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When School Was Not Designed for *Your* Family: A Culturally
Responsive High School Parent Engagement Guide

by

Julia Straszewski

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2024

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Responsive High School Parent Engagement Guide

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by

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This dissertation written by Julia Straszewski, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all who have come before me in my family. Each person taught me about life, directly and indirectly, through story and example. Statistically, because we were not a formally educated family, my sister and I should have never succeeded the way we did. Cheers to beating the odds through good, honest hard work and ignoring the things others think we ought to be. Our family is a patchwork quilt that honors one another in celebrating our differences through love and respect. I carried and wore that quilt through everything that led me to this completed dissertation. In two sincere words: thank you.

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ABSTRACT

When School Was Not Designed for *Your* Family: A Culturally

Responsive High School Parent Engagement Guide

by

Julia Straszewski

Beginning with a brief historical analysis of how the education system came to be and an analysis of culture, themes came forth demonstrating the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) roots of education no longer align with the diversity of society. Parental engagement in education has been veered as a pillar of overall success; however, it was consistently view through a nonculturally responsive lens and geared toward early childhood and elementary education, leaving out high school as an equally important facet of a child's development. Synthesizing the themes of cultural responsiveness, parental engagement, and positive relationships, a culturally responsive guide emerges to create a starting point for public high schools to serve their uniquely diverse populations in creation and promotion of parental engagement.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. public school system has remained largely unchanged for the last century. Common phrases include sit down, be quiet, eyes on your own paper, do not speak unless spoken to, only one speaker at a time, you should have understood it correctly the first time if you have a question, stay in line, fail the test, and you are that failure. However, in recent decades, institutions have begun actively rejecting the antiquated ways of the system, seeing it for the harm it perpetuates from its roots of how school historically came to be a staple for the United States. The education system was founded as a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) system, and all who wished to participate in education needed to conform, which largely meant being viciously stripped of their cultural identity. Hollie (2017), in *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning*, stated, “As the educational process of destroying a person’s culture and replacing it with a new culture. It is one of most inhumane acts one can partake in” (p. 49). As reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2023), in the time between 2010 and 2021, Hispanic student enrollment in United States public schools increased from 23% to 28% but enrollment of White students dropped from 52% to 45%. Data from NCES (2023) also demonstrated a small increase in the number of Black students enrolled in U.S. public schools increasing from 15% to 16%.

Though complete personalization of education would be ideal, systems are intended to depersonalize in some capacity to remain efficient. According to the California Department of Education *Enrollment by Ethnicity Report* for 2022–2023, there were 3,284,788 Latino or Hispanic students enrolled in California public schools in kindergarten through Grade 12, which

accounted for 56.1% of total student enrollment for that academic year (California Department of Education [CDE], 2023). Since 1975, Lazerson (1975) has highlighted the existing dominance of WASP values in the U.S. educational system, emphasizing cultural conflicts have always existed due to the lack of tolerance for cultural variety. Education, in many ways, was and has continued to be weaponized as a tool for politically and culturally socializing members of society, which would invalidate the student's existing culture with the deliberate attempt to replace it with WASP values and perpetuating racial and ethnic inequities and bias (Lazerson, 1975). Conformity is the key to success, and not conforming results in rejection by the existing system.

Due to lower academic performance of Hispanic/Latino students, the historical assumption that most Hispanic/Latino families do not value education and/or have a low socioeconomic status has remained largely unchallenged because it has been seen as the reason students are academically low achieving. Data drawn from the public high school in Los Angeles, which will be referred to as PSLA, that inspired the current study, showed 36% of the student population was Hispanic/Latino; however, they comprised 49% of the D/F/NM list for Semester 1 of 2020 across all six periods, as found in the Aeries Student Management System. Many staff members questioned the numbers but claimed the COVID-19 global pandemic caused the results due to stressors faced by low socioeconomic families, saying the results were under erroneous circumstances; yet, historically, the numbers were only slightly higher than they always were. It begs the question of whether educators were simply used to expecting this level of performance and maintained those expectations.

Though overall education is a cultural value of Hispanic/Latino culture, because "Latino parents believe it is their responsibility to educate their children for life, not just for school"

(Arbelo Marrero, 2016, p. 2), people in the Hispanic/Latino culture have been largely viewed as uneducated or in a low socioeconomic class, deficient of resources, or downright unable to be academically successful in school. People from Hispanic/Latino cultures vary greatly because they cover so much ground culturally and geographically. According to Turner-Trujillo et al., (2017):

The term Hispanic was first introduced by the US Census Bureau in 1970 . . . as an alternative to classifying Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican immigrants as “white.” Today Hispanic covers people of a variety of ethnic identities who have origins in Spanish-speaking countries- basically Spain and all of Latin America. (p. 9)

Thus, there has been far too much generalization of what it means to be a Hispanic/Latino.

Low socioeconomic status is not a disability; rather, low socioeconomic status is an opportunity gap where students must face different, more numerous obstacles than other students to achieve similar outcomes. Also, students’ family dynamics are affected due to the lack of time for one-on-one attention from families as they try to make ends meet. The question remains as to whether these factors are causing these outcomes, or if the story is more complicated. An additional question remains as to what extent these factors take hold of a student’s academic performance and overall success. The mentioned assumptions and issues are a social justice issue because the system is not designed to go the extra mile to understand and serve these students and families; students conform to the culture of school or will be rejected by it (Hollie, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Parent involvement is crucial for student success (Epstein, 2009); however, Hispanic/Latino families have faced unique barriers at the secondary level, including an

unwelcoming environment, difficulty communicating with school staff who are not bilingual, and cultural disconnects (Jensen & Minke, 2017; Tinkler, 2002). Although research has been conducted on parental involvement (e.g., Budhai & Grant, 2023; Epstein, 2009; Jensen & Minke, 2017) and Hispanic/Latino parental involvement (e.g., Tinkler, 2002; Zarate, 2007), little research has examined how culturally and linguistically responsive frameworks, including culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (CLRT) and culturally responsive leadership (CRL), and specific practices, such as the validate, affirm, build and bridge (VABB) strategy, can support parent involvement among Hispanic/Latino families with students in high school. Research employing CLRT, CRL, and VABB is needed to address the gap in knowledge of how to best engage Hispanic/Latino families at the secondary level. Addressing the gap in knowledge is essential to developing effective engagement practices to support student academic success as well as to confront the injustice of systemic exclusion of Hispanic/Latino culture in schools.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the current study consisted of research influences from parental involvement and positive relationships, based on existing science of cultural responsiveness, particularly CLRT and CRL. The combination of CLRT and CRL aimed to uncover the human side of the experience in the final portion of public-school education, Grades 9–12. The concept of parental involvement at high school level is directly related to the actions taken by each school site and their held operational definitions of what desired behaviors look like and what conditions need to exist for parental engagement to be effective in increased student outcomes for adolescents. The underlying question for the current study asked if theories of positive relationships and cultural responsiveness were extended to high school parents,

whether it could lead to increased parent involvement if they are made to feel welcome. It was hoped a framework would emerge from the current study's findings that would allow the entire educational system to create proper conditions for diverse parent involvement (Harris & Robinson, 2016; Hollie, 2017; Howard et al., 2020; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Dr. Tyrone C. Howard from University of California, Los Angeles has often been a leader of professional development opportunities in Los Angeles to help schools address behavioral issues using positive relationships. Howard et al. (2020) claimed humans inherently hold biases of what correct behavior looks like due to their own cultural experience, specifically how children should behave in various situations, and if any child acts out of line with those biases, they are subject to disciplinary and corrective action. The feeling of judgement caused by implicit biases can transcend all lessons and keep students from succeeding to their full capacity. Students go through their education believing, at their core, school is not the place for them or they do not belong there; therefore, students reject the system and try to find belonging elsewhere (Howard et al., 2020). Children should all feel education is for them because education is for everyone. All human beings are born to learn and, somewhere along the way from elementary school to high school, this light is lost. What feels like common sense has been anything but common because many teachers have mislabeled cultural differences as defiance or misbehavior.

The value of positive relationships is not limited to the relationship between student and teacher because parents, communities, and/or families are inherently connected to each student. Jensen and Minke (2017) stated parental engagement misses the broader context of family that acknowledges the importance of community influences as well; although, for the purpose of the

current study, family and parent involvement was referred to as one in the same. Jensen and Minke (2017) shared, when it comes to schooling, “There should be a bidirectional flow of information and shared responsibility for outcomes” (p. 170). However, this process looks different on every campus because “conceptualizations of parent involvement [are] ‘school-centric,’ meaning that school professionals decide what is expected from parents” (Jensen & Minke, 2017, p. 169). According to the *Center of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Enhancing Family-School Collaboration with Diverse Families* handbook, “When family-school collaboration is effective, it involves coordination, two-way communication, and a shared responsibility between families and schools” (White et al, 2021, p. 3).

As the relationship between parent and adolescent changes, the relationship between parents and schools also changes in response, meaning conversations between parents and students at the elementary and high school levels shift in terms of what the child is willing to share and what they allow the parent to do as they each search for their autonomy and identity. Therefore, parental engagement in person that was previously expected by elementary schools should shift to make room for increased student autonomy, with compelling evidence that over and under involvement of the parent is detrimental to students’ academic success and overall well-being (Jensen & Minke, 2017).

Positive relationships and parental involvement are influenced and informed by the components of cultural identity and cultural responsiveness, specifically by the work of Hollie (2018) with his concept of VABB. To validate means an individual sees someone and understands they do something differently. Affirmation is reassuring someone just because it is different does not make it inherently wrong. Hollie also highlighted VABB is rooted in positive

relationships, where cultural identity should be known personally and collectively, with openness to share even when these factors are not parallel, perhaps even contradictory. Cultural components include but are not limited to age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, ethnicity, and gender. All cultural component factors intersect with one another, yielding more complex levels of oppression (Crenshaw, 2019). Differences in a culturally responsive campus are celebrated and included in decision making.

The concept of situational awareness and appropriateness is also at the heart of the build and bridge portion of VABB, where an individual expands the cultural capacities of those served on the site to see the system with which they are interacting holds certain norms and bridging that gap by teaching how they can behave in a more situationally appropriate way (Hollie, 2017). All the while, students are not rejected by the system, rather they are loved outrageously by it through teachable moments of capacity building rooted in positive relationships. Hollie (2017) took it a step further and highlighted the inhumanity of requiring someone to conform. Requiring someone to conform requires them to be stripped of their culture, replacing it with a culture forced upon them if they wish to not just survive but thrive in the surrounding system. To strip someone of their culture is one of the most inhumane things that can be done to a human being, which has historically been expected of people of color or otherwise marginalized populations (Hollie, 2017). Anyone of nonmainstream culture is directly or indirectly told their culture is wrong or inferior, and to win, they must play by a set of rules that requires them to be completely different from who they used to be.

For principles of cultural responsiveness and positive relationships to survive and bear fruit, there must be a CRL style in place. As stated by Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012),

“[C]ulturally responsive school leaders help their teachers and students develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 180). Combined with validating and affirming the cultures each student brings, leaders must create spaces where students can truly feel seen and engaged in education by building those capacities in their faculty that serve the community in all aspects of their educational experience. Bal et al. (2016) stated parent–school partnerships “were found to successfully create and sustain productive partnerships among local stakeholders that renovated their school discipline systems” (p. 122). Leaders can use this existing combination and combine it further with a culturally responsive parent engagement framework “to transform their systems to be effective, efficient, and fair. Such school systems may serve as expansive learning and development contexts for all adults and students and impact the behavioral and academic outcome disparities” (Bal et al., 2016, p. 128).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the current study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of parents of Hispanic/Latino ninth and/or 10th graders at a large, comprehensive, public high school in Los Angeles County (pseudonymed as “PSLA”) to better understand parents’ experiences interacting with the U.S. public school system and develop recommendations for improved Hispanic/Latino family engagement at PSLA and similar schools. Ultimately, the current study’s purpose was to identify ways to better serve Hispanic/Latino families to support positive academic and overall outcomes for students.

