parent behavior: a) psychological motivators, including parent role construction and sense of self-efficacy; b) contextual motivators, including school, teacher, and student invitations; and c) life-context variables, including parents’ time, resources, skills, and knowledge. The three-year large-scale study researched how varied forms of involvement influence students’ outcomes. One hundred forty-seven Latino families

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responded to the questionnaires that were assessing the model's hypothesized predictors on parent involvement and parents' home-and school-based involvement. The questionnaires were in English and Spanish.

The results showed that parents supported each of the motivators included in the model (i.e., personal psychological beliefs, contextual motivators and perceptions of life-context variables). So Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, (2011), concluded that their findings showed that parents were actively engaged in supporting their children's learning experience; this contradicted the perception of deficit in Hispanic parent involvement in the education of their children. The home-based involvement participation was higher than school-based involvement. The opportunity for involvement at home appeared every day of the week, at multiple times. On the other hand, the school-based involvement was limited by hours and events organized by school. Parents responded to different forms of involvement, but contextual motivators (e.g. specific invitations from their children and teachers) played an important role in defining the behavior of parents who were involved. The study also concluded that it is necessary to have systematic discussions with parents to find out the families' experience with the school and how they understand the role they play in their children's learning experience. Due to the power of specific invitations from teacher and students Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011), suggested that future research needs to analyze the impact of diverse types of home to school communications. It is also important to profoundly study the contributions of the Latino parents' cultures of origin and acculturation, and how they understand their role in their children's school experience. Additionally, Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011) concluded that there is a need for

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more professional development for teachers focused on cultural relevant and specific issues to promote effective and trustworthy relationships with Latino families. It has been documented that parental involvement increases with their access to cultural capital, where a dominant group knows and understand the “rules of the game” to a larger degree than the marginalized group. These differences exist between school faculty and families in general, but between ELs’ families and school faculty in particular (Reynolds et al., 2015). Therefore a cooperative professional development programs where parents could take part in sharing their cultural capital and acquiring the cultural capital of the schools are empowering experiences for both: parents and schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

Hispanic Parents and Schools Working Together

When families, schools and communities form partnerships a strong learning environment is created. In this environment, everyone benefits: schools work more effectively, families become closer and the community resources are maximized (Antunez, 2000; Bermudez & Marquez, 1996; Tse, 1996). For example, parent involvement in children’s education is higher if schools’ policies and teacher practices are designed with parents in mind. As summarized by Antunez (2000) a remarkable feature of a good parent-involvement program is respect for cultural diversity and active efforts to strengthen the native language in the home. Since it is important to foster the parents’ home language to serve as a good model for children learning a language and to nurture good parent-child relationships family literacy or developmental bilingual education are good pedagogy to facilitate parent involvement. Likewise, family literacy nights support education for the whole family, connecting parents to their children’s schooling and boosts student achievement. Hispanic parents care about their children and

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are capable of advocating for them in schools, when given the power, which according to Delgado-Gaitan (1991) is the capacity to participate in collective process, critical reflection, mutual respect, and a win-win situation.

Delgado-Gaitan's (1991) research shows that schools can go further than involve parents by empowering them, especially parents of EL students to fully participate in the education of their children. There are many ways schools can immediately increase parental involvement and subsequently establish mutual trust and respect.

- Translate parent meetings and informational materials into the languages spoken by the community;
- Offer English classes for adults and family literacy programs;
- Establish clear rules and behavioral expectations, explaining the purpose of those rules of expectations. (For example, that parents are expected to attend parent/teacher conferences and explain the protocol on how they are run and benefit for the student's school experience);
- Invite and encourage parents to volunteer at the schools; and Offer power-sharing relationships by encouraging parents to form advocacy groups and enabling them to share in decision-making about school programs and policies (Delgado-Gaitán, 1991, as cited in Antunez, 2000, p. 4).

Many of these strategies are relevant to parents of all languages and cultures.

Additional practical and more recent strategies were outlined based on the findings of another study (Espinosa, 1995, as cited in Antunez, 2000).

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- **Personal Touch.** Face-to face communication is very important. Home visits are a way to begin rapport with families. It may take several in person meetings to establish trust and participation.
- **Non-Judgmental Communication** is necessary in order to gain trust and confidence of Hispanic parents.
- **Maintaining involvement.** To keep Hispanic parent actively involved, programs and activities must be relevant to the parents concerns and needs. Educators should have very clearly the outcomes that are going to help parents in their roles.
- **Bilingual Support.** All communication should be provided in Spanish and English. Additionally having bicultural and bilingual staff helps to promote trust.

