

Hispanic Parent Participation:

Practices in Charter Schools

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fullfilment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

Approved April 2011 by the  
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY  
May 2011

## ABSTRACT

This qualitative grounded theory study is based upon interviews with charter school administrators, teachers and Hispanic parents to gather their perspectives on what practices encourage and elevate the participation of Hispanic parents in schools. There were three Guiding Questions utilized: 1) What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose the particular charter school? 2) What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child's education? 3) What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation for children at these charter schools?

Hypotheses were generated from the interviews based upon literature review. For Guiding Question #1 there were five hypotheses based on a. Personal Interactions/ Relationships, b. Environment, c. Language accommodations, d. Communication, e. Family Services. For Guiding Question # 2, there were two hypotheses based on: a. Staff experience with Hispanic community and b. Leadership building. For Guiding Question #3, there were three hypotheses based on: a. Home/School Partnership, b. Academics, c. Physical Presence.

## Dedication

I first would like to give thanks to the most Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit for guiding me through this arduous process. All for the Glory of God! To Our Lord's Holy Mother, Our Lady of the Americas, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Lourdes-all one in the same, whom I love as my heavenly mother, my friend, my "Comadre". She is always there for me in times of trials and in joyful times.

Fernando, my husband and my "BFF", I dedicate this gift to you. You have been my inspiration, my rock, and many times, the one who has pushed me on this journey. To my children and grandchildren, thank you so much for your patience, love, support and sacrifice when I was not there for you. I love you and your beautiful names-Xóchitl LeSen Venessa Victoria, Izalco Téofilo Fidencio Chúmure, Nehuatl Rafael Miguel-Angel Bruno, Tepili del Rosario Estela Cruz, Cuathemoc Reyes Cesar Abram, Xocoyotzin Fernando Moises Ezequiel. To my son-in-law Daniel and daughter-in-law Amanda, thank you for loving my children. To my Grandchildren-Destiny, Victoria Divina, Angelina, Magdalena, John Maximus, Athanasius and those who are not with us-my saintly daughter Tonali de Guadalupe, my grandsons Baby Daniel and Baby Nathan. I love you too much!!!!

Amá-Agustina, a usted le dio las gracias por apoyarme en mis estudios. A mis hermanos Ángel, Rubén y Héctor y sus familias, I love you guys. My

Abuelito “Chumare”, abuelita Victoria Martínez, tías Jovita Payán, Felipa, Antonia, Raquel y mis todos mis tíos Paulino, Rodolfo, y Daniel y montón de primos. Gracias por ser mi familia querida.

To my beloved father-in-law Reyes Maria Ruiz, I miss you, but I know that you are jumping for joy in heaven. To the rest of my in-law family, this dissertation is offered to God for His Glory and our work for Him. We are BLESSED!!!

To friends who have been always praying for me to finish this darn thing- Nehosia, Peg, Gloria, Petra, Elizabeth, Heather, Deidre, Debbie, Irma, Mercy, Teresa and so many other prayer warriors. And to all the students, teachers, administrators who have touched my life, I thank you for giving me more than I could give you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to give special thanks to my chairman. Dr. Valverde, you have been extremely patient with me in this task. I appreciate all the time you took to explain things to me; the patience you had editing my work. Dr. Ovando and Dr. Scribner, you, like Dr. Valverde are great men that influence the education of our children, and in particular, our Hispanic children, who try so hard to please their teachers and families.

To the parents, teachers and administrators that gave up their valuable time to help on this project, ¡Muchísmas Gracias!

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

In the United States it is commonly accepted that participation in the education of one's child is a primary responsibility of parents: "The evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life" (Henderson & Berla, 1995, p.1). The extent that minority parents actually participate in their child's education may at times be determined by cultural and traditional factors: "Increased parental involvement based upon *values familiarity* between home and school seems to suggest minority students experience higher level of achievement when cultural norms and belief of parents and school personnel are more closely aligned" (Scribner, 1998, p. 20).

Hispanic parental participation has been challenging due in part because education in the United States has not been responsive to cultural and traditional practices that encourage parents to participate in the success of their children's education: "Whereas white parents are seen as the key in their children's success, ethnically diverse and low-income parents are viewed as barriers to theirs" (Olivos, 2006, p. 53). Nonetheless, there is no disputing that parental involvement is one, if not the most important indicator, of student success, for all students: "A majority of the research consistently found that students performed better and had higher levels of motivation when they were raised in homes characterized by supportive and demanding parents who were involved in schools and who encouraged and expected academic success" (Tierney, 2002, p. 591).