The researcher looked specifically at the concept of positive relationships, as they pertained to parents, and whether systemic practices and parental involvement definitions were

culturally responsive to families' needs. The goal was to expand the existing definition of parental involvement by developing a framework for parent involvement/engagement that was culturally responsive not only to parents of Hispanic/Latino students but also secondary parents in general. By expanding the existing definition of parental involvement, the created framework offered ideal conditions to include and encourage parents to actively participate in the ways that align with the developmental level of their child or children, validate and affirm their family, and provide a method of access to resources that would lead to more positive outcomes for all.

The social justice issue the researcher focused on was the inequity of the U.S. educational system toward Hispanic/Latino families. Hispanic/Latino families have been historically marginalized and underserved due to oppressive practices and underrepresentation, especially in decision making, leadership settings, and inclusivity in the overall school culture (Dillinger, 2019). The research site, PSLA, stated alignment with state and district efforts to include Black, Indigenous, and people of color perspectives as stakeholders of the community, yet the lack of inclusive practices, specifically direct invitations and removing barriers of access, provided an inadequate environment for Hispanic/Latino voices to be included or heard.

Research Questions

To better understand the parent involvement experiences and perceptions of Hispanic/Latino families at PSLA, the current study sought to answer the following research questions (RQs):

1. How do parents of Hispanic/Latino students define parent involvement in the home/community?

2. To what extent, if at all, do parents of Hispanic/Latino students feel supported, validated, or affirmed by the school; why or why not?
3. How can schools best support home/school involvement of Hispanic/Latino families at the high school level, particularly grades nine and/or 10?

Method

The current qualitative research study aimed to address the social justice issue of culturally responsive parent engagement in the education system. To accomplish this goal, it included semi-structured interviews with seven parents of Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in ninth or 10th grade at PSLA. In each in-person, one-on-one interview, participants responded to guiding questions connected to the RQs. Interview responses were analyzed to identify holistic themes and patterns to inform how to provide culturally responsive structures to historically marginalized communities. The analysis was based on practical and actionable changes that could be made socially and systemically to create ideal conditions for culturally responsive parent involvement, reflecting the people served in their system.

Participants

Participants included seven parents of Hispanic/Latino ninth and/or 10th grade high school students at PSLA. Participants were selected from the student information management system, Aeries Student Management Software, via query. The query provided a list of parents of Hispanic/Latino students in Grades 9 and/or 10. Parents of students included in the query were contacted via the researcher's Loyola Marymount University email address with a standard emailing message soliciting their participation. They were selected on a first-come first-serve basis in the order in which they replied to the email and their availability to participate in the

interviews in the short data collection timeline. Participants also had the option to self-identify as Spanish dominant so the interview could be conducted in their preferred language.

Assessments and Measures

Gathered data consisted of seven individual interviews of parents of Hispanic/Latino ninth and/or 10th grade students, as provided by the query generated at the PSLA. Participants were asked open-ended questions that addressed the previously stated RQs, allowing participants to elaborate as they saw fit through semi-structured interviews; they were not provided with questions ahead of time. Interviews were only audio recorded and then transcribed; next, interview transcriptions were inductively coded by hand, with holistic as the first cycle coding method and pattern coding for the second cycle method, relating interview responses to each of the three RQs (Saldaña, 2013). Conclusions from the findings were drawn using a culturally responsive and positive relationship conceptual lens, and a parent engagement framework evolved from the findings so practices at the selected PSLA could be culturally and linguistically responsive, particularly to the large portion of Hispanic/Latino families in the PSLA's population. The effort was to ultimately uncover variables that were important to participants' worldview and experience with the public school system to inform placement of conditions. The researcher's work and analysis will hopefully help work toward a potential solution or starting point to increase parent involvement and inclusivity, hopefully leading to improved student outcomes of Hispanic/Latino students and their families.

Limitations and Delimitations

One of the limitations of the current study was the researcher could not drastically change systems in place at the school or district level or those that caused families to be where they were

socioeconomically, because each arrived at where they were due to a tangled web of circumstances. The researcher also could not define all cultural and personal factors that could have contributed to the results because each person had unique experiences and intersectionalities that would remain unknown to the researcher. Another limitation of the current study was the benefits of the framework created may not have necessarily, or directly, benefited participants involved in its creation because the framework may not have been implemented into practice in a timeframe that included participants and their families. The researcher was just one small influence of their experience with the school system toward the end of the K–12 journey.

The researcher also consciously limited the perspective and/or reach of the study by focusing solely on the Hispanic/Latino demographic. The researcher made the conscious choice of focusing on the parent perspective of Hispanic/Latino high school families because there was little research about their experiences, and even less so at the secondary level. The researcher also focused on parents of high school students specifically because, as stated previously, parental involvement decreases once the student grows to be at the high school level (Jensen & Minke, 2017). The researcher's positionality as a Latina herself influenced the sorts of questions the researcher addressed in the current study and likely influenced their interpretation of the findings. The researcher solicited participation of only the Hispanic/Latino(a)-(x) population of the selected PSLA, allowing the first seven participants to participate who were available during the tight timeline the researcher had for gathering data in the month of May 2023. The short timeline created limited opportunity to participate in the current study, but the method chosen also created a natural limit of the information that could be gathered.

Positionality

The researcher's intersectionality consisted of being a young heterosexual woman in the United States, a first-generation American, upper middle class for most of her upbringing, culturally Argentinian, and racially White. Due to the researcher's background as a Hispanic/Latina in the public school system as both a student and educator, they had personally experienced or witnessed the othering of Hispanic/Latino students and families, in which they were held to lower expectations due to implicit biases and deficit thinking. The researcher strived to contribute research that helped to understand and address the root causes of the referenced lower levels of academic performance and historical marginalization in the public school system.

Organization of Dissertation

Chapter 1 outlined the problem of practice, Hispanic high school student historical academic under achievement, through the facets of positive relationships, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching/leadership, and parental involvement. The study directly focused on Hispanic/Latino students and families due to their high need for cultural responsiveness. The history of public education was briefly summarized, showing the roots of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) values and how little those values have changed in comparison to the explosion of the diversity of the population it is still intended to serve. The emergence of the term "Hispanic" was also discussed. The researcher acknowledged her positionality as a cisgender Hispanic/Latina woman and how it could affect the outcomes of the study, as well as the identified research questions, delimitations, and limitations.

Chapter 2 shows literature surrounding the concepts of positive relationships and parent involvement, beginning with the history of WASP U.S. education and the emergence of

culturally responsive teaching and CRL. The chapter included a literature dive around the concept of culture, particularly about the general cultural values of the WASP culture of the school system that essentially exclude nonconforming cultures, and what it means to be a Hispanic/Latino, showing how their culture is often misunderstood and has been historically marginalized via opportunity and achievement gaps. Literature discussed in Chapter 2 is targeted to address the inequities faced by Hispanic/Latino high school families through a practical, solutions-oriented lens.

Chapter 2 also included an analysis of literature on positive relationships, parental involvement, and cultural responsiveness, particularly pertaining to culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy that emerged from the definition of cultural responsiveness. Parent involvement of high school students was examined through these lenses, revealing gaps in what parental engagement looks like at the high school level of schooling, development, and how it evolves. Chapter 2 included additional emphasis on definitions of parental involvement and what parental involvement looks like for Hispanic/Latino families. The literature review was intended to pave the way for a culturally responsive framework of parent engagement built in the existing educational structure.

Chapter 3 presented the methodology of the current study, which included semi-structured interviews with parents of Hispanic/Latino students at PSLA and pattern analysis of interview transcripts. Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study, organized by RQ and expressed through the lenses of cultural responsiveness, positive relationships, and parent involvement as they related to each of the three RQs. Chapter 5 reviewed how the results of the study connect in a practical manner to the PSLA, offering insights to build a starting point for the

current study to be replicated in other public high schools, always with the explicit intention that the application of the insights will look different at every site.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the literature focuses on studies of parent involvement in schools. The goal of the literature review and dissertation was to provide a culturally responsive framework for parental involvement, specifically for Hispanic/Latino parents, so they can be an integral partner with school leadership. Literature is particularly lacking focus on Grades 9–12; however, Jensen and Minke (2017) showed parental involvement is important at all levels of a child’s education. To best inform a culturally responsive parent framework that would provide a space, tools, and ideas for ways all parents could be active participants in their child’s education, existing ideas around positive relationships, parent involvement, and cultural responsiveness must be examined because the combination of these concepts will create the environment for all stakeholders to contribute to and maintain an inclusive flow between home and school systems and cultures.

The sections that follow first review literature on parental involvement in general, looking to define and contextualize common practices and assumptions about parental involvement. Next, the review synthesizes the more limited literature specifically on parent involvement at the secondary level and with Hispanic/Latino families. Next, literature on culturally responsive practice—both pedagogy and leadership—is examined, followed by a discussion of the role of positive relationships in supporting parental involvement. Finally, community cultural wealth (CCW; Yosso, 2005) and multicultural education (Banks, 1976) were explored as frameworks for understanding the important role of family culture in schools.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement holds a nebulous definition that varies among cultures and school sites (Scribner, 1999; Trumbull et al., 2001). For the purpose of the current study, the term parental involvement also refers to parent and family engagement. Fan and Chen (2001) stated, “Despite its intuitive meaning, the operational use of parental involvement has not been clear and consistent” (p. 4). Fan and Chen (2001) added, “This somewhat chaotic state in the definition of the main construct [of parental involvement] not only makes it difficult to draw any general conclusion across the studies, but also may have contributed to inconsistent findings in this area” (p. 4). Through a meta-analysis about the empirical relationship between parental involvement and students’ academic achievement, Fan and Chen (2001) concluded relationships should not be generalized across different operational definitions but suggested future studies, “...should pay attention to the operational definition and measurement of parent involvement and should carefully document such definition and measurement” (p. 19).

Williams (1984) suggested, “It seems that parents and educators have dissimilar views about the meaning of parent involvement in education” (p. 8). Although there are some mutual agreements about certain aspects of parent involvement acceptable to both groups, parents’ involvement interests appear much broader than the more narrowly defined areas educators consider useful, which includes general terms like connection and communication discussed further in the literature review. However, the body of literature shows strong general support “that parent involvement leads to improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates, and that these improvements occur regardless of the economic, racial, or cultural background of the family” (Tinkler, 2002, p. 1).

Parent engagement also shows overall positive effects on students' academic and social/emotional success, "including lower levels of depression and aggressive or violent behaviors as well as higher levels of adolescent sense of competence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy" (Jensen & Minke, 2017, p. 173). Further supporting this notion and findings, Sawyer (2023) stated:

Children with families engaged in their education are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, graduate from high school and attend postsecondary education, develop self-confidence and motivation in the classroom, and have better social skills and classroom behavior. (p. 2)

Parental involvement has been viewed as one of the pillars of academic success, though often rooted in Whiteness. For example, Epstein's (2009) has been considered an ideal framework for family involvement in their child's education. However, Budhai and Grant (2023) shared:

While Epstein's [2009] model of parent involvement is generally relied on in the field of PK-12 education, there have been several critiques of the model in the literature as it takes the involvement practices of White middle-class parents as the norm . . . and causes schools to view certain families through a deficit lens. (p. 373)

The notion that parental involvement could look different depending on socioeconomic factors is not considered in the Epstein (2009) framework, though it is seen as the leading authority of correctness in parental involvement. According to research conducted by the University of North Carolina, "Many of the studies using Epstein's [2009] model do not take into account differences in race and ethnicity; rather, they provide a general approach to parental involvement, regardless

of race, class, or sociocultural factors” (Bower & Griffin, 2011, p. 79). Further, Bower and Griffin (2011) stated:

Parental involvement strategies are largely based on school cultures that are formed from middle-class, European American cultural norms; therefore, schools need to consider differences in cultural norms by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status to use parent involvement effectively as a strategy for student success. (p. 79)

Chen (2022) stated the nationwide policy (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001) attempted to address parental engagement because:

One of the purposes of NCLB [2001] is to encourage parents of disadvantaged or underachieving students to get involved in their children’s education. This goal is accomplished by requiring the education system to reach out to parents by communicating effectively with them and by providing opportunities for parents to learn how to assist their children. (para. 24)

Chen (2022) shared NCLB (2002) also:

Emphasizes that schools and parents share responsibilities for improving academic achievement . . . recogni[zing]that some parents do not know how to participate in their children’s education and that some schools do not know how to reach out to parents to get them involved. Thus, schools are required to educate teachers and other school personnel about reaching out to and working with parents as equal partners. (para. 28)

Chen (2022) urged schools to offer materials and training to help parents support their children’s education, including developing technology and literacy, understanding academic standards, monitoring their child’s progress, and working closely with teachers in monitoring improvement.

