

# **Latino Parental Involvement: Myths, Perceptions and Inhibiting Factors**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research was to review the significance of parental involvement in general and Latino parents specifically. Educators believe parents' participation in schools, is essential for students' academic achievement (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008; Goodall & Montgomery, 2013). Historically, mainstream schools and educators have generally considered Latino parental involvement as minimal (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Moreno & Valencia, 2002; Olivos, 2006; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Smith & Shatrova, 2008). However, Latino parents encounter barriers and inhibiting factors that impact their participation such as language, school environment, immigration status, lack of information and their level of education. The findings indicate that stereotypes and myths continue to guide educators perceptions and policy development. The research showed that Latino parents are involved in their children's education despite the myths (Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007; Moreno & Valencia, 2002; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Ramirez, 2003; Shah, 2009; Zygouris-Coe, 2007).

Keywords: Latino parents, home school connections, parental involvement, English Language Learners

## INTRODUCTION

Students' academic success is at the forefront of education reform. According to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110), parental involvement is an important component for improving student academic success. The U.S. Department of Education (2004) stated that for the first time since the authorization of the Elementary and Secondary (ESEA) Act of 1965, the term *parental involvement* has its statutory definition. NCLB defines parental involvement as "the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities" (p. 3).

Educators believe parents' participation in schools is essential for students' academic success (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001, 2004). Research studies have noted that there is a relationship between parental involvement student academic achievement (see Hayes, 2012; Jeyes, 2005; Shute, Hansen, Underwood, & Razzouk, 2011). Moreover, in a meta-analysis, Fan and Chen (2001) discovered that parental expectation for their children's academic outcomes had the strongest relationship/predictor. Bruton and Robles-Piña (2009) contend that educators and schools rely on deficit thinking (Valenica, 1997) and blame Latino students and their parents for their low achievement.

The Latino population is emerging as the largest minority group in the U.S. (Young & Vrogistinos, 2010). According to the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2012), students who come from Spanish speaking households make up the largest culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) group in U.S. public schools. Nearly 20% of the nation's K-12 student population is constituted by Latinos (as cited in Loera, Rueda, & Nakamoto, 2011, p. 134). The increase in demographics of Latinos increases the needs for educators to become

### Purpose

The purpose of this paper was to provide an overview of research on parental involvement in general and Latinos specifically. The review will shed light on the misconceptions that educators have about Latino parents' in regards to their involvement. In addition, the review will provide a review of how Latino parents have been involved and have challenged the negative stereotype, that Latino parents don't value education. This paper addressed the following research questions.

- 1) What myths surround Latino parents' interest in their children's education?
- 2) What are Latino parents' roles and responsibilities in education as perceived by Latino parents and schools?

### Significance

The research on Latino parental involvement includes uncovering the myths, perceptions, and inhibiting factors, which can be a helpful to educators in U.S. schools, especially in areas with recent increase in Latino groups. If schools/educators realize and account for how Latino parents are involved and are concerned in their children's education, they may change their perception on low Latino parents' participation in schooling. Also, if educators learn that Latino parents have different concepts about their participation in schools, they may comprehend that Latino parents are involved in their children's academic development. Schools and educators can use the research findings to develop strategies to reduce inhibiting factors that contribute to low

Latino parents' involvement and increase their participation. As a result of their parent(s) and families providing them with appropriate support, Latino students could become more successful in school.

## **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

Previous research indicates that parents are important partners in the education of all children because parents are viewed as the primary source for learning since they are the first teachers of their children (Zygouris-Coe, 2007). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) stated that parental involvement is an essential factor for improving a student's development in school. Additionally, substantial research through the last three decades supports the belief that identifying parents' participation as a decisive contributor to student achievement (Larrotta & Ramirez, 2009; Olivos, 2004; Orozco, 2008; Quezada, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2003; Smith et al., 2008; Young & Vrogistinos, 2010; Zygouris-Coe, 2007). The following section will provide a review of the myths, inhibiting factors, educator and parent perceptions of the concept of parental involvement.