According to Antunez (2000) and others, strong leadership and administrative support with flexible policies, and welcoming environment are necessary to bring success to parent involvement programs; teachers alone cannot do it. The support and commitment to these principles are needed to reach the goals. Additionally staff development focused on Hispanic Culture is essential to understand the Hispanic culture and its impact on their students' behavior and learning styles. When schools collaborate with Hispanic parents they form a stronger community with mutual respect and appreciation, supporting children's academic success that may not be accomplished on their own if school and families do not work together (Antunez, 2000; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Reynolds et al., 2015).

Conclusion

Parent participation and engagement in the education of their children is a determining factor for their success in school. The positive impact of parental involvement is even more critical for language minority students and ELs. Even though this is not a new concept, it became relevant in the state of Ohio in the last decade due to the dramatic increase in the number of EL students. Schools are working to reach out to ELs' parents to enroll their participation and engagement in the education of their children, but lack information about the factors that affect parents' participation in schools. Therefore, the intent of this capstone is to identify the factors that affect parents' decision to participate in their children's school, and to recognize schools' practices and policies that encourage or discourage parent participation. Additionally, it will suggest practices and programs that, according to research, have been successful.

SECTION THREE

Theoretical Perspective

Parental aspirations and expectations for children’s education have been shown to have the strongest influence on children’s academic achievements. Diverse studies show that regardless of the demographics or socioeconomics aspects, active parental involvement is a factor that impacts students’ academic achievement as well as fosters skills and attitudes that are conducive to children’s success (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Parent involvement is multidimensional and includes emotional and personal aspects as well as school related activities (Reynolds, 2015; Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sanders, 2011). Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski and Apostoleris (1997) define parental involvement as “*the dedication of resources by the parent to the child within a given domain*” (p.538). These authors identify three types of involvement: 1) Behavior, which refers to the parents’ behavior in relation to the school like attending parent- teacher conferences and other school related activities. It also includes other activities at home, like helping with homework or reading to their children. 2) Cognitive –intellectual involvement which includes exposing the child to intellectually stimulating activities like going to the library, to museums and talking about current events. 3) Personal involvement, which involves knowing about the child’s personal life related to school. Teachers are the first to recognize and appreciate the impact of parental involvement and tend to look more positively at families that are actively involved, because they work together in collaboration.

Jaynes (2003) stated that the positive impact of parental involvement is greater on standardized test scores than on Grade point average scores. Jaynes (2003)

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hypothesized that when parents are cooperating with the teachers, there is more communication that leads to a wider and better understanding of what the students are learning. Consequently, parents can guide and support their children better in the topics that they need to learn and focus on.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s Model of the Parental Involvement Process

For the purpose of this capstone, I chose Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model of the parental involvement process to explain Hispanic parents’ involvement behavior, because this model organizes in three major categories most of the factors that affect parental behavior, which makes it easier to comprehend. Their model is cited in multiple studies, and some researchers focus on some of the factors and apply them independently on their studies leaning on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model. Furthermore, being Hispanic, and having worked for 10 years with Hispanic families I can testify that the factors analyzed and explained in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model are accurate. It is also important to note that Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler did not just write the theoretical model, they also used it as the basis for an exploratory study with Walker and Ice (2011).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s theoretical model is based on three main categories to explain parent behavior: a) psychological motivators, including parent role construction and sense of self-efficacy; b) contextual motivators, including school, teacher, and student invitations; and c) life-context variables, including parent’s time, resources, skills, and knowledge.

Psychological motivators. Each of the categories in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model is very important. To have a clear understanding of how they influence the

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behavior of Hispanic parents I will explain each of them, beginning with the psychological motivators. First, parental role construction for involvement refers to the perception that parents have about what they are supposed to do, and the role they play, in supporting their children's education. For example, even though Hispanic parents have high expectations for their children's education, and it is one of the reasons why they emigrate to the United States, they believe that it is their role to take care of the children and raise them with good character, but it is the school's job to teach their children (Goldenber, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2002, as cited in Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 2011). Since Hispanic parents don't see their role as educators, they believe it is disrespectful to become very active in their children's school because they might be interfering with the teacher's role and expertise, unless the teacher initiates contact. The study by Reynolds et al. (2015) also noted similar findings related to how Hispanic parents view their role.