It is especially a public school's responsibility to establish and maintain an active and healthy partnership with parents, which in turn fosters community connection and success.

Chen (2022) listed 18 specific ways parents could be involved in their child's education (see Table 1), the majority of which make assumptions about a parent's ability to deliver middle-class types of involvement as mentioned earlier but did not touch on examples of how to form and maintain positive relationships with their adolescent child. Being involved in their child's education is more complex than being present and advocating (Howard et al., 2020). It is about knowing their own child, having a deep connection with them, understanding their perspective in the current state of the world, and partnering with them and the school system to allow them to be the best version of themselves. Positive relationships are at the root of good parenting as much as they are of good education, which was supported by the work of Howard et al. (2020). Finally, Jensen and Minke (2017) stated, "Importantly, parents are more likely to be engaged in their child's schooling when they perceive that their engagement is welcomed and desired" (p. 176).

Table 1

Tips for Being an Involved Parent

Tip #	Tip
1.	Read with your children and talk with them about the books and stories you read.
2.	Help your children work on homework assignments.
3.	Organize and monitor a child's time.
4.	Tutor a child with materials and instructions provided by teachers or found on the internet.
5.	Attend and actively support school activities.
6.	Volunteer in classrooms, on field trips, or for special events.
7.	Continue to be involved as your child is in middle and high school.
8.	Attend parent-teacher meetings.
9.	Talk with your child about school on a daily basis.
10.	Be an advocate for your child to make sure the child's needs are being met.
11.	If a problem arises, address it quickly by requesting a meeting with the teacher.
12.	Advise the teacher of any issues at home that may affect the child's school performance.
13.	Vote in school board elections.
14.	Encourage your children on successes and support them on poor performances.
15.	Take classes at a community college or adult education program to demonstrate to the child that learning is important.
16.	Participate in PTA or other parent organizations, school advisory councils, or committees.
17.	If your child's school does not have a program for reaching out to parents, become an activist and persuade the school or school district about the importance of parental involvement.
18.	Consider involving grandparents, who may be retired and have more time, in their grandchildren's education.

Note: Adapted from *Parental Involvement is Key to Student Success*, by G. Chen, Public School Review, copyright 2022 by Public School Review.

Chen's (2022) work largely aligned with one of the top researchers of parental involvement, Epstein (2009). Epstein (2009) provided six types of parent involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Barnett (2016) highlighted the importance of having, "two-way communication activities that keep families informed and involved in school programs and student progress" (p. 15). As stated previously by Bower and Griffin (2011), Epstein's (2009) model works from a middle-class, European American lens, however, "Parents with a higher income and more education maintain stronger relations with school administrators and teachers

than parents with lower incomes [and education]” (Barnett, 2016, p. 37). However, Lareau’s (1989) claims were based on parent involvement in elementary education.

Secondary-Level Parental Involvement

Most of the body of literature has addressed the levels and manners of parental involvement of elementary-aged children, sometimes showing the progression into middle school, or Grades 6–8. However, the question remains about high school. Literature surrounding parental involvement of high-school-aged children is far more limited than that of elementary-aged children. Chen (2022) stated:

Parental involvement can make a positive difference at all age levels. Parental involvement tends to be the greatest with young children and tends to taper off as children get older. Studies have shown, however, that the involvement of parents of middle and high school students is equally important. (para. 9)

Unironically, Jensen and Minke (2017) stated, “It appears that both parents and students need a period of adjustment to the high school setting, and this affects engagement behaviors” (p. 179). Also, Jensen and Minke (2017) shared, “As the level of academic difficulty increases, parents may no longer feel they can help their adolescent, leading to a decrease in self-efficacy and a decrease in engagement” (p. 179). The structure of elementary and secondary education varies and creates different barriers around parental involvement, along with developmental differences at both levels (Jensen & Minke, 2017).

Cooper (2015) indicated as children transition from elementary to middle and middle to high school, parent involvement declines. What is seen as correct in terms of parental involvement is inherently different at each schooling level due to the developmental level of the

children, along with the notion it is also culturally based (Budhai & Grant, 2023). Furthermore, as Jensen and Minke (2017) stated, “Conceptualizations of parent involvement as ‘school centric,’ meaning that school professionals decide what is expected from parents” (p. 169).

Furthermore, Jensen and Minke (2017) stated, “Questions remain regarding the role the parent-child relationship may play in motivating parent engagement and whether there are developmental differences in the kinds of behaviors that adolescents prefer and will accept from their parents” (p. 168). Jensen and Minke (2017) also stated, “Parent-student communication (regarding school and values), holding high educational expectations, and authoritative parenting style were the strongest predictors of academic achievement” (p. 170). However, Jensen and Minke (2017) also shared there are limitations to an authoritative parenting style, because there is evidence that overly intrusive parental involvement interferes with developing a child’s autonomy and life skills, the reverse of its intended purpose.

Hispanic/Latino Parental Involvement

As stated earlier in Chapter 1, Hispanic/Latino parents and families highly value education. However, there are many cultural discrepancies between Hispanic/Latino and mainstream schools, or White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP), culture. As a cultural contrast, Smith et al. (2008) shared, “Hispanic families value social responsibilities, the wellbeing of the group, and interdependent relationships above individual fulfillment and choice. Because U.S. schools often stress competition in schools and individual achievement over cooperative behaviors, Hispanic children often get mixed messages” (p. 10). Just as parental involvement looks different at each school level, it also looks different cross culturally. Tinkler (2002) stated, “Many Hispanic parents (feel) intimidated by teachers, particularly if the teachers adopt a

condescending attitude” (p. 9). Tinkler (2002) added, “Many school administrators and teachers misread the reserve, the non-confrontational manners, and the non-involvement of Hispanic parents to mean that they are uncaring about their children’s education” (p. 1).

Literature has pointed to a cultural misunderstanding that leads to detrimental results in academic achievement and parental involvement. Hispanic/Latino parents see their role as providers of “nurturance and to teach morals, respect and good behavior;” however, “the role of the school is to instill knowledge” (Tinkler, 2002, p. 8). Tinkler (2002) summarized:

When parents are asked to take on responsibilities that they traditionally view as the domain of the school, they may be unsure of the role they are asked to play and they may feel that they are encroaching on the school’s territory. (p. 8)

What is seen as lack of involvement by the definition of those at the school site is a Hispanic/Latino cultural act of respect toward educators.

Tinkler (2002) added:

School expectations of parents helping with a child’s education at home may not be realistic if the parent does not have the requisite skills. It is not unusual for immigrant Latino families to have limited formal education. This is particularly the case for migrant families who have often had only limited exposure to schooling. (p. 11)

Tinkler (2002) stated some of the key barriers to Hispanic/Latino parental involvement are, “language barriers, low expectations of teachers, poverty, racism, and isolation; the lack of cooperation between school, parents, and community has also played a role” (pp. 2–3). It is important to note how alarming it is that the bulk of research for Hispanic/Latino parent involvement was conducted around 20 years ago. If a Hispanic/Latino family is experiencing any

single or combination of disadvantages listed prior, Barnett (2016) stated parents “can make a positive contribution to their children’s achievement in schools if they receive adequate training and encouragement in types of parental involvement that can make a difference” (p. 34).

Specifically related to the language barrier, Scaringi (1994) stated:

By communicating with the parents in the native language and on a more personal basis, the parents were more able to help their students . . . throughout the student’s academic career; middle school students may benefit by being promoted to the ninth grade with the necessary skills to be successful in high school. (p. 30)

Scaringi (1994) showed considerable academic improvement of the targeted students in their study—30 Hispanic eighth graders at risk for not being promoted to the ninth grade—and improvement in overall school culture for parents due to the deliberate inclusive linguistic. Smith et al. (2008) shared, “Parents described how the failure of the school to send general information letters, school calendars, lunch menus, or newsletters printed in Spanish resulted in confusion for the children and the parents” (p. 10).

A synthesizing report by Zarate (2007) attempted to study Latino parent involvement from the perception of parents, educators, and students, narrowing down parental involvement in a parents’ perspective to two themes: academic involvement and life participation. Students placed most emphasis of parent involvement on nonacademic support, specifically, “giving general encouragement, providing discipline, and offering incentives/disincentives for proper behavior” (Zarate, 2007, p. 14). Educators had expanded categories including parenting, academic support, school leadership participation, and providing administrative support, which deeply contrasted what the parents saw their role to be.

Zarate (2007) failed to operationally define parent involvement at multiple levels and did not define what it meant to be a Latino parent. Like other articles regarding parental engagement, Zarate (2007) stressed the importance of elementary school parent involvement, stating, “In elementary school, their parents had established an educational foundation by enforcing school attendance, establishing high expectations for academic performance, and enforcing discipline. These actions became crucial to later educational success” (p. 14). However, Zarate did provide policy and programmatic recommendations for schools, organizations, and teachers to foster increased parental involvement among Latino parents. Zarate (2007) urged, “The strongest message that can be conveyed from this study is that parental involvement needs to be an organizational expectation if stakeholders are interested in increasing parental involvement” (p. 15).

Three Levels of Impact

Literature has shown not all researchers agree parental involvement is the key to improvement of school culture and academic success of students. A. J. L. Baker and Soden (1997) cited Gordon (1978) in his synthesis of three angles researchers have used for understanding and tackling the issue of parental involvement: impact models of school, parent, and community. A. J. Baker and Soden (1997) offered an approach for the school-impact model:

Call[s] for radical changes in how schools relate to families in order to improve the achievement of bilingual and minority children. A central tenet of his framework is that students are empowered or disabled depending upon their interactions with schools. (p. 5)

In the parent-impact model, “Both homes and communities provide children with capital 4 6 (resources, skills, and support)” (A. J. L. Baker & Soden, 1997, pp. 4–5). A. J. L. Baker and

Soden (1997) added, "...that schools rebuild children's social capital by proactively reaching out to families, linking parents with each other, bringing parents more fully into the educational process, and by linking families to community resources" (p. 5).

Lastly, in the community-impact model, A. J. L. Baker and Soden (1997) stated the, "model emphasized attention to the developmental and emotional needs of children and families. Parent involvement in the development and implementation of the intervention were key features of his project from the outset" (p. 5). Each of these approaches holds different keys to solving the issue of lack of Hispanic/Latino parent involvement and was considered when forming the ideal parental engagement framework of this study. Echoing these sentiments, Barnett (2016) stated, "Previous studies suggest that school policies and practices generate high levels of parental involvement. When parents are made to feel welcomed and values in the school, they are more likely to become involved in their children's school experience" (p. 33).

Emergence of Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural responsiveness began as a way to address inequities minority groups experienced as they interacted with WASP culture in schools, as nonconforming students were penalized directly or indirectly by the system. Artiles (2015) stated, "[Cultural Responsiveness] does not acknowledge diversity within cultural groups and the mechanisms through which culture mediates learning or ability differences are not specified. Despite such substantial limitations, this is a favored perspective in educational research, policy, and practice" (p. 3).

Furthermore, Artiles (2015) stated:

Embedded in these trends are problematic and often contradictory theoretical assumptions about the notion of culture that mediate inequities affecting non-dominant

populations, which translate into educational segregation, limited opportunities, and lower outcomes for these groups. Ironically, these trends are apparent despite current educational accountability demands for all groups represented in school systems. (p. 5)

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy

Oftentimes, students of color feel like outsiders in an education system rooted in Whiteness. The campus of the selected public high school in Los Angeles (PSLA) has built professional competency in validate, affirm, build, and bridge (VABB), developed by Hollie (2017), which allows for positive relationships to flourish in the education setting. Essentially, to VABB means viewing the behavior as a circumstance, not a characteristic. Hollie (2021) stated to validate and affirm means to:

Make culturally and linguistically legitimate and positive, that which has been illegitimate and negative by the institution of education and mainstream media; understanding the complexity of culture and the many forms it takes (including age, gender, and social class), which will then create opportunities for making meaningful experiences in school. (para. 1).