### **Myths around Latino Parental Involvement**

Latino parental involvement throughout the years has been surrounded by myths that question Latino parents' interest and support for their children's education (Moreno & Valencia, 2002; Valencia & Black, 2002). According to Moreno and Valencia (2002), some of the myths have been developed based on educators reliance on the pseudoscientific notion of "deficit thinking", which indicates that perceived Latino/a student deficits (cultural and linguistic) may be based on a process of false persuasion by scientific pretense (Valencia, 1997). The theory of deficit thinking is defined as the accepted idea that a students' and families' social, cultural and economic environment is lacking or is deprived, and this leads to poor academic achievement (Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009; Moreno & Valencia, 2002). This theory blames the victim by placing these deficits within the individual, his/her culture and includes his/her home and community language. The deficit thinking theory provides the basis for which educators blame the students and their parents for their failures in school. It also provides schools with a method of solving the problem by developing compensatory programs that aim to 'fix' the individual by subtracting their language, culture and ethnicity (San Miguel, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999).

The theory of deficit thinking alleges that persistent poverty creates cognitive deprivation, ignorance, and low aspirations (Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009). Within these myths, Latino parents' culture and language are viewed as barriers towards their children's achievement, but according to Olivos (2004) low parental involvement can be explained as an expression of resistance or self-defense and not lack of interest or low aspirations.

#### ***Myth: Latino families do not regard education highly***

Moreno and Valencia (2002) state that the basis for the myth that Latino parents do not value education refers to the idea that these families do not regard education highly in their value hierarchy. This myth alleges that the reason why a student displays low schooling performance is because he/she suffers some a deficit environment in the home in which the parents language and

culture are presumed to be the source of such a problem, specifically the mother (Moreno & Valencia, 2002).

This myth continues to allege that Latino parents have not been motivated and dedicated enough to make school and education a priority for their children (Valencia & Black, 2002). Many educators and school administrators assume that Latino traditional cultural values and beliefs which focus on familial relationships, do not include being competitive which in the U.S. is part of becoming academically successful in school (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010). Thus, educators and schools feel that Latino families' values, position educational success as secondary to maintaining the family/community.

Even though, deficit thinking is less prevalent in education than in the past, some teachers and school personnel continue to falsely assume that Latino parents do not care about education (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). Quioco and Daoud (2006) exposed that educators and schools often perceived that Latino parents are not concerned about their children's schooling. Additionally, these researchers show how parents' cultural practices and values do contribute to Latino student success which will be addressed in the following section.

### ***Reality: Latino parents value education***

The myth of a lack of interest about education is effectively debunked by literature documenting the high expectations for children's education and positive beliefs held by Latino parents and families (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Orozco, 2008). Some examples are provided in Moreno and Valencia's (2002) research, where they explained five historical processes by parents to improve education for their children. These include historical litigation cases, advocacy organizations, individual activists, political demonstrations and legislation where Mexican American parents struggled for better education for their children in the U.S.

For decades, Latinos/Hispanics have expressed their collective interest and action in promoting better education for children and youth by engaging in public confrontations in a display of dissatisfaction with oppression (Valencia & Black, 2002). In spite of the myths, Latino parents have demonstrated they are concerned for their children's academic achievement. Moreover, their contributions advocate for the best education for their children. Additionally, Moreno and Valencia (2002) considered that Latino parents embrace more or less the same ideals of children's academic achievement as Caucasian parents.

Young and Vrongistinos (2010) concluded in their study that Hispanic parents (n=32) believed that education was very important for their children's future life and they saw education as an opportunity for their children to have a successful life, especially in the U.S. Also, all the participants in this study perceived their involvement as a fundamental provider for emotional support that resulted in their children's positive learning. In their research over a period of 28 years, Ada and Zubizarreta (2001) found that Latino parents had high hopes for their children's academic success. Parents wanted to actively support and participate in their children's education and moral development.

In another example on how parents are an asset is discussed by Young and Vrongistinos (2010) which shows the involvement by Latino parent influences their children's self-confidence, self-esteem, and academic achievement in positive ways. Also, Valencia and Black (2002) discussed that many studies have identified effective parental teaching strategies initiated by both Latino parents and schools such as programs that involve literacy activities with students and their families, and other activities that use Latino culture as an important educational

resource. According to Quioco and Daoud (2006), Latino parents desire to contribute and actively get involved in their children's education and moral development.

### ***Myth & Reality: Post-secondary education***

Another myth indicates that Latino parents are perceived to be less supportive of their child's decision to continue with a post-secondary education. Latino parents truly believe they do not have enough skills and knowledge to emotionally and morally support their children's educational and career aspirations, according to Wolf, Sax, and Harper (2009). However, Latino/Hispanic parents recognize the importance of education, which plays a major role in being successful. The values and characteristics as a family are perceived by Latino parents as a powerful factor that influences positively their children's decisions to achieve in postsecondary education (Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007). Latino parents see their involvement as an opportunity for their children to value education, succeed academically, and attain a better life in the future (Young & Vrongistinos, 2010).