Next, self-efficacy denotes the parents' belief on whether or not their involvement will positively impact their children's school success. Due to the limited English proficiency and the lack of cultural knowledge about the education system in the United States, many Hispanic parents believe that they can't make a positive impact in their children's education. Hence, this weak sense of self-efficacy prevents them from becoming actively involved at their children's school. However, several researchers noted that Hispanic parents feel confident (self-efficacy) supporting their children's education at home by teaching them the value of hard work, the importance of respect for others, stressing the value of education and monitoring the children's school work and discipline (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011).

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Reynolds et al., (2015) as well as Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011) stated that multiple studies also suggest that Hispanic parents' sense of self-efficacy strengthens when they participate in programs that teach them about the role that parents play in the school in the United States.

Contextual motivators. According to Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011), Reynolds et al., (2015) and Delgado-Gaitan (1991) the strongest contextual motivators of involvement originate in schools. Schools that make an effort to encourage Hispanic parent involvement, generally speaking, do a number of things to help parents engage. These schools have their forms translated into Spanish, hold meetings in Spanish or provide interpretation, and send general invitations and specific invitations. These strategies have proven to increase parent participation; research has also found that specific invitations from teachers and students are strong motivators for participation. These invitations give parents a sense of value and belonging, which promotes greater participation in their children's education. Furthermore, teachers can support parental home-based participation by developing students learning assignments that draw from parents' foundation of knowledge, expertise and culture (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011). The positive and trusting relationship developed between teachers and families, where there is a sociocultural harmony, is also very powerful motivator of involvement (Reynolds et al., 2015).

Life-context variables. Finally, life-context variables are the parents' perception of the skills and knowledge that they bring to their decision for involvement (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011). In general, parents' perceptions of their abilities and knowledge to support their children's academic learning at home and in the schools

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during the elementary school years is positive. However, as their children transition to middle and high school the parents' confidence in their skills and knowledge to positively impact their children's academic experience decline, and consequently their involvement decreases as well, unless the child asks for their help. Likewise, a challenge that low income Hispanic parents face is the perception of the time and energy that they will need to be involved, since many of them juggle more than one job.

Findings Based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model

The study conducted by Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011) showed three consistent findings based on the theoretical categories. First, related to their parent role construction, most Hispanic parents are more involved in supporting their children's education at home than at school. The ways that Hispanic parents get involved in their children's education at home consists of, but is not limited to: firmly stating the value of education, articulating their expectations about their children's performance in school, and helping with homework. Most Hispanic parents do not participate in school activities like parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in the classroom, or chaperoning field trips, because they don't consider it their role and because the school sponsored activities are during parents' work-hours (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011). It is important to note that educators consider parental involvement as school participation, but not the home-based participation, because it is less visible, and this is in contrast to the view of Hispanic parents.

The second set of findings was related to the second concept of contextual motivators. Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011) noted that Hispanic parents participate when they perceive that their children or their children's teacher need

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their help, when they are invited, and when their participation is valued. The perception of being needed, an invitation, and the feeling of being valued is the strongest and most consistent predictor of parental participation. The motivators may consist of, but are not limited to, teacher and children's direct and personal request to attend a school event, help with homework, or with behavioral indicators like procrastination or frustration.

Finally, the third finding of Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011) showed that parents' resources like time, energy, knowledge and skills (life context variables) are significant predictors of parents' school-based involvement (e.g., visiting the school during the school day, attending evening meetings or events, attending parent-teacher conferences held during the work day and evening) included the contextual motivator of specific invitations from the teacher (e.g., being asked by the teacher to help out at school), as well as a perceived life-context variable, time and energy for involvement.

Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2011) stated that low-income families' participation in school-based events depends on parents' ability to adapt their schedule and resources to the school-imposed schedule. Reynold et al. (2015), in addition to Walker et al., found that when schools want to promote, and support Hispanic parents' participation, they need to take in consideration the Hispanic parent's life-context variables to design a program that enables their participation.

There is still little research to understand the motivation that Hispanic parents have to become actively involved, the ways, and the depths of their involvement. Understanding why parents become involved is important to direct educators' efforts to

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encourage and foster Hispanic parental involvement. Therefore, based on my own personal experience and an extensive review of relevant literature, it is my goal to provide helpful information to both educators and Hispanic parents with a manual that summarizes the practical application of the three motivators: a) psychological motivators, b) contextual motivators, and c) life-context variables.