Hollie's (2021) build and bridge components require educators to build their cultural competency, creating opportunities for that knowledge "to be connected to academic use, within the school context, after students' cultures have been validated and affirmed" (para. 4).

Ultimately, student and community understanding of situational appropriateness for the educational setting is being built, challenging the stereotypes of what education should look like. For example, a quiet classroom is not necessarily an engaged classroom, and talking out of turn is not a character flaw but a cultural behavior (Hollie, 2017).

Culturally Responsive Leadership

Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) stated, “Culturally responsive school leaders help their teachers and students develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 382). Culturally responsive school leadership was developed by Khalifa et al. (2016), in which four tenets surround building responsive and effective school environments that engage all stakeholders, especially parents. Khalifa et al. (2016) also emphasized the importance of critical self-reflection and self-awareness in which “[Leaders in education] must be keenly aware of inequitable factors that adversely affect their students’ potential” (p. 1281).

The selected PSLA, regardless of their best intentions, has made many assumptions on how to solve the issue of underperformance of Hispanic/Latino students and under involvement of their parents, by focusing on anecdotal evidence for suggestions of solutions. Though the PSLA has brought many experts in to increase the vocabulary of equity and cultural responsiveness, there is a tendency of *solutionitis*, which Bryk et al. (2015) defined as “The propensity to jump quickly on a solution before fully understanding the exact problem to be solved” (p. 24). For example, the PSLA created semi-structured Zoom (www.zoom.us) meetings through the parent affinity to give parents a forum to share their concerns and provide them with resources, but only two to seven parents from the entire school’s Hispanic/Latino population attended. The well-intentioned event was unfortunately not a culturally responsive way of reaching out to the Hispanic/Latino population due to their generally low level of tech literacy. Thus, there are real barriers to access for Hispanic/Latino parents that can be studied through the lens of cultural responsiveness and positive relationships.

Positive Relationships Are at the Core of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Parental Involvement

Positive relationships marry the concepts of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (CLRT) and parental involvement. The important thing is for relationships to be authentic. As Howard et al. (2020) stated in *No More Teaching Without Positive Relationships*, “Too many students pass through school feeling unknown, uncared for, unsupported, and disengaged. These students come to believe that school is not a place for them, and if they do not belong here, where do they belong?” (p. 13). Howard et al. (2020) also stated, “Students of color do better when families are involved in schools” (p. 69), though most of the communications are reactionary in nature, only reaching out to families when something is wrong, making them reluctant to participate or even respond.

Developing positive relationships is essential to helping each student maximize their potential by refusing to be permissive, being asset based as opposed to deficit based in their approach to them, and having lower expectations for them to meet communicates lesser expectations of them or expectations for them to fail (Howard et al., 2020). Each child and family sees educators at the front lines of the system, but the question remains as to what they see when educators are at the front lines: (a) Do they see a role model? (b) Do they see an example of excellence? (c) Do they see someone they can look up to? (d) Do they see someone they can identify with? Or (e) Do they see someone who genuinely cares about them?

Community Cultural Wealth

Yosso (2005) created the framework for CCW that includes cultural factors previously not acknowledged as assets. The six factors of CCW are: (a) aspirational capital, (b) linguistic

capital, (c) familial capital, (d) navigational capital, (e) resistant capital, and (f) social capital (Yosso, 2005). Pertaining most to the current study, aspirational capital and linguistic capital are strong cultural capital for the Hispanic/Latino community. According to Yosso (2005), aspirational capital is, “The ability to maintain hope and dreams for the future in the face of real and perceived barriers;” (p. 79) but linguistic capital is, “The ability to develop communication skills through various experiences [like] act as an interpreter for members of their family” (p. 79). Yosso (2005) saw cultural capital as assets students of color bring with them everywhere they go; therefore, cultural capital should be taken into consideration throughout reform.

Yosso’s (2005) work aligned directly with Hollie (2017) because Hollie outlined the differences between surface, shallow, and deep culture in the iceberg concept of culture. Hollie (2017) stated, “If you focus on superficial culture, you are doing a disservice to cultural responsiveness overall because you are ignoring who your students really are at the deepest levels” (p. 41). Hollie (2017) added, “The list of elements of culture shows the complexity of culture and illuminates how we as educators often simplify who students are culturally and linguistically” (p. 41). One of the most unfortunate aspects of school culture is most ethnocultural behaviors “are in stark contrast to the behaviors validated by school and mainstream culture” (Hollie, 2017, p. 42). Therefore, cultural capital outlined by Yosso (2005) was included in the deeper portions of the cultural iceberg most frequently denied by educators, ultimately yielding deficit thinking for nonconforming behaviors that represent students’ cultural heritage.

Multiethnic Education

The concept of multiethnic education, according to Banks (1976), attempts to “provide students with cultural and ethnic alternatives and to reduce ethnic encapsulation” (p. 1), which means they are, “unable to fully know and see their own cultures because of their cultural and ethnic blinders” (p. 1). Banks (1976) explained school is historically based on WASP culture in alignment with the Anglo-American child’s experience. Banks (1976) stated an individual can truly understand their own culture, “only by viewing them from the perspectives of other racial and ethnic cultures” (p. 1). Banks (1976) also stated multiethnic individuals, “often deny their ethnic identity, ethnic heritage, and family in order to assimilate and to participate more fully in America’s social, economic, and political institutions” (p. 2).

Banks (1976) stated multiculturalism is at the root of cultural responsiveness because “students are also more likely to master skills when they study content and problems related to the world in which they live” (p. 2). Banks (1976) highlighted the controversy of multiethnic education as the assumption that children are unaware of racial and ethnic differences, so addressing them would merely create problems; though research has directly contradicted this, stating awareness of ethnicity and race largely takes place before kindergarten. Unfortunately, Banks (1976) stated, “Ethnicity is a broad concept which is often misunderstood by educators” (p. 4) and is usually equated with race. Ethnic and racial experiences and history should be studied to challenge existing biases and stereotypes beyond the special holidays dedicated to them because doing so may reinforce minority ethnic and racial groups are not integral parts of society but are rather an othered group. Education should be as diverse as the student population itself.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The study was qualitative in nature and consisted of data gathering through seven individual interviews with parents of ninth- and/or 10th-grade Hispanic/Latino high school students. Parents also had the option of identifying as a native Spanish speaker to provide the option to interview in their preferred language. Thoughts and attitudes participants shared were inductively coded to find consistencies and frequencies that reflected their familial experiences. The school used and all participants remained anonymous and were referred to using pseudonyms. The pseudonym chosen for the school site was PSLA (public high school in Los Angeles).

Research Questions

The current study sought to answer the following research questions (RQs):

1. How do parents of Hispanic/Latino students define parent involvement in the home/community?
2. To what extent, if at all, do parents of Hispanic/Latino students feel supported, validated, or affirmed by the school; why or why not?
3. How can schools best support home/school involvement of Hispanic/Latino families at the high school level, particularly grades nine and/or 10?

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research methods were chosen to hear directly from the school's Hispanic/Latino families regarding their experiences with inclusion and cultural responsiveness of the selected PSLA rather than assuming anything about their experiences. Individual

interviews were chosen to create a safe space for people to share authentically with anonymity in reporting, with the option to do so in their preferred language. In-person interviews were chosen to build in cultural responsiveness through the concept of *pláticas*, which is informal, layered conversation (Fierros & Bernal, 2016). The overall goal of the current study was to gain understanding of the underlying variables for Hispanic/Latino family involvement at the PSLA. The researcher aimed to understand the trends of experiences of parents of Hispanic/Latino students to discover ways to be more inclusive and responsive to their needs.

Method

To answer the RQs, the researcher conducted seven individual semi-structured interviews with parents from the selected school site, PSLA, derived from a query of all Hispanic/Latino students currently in ninth and/or 10th grade, with the option of self-identifying as a native Spanish speaker to support their participation in the interview in their preferred language. The sections that follow provide details about the participants, setting, data collection, and analysis plan. Participants were not given the interview questions ahead of time, and their identities remained anonymous in the reporting of findings from the interviews and beyond.

Participants

Each participant needed to be a parent or guardian of a Hispanic/Latino ninth- and/or 10th-grade student from the chosen PSLA. Participants may also have considered themselves native Spanish speakers, but this was not a requirement for participant selection. The demographic distribution of the PSLA was 36.9% Hispanic/Latino, 25.7% White, 15% Black, and 12.3% Asian (US News & World Report, 2022). The Hispanic/Latino population of the PSLA was chosen because data gathered from the PSLA showed 36% of the student population

was Hispanic/Latino; however, this group comprised 49% of the D/F/NM list for Semester 1 of 2020 across all six periods, as found in the PSLA's student management system. Consent was obtained from PSLA with the agreement that the school and all participants would be referred to by a pseudonym. An Aeries query was conducted to identify parents of students that fit the required criteria. Parents were contacted via the researcher's Loyola Marymount University email address, and the first six to eight parents to reply were the first considered for participation. Parents were required to be available for individual interviews in the window of data collection to be chosen as a participant in the study. The location of the interviews varied based on each individual participant's needs.

Setting

The setting of the research gathering was a selected PSLA. The school was established roughly 100 years ago. The population has become more heterogeneous over the years, and the school was one of the most diverse schools in the state of California in terms of socioeconomic status and other demographics. At the time of the current study, PLSA had roughly 2,100 students and 150 staff members. Table 2 shows a comparison of the demographics of the school staff and students. Parent involvement in the PSLA consisted of parent affinity groups, parent teacher student association, school site council, school board meetings, town hall meetings, and parent information nights/workshops that all incorporated parent input and interest. Necessary permissions were gathered from the selected district and site at the beginning of February 2023. Individual interviews were gathered at agreed upon locations decided by the selected parent from the PSLA who met participant criteria; this was done to support their access to participation and allow them to select non-White-dominant spaces for the interview.

Table 2

Demographic Composition of PSLA

Race/ethnicity	Certificated staff	Student population
Hispanic	20.1%	36.9%
White	56%	25.7%
African American	6.7%	15%
Asian	14.4%	12.3%
Other	≈3%	10.1%

Note: Certificated staff data, most recent 2018–2019 data from State Report: 2022-2023 Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade, by California Department of Education, 2023, <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/EnrEthGrd.aspx?cds=00&agglevel=state&year=2022-23&ro=y>, copyright 2024 by California Department of Education; student population data derived from PLSA, by US News & World Report, 2022, <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/california>, copyright 2022 by US News & World Report.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of using the Apple (2024) voice memos application to record each of the seven individual interviews, which the researcher later transcribed using artificial intelligence tools. The researcher also gathered notes as they interviewed participants following the interview script prepared to address the three RQs. The current study was conducted after obtaining institutional review board approval for data gathering during Spring 2023. The data collected were inductively coded by hand (Saldaña, 2013) for a holistic overview, and then again for patterns of common themes observed as they related to the three RQs. Findings from the current study fostered the creation of an operational definition of parent involvement and a culturally responsive framework for parent involvement to create the ideal environment. The hope was both the operational definition of parental involvement and a culturally responsive framework for parent involvement could serve as a catalyst for change regarding parent involvement becoming more inclusive and culturally responsive.

Study Procedure/Instrument

The first procedure involved the initial gathering of six to eight participants from the participant list who were able to participate in individual interviews in the data collection

window from the end of April to the end of May 2023. An Aeries query was generated by the PSLA meeting all prescribed criteria of participants. Again, each parent had self-identified as a Hispanic/Latino parent of a ninth- and/or 10th-grade student at the selected PSLA, with the option to also identify as a native Spanish speaker on their Aeries profile. Each of the email addresses from the query was pasted into a blind copied mass email from the researcher's Loyola Marymount University email account. The first six to eight parents who replied to the mass email were contacted for scheduling of their individual interviews. If any of the parents backed out or changed their mind, the next replying parent was considered in the order their replies were received.