### ***Stereotypes and Latino Parent Resistance***

What follows is an explanation of the Latino parental involvement as an expression of resistance. Stereotypes and myths toward Latino parents create significant institutional barriers to parent participation in their children's education (Salinas, 1997). According to Olivos (2004), low Latino parental involvement in the education of their children is more an expression of resistance or a self-defense mechanism against unjust beliefs around them, than a sign of disinterest. Resistance can take different forms. The most common comes in the form of absence, disengagement, or indifference.

Olivos and Mendoza (2010) note that many educators and school personnel may discriminate against Latino parents based on stereotyping. Traditionally Latinos, particularly Mexican-Americans, have been described under the "Mexican-American culture label" (Valencia and Black, 2002), which assumes that the person is of lower class status, uneducated, undocumented and does not speak English well (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010).

Unfortunately, educators and school administrators, based on stereotypes, limit Latino parental participation with actions that marginalize and silence their voice (Good et al., 2010). Latino parents do not feel empowered to influence decisions related to their children's education because schools and educators assume they do not have interest and knowledge to be involved (Good et al., 2010; Quezada et al., 2003). Latino parents feel their participation in important decisions in their children's schools, such as selecting new teachers is limited by schools. Educators and school administrators make Latino parents feel like they are not good judges of quality in choosing the best teachers for their children (Good et al., 2010). Another example is that Latinos/Hispanics feel alienated in school meetings because educators, non-Latino parents and schools administrators, mistreat and disrespect the Spanish-speaking parents (Olivos, 2004).

Previous experiences by Latino families with their children's schools can be described as oppressive experiences that create a state of marginalization and silencing their voices (Good et al., 2010). Thus, with the attitudes against them, Latino parents may prefer to be involved in learning activities at home as emotional support, reducing chores so their children can study, supervising school work and modeling the value of hard work (Auerbach, 2011).

Research shows that Latino/ Hispanic parents do not lack the interest or abilities to be involved in their children's education (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Moreno & Valencia, 2002; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Smith et al., 2008; Young & Vrongistinos, 2010); rather they lack the fundamental information about their rights as parents and their responsibilities in their children's education prescribed in the U.S. school system (Olivos, 2004).

### **Difference between Parents' and School's Perceptions**

Latino parents are surrounded by the myths of their lack of involvement. Additionally, their interest for education encounters the problem of having different concepts about how their involvement and what their role should be in their children's education. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) explained that the parental role is created through the use of the parents' beliefs in relation to their children's education and the patterns of their participation, which follow those beliefs. Culture establishes for each person the context of cognitive and effective behavior, appropriate patterns of interaction, attitudes, traditions and costumes (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Ramirez, 2003). According to Orozco (2008), culture could establish what signifies for parents to get involved in their children's education. The difference between views of a parent's responsibility and place in school can differ across both parents and schools cultural backgrounds (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). Culture may define the role that parents should play in their children's education. However, schools and educators' culture is different from the Latino. Thus, Latino parents may have a different concept of which their participation is in their children's achievement than schools and educators.

According to Chrispeels and Rivero (2001), Latino parents have a genuine concern in their children's academic development, but face a mismatch between their own perceptions and that of the school in regards to parental involvement. This means that many Latino parents bring to the school a different notion of their responsibilities in education derived from cultural thinking, behaviors, and interactions. The parents' prior experiences affect their behavior and interactions with schools and educators (Ramirez, 2003). The next section will discuss the perception of educators and schools about parental involvement.

### ***Educators' and Schools' Perceptions***

Latino parents, schools and educators have different perceptions of the responsibility of parents within schools (Shah, 2009). According to the study of Smith et al. (2008), educators from a non-metropolitan area in Texas perceive parental involvement as participation in formal activities in schools while Latino parents explain their role in their children's academic development as working in informal home activities like supervising the completion of homework.

Salinas (1997) discussed that school's perception of parental involvement is related to the areas for assistance that help parents to understand how and when they should be involved. Therefore, Altschul (2011) and Salinas (1997) stated that schools and educators determine the level of parents' participation based on the concept of school-based involvement, similar to the definition found in NCLB, which defines parental involvement from a mainstream perspective. This involvement includes activities as attendance at parent-teacher conferences, participation at school meetings or events, involvement in parent organizations, and playing a role in the decisions and operation of schools. Hence, educators and schools focus their attention on

activities, which parents participate in schools as open houses, and academic exhibitions in schools (Shah, 2009; Smith et al., 2008).