SECTION FOUR

Instructional Manual

EDUCATORS' MANUAL TO DEVELOP A MEANINGFUL AND COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR HISPANIC FAMILIES

Marlene Tórrrez-Graham

marlene.graham@otterbein.edu

This educator manual is a completion of a comprehensive analysis of existing studies from prestigious researchers, and my personal experience. By adopting some of the strategies given on the tables, teachers will be able to build better relationships with the Hispanic families and help meet the needs of the largest minority group in Ohio schools.

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Overview

Ongoing research shows that parental participation and engagement in schools improves students' achievement, reduces absences, and prevents student misbehavior (Reynolds et al. 2015), therefore they are important predictors of academic success. Hispanic parents have high regards for the education system in the United States and the benefits it brings to their children. For many parents this is a strong motivator to immigrate to this country (Brandy, et al., 2017). Unfortunately, parents soon become disillusioned with the education their children receive and find many obstacles to become involved in their children's educational experience. When Hispanic parents interact with educators, many of them feel unwelcomed, confused and intimidated. Negative interactions with the schools leaves Hispanic parents feeling alienated and discouraged to engage and cooperate with teachers. At the same time, due to this demotivation, they may be perceived by educators as not interested in participating in their children's education (Brandy et al., 2017).

Unfortunately, most educators do not receive training on building home-school relationships, or on how to work with families of multicultural background unless they choose an additional certification to work with English Learners (ELs). Some teachers may have difficulties interacting with Hispanic parents due to the language barrier, their unfamiliarity with the culture, and because they do not know what to expect nor how to meet Hispanic parent's expectations. They may also perceive Hispanic parents as limited resource to educate their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). As summarized by Brandy et al. (2017), the different expectations about roles, responsibilities, values and students' behavior, generally creates conflict that impacts home-school partnership negatively. This disconnect between schools and Hispanic families leads to misunderstandings and

barriers that affect the communication, collaboration and most importantly the students' success. Therefore, programs that support the relationship between Hispanic families and schools, facilitating mutual cultural understanding and respect will improve Hispanic students' achievement.

This manual presents important suggestions, guidelines, and practical examples of best-proven practices to reach out, elicit, and engage Hispanic parent participation in schools. It is my hope that this manual will help teachers, school staff and administrators to better comprehend Hispanic culture, as well as the parents' paradigm of their role in education. For only when we fully comprehend where people are coming from and what is expected from us, we can reach out, share our expectations, and start collaborating for a common goal which is to improve all children's academic achievement. The creation of this educator's manual is the outcome of research organized according to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model, as well as empirical experience from working with Hispanic families for over 10 years, developing programs that helped Hispanic families and schools.

Finally, a video in Spanish with general information about the school systems in Ohio will be produced for Hispanic students and families to help them understand the education system, the schools' expectations, and the important role that parents play in the academic success of their children.

Characteristics of English Learners and Hispanic Population

English Learners (ELs) are “students whose primary or home language is a language other than English and who need special language assistance in order to effectively participate in school’s instructional programs.” (ODE website, 2019). Once the student is identified, s/he is assessed for English Language Proficiency in the modes of listening, reading, writing and speaking, by a qualified screener.

According to the Ohio Department of Education, there are 61,472 ELs enrolled in schools in 2019. This is an increase of more than 90% since 2006. Fifty percent of the ELs attend city schools, and about 45% are of Hispanic origin.

Hispanics in the United States include any person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture of origin, regardless of race (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). Hispanics identify themselves by their nationality, not by race. The term Latin America refers to countries in the region where the official language is one of the “romance languages” derived from Latin. This includes Spanish, Portuguese, and French (English.stackexchange.com); hence, Latinos are people of Latin-American descent including Brazil and Haiti. However, many Latin Americans dislike being combined indiscriminately into a big group, since they identify themselves by their nationality, like Mexicans, or Peruvians, or Cubans (AHA, Does “Latin America” Exist? 2018). People who identify themselves as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino may be of any race like Black, Caucasian, Asian, or Native.

Schools are usually the first authentic social institution with which immigrant and Hispanic families, interact when their children start attending school. When the families have to register their children in the school, they are forced to step out of their comfort

zone and approach an institution that may or may not be prepared to respond culturally appropriately to their needs. As educators we have the responsibility to prepare ourselves to meet families of diverse backgrounds and do our best to help them succeed, just as we would like to be successful if we were to move to another country.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of the Parental Involvement Process

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model is based on three main categories to explain parent behavior: a) psychological motivators, including parent role construction and sense of self-efficacy; b) contextual motivators, including school, teacher, and student invitations; and c) life-context variables, including parent's time, resources, skills, and knowledge. For practical purposes, I will categorize some of the challenges and opportunities that parents and schools face according to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parent participation, and give examples of how to address the challenges, so they become motivators for parental participation.