Once participant selection was finalized in order of their responses to the email solicitation, the researcher then held each of the individual interviews at the PSLA or a participant selected interview setting, to conduct the interview in a manner that felt most comfortable for them; however, all interviews had to occur in person. All participants had to be able to conduct their individual interview in the data collection window and were chosen because they met the specific criteria. The researcher conducted individual interviews based on a created interview protocol. The researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews using AI technology, OtterAI (www.otter.ai) in English, and Sonix (sonix.ai) in Spanish. Interview questions were not provided to the participants ahead of time. Interviews were semi-structured, modeling the Chicana epistemology of *pláticas* (Fierros & Bernal, 2016).

Interview data were then summarized for each participant and member checking was conducted for ratification of the interview summary and confirmation of demographic information. Qualitative data collected in the current study were inductively analyzed through a

culturally responsive lens rooted in positive relationships. Inductive analysis allowed for themes to reveal themselves through the words of parent participants rather than the researcher. Holistic and pattern coding analysis methods were employed to understand the data, organize the responses, connect back and analyze data in relation to each of the three RQs, and find notable responses that stood out. Findings from the current study are reported in Chapter 4, organized by each RQ, followed by the emergence of an operational definition of parent involvement for secondary parents and a culturally responsive parent involvement guide that creates an environment for inclusive parent engagement.

From the holistic coding analysis, central themes that emerged included: Parents Seeing Themselves as Partners in Educating Their Child, and the Facts That Their Experiences with the School and School System Shaped Their Opinions Regarding Parental Involvement. Although some parents felt education was accessible to them, others felt there were barriers of access to the educational system. Through the second cycle of coding, patterns were categorized based on their relation to the three RQs. Many participant responses demonstrated the selected PSLA had culturally responsive features in place, such as parent affinity groups and multidirectional and multimodal methods of communication, that allowed some parents to choose their methods of engagement, though there was still room for growth in terms of equitably addressing opportunity gaps.

Of the seven participants in the current study, five participants identified as Hispanic/Latino and two of them identified as White, revealing in the interviews their child's other parent was Hispanic/Latino. Six of the seven participants were mothers. Of the Hispanic/Latino participants, two of the five parents stated their dominant home language was

Spanish; all interviews were conducted in each participant’s dominant language. Approximately 43% of participants were 10th-grade parents, but the remaining 57% of participants were ninth-grade parents. About 29% of participants shared their child received special education services. Five of the seven participants had children involved in extracurricular activities. Table 3 illustrates nonidentifying data shared to better understand participants and provide context without jeopardizing their anonymity. Nonidentifying data were limited and not intended to provoke bias.

Table 3

Nonidentifying Participant Information

Participant	Ethnicity/race	Parent	Student’s biological sex	Dominant home language	Student grade level	Special education services	Student involved in extracurriculars?
Participant 1	Hispanic/Latino	Mother	Female	English	10	✓	✓
Participant 2	Hispanic/Latino	Mother	Female	English	9		✓
Participant 3	Hispanic/Latino	Mother	Male	Spanish	10		✓
Participant 4	White	Mother	Male	English	9		✓
Participant 5	Hispanic/Latino	Mother	Female	Spanish	9		
Participant 6	White	Father	Female	English	9	✓	
Participant 7	Hispanic/Latino	Mother	Female	English	10		✓

Analysis Plan

Once the seven individual interviews were conducted and transcribed, each set of interview data was summarized for each of the participants, and member checking was conducted for ratification of the interview summary. During member checking, participants were also asked to provide their demographic information. Once each participant ratified their responses and race/ethnicity, the researcher then analyzed the responses by inductively coding. The first cycle of coding was holistic (Saldaña, 2013), absorbing the major themes of all seven

interviews. The coding process involved three passes of the transcriptions while concurrently listening to the recorded audio of each interview and highlighting common themes.

The second cycle of coding consisted of pattern coding (Saldaña, 2013), categorizing responses based on their relation to the three RQs, and another category of notable responses that stood out or were worthy of sharing but did not necessarily address the RQs. The researcher identified common themes from the responses by taking notes while listening to the audio and highlighting participant statements as they related to the RQs, also noting any provoking statements. Results were analyzed by hand, inductively rather than deductively, so the responses would form conclusions, rather than vice versa. The researcher gathered highlighted quotes that depicted their relation to each RQ, forming a detailed narrative while consistently maintaining participant anonymity.

Limitations

The researcher's positionality as a Latina and being multicultural influenced the sorts of questions addressed in the current study. The researcher was aware of what it felt like to be considered as an "other" in U.S. culture and the education system; therefore, the researcher anticipated participants chosen would likely mirror the researcher's sentiments, though not all parent participants identified as Hispanic/Latino. The researcher believed wholeheartedly even with polarized differences, all people could coexist if there was compromise somewhere in the middle. The researcher had seen this modeled in their family, with half being Atheist and the other half Catholic; the researcher's family had deep discussions with utmost respect for one another and their differences. The researcher had also traveled to and interacted with cultures very different from their own; still, the researcher's family had managed to get along by meeting

in the middle, each teaching the other something valuable. The researcher's core beliefs, rooted in their experiences, indirectly influenced data analysis.

Another limitation of the current study was the researcher chose to work with a school site with which they were familiar so the benefits of this research could directly affect the people they served. The researcher solicited participation of the Hispanic/Latino ninth- and/or 10th-grade parent population of the selected PSLA, allowing the first six to eight participants to participate who were available during the tight timeline for gathering data (i.e., end of April 2023 to the end of May 2023). The methods chosen limited the outcomes by having a small sample size, coupled with a challengingly short timeline that created a barrier to participation. Finally, the framework created may not have been finalized and implemented quickly enough to serve the families who helped create it, which was due to the hindsight nature of the results from the current study.

The study used a convenience sample, so it may not have been representative of the population. The total sample size was also small, consisting of only seven total participants, which contributed to the fact the data may not have been representative of the entire population. As stated previously, the first six to eight parents emailed from the Aeries query list who agreed to participate on the given data collection dates were selected until all interview opportunities were filled. Participants were chosen based on the prescribed criteria and on a first-come first-serve basis, meaning whoever replied to the email first was considered in the order their replies were received; this process presented potential bias because individuals who replied first were most readily available and/or eager to participate.

There may have been a descriptive threat to validity (Saldaña, 2013) because there may have been overlapping conversation that occurred in the interview that, although recorded, may not have all registered in an understandable manner. Additionally, there was the potential for observer interference (Saldaña, 2013) because they knew they were being formally interviewed, and observer bias in which the researcher's attitudes, opinions, and prejudices may have affected the way responses were interpreted. Lastly, the nature of inductive coding analysis provided potential for biases, life history, and personal interests to inform or steer the analysis of the interview responses. Even with the intention to mitigate bias, it could not be eliminated from the research process, specifically intensified by the decision for inductive coding analysis. There was also an interpretive threat to validity (Saldaña, 2013) because the researcher's own biases may have influenced how accurately participants' behaviors were measured throughout the interviews. The researcher conducted participant member checking to validate and ratify the data captured accurately reflected their position.

Delimitations

The choice of targeted demographic in terms of school level and ethnicity was deliberate because they aligned with the researcher's positionality and interests. The researcher made the choice to do in-person interviews because, although a survey might have been easier to collect at the time of the current study in the K–12 public school academic year, the researcher's previous experience with this particular group of parents showed technology literacy was low, and they were not fully comfortable interacting with electronic devices and surveys. The researcher also specifically chose to ask about their personal experiences, modeling the approach after Fierros and Bernal's (2016) pláticas, to allow each participant to speak comfortably in a way that was

culturally responsive, which built in the added option to conduct the interview in their preferred language. The researcher did not actively insert their own biases; rather, they held a microphone to participants in a conscious effort to amplify their voices for the betterment of the entire community. The betterment of all parts was a win for the whole.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of the current study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of parents of Hispanic/Latino ninth and/or 10th graders at a large, comprehensive, public high school in Los Angeles County (i.e., PSLA) to better understand parents' experiences interacting with the U.S. public school system and develop recommendations for improved Hispanic/Latino family engagement at PSLA and similar schools. In addition, the underlying goal was to not only understand their experience but also to provide culturally responsive supports that could address the academic achievement gap experienced by Hispanic/Latino students in the selected PSLA and expand the definition of parent involvement beyond the ones that exist, because they are generally elementary centered.

The reviewed literature of desirable parent involvement, specifically that of Chen (2022) and Epstein (2009), were not inherently incorrect; they were simply rooted in a White, middle-class lens. The goal of the current study was to expand their definitions through a culturally responsive lens to include the diverse perspectives of those currently served in the educational system, combating the historical tendencies therein. Epstein (2009)'s six types of parent involvement were the starting point and just one of the angles, and adding the culturally responsive lens through validate, affirm, build, and bridge (VABB) created the reach of the expectations that had been missing. If volunteering, for example, is not possible, are parents considered uninvolved? Are they uninvolved if they simply cannot attend Back to School Night or Open House?

Chapter 4 presents analysis of the individual interview data. The three research questions (RQs) that guided the current study were as follows:

1. How do parents of Hispanic/Latino students define parent involvement in the home/community?
2. To what extent, if at all, do parents of Hispanic/Latino students feel supported, validated, or affirmed by the school; why or why not?
3. How can schools best support home/school involvement of Hispanic/Latino families at the high school level, particularly grades nine and/or 10?

RQ1: How Do Parents of Hispanic/Latino Students Define Parent Involvement in the Home/Community?

Participants were each asked how they would define parent involvement and in what ways they supported their child's overall success in school and in life/well-being. General patterns that emerged from the responses were presence on campus and communication. Though responses were generally similar, each parent had slight variations of what it meant to be involved as a parent, which was consistent with the literature. For some parents, there appeared to be a certain level of trust instilled in their relationship with the school, specifically that the school would communicate outwardly to the parent if there was an issue.

Most of the communication expectation was outward (i.e., school to parent), but some parents also experienced multidirectional communication. Through the lens of cultural and linguistic responsiveness, to VABB is to validate and affirm the home language while actively building capacity and bridging the school and home culture, which is as true for the students as it is for the families; they are interconnected. In a couple participants' responses, not directly

connected to RQ1, they mentioned a barrier of communication due to language, which may have contributed to how they communicated and interacted with the school. The PSLA did not have specific policy around general push-out communication, though they had affinity groups that would cater particularly to documents translated into Spanish and readily available translation services. If communication is a key pillar, as defined by the literature, then the school system holds partial responsibility for fostering communication and creating opportunities for parental involvement that can be received by parents without the expectation of conformity. It then becomes the shared responsibility of the parent to actively engage.

Participant 1 stated they were not necessarily in contact with teachers until problems arose. Participant 1 used an executive functioning coach to support their child's attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and shared they get "involved with [like] the things that really matter because [their] time is very limited." What appeared consistent among all participants was the bulk of communication between school and parent was initiated by the school itself. Though a lot of communication initiated by the parent was in response to something initiated by the school, participants shared experiences of ways they actively sought out information and resources. Overall, the channels of communication appeared to be multidirectional and multimodal, which was a culturally responsive approach to engaging parents demonstrated by the PSLA.

Participant 2 had a contrasting experience to Participant 1, stating "[I have] always been very involved and very hands on, whether it's through PTA, booster club, I've always been a room parent for many of my kids' classes." Participant 2 also shared in high school, they "can't do that as much, but just [you know] keeping up and staying up to date with what's happening in the school, reaching out to counselors for clarification or more information, using resources."

Participant 2 elaborated resources were sometimes in the school, and sometimes they sought tutoring or additional support outside of school to support their child's academic achievement. Participant 3's response mirrored Participant 2's response, adding they physically, rather than remotely, sought out the school's support, stating:

Vengo [al campus] a informarme porque empieza uno a oír de otras mamás. Trato de involucrarme lo más que puedo, lo que está a mi alcance para poderlo ayudar. [I come (to campus) to inform myself because you start hearing things from other moms. I try to involve myself as much as possible, in the ways I can so that I can support them.]

Like Participants 2 and 3, Participant 4 shared they also thought parent involvement meant being involved on campus, stating that to be an involved parent means, "being involved in the classroom." They said, "I know at elementary level they really need that from parents for volunteering, and then I took it a step further and [you know] went into different committees and groups, and then the PTA." Participant 4 also elaborated by saying, "When you're involved like that, you see what goes on in the school in terms of behind the scenes, which is really great." However, Participant 4 also mentioned, "For high school, it's been different. I kind of stepped back at the high school level because [I really] I kind of got a little burnt out in middle school with it [PTA]." Furthermore, they said, "It's normally the same people from elementary, all the way through high school, that you see in terms of the PTA members."