According to Moreno and Valencia (2002), it is significant for schools and educators to recognize the way in which Latino parents understand their responsibilities with respect to their child's education. Teachers and school personnel need to recognize the roles that Latino parents practice even if it is different from their schools expectations.

### *Latino Parents' Perceptions*

Typically, educators and schools ignore the moral and emotional support that Latino parents provide to their children behind the scenes, or at home. Such support can include choosing the best schools, offering a quiet and nice place where their children can study, and modeling the value of hard work (Auerbach, 2011; Good et al., 2010).

According to Walker et al. (2011) Latino parents play home-based support roles in their children's academic development in diverse forms. These include having high aspirations for their children's learning, promoting the importance of education, and observing their children's schoolwork and performance. Orozco (2008) explained that some Latino parents limit their role in their children's education to the home, ensuring their children are fed, dressed and provided with the motivation and support to continue studying to pursue a higher education. Often, Latino parents limit their participation in their children's academic development to the home because they see involvement in schools as an encroachment (Shan, 2009).

According to Shah (2009) and Smith et al. (2008), Latino parents understand their role as supervising homework, preparing their children for school, and teaching them to behave appropriately and showing good manners. Also, the type of participation Latino parents present includes discussing school-related matters with their children, and engaging with their children in intellectual activities like literacy at home (Altschul, 2011). Latino parents' perception of their role in their children's education may be defined by their cultural practices and beliefs.

Cultural practices and beliefs are factors that influence the type of participation that Latino parents impart. Many times, Latino parents who are immigrants to the U.S., may not be familiar with or have experiences in which schools require 'formal' parental involvement. It is important to mention that Latino parents' culture encourages them to have complete confidence in educators and the school administration. It is important for educators to understand that Latino parents may not question teachers'/educators' decisions based on cultural notion of respect (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001).

Latino parents highly respect teachers' and schools' responsibility to instill knowledge, therefore, questioning educators, and their ways to instill knowledge may be seen as a type of disrespect (Smith et al., 2008). In American schools, educators might perceive parental questions about assignments and grades as representing a level of parental involvement while Latino parents may see this as demonstrating lack of respect toward educators (Smith et al., 2008). This is one reason why Latino parents limit their role to questioning educators in regards to their children's behavior in the schools. According to their perception of their involvement, to ensure their children's behavior is part of the role they play in their children's education. Also, Latino parents see their participation in their children's education outside of school. Their culture may indicate that their involvement in school should be as minimal as possible (Auerbach, 2011).

Ramirez (2003) indicated that Latino parents view of school as a place for educating their children, and their culture indicates they should meet with teachers only when teachers send

them a personal invitation. For example, Latino parents believe that they should only be present in their children's school when their child has had behavior problems and teachers require their presence. According to Quezada et al. (2003), Latino parents view the school as the main source responsible for their children's academic development and educational improvement. This does not mean that Latino parents do not feel responsible for their children's education, most of the time they feel they do not have the ability and knowledge to teach their children appropriately (Auerbach, 2011).

Latino parents often build high expectations of their children's schools. Caucasian parents believe that in order to support their children's learning, they must establish a strong partnership with the school. Latino parents, on the other hand, believe that it is the schools' responsibility to teach their children while they focus on doing their part at home (Walker et al., 2011).

According to Smith et al. (2008), if Latino parents are going to succeed in meeting the mainstream expectations of the schools, they would have to demonstrate increase participation based on the expectations of schools and educators. However, educators also need to consider the challenges and inhibiting factors established by schools. Latino parents may not feel comfortable participating in formal school activities with other parents due to a lack of English language skills, or the unwelcome environment, which inhibits their participation. Usually, teachers and schools establish low expectations on Latino parents' involvement. They do not effectively communicate to them the activities in which they should participate to increase their involvement in accordance with schools' definition of parental involvement. For this to change, educators need to take into account the inhibiting factors in schools.

### **Factors Inhibiting Latino Parents' Involvement**

Being a Latino parent or family who is involved in their children's education, based on the school and educator's definition of involvement, is not an easy task. Latino parents face the following challenges and inhibiting factors that affect their participation.