Psychological Motivators

Role Construction

Parental role construction for involvement refers to the perception that parents have about what they are supposed to do, and the role they play, in supporting their children's education. Even though Hispanic parents have high expectations for their children's education and it is one of the reasons why they emigrate to the United States, they believe that it is their role to take care of the children and raise them with good character, but it is the school's job to teach their children. Therefore, Hispanic parents

don't see their role as educators, they believe it is disrespectful to become very active in their children's school because they might be interfering with the teacher's role and expertise, unless the teacher initiates contact, and asks for their cooperation.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy denotes the parents' belief in whether or not their involvement will positively impact their children's school success. Due to the limited English proficiency and the lack of cultural knowledge about the education system in the United States, many Hispanic parents believe that they can't make a positive impact in their children's education. Hence, this weak sense of self-efficacy prevents them from becoming actively involved at their children's school. However, several researchers noted that Hispanic parents feel confident (self-efficacy) supporting their children's education at home by teaching them the value of hard work, the importance of respect for others, stressing the value of education and monitoring the children's school work and discipline. Hispanic parents' sense of self-efficacy strengthens when they participate in programs that teach them about the role that parents play in the school in the United States. Educators have a remarkable opportunity to boost parents' sense of self-efficacy highlighting the home practices and skills that they already do or have and are transferable to formal education.

Contextual Motivators

The strongest contextual motivators of involvement originate in schools. Schools that make an effort to encourage Hispanic parent involvement, generally speaking, do a number of things to help parents engage. These schools have their forms translated into Spanish, hold meetings in Spanish or provide interpretation, and send general invitations and specific invitations. These strategies have proven to increase parent participation; research has also found that specific invitations from teachers and students are strong motivators for participation. These invitations give parents a sense of value and belonging, which promotes greater participation in their children's education. Furthermore, teachers can support parental home-based participation by developing students learning assignments that draw from parents' foundation of knowledge, expertise and culture.

Additional practical and more recent strategies include face-to face communication, which is very important to create rapport. Non-Judgmental Communication is necessary in order to gain trust and confidence of Hispanic parents. To keep Hispanic parent actively involved, programs and activities must be relevant to the parents concerns and needs. Educators should have very clearly the outcomes that are going to help parents

Life Context Variables

Life-context variables are the parents' perception of the skills and knowledge that they bring to their decision for involvement. In general, parents' perceptions of their abilities and knowledge to support their children's academic learning at home and in the schools during the elementary school years is positive. However, as their children

transition to middle and high school the parents' confidence in their skills and knowledge to positively impact their children's academic experience decline, and consequently their involvement decreases as well, unless the child asks for their help. Likewise, a challenge that low income Hispanic parents face is the perception of the time and energy that they will need to be involved, since many of them juggle more than one job.

Challenges and Opportunities Facing Schools

Schools are experiencing a change in the demographics of their student populations due to the influx of diverse ethnicities. Most schools are not prepared to deal with the variety of values, norms and beliefs of students who are part of these new demographics. The most common challenges that schools face are:

- School staff doesn't reflect the diversity of the school's student population.
- Educators have a perception of deficit in Hispanic parental involvement.
- Schools' policies and teachers' practices are designed with out ELs or Hispanic parents in mind.
- Lack of appreciation for cultural and language diversity.
- Lack of bilingual educators and school staff who can provide personalized communication.
- Lack of strong leadership and administration that creates innovative, flexible policies and curriculum having the Hispanic families in mind.
- Lack of professional development that addresses fundamental qualities of Hispanic culture, like family values, parents' paradigm about formal education, and parents' expectations for their children's education.

- Lack of Hispanic community leaders in decision-making positions.
- Lack of time and opportunities, to get to know the school's Hispanic community, its needs, and challenges.
- Lack of Professional development where participants can learn about their own hidden biases and stereotypes.
- Lack of Professional development where educators can interact with Hispanic parents and learn about what challenges they perceive that prevent them from participating in their children's education, and what possible solutions they suggest.

Opportunities

Each school-organized activity involving parents is an opportunity that schools have to reach out to Hispanic parents, especially if they plan it with Hispanic parents in mind and are willing to meet them where they are. See Table 1.