For Participant 5, parent involvement means, "*Conocer a los maestros, estar al pendiente de cómo ellos enseñan y lo que mis hijos están aprendiendo* [Meeting/being acquainted with the teachers, being aware of how they teach and what my children are learning]." However, Participant 5 admitted they had not been very involved, stating directly, "*Yo, francamente, aquí*

en la high school he estado muy poco involucrada. [I, frankly, here at the high school, have been involved very little].” Participant 5’s response is discussed further in RQ 2. Participant 6 also emphasized the importance of awareness, stating, “Awareness of what activities my daughter is involved in, awareness of roughly what’s going on in the classroom.” Further, Participant 6 added awareness also extended, as they shared, “With regards to grades, to anytime a teacher reached out . . . and communications with the counseling office.” An important highlight of Participant 6’s response was parent involvement included, “To a lesser extent, going to Back to School [Night].” Participant 7’s response was similar to Participants 5 and 6, sharing parental involvement was about being informed. In summary, Participant 7 stated, “One of the most important things as a parent is staying informed, to be able to connect with your child on what’s going on in their lives and how they feel about it.”

In terms of well-being, Participant 4 shared making sure their child had the proper nutrition for breakfast and lunch was important, and making sure their child got enough rest each night was also important. Making sure their child got enough rest at night includes trying to instill boundaries around things like cell phone use, which Participant 4 highlighted, “It’s so hard to actually do that [set boundaries].” Participant 4 used to say to other parents that they should just take the cell phone away, but they realized, “in fact, it’s not that easy.” Participants 4, 5, and 7 all emphasized the importance of being aware of what was happening in their child’s lives and how they felt about it. These responses demonstrate the overarching themes of awareness and connection as pillars of what parent involvement means at secondary level.

Modeled Operational Definition

As shown in the literature review in Chapter 2, the definition of parent involvement usually pertained to elementary-aged students and came from a White middle-class lens rather than a culturally responsive one that addressed the social and socioeconomic diversity experienced in Los Angeles public schools. Even synthesized literature specifically conducted to define parent involvement of Latino parents did not create a definition to follow, nor did they define what it means to be a Latino parent with any specificity. What if this is a good thing? The researcher argued each individual school site should have a unique definition of what it meant to be involved as a parent, one created responding to the cultures of its constituents. To model, the researcher created a sample operational definition of the PSLA crafted by the input of the seven study participants (see Table 4).

Table 4

Sample Operational Definition of Parent Involvement

Component	Definition
1.	Being active in your child's life by connecting with them and being aware of their general affect and what they are learning.
2.	Being aware of the school's and additional resources and using them to meet your child's needs and fostering success, asking questions as needed.
3.	Communicating regularly with school staff and actively engaging whenever possible to best understand their child's education and the overall system.

An operational definition of parent involvement was significant because it provided flexibility to the notion of what it meant to be an involved parent in ways the existing standards of parent engagement that are rooted in White middle-class and elementary-aged lenses could not. For example, Chen (2022) provided specific tips for parent involvement that did not consider any issues of equity. Similarly, as stated in the literature review, Epstein (2009) was criticized for suggested involvement practices due to its White middle-class centrality that

caused certain families to be viewed from a deficit lens if they did not fall in with them (Budhai & Grant, 2023). Traditional definitions include the ability to volunteer and be present in person on campus, which is inherently inequitable because not all families have the socioeconomic ability to participate in this manner; thus, their lack of physical and monetary participation does not deem them an uninvolved parent. The operational definition that emerged from the data actively challenged Epstein's (2009) industry-respected definition of parental involvement rooted in White middle-class ideation. However, Epstein's (2009) framework is still valuable, especially due to its emphasis on communicating and collaboration with the community; therefore, the researcher suggests it could be built upon to include the element of cultural responsiveness.

After forming the three-part operational definition of parent involvement for ninth- and/or 10th-grade parents, the definition was compared to each of the participant's transcripts to see if each portion of the definition was consistent with their interview responses. Table 4 depicts the first and third portions of the operational definition were consistent among all seven participants, and the second portion of the operational definition was consistent among 5 out of 7 participants' responses. Almost unanimously, the operational definition held value for most participants. In contrast with Chen's (2022) list of recommendations for parent involvement, being physically present on campus or at events was not a qualifier for whether a parent was adequately involved in their child's education. The operational definition of parental involvement provided a layer of cultural responsiveness because sometimes being physically present was an issue of equity, not a matter of choice and preference.

Table 5

Sample Operational Definition of Parent Involvement Consistency Across Participant Responses

Participant	Being active in your child's life by connecting with them and being aware of their general affect and what they are learning	Being aware of the school's and additional resources and using them to meet your child's needs and fostering success, asking questions as needed	Communicating regularly with school staff and actively engaging whenever possible to best understand their child's education and the overall system
P1	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent
P2	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent
P3	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent
P4	Consistent	-	Consistent
P5	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent
P6	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent
P7	Consistent	-	Consistent

Note. The abbreviation "P" was used to indicate the word "participant," and the number corresponds with the participant number.

RQ2: To What Extent, If at All, Do Parents of Hispanic/Latino Students Feel Supported, Validated, or Affirmed by the School; Why or Why Not?

The overall responses in relation to RQ2, viewed through the lens of inclusion and exclusion, looked different for everyone due to variation in each parent and child's lifestyle, background, needs, desires, and priorities, further illustrating the subjectivity of what it means to be an involved parent. Data showed once their child reached high school, the connection between student and parents, and parent and school, shifted for various reasons. The literature supports that involvement does look different depending on the developmental age of the child, which was also supported by the interview data.

There was a partnership between the responsibility of the institution and the parent. The responsibility of the school as the institution was to create channels of connection, but the parent's responsibility was to engage in ways they could. It appears more was frequently the answer but was not always possible. Epstein (2009) urged communication is a central pillar of involved parents; however, communication was not viewed in a culturally responsive way. There

was an expectation of conformity to English to be considered adequate parental involvement, rather than illustrating the shared responsibility between the parent and the school around language. Further, Epstein (2009) did not address the vast difference between communicating for survival in the system and communication for shared decision making and collaboration.

Inclusion

Participant 7 shared their perspective that it was the parent's job to include themselves, stating, "You include yourself, you put your voice out there. . . . It's up to you to get involved or not, you can't blame other people for not getting involved. Even if you feel excluded, you get yourself included." Similarly, Participant 6 shared, "From the school's perspective, the schools have done what they can do to include parents in general, like notifications of events and sharing the calendar, [but] then it's up to the parent how much they want to be involved." Participants 6 and 7 appeared to have a more inner locus of control for parent involvement, feeling decisions were in their power and alluding to a bootstraps mentality often referenced by Hollie (2017) in his various professional developments around cultural responsiveness. Participants 6 and 7 were aware of options they had and engaged in the ways they could, demonstrating the PSLA had communicated and provided multiple modes of participation, which was culturally responsive to its population; however, not every family would engage with the school in the same manner.

Most participants demonstrated they felt supported and included in their child's education when they were able to have a touchpoint person (i.e. a personal connection with someone they built trust with). Having a touchpoint person is later discussed in RQ3 also, but parents felt having someone they could count on to support them or their child made a difference in their ability to participate. Specific people they mentioned in their interviews showed there was a

positive relationship between them that helped them feel seen and supported. That person responded to their needs, including linguistic ones, in a way that allowed them to support their child toward positive educational outcomes. Participant 7's experience of being seen as a leader by the extracurricular group her daughter belonged to demonstrated specifically how the PSLA validated and affirmed her as a leader. Though she stated, "I was really surprised that they actually put me up for being the representative for the next year," she gladly took on the challenge as a Latina because she felt recognized for her potential. Though Participant 7 stated prior it was up to the parent to include themselves, the act of validating and affirming her amplified that inclusion. Being validated and affirmed transformed her involvement as a parent from being based on communication into partnering with the school in decision making, a more evolved form of communication and inclusion.

Participant 3 stated they felt included in the high school culture because the Latino Parent Affinity Group had actively invited them to participate. The Latino Parent Affinity Group afforded them increased access to information, touchpoint people to interact with regularly to foster their involvement as parents, and access to information in their dominant language of Spanish for both presentations and correspondence; this was a culturally responsive effort of the PSLA (Hollie, 2017). Prior to involvement in the Latino Parent Affinity Group, Participant 3 stated it was different at the middle school, and the cultures between the two felt different to them. In general, involvement from elementary school onward decreased.

In relation to the differences of inclusion Participants 3 and 5 felt from the middle school and high school levels, the deciding factor appeared to be the relationships they had and how actively they were invited to participate in their dominant language. Staff had changed

throughout Participants 3 and 5's experiences, and staff changes influenced their experience of inclusion, largely because of the language barrier. When they were able to have formal and/or informal interactions with school personnel in Spanish, they felt more encouraged and supported in their involvement as parents. Interactions with school personnel in Spanish created a positive sense of belonging (Howard et al., 2020). Language was a significant barrier to their engagement with the school where providing translation services would create a pathway of access rooted in cultural responsiveness (Hollie, 2017).

Validating and affirming the home culture of students was key to forming positive relationship connections, and both worked in conjunction. Language, appeared to be an entry point for participants to feel included by the school culture. The structural barrier of language was rooted in the historical assumption everyone must conform to White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) school culture to succeed. The concept of cultural responsiveness aims to address the barrier to education by creating a pathway of access to being equitably served the system, which is true for Spanish-speaking families and families of any other culture not rooted in WASP values. Language barriers impede access to educational services; thus, responding to the unique needs of the school site's families would include providing communication in their native language. The key step of providing multilingual communication is often viewed as impractical for school sites, especially less common languages, due to its time-consuming nature, but if the public school does not serve the public as they are, opportunity gaps emerge and manifest themselves as achievement gaps.

Decline in Involvement, or Not Included in High School

Participant 1 stated they did not necessarily feel included or excluded, saying:

I feel that the culture itself is very fragmented. There's not a lot of fluidity between groups. I don't feel like I'm part of the community, but I feel like I'm part of a fringe group that makes up the community.

Participant 1's interview concluded with a discussion of how they felt many factions were not necessarily working together to form a larger culture of community across the campus.

Participant 1 added, "It's a very overwhelmingly large school, where it seems that having any involvement feels like you're just sort of yelling into a void." Participant 4 shared a similar sentiment, stating, "I can see how some parents would feel like their kids are lost in the mix of the school because it is such a big school."

There appeared to be a general decline in parent involvement, particularly physical involvement, on the high school campus. Participant 2 shared the reason they did not feel included was, "only because [they] think when [students] start junior high in middle school, [the school] kind of want [parents] at the door, they don't want [parents] to go any further." However, Participant 2 felt included because they used the school's resources. In short, their involvement did not require their physical presence at the school. The feeling of not needing to be physically present at school appeared largely due to the developmental level of the students, and student autonomy was a central component of operations. Participant 4 echoed this response, as shared in RQ1, in which their physical involvement decreased, though it was specifically tied to the burnout they felt after being involved in the PTA in middle school. Similar to Participants 2 and 4, Participant 5 shared their involvement was also higher at the middle school level, stating, "*Anteriormente cuando mis hijos iban yendo a la middle school si me involucraba un poquito más* [Before, when my children went to the middle school, I was a little more involved]." The

one component they identified as having affected their level of involvement was the fact the principal spoke Spanish and was approachable in an informal way.

RQ 3: How Can Schools Best Support Home/School Involvement of Families of Hispanic/Latino Students at the High School Level, Particularly Grades 9 and/or 10?