Some challenges encountered by Latino parents are the language barrier, a lack of understanding the role of families and parents in schooling, parents' level of education and socioeconomic status. Other inhibiting factors are previous negative experiences with schools, the unwelcoming environment provided by schools, Latino parents feeling intimidated by teachers based on their immigration status, and lack of time for many parents who work long hours (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Moreno & Valencia, 2002; Ramirez, 2003; Smith et al., 2008).

#### ***Language Barrier***

In several research studies, language has been found as the main barrier for Latino parents to be involved in their children's education (Quezada et al., 2003; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). Language and cultural barriers between English-speaking teachers and Latino parents are the significant factors inhibiting parental involvement and participation in schools (Altschul, 2011). For example, in the majority of schools, educators speak little or no Spanish, making communication about behaviors, grades and school work with Latino parents difficult (Smith et al., 2008).

Many Latino parents understand that they need to establish effective communication with their children's teachers; however, their lack of English skills inhibits their presence at school

(Quezada et al., 2003; Salinas, 1997). According to a study by Good et al. (2010), Latino parents expressed that their conversation with teachers and school personnel cannot be meaningful because there are not enough bilingual teachers or the school does not provide enough interpreters or translators to help bridge language gaps. Latino parents are fearful to express themselves and their views because of the lack of English language skills (Auerbach, 2011; Loera et al., 2011). These communication gaps have generated a great deal of fear for Latino parents because they feel frustrated, intimidated and underpowered to influence decisions affecting their children's education (Good et al., 2010; Loera et al., 2011). The language barriers impede promoting ongoing dialogue between parents and educators for mutual understanding.

### ***School Environment***

The school environment has been noted as another factor deterring the participation of Latino parents in their children's education. According to Good et al. (2010), beyond language barriers, Latino parents perceive the school environment as not welcoming. Research suggested that Latino parents frequently felt uncomfortable, intimidated and unwanted in their children's school (Altschul, 2011; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Olivos, 2004; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Zygouris-Coe, 2007). In the study conducted by Good et al. (2010), one of the biggest concerns expressed by Latino parents was that they felt the school personnel ignored them or did not respect their efforts. Parents expressed that they lost their sense of trust for the school. They felt ignored and uncomfortable to participate in any decision-making, and they felt incapable of expressing their opinions to advocate for their children's rights.

Many Latino parents perceive school personnel as condescending, disrespectful, and discriminating against them based on stereotypes (Good et al., 2010). Also, parents feel judged by their occupation, economic status, ethnicity or social class (Salinas, 1997).

The school personnel's attitudes toward Latino parents cause many of these parents to feel unwelcomed, disrespected and discriminated against. The effects of these negative attitudes against them creates an uncomfortable environment and results in the absence of Latino parents' participation in schools (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010).

### ***Immigration Status***

Another inhibiting factor in Latino parental involvement is the of parent and families immigration status. According to Salinas (1997), too often, recent arrivals to this country may have to clear up questions about immigration status in order to meet their basic needs; if they are undocumented this terrifies them. Nowadays, the increased presence of federal immigration officials in the communities has alarmed Latino parents. Historically, Latino communities have been targeted by immigration officials for deportation and repatriation (San Miguel, 2004). Parents are concerned about how to protect their children's access to public education and their personal information privacy (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). Like other parents, immigrant Latino parents are obligated to send their children to school. However, given their concerns about deportation, their interaction with teachers and school staff may be distant or isolated, and their participation at school activities may be minimal (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010).

Although, school districts are warned to discourage educators and school administrators from reporting to immigration officers about the real or perceived immigration status of the students or the students' parents, undocumented Latino parents perceive educators as

government employees that can enforce federal immigration laws (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). Many undocumented Latino parents do not realize that their privacy is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA] (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010); therefore, educators and school districts are prohibited from revealing the education records of any student without parental permission (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 1974). School officials are also prohibited for asking for documentation of legal status (Plyer v. Doe, 1982). Unfortunately, the lack of information about their privacy rights typically impedes Latino parents from feeling comfortable at school activities and having a closer relation with their children's teachers (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010; Salinas, 1997). Latino parents may be afraid to attend the school activities and meetings because they see the school administrators and educators as authorities that can report them to government officials who have the power to deport them. Speaking with Latino families, many can tell stories of their experiences in school and family members who were deported. This barrier is a result of an absence of information and trust by the Latino families with institutions in the U.S. In the next section, the lack of information barrier will be exposed to understand how that inhibits Latino parental involvement.