Challenges and Opportunities Facing Schools

Table 1
Contextual Motivators

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES (SOLUTIONS)	CONCRETE EXAMPLES
<p>School staff doesn't reflect the diversity of the schools' student population.</p> <p>Need for bilingual educators and school staff who can provide tailored communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire diverse, bilingual staff at all levels, that reflects the student population, and can facilitate effective communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A K-8th school in Columbus, with 62% Hispanic population, 21% of school staff is from Hispanic background including the Principal, many of the teachers who do not have a Hispanic background, are also bilingual.
<p>School policies and teachers' practices are designed without ELs and Hispanic families in mind.</p> <p>Need for strong leadership and administration that can create innovative, flexible policies and curriculum taking Hispanic families into account.</p> <p>Need for Hispanic parents and/or community leaders in decision-making positions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach Hispanic parents to advocate for themselves, form relationships, make them aware of the condition of their children's education; their rights as parents to connect with others with similar experience and to collaborate with the schools creating policies to improve programs that will foster dialogue. Based on these dialogues design non-conventional parent involvement programs and activities taking into account parent's input and life context variables, like language barrier, work schedule, families with young children, and dependability on public transportation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish bilingual preschool parent involvement program. • Expand the traditional parent events (e.g. "Open Houses") with events customized for diverse parents. At these events teachers share with parents how they can help children in their everyday, home based life activities like measuring solids, liquids while cooking, or practice colors or shapes that they see while riding in the car. Organize an after school program to help students with homework, or connect parents with community resources, like public libraries that offer academic support, and have bilingual staff.

Table 1
Contextual Motivators

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES (SOLUTIONS)	CONCRETE EXAMPLES
<p>Need for a change in educators' perception of deficit in Hispanic parental involvement abilities.</p> <p>Increase appreciation for cultural and language diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote school wide initiatives highlighting cultural diversity. For example, share with teachers how Hispanic parents view their roles differently in relation to the education of their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pre-school teacher designed the curriculum in a way that parents learned to be co-teachers. Parental stories, occupations, and natural home activities were used to teach children cognitive concepts.
<p>Need for professional development that addresses fundamental qualities of Hispanic culture like family values, parents' paradigm about formal education and their expectations for their children's education.</p> <p>Need for opportunities for school educators and staff to reflect and identify their own hidden biases and stereotypes about immigrants and Hispanics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give Hispanic parents the opportunities to participate in schools; educate parents about the school curriculum. While educating the parents about the school curriculum, ask parents to share with you why education is important to them, what else in their life do they consider important; what they want for their children in the future. Invite parents to share their culture, their traditions and their expertise. With that information, design curriculum capitalizing in parents' cultural wealth of knowledge and abilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the high school where I was a teacher's assistant, we invited one of the parents who worked at a financial institution, to teach personal finances to the EL students, and to share her personal story, about how she overcame hardship being abandoned at the age of 12, pursuing education in her country and in the U.S. At one of the school districts where I worked, Hispanic parents hosted a very impactful Professional Development activity that I organized for the school staff in Spanish.

Table 1
Contextual Motivators

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES (SOLUTIONS)	CONCRETE EXAMPLES
	Organize Professional Development to identify, acknowledge, and address hidden biases.	The participants had to produce note pad, from recycled paper, in an assembly line. At the end of the activity, the school's staff had a change of attitude towards Hispanic students and their families, because they experienced the challenge of not being able to understand the language of instruction, and to be judged on the outcome of their performance.

Challenges and Opportunities Facing Families of Hispanic Students

Discrimination and lack of opportunities are some of the challenges that many

Hispanic families living in the United States face (Bradley et al, 2018). Some of those challenges include:

- Language barrier.
- Sociocultural incongruence between home and school settings.
- Systemic isolation from school culture.
- Lack of information about the schools' way of operating and expectations.
- Over identification as children with disabilities and with speech or language impairment.
- Poverty and lack of opportunities for exposure.
- Rigid conventional school expectations and activities.

Opportunities

Research and experience show that when schools create a welcoming environment for Hispanic families of EL students, these families can also transform the challenges into opportunities to learn about the schools, how they operate, what educators need from parents. Additionally, they also find space to share their cultural capital. Thus, these actions contribute to form partnership with schools to support their children's education. Table 2a, 2b, 2c.