As the literature stated, high school level parent involvement is equally important to the elementary level, though it will look different for various reasons. The focus of RQ3 was explicitly limited to Grades 9 and 10 because it is the pivotal transition into adolescence where the greatest shift in the parent relationship occurs. The transition from middle to high school is also very challenging due to the expected levels of behavior and autonomy of the students; parents are often left behind. Restating the quote from Participant 2, “when you start Junior High in middle school, they [the school] kind of want you at the door, they don’t want you to go any further,” and this only gets more pronounced at the high school level due to the expectation that the student is now old enough to fend for themselves. This is rooted in deep assumptions that each child has been implicitly or explicitly taught how to manage themselves, but per adolescent development, their prefrontal cortex responsible for regulation of actions, emotions, and thoughts begins forming in adolescence and does not fully develop until age 25. Students still need the support of their parents because they are forming responsible habits on how to conduct themselves as they gather experiences in the educational system. The transition period into adolescent and high school culture is a key time to focus on supporting parents so they can best support their children in achieving positive outcomes.

The support most participants desired was having someone on whom they could count on campus. Many participants shared groups or names of people who had positively supported

them, making them feel truly cared for as they, together, supported their child. Participant 1 shared their positive experience with their counselor, stating they were extremely responsive to the needs of their child: “[They] have gone above and beyond in my opinion . . . to me, as a parent, that’s invaluable.” The same counselor’s praises were sung by Participant 2, who stated, “My daughter’s counselor has been an excellent source for us.” Additionally, as referenced in the RQ2 section, the two parents who were Spanish speakers felt supported by the Latino Parent Affinity Group, sharing they felt they could now have the platform to get informed, ask questions, and be involved.

Participant 6 shared they wanted more oversight and transparency when communicating about controversial topics. Participant 6 expressed empathy, saying, “I know everybody at the school is overworked, but it kind of feels like things are falling through the cracks. It’s because there is minimal oversight.” If there was ever a disconnect with an issue with a teacher, Participant 6 continued:

It’s not like somebody in administration is copied on that. So, if I’m gonna bring it up, I’m literally stepping on the teacher’s toes or putting them on blast, that quite frankly may have an adverse reaction for my daughter.

Participant 6 elaborated people are copied on communications all the time in the business world, and it is not in an adversarial way. He described it felt like, “a disconnect from [his] parent’s perspective.” Participants’ points overall were communication of all issues should have included multiple levels of the school for oversight without being perceived as insulting or undermining to the staff.

Subsidiary Findings

Two notable themes appeared in the interview data that were more broadly tied to RQ3 that emerged from the interview questions. One theme was an Overall Concern for School Safety and the other was Sharing an Experience of Prejudice. Both themes surrounded the overall journey of what it meant to be a parent and served as suggestions as to what the school could do to support their involvement, as RQ3 stated.

Overall Concern for School Safety

The issue of school safety came up in all seven interviews when participants were asked if there was anything else they would like the researcher to know about their experience with PSLA. Participant 1 shared, “With the violence, for like a month, it was almost daily, right, where there were fights breaking out.” Participant 3 shared, “*La seguridad de los niños es la única [cosa] que me preocupa* [The safety of the children is the only thing that worries me].” Participant 3 added, “*A veces hay padres que lo toman a juego cuando traen las pistolas de agua* [Sometimes there are parents that take it lightly when students bring water guns to school].” Participant 3 concluded these sorts of situations felt like a cry wolf scenario, and they were worried there may be real guns one day.

Participant 5 speculated students fight because of the sheer size of the school. They shared their daughter said there were long lines at the cafeteria. Participant 5’s daughter told them:

Hay muchas peleas, sí, pero la mayoría de los que estudiamos aquí no comemos y luego las filas son largas . . . si las filas son largas, no comemos. Al final del día ya no estás buscando quien te la hizo sino quien te la pague. Y si alguien [pasa] y te empuja, pues ya

te enojas. [There are a lot of fights, yes, but most of us that go to this school don't eat, and then the lines are long . . . if the lines are long, we don't eat. At the end of the day, you're no longer looking for who did something to you, rather who's going to pay for it. And if someone passes by and bumps into you, then you just get angry].

Three parents shared their concerns specifically about how the site and district should address situations of violence differently. Participant 2 said:

I would say [like] our district should do better. You know, addressing situations that sometimes cause more misinformation and more gossip, or, you know, the type of information to be disseminated among the community . . . when you leave things unanswered or unaddressed, people's imaginations run wild.

Regarding a stabbing incident, Participant 6 echoed Participant 2's sentiment, stating, "I did an instant response to the email that went out, and I'm sure there were plenty of parents that did [too]." Participant 6 added, "There was no response or follow up on that." Additionally, Participant 4 shared security guards were employed outside of the district to address the violence, stating, "[Rhey] are just too friendly with the kids . . . like too chummy." Participant 4 added at football games, "some boys were hanging out with the security guards, like hanging out with them outside the gate," which Participant 4 thought was inappropriate.

It would be culturally responsive for the PSLA to directly address parent concerns, showing their stakeholders that they validate and affirm their concerns, building connections and capacity while bridging the gap between their understandings and roles in the process. The PSLA could also potentially build in cultural responsiveness around age and development by explicitly explaining the literature around how their relationship with their child may evolve. This

information could potentially be expressed by parent-led groups overseen by the PSLA, to unite in their messaging and have multiple channels of approval of the information being put forth. These suggestions are not intended to criticize the PSLA, because they have taken many effective steps toward DEI movements. However, the journey of cultural responsiveness is never finished due to the ever-changing population of the community they serve.

Prejudice at First Glance

Participant 5 shared a situation that demonstrated prejudice. They shared their child's teachers forgave students' homework if their parents went to Back to School Night. Participant 5 expressed sadness over not knowing how to navigate the school, wandering around while desperately talking on the phone with their child trying to make sense of the room numbers, how to get there, and the schedule. At some point in the evening, they went to their daughter's classroom. Participant 5 stated, "*Mi hija es alta, guapa porque su papá es americano. Entonces no se ve Latina* [My daughter is tall, good-looking because her dad is American. So, she does not look Latina]." Participant 5 continued sharing, "*Yo traté, ahorita vengo después de trabajar, pero yo traté de arreglarme porque yo digo voy con mis hijos, quiero que ellos . . . se sientan orgullosos, vean que su mamá se esfuerza* [I tried. Right now, I am coming right after work, but I tried to dress up because, I say, I am going with my children. I want them to feel proud, like their mother puts in effort]." The very next sentence, Participant 5 stated, "*La maestra me vio arriba abajo cuando mi hija me la presentó* [The teacher looked me up and down when my daughter introduced me.] . . . "*Yo me sentí tan mal que yo no- me la presentó fuera no en el salón- yo ya no fui al salón*" [I felt so bad that, they introduced me outside the classroom; I decided not to go into the classroom]." They chose after that day to not even visit the classrooms of their other child.

Participant 5's experience painted the picture of barriers that existed for families not familiar with the mainstream culture of the U.S. education system. Participant 5's dominant language was Spanish. Even though they were brave enough to bear with the experience, regardless of how challenging, and put their best foot forward, they were still met with a social barrier due to the teacher's implicit biases. As much as the PSLA had emphasized diversity, equity, and inclusion and their commitment to equity through implicit bias and culturally responsive professional development, teachers still had blind spots. Though the PSLA's efforts represented a good place to begin the work, there was still room to improve. There should be systems in place that even if there were naysayers of the work, the system could correct itself through built in accountability and alternate access pathways.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the current study was to amplify the voices of Hispanic/Latino families to define parent involvement at the secondary level, create culturally responsive supports, and expand on existing research regarding Hispanic/Latino parent involvement, particularly of secondary parents. Hispanic/Latino students are among the most academically underperforming students in the state of California, which has been attributed to the opportunity and achievement gaps in the public educational system. Understanding their experiences would potentially lead to ways to better serve historically marginalized Hispanic/Latino students and families. Although schools have some channels of parental engagement, they are oftentimes White-dominant spaces or rely heavily on technology, which presents barriers to access.

The conceptual framework consisted of culturally responsive pedagogy, positive relationships, parent involvement of high school parents, history/culture of education and the history of what it meant to be Hispanic/Latino. The work of Hollie (2017) guided the current study with its emphasis on the rings of culture and the cultural iceberg, showing the multifaceted experience of all human beings. The literature centered around the importance of positive relationships was primarily based on the work of Howard et al. (2020), where the need for connection is central to human existence. Parental involvement literature was primarily rooted in the work of Chen (2022), Epstein (2009), and Jensen and Minke (2017). These authors were foundational to the current study because they guided it through to the product. The researcher argues schools cannot equitably serve all parents or form positive relationships with them

without the elements of cultural responsiveness that challenge a system historically rooted in Whiteness and White Supremacy.

Methods employed by the current study were qualitative in nature, consisting of seven semi-structured interviews, conducted in both English and Spanish, transcription of the interviews using AI software, and inductive coding analysis of the interview data using holistic and pattern coding. Once central themes emerged from two passes of data analyses, the operational definition of parental involvement emerged from participants' responses to Research Question (RQ) 1, followed by the emergence of a culturally responsive parent engagement guide in an effort to challenge the historical barrier of deficit lens created by Epstein's (2009) respected definition of parental involvement, which was rooted in White middle-class ideation.

Parent engagement was operationally defined in the current study as being actively connected with their child and aware of their general affect, being aware of all resources that fostered their child's success, asking questions when needed to clarify their understanding of their child's education and the overall system, and actively engaging in communication with the school regularly. All mentioned forms of engagement were demonstrated by some or all participants according to Table 4. Positive relationships with staff members of the school, and culturally responsive components, helped foster engagement, but the expectation of physical involvement and lack of cultural responsiveness led to disengagement.

Summary of the Findings

Through each of the seven interviews and inductive analysis of the data, an operational definition of parent involvement at the secondary level evolved and was necessary for creating common and intentional language to create a more inclusive school environment for parental

involvement. Without the operational definition, previous literature showed parental involvement would be defined differently depending on who you ask. The literature review demonstrated literature on this subject was rooted in elementary level education through a White middle-class lens; though, the levels of parent engagement should naturally change with the developmental level of the student for increased autonomy and personal identity. Further, the operational definition would provide the inclusive language necessary for educators to engage their children's parents in a culturally responsive manner at secondary level by uniting the school's baseline for determining whether a parent is involved or not. This was not previously accomplished because, without a unifying definition for high school level, the literature demonstrated the elementary lens for parent involvement was the leading voice educators based their judgements on.

The needs of each of the seven participants were different, though all were rooted in the themes of connection, awareness, and communication. For schools to address the needs of their families (i.e., parents, students, and supporters), the guide for parent engagement must offer flexible ways to engage parents connected to the operational definition of what it means to be an involved parent. Each family deserves to be validated and affirmed, and the culturally responsive nature of the emerged guide allows for parents to choose the ways in which they wish to engage with the school system, seek support, and support their child by providing physical/social and systemic support components that could create ideal involvement for high school parents to engage in their child's education in ways not addressed or included by existing literature. The intent behind the guide was to create the ideal environment for parents to be able to engage. As stated later in the discussion for future research, it would be interesting to study how parent

involvement is affected by this guide, testing if the components therein truly address the needs in measurable ways.

The selected PSLA showed direct efforts in providing parent involvement opportunities through school to parent communication. Five of the seven participants reported a specific person or group who was responsive to the needs of their child and/or family. The PSLA had systemic culturally responsive components, such as providing choice for how parents would like to get involved or connected, and the parent affinity groups that served as sources of access, specifically in Spanish as it pertained to the current study. Though one outlier reported a staff member who did not fall in line with the school's overall efforts, the beginnings of suggestions for the parent involvement guide were present. The PSLA has already started to offer professional development regarding implicit bias training and culturally responsive pedagogy, which is an ongoing endeavor.

The culturally responsive parent engagement guide protects schools and staff from committing microaggressions or acting on implicit biases of how parents need support based on their ethnic and racial backgrounds. Ultimately, it is up to parents to decide how they would like to engage with the school based on their unique needs and experiences, which cannot be assumed. The guide should also inspire an expansion of what parent involvement looks like at the secondary level; just because the parent is not physically present on campus does not mean they are not an involved parent. All staff do not see a lot of students' parental involvement; therefore, they usually make assumptions to arrive at concluding parents are not engaged. Perhaps parents are not engaged in the ways a particular staff member is expecting or used to, or ways teachers need them to be at the time. The culturally responsive engagement guide provides

educators with the professional development opportunity to challenge their biases and get to know each child and family rather than making assumptions and judgements based on unfounded or incorrect information and observations.