### ***Latino Parents' Lack of Information***

Latino parents who are new to the U.S. may not be aware of expectations from the educational system and the role they must play in their children's education (Salinas, 1997). The lack of information in the parent's native language impedes Latino parental involvement (Good et al., 2010; Olivos & Mendoza, 2010; Salinas, 1997).

When Latino children come to the US, their parents encounter many obstacles in developing strategies to significantly increase parental participation in their children's education (Smith et al., 2008). This is because they do not have enough information about what they should do to be involved. Loera et al. (2011) explained that Latino parents are better advocates for their kids when they are more well-informed about school expectations.

The lack of information about what is the expected role on their children's education may cause anxiety for Latino parents (Salinas, 1997). As a result, they feel a loss of control in their contribution to their children's education (Good et al., 2010). Latino parents are conscientious and feel that schools perceive them as parents who do not care about their children's education. Ironically, they do not have the tools and knowledge to properly assist their children with their education. Latino parents' lack of information is complicated by their level of education or lack of education. Some Latino parents may not be able to read or write and encounter additional barriers.

### ***Level of Education***

Latino parents may feel frustration when it comes to helping their children achieve in school. Parents may believe that they do not have the skills to assist their children due to their lack of education in their home country prior to immigration to the U.S. Latino parents may have low confidence in dealing with educators and school administrators (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Zygouris-Coe, 2007). Latino parents feel dissatisfied over their own capability to develop the role and activities that schools and administrators demand from them to be involved in their children's academic development (Quezada et al., 2003).

Good et al. (2010) agreed that Latino parents who have a lack of academic preparation in academic content areas face additional challenges in supporting their children with schoolwork. According to Walker et al. (2011), some Latino parents in the southeastern part of the U.S. perceive their skills and knowledge as sufficient for supporting part of their children's early school performance (elementary school level). However, when their children attend middle and secondary schools, they find their skills and knowledge inadequate to help them.

For many Latino parents, time for involvement in school activities is an obstacle since often both parents work (Salinas, 1997). Walker et al. (2011) and Altschul (2011) explained that parents' perceptions of their time and energy may present particular challenges for lower-income Latino families, as parents juggle job demands, and extended family needs, they have little time and energy for involvement at school. Even though Latino parents want to participate more often at their children's school activities, the little time they have may inhibit their participation. Also, Latino parents after long hours of work do not have much energy to attend and participate at the activities in their children's schools.

## **DISCUSSION**

The importance of students' academic achievement is a concern for public education all over the U.S. Latino students' low achievement has become the center of attention for schools and educators. As Latino population continues to grow, schools need to take steps to better understand Latino families as powerful resources that contribute to their children's success (Auerbach, 2011). Latino parents' moral and emotional support to their children is typically ignored and underestimated by educators and schools (Auerbach, 2011).

The literature review reaffirms that parental involvement is a powerful tool to support Latino students' academic success. The role that parents play in their children's education is crucial in motivating children to desire a better future for them; parents provide their children with emotional support to reach their future goals (Larrotta & Ramirez, 2009; Olivos, 2004; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Ramirez, 2003; Shah, 2009; Zygouris-Coe, 2007).

It is evident that the erroneous belief that Latino parents do not value education has evolved into an unfounded stereotype (Valencia & Black, 2002). The previous research examined has demonstrated that Latino parents are interested in their children's academic development and are involved in their own way (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Moreno & Valencia, 2002; Olivos, 2004; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Smith et al., 2008; Young & Vrogistinos, 2010).

The findings reveal that Latino/ Hispanic parents' interest for education, but encounter the problem of having different concepts about how their involvement and what their role should be in their children's education. These parents are participating in their children's education but in non-traditional ways from what schools expect (Loera et al., 2011). It is critical that schools and educators develop programs to help Latino parents understand and comprehend their role in their children's schooling as they think it should be, because they will become more assertive in their involvement (Olivos, 2004).

With this research it is clear that Latino parents value education and desire to help their children succeed and have a prosperous future in the U.S. Unfortunately, Latino parents, especially recent immigrants, may not have the appropriate tools to support them. It is necessary that Latino parents receive appropriate and efficient training to guide them on how to create and develop strategies to help with their children's schooling (Larrotta & Ramirez, 2009).