Challenges and Opportunities Facing Families of Hispanic Students - Psychological Motivators

Table 2a

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES (SOLUTIONS)	CONCRETE EXAMPLES
Language barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools are required by law to communicate with parents in a language that they can understand. This is especially important for meetings where decision about the children’s education are made. • Identify any teacher, teacher assistant, school personnel or a bilingual parent who can help to overcome the language barrier, for those short conversations to ask for an appointment. Be mindful that if you need to talk to teachers, it has to be before or after school, preferable with an appointment. • Use some translation sites to communicate. Look for those that give more than one translation. www.spanishdict.com is one of them. • Teachers could ask parents and students to teach some basic Spanish to the rest of the class in order to communicate with the Hispanic students, they could also teach about their culture and cuisine. Food is always a good connecting tool. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide certified interpreters. Most school districts hire certified interpreters. • My daughter’s elementary school Principal called me the first time to ask if I could interpret for a 4th grader who was having problems with her classmates. • In my role of bilingual paraprofessional, I assisted teachers of diverse subjects during class instruction, with translation, to ensure EL students’ learning. • As an ESL community liaison one of my responsibilities was to help parents communicate with the schools. The communication consisted on sending emails, requesting meetings with school counselors, teachers.
School jargon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When in a meeting with parents, educators should avoid using school jargon. Hispanic parents might have difficulty understanding terms such as “board of education” since “board” means a piece of wood, as well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During IEP and other important meetings, parents, administrators and teachers asked me to attend them, to explain the school jargon to parents, since few interpreters are familiar with the school jargon or had all the context for the meeting.

Table 2a
Psychological Motivators

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES (SOLUTIONS)	CONCRETE EXAMPLES
<p>Need for information about how schools in the United States and Ohio operate and their expectations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a video recording in Spanish with general information about how the school functions, what are the expectations and what are the common goals. The video should be uploaded in the schools website, under parent’s resources, hence, parents can access and watch it. The video should state information as how and when to communicate with the teacher, school calendar; calendar of parent events, any support, like child care provided, so parents can plan to attend the events. • Communicate to parents the <u>purpose</u> of each school activity that requires parent participation. Hispanic parents will attend events that they understand are important for their children’s education. • Organize parents’ meetings with topics of their interest in education, child rearing or to meet their needs according to Maslow’s hierarchy and parent feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my role as an ESL community liaison, I organized monthly meetings for Hispanic parents based on topics directed to meet both, schools’ and parents’ needs. Some of the topics included the district’s power structure, schools’ code of conduct; requirements for magnet schools; how to discipline children with care, how to use public transportation (COTA), how to get a library card, and use the public library, and other topics suggested by the parents and schools.

Table 2b Contextual Motivators

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES (SOLUTIONS)	CONCRETE EXAMPLES
Systemic isolation from school culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize activities with Hispanic parents, in mind. Do it on a day and time that most of them can attend, anticipate any small barrier that may prevent them from attending (e.g., time when the meetings are scheduled, dinner time). Provide childcare, many families have younger children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on a survey I did during my years as ESL community liaison, we realized that the evening meetings shouldn't start before 6:30 or 7PM. We also saw the need to provide light dinner, parents didn't have enough time to feed the family before the meeting. We also provided childcare.
Sociocultural incongruence between home and school setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide interpreters. Take advantage of the interpreter services and ask them the social norms and make parents feel welcome Invite Hispanic parents and other ELLs' parents to share the cultural differences with students in the classrooms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of my roles as a ESL community liaison was to attend the parents' meetings and give the context of the meeting to the interpreters, and listen to the interpretation, to make sure that important information was not missed in translation.
Rigid conventional school expectations and activities concerning parental involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be open-minded, ask parents if you could do a home visit. If you do not feel comfortable with that, ask about the child's routine at home after school. Hispanic parents like to share about their families. Keep in mind that there may be cultural norms that are different than the American norms, for example Hispanic children are more formal when talking to adults, and elders. Hispanic parents use command voices more frequently than American parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a community liaison, I did many home visits and learned that there were many stay at home mothers who preferred to meet during the day, while children were in school. Mothers came to meetings during the day with smaller children, we saw the need to do something for them. We organized English "classes" for the small children. An adult volunteer, an student of honor Spanish and a librarian from the public library ran them.