Discussion for Future Research

Throughout the current study, the theme that came up most for the researcher was the question of what it meant to be Hispanic/Latino. Hispanic/Latino is such a large ethnic category, and the experiences of people from each of the nationalities and generations of Hispanic/Latinos vary vastly from one another; to bundle them all together is to deny their unique experiences and potentially encapsulate them (Leong, 2008). The question remains as to how demographic figures of Hispanic/Latino students are used in practice and whether they adequately represent the population of students. One recommendation informed by the current study is to examine the way race and ethnicity are reported in the state of California.

Beyond increasing the scope of the ethnic identification of Hispanic/Latino demographics, race and ethnicity are often treated as synonymous in practice, though the literature and history have provided support otherwise. The following questions remain:

- Is there an assumption being made that every Hispanic/Latino experience is the same?
- Is there accurate distinction between someone who is Hispanic/Latino and also chooses another ethnic or racial category?
- Is there a need for an additional field revealing 1st, 2nd, or 3rd generation for Hispanic/Latinos to provide further insight into their experiences? and
- Are students who represent multiple ethnicities and races self-reporting accurately?

The questions are just a few that arose because of results from the current study.

An additional demographic concern arose during the current study. The initial purpose was to support Hispanic/Latino families in their journey through high school public education. However, the way most data queries were structured and conducted, an assumption was made that Hispanic/Latino ninth- and 10th-grade students would have Hispanic/Latino parents. Though this was true to some regard, some participants who elected to participate in the interviews were not the Hispanic/Latino parent in the household. The literature refers to either Hispanic/Latino parents or Hispanic/Latino students, but language can be misleading. Questions arising from the current study include the following:

- Are Hispanic/Latino parents and parents of Hispanic/Latino students truly delineated in the literature?
- How would this distinction affect the way research is reported? and
- How would this, in turn, affect how students who identify as Hispanic/Latino are supported in the public educational system in Los Angeles, California, and the United States?

Everyone has the right to form their own concepts of their ethnic and racial identity, as they see fit. A recommended study for future research is to center education, whether the student themselves or parent engagement, around the concept of choice. Possible research questions (RQs) include:

- Does providing choice lead to increased positive outcomes for students and their families?
- Does the culturally responsive nature of choice have any effect on their affect or performance?

- Are these results consistent across all racial and ethnic backgrounds?
- Now that ethnicities and races are more mixed than ever, how does that affect education data?
- Do the existing categories inform educators about that child and family's experience or do they lead to potential biases and misinformation? and
- How can multiethnic and multiracial students be supported without being encapsulated in the categories they belong to?

It is important to note a student of a certain ethnic or racial background does not equate to feeling connected or identifying with those roots.

Emerging of a Culturally Responsive Parent Engagement Guide

In analyzing data with each of the RQs and central themes in mind, the need for a starting point presented itself. The state of the public school system is variable as functions continue post-COVID 19 global pandemic and on the cusp of economic downturn. An educational doctorate (i.e., EdD) differs from a doctorate of philosophy (i.e., PhD) in respect to practical application; therefore, the researcher viewed the results in a way of a product that could be considered a place to start for any school. Time is one of the most limited resources, and it was the researcher's hope that this work expedites the positive outcomes to address the problem of practice. Sites can reasonably trust the guide is rooted in research and flexible enough to adapt to the needs of their unique setting. Parental engagement would be addressed with marginalized communities in mind, in a culturally responsive way, rooted in positive relationships and delineating the responsibilities of the system and parents.

Participants desired a solution for how to organize all elements in a way that allowed educational establishments to address the needs and preferences of methods of communication, participation, and flexibility while also validating and affirming the developmental level of the adolescent student and each of their families' cultural composition. A guide emerged consisting of the systemic and physical/social components that ideally should be present, as informed by the data inquiry from the current study, in combination with the operational definition of parent involvement that emerged from the current study and the literature review itself, which was specifically rooted in the conceptual framework of cultural responsiveness and positive relationships as they related to parent involvement (Chen, 2022; Hollie, 2017; Howard et al., 2020; Jensen & Minke, 2017).

The systemic mechanisms that must be in place to foster ideal conditions for parental involvement include: (a) access to information through multiple communication pathways; (b) linguistic support, including but not limited to translation services and translated school documents/correspondence; (c) bidirectional parent education; and (d) active invitation of all parents to participate in the educational process (Chen, 2022). Access to information should be as diverse as parental needs; however, information needs are similar, and multiple modes of communication create pathways of access so each parent can choose what works best for them rather than forcing conformity (Hollie, 2017; Howard et al., 2020).

Linguistic support is rooted in culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy; specifically, support will be provided in response to the linguistic needs of the population served. As shown from the direct quotes and synthesized responses of Participants 3 and 5 who were the two native Spanish speakers, the relationships they had with school leaders and staff who spoke

Spanish directly affected their ability to participate and level of participation as a parent. As stated by Howard et al. (2020) regarding the educational system, it is important we are conscious in considering what each family and child sees within the system that serves them, which suggested students and families seeing themselves reflected in the system with people who look and sound like they do creates a connection that could begin to close opportunity and achievement gaps. Opportunity and achievement gaps exist because families who are not culturally and linguistically consistent with mainstream educational culture are at a disadvantage, underserved if they do not conform, and sometimes underserved even when they do.

Parent education is bidirectional intentionally to validate and affirm parents in culturally responsive fashion while creating the opportunity to build and bridge understanding to the specific educational or school culture (Jensen & Minke, 2017). Parents can lead other parents, and validate, affirm, build, and bridge (VABB; Hollie, 2021) innately demonstrates the person delivering the lesson is not omniscient; rather, all people in the room learn from each other and take ownership of the information and understanding being shared. Participant 7 made a direct mention that she was surprised when they asked her to lead an extracurricular program as a parent leader. She said, “And honestly, as a Latina, I mean, usually, not a lot of people see your potential.” She continued to elaborate she always felt “these positions will be for professionals.” Ultimately, Participant 7 said, “I feel like sometimes when people hear your talk, or, or when see your work, when see the kinds of things you do, that's when you put yourself out there.” Actively inviting all parents to participate in the educational process is rooted in both cultural responsiveness and positive relationships because the invitation must occur in a culturally responsive manner and focus on building genuine relationships between the school and families

they serve, which is supported by the literature in leading to positive outcomes for student achievement.

Physical/social mechanisms must be in place to work in conjunction with the systemic mechanisms to

- create and maintain safe spaces, which can be physical and/or emotional, for parents to communicate and collaborate;
- provide the opportunity for parent presence on campus through proper vetting channels;
- ensure staff accountability and training as it relates to implicit biases and cultural responsiveness; and
- provide opportunities for all parents to connect in direct and indirect ways, online or in person, with staff and parents alike sharing responsibility of support.

Safe spaces allow for authentic ideas and concerns to be shared, rather than forcing conformity (Hollie, 2017; Howard et al., 2020). Explicitly soliciting their participation made the seven parent participants feel heard, like they could share their concerns openly without fear of retaliation. Through guaranteed anonymity in the current study, they shared courageous conversation, though they should ideally have had safe spaces without the need to be anonymous.

Certain environments are not conducive to true collaboration because they are White-dominant spaces that only allow conforming opinions to be shared. The goal is to provide spaces where even dissenting opinions are welcomed and explored by the school and its leadership structures. Safe spaces provide a way for more efficiency and practicality in obtaining parent

feedback. Rather than hearing hundreds or thousands of separate parent concerns because time is finite, the potential for consensus of needs and communication should be provided that would lead to much more actionable items that would serve and benefit the larger school community. The parent affinity groups mentioned by Participants 3 and 5 were safe spaces where they felt empowered as a Hispanic/Latino parent to participate as partners with the PSLA, and the relationship was mutually beneficial.

The opportunity for ensuring properly vetted parent volunteers are present on campus creates a shared responsibility for the campus, both physically and culturally. Parent presence creates an extension of the community and provides a vehicle for positive relationships to form, not only with parents and the school, but also parents and children and parents and other parents. Proper vetting channels provide an additional layer of safety in line with state safety protocols. As shown in results from the current study's interviews, not all parents had the ability and/or desire to physically participate on the campus. Although physically participating on campus is not something in which every parent will take part, it is included in the guide to address individuals who do choose to use the particular opportunity.

Staff accountability and training, as related to implicit biases and cultural responsiveness, must take place to build foundational vernacular and theory at the root of the initiative to increase parental involvement. Parents are key partners, so to foster a positive relationship with each family, educational establishments and educators must validate and affirm those they serve. To do so effectively means they must understand their immediate responses and judgements, and certain behaviors do not necessarily mean what they think they do. Educating the staff to

challenge their initial beliefs about students and families is pivotal to the success of increased parent engagement.

Lastly, having multiple opportunities to connect with others, through online or in-person means, direct and indirect, provides a global view of what it means to be social and have positive relationships. As stated in the literature, all humans desire connection, which is at the heart of education. Learning with positive outcomes is rooted in positive relationships. Providing multiple acceptable pathways to achieving connection is culturally responsive by nature because there is not one single right answer for what this could look like. One size fits all education is not effective, and cultural responsiveness in combination with positive relationships helps address the nuances of existing in a larger system. All families deserve to be served, even the ones who have historically not aligned or conformed to the historical White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) culture of the U.S. educational system.

Recommendations for Future Practice

The researcher recommends replicating the current study with similar researcher decisions, in another PSLA or city in California, and in another state in the United States with similar demographic composition of certificated staff and students. Replication of the current study could include various adjustments to participant selection and manipulating the emphasis of certain demographic information (e.g., ethnicity, race, gender of the parent, gender of the child, generational ethnic status). Another layer of selection could include only choosing participants whose children are not involved in extracurricular activities, giving voice to parents who are not already involved. Other adjustments could include selecting participants based on having students in 11th and/or 12th grade.

Regarding future application of products created because of the current study, the researcher recommends staff engage in professional development about implicit bias training and culturally and linguistically responsive techniques. It is also important for the school and district to build common language by using the operational definition of parent engagement for high school students, so high school educators can validate and affirm the ways parent engagement can and should look different for each family at this developmental stage of the children. School sites should work to create capacity in the factors proposed by the culturally responsive parent engagement guide to create ideal conditions that allow and invite parents of all backgrounds to be engaged in their child's education in a way that works for them. The element of choice in how parents involve themselves in their child's high school education should be examined in relation to the operational definition and culturally responsive engagement guide. The dynamic nature of the guide provides a starting point for uniting a campus and allows school districts to self-assess, much like the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (n.d.) reports, and identify blind spots, improvement areas, and needs of the populations they serve.

The previously listed propositions would ideally lead to a case study in which the guide's effectiveness could be observed. Possible questions could include:

- Did parent involvement increase with these factors in place?
- How do we know the factors are adequately in place? and
- How do we know they are effective?

The guide is dynamic and intended to evolve based on the needs of the setting. Similar to positive behavior interventions and supports, implementation of the culturally responsive parent

involvement guide will look different for every site. This was an intentional choice to be an inherently culturally responsive guide.

The researcher also recommends school sites conduct a self-study about the site's sense of belonging, specifically identifying ingroup and outgroup biases that exist in the organization at micro and macro levels. Self-exploration of the organization would be conducted by all its members, also like the self-study structure of a Western Association of Schools and Colleges (n.d.) report, so all voices are heard, and a complete snapshot is collected. Questions could include:

- Where are the blind spots of the organization that would prevent the success of cultural responsiveness? and
- How can those blind spots and/or implicit biases be addressed for the benefit of the families served at the school site?

The educational system, though rooted in WASP values, has the charge to evolve to equitably address the diversity of needs of the current and future human population. Having culturally responsive parameters in place allows for the educational process to flourish and naturally change in response to the population, challenging roots of White supremacy. All means all; thus, all students in the system should have equitable access and opportunity to succeed without the expectation of total cultural replacement or cultural conformity. May this work amplify the voices of the few parents in this study to create an echo of curiosity for social change to better serve people currently living in the educational system. May they one day see themselves accurately reflected in it and equitably served by it.

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