An area that schools and educators need to work on is to improve communication. Primarily, schools need to eliminate the language barrier between home and school (Moreno & Valencia, 2002; Ramirez, 2003; Smith et al., 2008). Latino parents want to receive information about their children's performance at school, or the information about how to participate in their children's educational development, but the language is a barrier faced by them (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). All the more reasons why it is important for schools to find appropriate strategies to produce an effective communication support for Latino parents. To overcome this barrier, schools may provide more interpreters at parents' meetings, provide information to parents in their own language, and be careful when they translate documents in to the Latino parents' language to not lose information in the process (Smith et al., 2008). Also, schools may have as part of their staff a person that can speak Spanish to the Latino parents to help with their communication (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). Latino parents also need an environment that is conducive to their engagement (Auerbach, 2011).

The research suggested that in order to transform the Latino parental involvement, schools must develop and implement an environment of comfort, support, acceptance, respect and encouragement. One in which parents would feel their participation is welcome, valuable and supported by educators and the schools (Larrotta & Ramirez, 2009; Shah, 2009).

Research revealed that a Latino representation within roles of power as being members of school boards or participation in the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings could improve this minority's involvement in their child's education (Shah, 2009). Latino parents' perception about schools' environment changes when they see others like themselves in positions of authority, feeling their involvement is wanted, welcomed and accepted by schools. If the school environment reflects positive attitudes and behaviors of school staff towards Latino parents, those parents can feel as valued members of the community and valued participates in their kids' schooling (Walker et al., 2011).

It is clear that Latino parental involvement has many deterrents to encounter, but schools and educators have in their hands the possibilities to develop strategies to increase the participation of Latino parents in their children's schooling. Latino parents are invested in their children doing well in school and transfer this expectation to their children (Altschul, 2011).

Educators must spend time learning about their students' families to change their opinions about Latino families and the contributions they can make to their children's academic success (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Ramirez, 2003). It is critical that teachers and school staff understand that successful parental involvement should recognize that all parents, including Latino parents, are contributors and collaborators into students' achievement (Salinas, 1997).

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The concept of parental involvement by educators and schools is shaped by our current educational policy (No Child Left Behind). Latino parents and other CLD groups encounter barriers and disconnections between school expectations of parental involvement and Latino perceptions. For Latino parents myths, stereotypes and barriers continue to inhibit their participation in their children's education. Additionally, Latino parents' efforts and 'invisible' involvement has not been accepted or seen as an asset by educators. Educators could take a step forward to improve the relationship with Latino parents. Educators and schools need to understand Latino parents' and families' culture. Educators and schools need to provide routine methods of visiting Latino students' homes and communities in order to learn about the students'

and their parents' lives and culture. With these visits, educators may obtain information needed to understand non-traditional ways in which Latino parents are participating in their children's education. If educators understand how Latino parents are involved in their children's academic success, they may become more aware and appreciate the Latino parents' contributions in their children's schooling as positive. Also, this information or Latino families' funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) can be used or integrated with classroom learning. Latino parents may feel that their culture is appreciated by the educators and schools.

Educators and schools need to be more comprehensive with Latino parents. They need to be more supportive to Latino parents in order to reduce some of the barriers encountered by these parents. Schools may have on their staff a person who speaks Spanish in order to communicate with Latino parents. Also, educators may understand that Latino parents may have little time to participate in school activities. They can schedule parent meetings in times that are more convenient for all parents. Additionally, educators and schools should realize that many Latino parents need information to know their rights and responsibilities in their children's school. Many Latino parents are afraid because of their immigration status; educators should give them the information about their information privacy rights. Schools and educators need to help parents feel comfortable with their participation in their children's education. Also, educators may provide Latino parents the tools and information necessary to improve their involvement in order to help their children to success academically. Latino parents are doing the best they can; however, if they get more information that guide their participation in their children's education, their involvement would be not as difficult as it is now.

Finally, policymakers should realize that Latino parents have a different way to be involved in their children's education. Latino parents participate in their children's education in learning activities at home. Policymakers may change the concept of parental involvement and integrate the Latino concept of home-involvement. With this change, myths and misconceptions around Latino parental involvement may be reduced or disappear, and may be more appreciated by schools and educators.

Educators and schools should look for ways to make connections with parents in order to make partnerships with them. Educators should remember that their main purpose is to help students to academically succeed. If parental involvement is a powerful way to help students become academically successful, educators should be committed to help Latino parents to get more involved and appreciate their contributions.

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