Table 2c

Life Context Variables

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES (SOLUTIONS)	CONCRETE EXAMPLES
<p>Poverty and lack of opportunities for exposure.</p> <p>Lack of time and extended family obligations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers could abate the lack of opportunities and exposure by incorporating virtual or physical field trips to museums, parks, cities, and more into the curriculum. When planning these activities, coordinate with the parents and come up with ideas to include a fundraiser with their help to make sure all students can attend. Hispanic parents are used to doing more with less, they may surprise you with their creativity and resourcefulness. Create a community within your classroom modeling care and respect for everyone. • Hispanic parents may not be able to chaperone during field trips, because many of them are not salaried, but would like their children to attend the field trip. Let them know if there is a possibility of a kind of scholarship for this kind of activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When my daughter was in 5th grade, the teacher sent a note to the parents asking if they could send the cost to cover their child’s field trip and some extra, to help cover the cost for some children who may not be able to attend for economic reasons. We and other parents did it and all the children went on the field trip, but nobody knew who paid in full and who didn’t. Some schools’ PTOs raise funds to cover this kind of expenses, as well. • Make parents aware about museums that are free on Sundays.
<p>Over identification as children with special needs and language disorder and speech impairment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When educators suspect a language or speech impairment, they need to research about the dialect of the students country of origin. In Spanish, just like in English different regions have different dialects. In Ohio where we have a neutral dialect, we say “I will <u>park</u> my <u>car</u>”, but in New York they say “I will <u>pak</u> my <u>ca</u>”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At one of the IEP meetings that I attended in my role as an ESL community liaison, a child was being referred and evaluated for speech disorder. The child was in 3rd grade and this was his second year in the country. He didn’t pronounce the sharp “s” when speaking in English.

Table 2c
Life Context Variables

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES (SOLUTIONS)	CONCRETE EXAMPLES
		<p>I had previously worked with this family, I knew that they didn't pronounce the sharp "s" in Spanish either, because that is the dialect from their country, which is Venezuela. When I shared this information with the speech pathologist, she understood exactly what I meant. She lived in New York and she realized the difference when they pronounced the letter "r". She is the one who gave the example "I will pak my ca".</p>

Conclusion

When families, schools and communities form partnerships a strong learning environment is created. In this environment, everyone benefits: schools work more effectively, families become closer and the community resources are maximized. It is a win-win partnership. Parent involvement in children's education is higher if schools' policies and teacher practices are designed with parents in mind. A remarkable feature of a good parent-involvement program is respect for cultural diversity and active efforts to strengthen the native language in the home. By adopting some of the strategies given on the tables, teachers will be able to build better relationships with the Hispanic families and help meet the needs of the largest minority group in Ohio school

SECTION FIVE

Conclusion

The goal of my research was to examine the factors that affect Hispanic parent's decision to be involved in their children's education while they attend public school in the United States. The final product of this research is the educator's manual, which is the result of a comprehensive analysis of existing studies from prestigious researchers, and my personal experience. The findings of the researches can be organized in three major factors of motivation for parental participation proposed by Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler(2005): psychological motivators, contextual motivators, and life context variables.

The educator's manual, titled "Educator's Manual to Develop a Meaningful and Collaborative Parent Engagement Program for Hispanic Families" is intended to be a guideline for educators who are interested in starting or increasing the Hispanic parent participation and engagement in their schools.

While the manual is intended for Hispanic families, educators will find that many of the challenges and opportunities, as well as the best practices for engagement, are applicable to many EL communities. One of the fundamental factors to create a meaningful parent engagement program is to know your school's EL population, to be able to customize the activities that best serve that population, while using the manual as a foundation.

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Even though the law requires schools to have a parent engagement component for EL parents, there is not guidelines on what the program should include or look like. To implement a program with the elements suggested in the Educators' Manual teachers may encounter some challenges. 1) Human resources hiring practices that don't take into account the need for diversified teachers and school staff. 2) Teachers' paradigm shift on how to design lesson plans to include Hispanic culture and how to effectively deliver information to Hispanic parents. 3) Convince administration and school board the need to hire a bilingual professional who is culturally proficient on the Hispanic and American culture, whose role will be to advise, develop and run the parent engagement program. An additional external challenge may be the potential community opposition from those who do not see the significance of cultural and language diversity.

Parallel to the Educators' Manual, there is a need of a mode to deliver information to Hispanic parents in their language in a concise way. It is my intention to create, in the near future, a video with general information about schools.

My ultimate goal as an educator, is to assist school districts in developing parental engagement and professional development programs based on the Educators' Manual.

To disseminate the manual, it is my plan to reach out to the Ohio Department of Education, the major school districts in Columbus, as well as to the Vineyard Community Center that runs an ESL program, to present the manual. Additionally, I plan to have a presentation based on the Educator's Manual at the TESOL conference in the fall.

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