Dr. Kent Scribner (1998) investigated what school involvement meant to Mexican parents in public schools in Phoenix, Arizona, according to three levels of involvement. His findings showed that parents truly believed they were involved in their child's education, but their participation differed according to factors such as their own school experience, unfriendly school personnel, and language misunderstandings. If their experience was a positive one, then they tended to have more time and physical involvement in their own child's schooling. Other researchers have collaborated on the reasons why minority parents, especially those with language differences, tend to shy away from involvement in schools, such as shortage of personnel speaking the parents' language, lack of legal residency documentation and feeling that they are not capable of dealing with educational professionals for fear of being deficient in the educational world, etc. (Tierney, 2002; Ulpindo, 2008; Gaitan,2004; Koger, 2000; Gay, 2000; Gonzalez, 1998; Hiatt-Michael, 2005; Olivos, 2006).

#### Problem Investigated

This qualitative grounded theory study is based upon interviews with charter school administrators, teachers and Hispanic parents to gather their perspectives on what practices encourage and elevate the participation of Hispanic parents in schools. School administrators and parents were asked ten questions; teachers had seven. The questions were formulated based on the general categories defined by research done by Dr. Juana Bordas, "Utilizing Hispanic Cultural Values to



Enhance Educational Effectiveness” from Mestiza Leadership International (Appendix B). Data was organized in a manner that would answer three major questions:

1. What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose the particular charter school?
2. What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child’s education?
3. What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation for children at these charter schools?

The participating charter schools are located in Phoenix, Arizona and have a student population of at least eighty-one percent (81%) Hispanics. The aim is to gather data on culturally compatible or sensitive practices, as reported in the literature that encourages high Hispanic parental participation in order to generate hypotheses or theories from data.

The Arizona legislature approved the formation of charter schools in 1994. These charter schools were initiated in 1995 with the intent of fulfilling three fundamental objectives:

Choice: Charter schools give families an opportunity to pick the school most suitable for their child’s educational well-being.

Accountability: Charter schools are judged on how well they meet the student achievement goals established by their charter contract

Freedom: While charter schools must adhere to the same major laws and regulations all other public schools, they are free from the red tape that often diverts a school's energy and resources away from educational excellence.

Instead of constantly jumping through procedural hoops, charter school leaders can focus on setting and reaching high academic standards for their students”

(Center for Education Reform, 2003, p. 1-A)

For Hispanics (in this case, mostly those of Mexican descent), having the opportunity to choose a public school that best fits their cultural norms is difficult. Charter schools have no attendance boundaries, hence, additional options have been opened for Hispanic parents to select a school which they might feel culturally comfortable with and will serve their children academically. Charter schools were purposefully created to give parents the options of choosing schools for their children. Therefore, it is beneficial to analyze what culturally compatible practices these schools provide which encourage Hispanic parents to have significant participation in their child's education. This study gathered data to form hypotheses on what techniques charter schools may be implementing that encourage higher Hispanic parental participation. Since the study utilized charter schools, the hypotheses might or might not apply to district or private schools.

## Parental Participation

Education in modern times necessitates the involvement of more than just the classroom teacher. The expectations of schools have grown from simply the teaching of basic skills to one that is complex and challenging:

Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century means much more than providing students with academic knowledge and skills: ‘Educators alone cannot help children develop intellectually, personally, socially, and morally-develop all the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to be productive citizens and caring people as adults...Educating children to live in our rapidly changing and increasingly complex society ‘requires contributions and commitments from everyone in the community’(Carter, October 2003, p. 8).

Schools must recognize the importance of working in conjunction with parents in the education of children. These are the parents and/or guardian who have the best interest of the child:

Parents are a child’s “first and most influential” teachers and often their strongest advocates. Parents “teach, model and guide their children”...They are the “big picture” team member in their child’s education. Many parents spend 365 days a year with their children and are the most knowledgeable about their history, interest, and abilities....Providing opportunities for parents to share information about their children can help families and educators avoid

conflict and develop collaborative relationships that encourage the educational opportunities for students” (Carter, 2003, October, p. 11).

### Non-white participation

Non-white parental participation in schools has been criticized for lack of presence in the schools. However, there is extensive research that accounts for this physical absence due to parents not feeling welcomed: “Parents were discouraged by negative comments about parents and feelings of being patronized, examples of low expectations by teachers, principals and staff” (Hiatt, 2005, p. 118). Also: “major impediments to parent involvement in their children’s schools and in their children’s education often included low levels of commitment from the school staff, a one-way bureaucratic power relationship, and an insensitivity to the family’s cultural background” (Scribner, 1998, p. 17). Finally, schools might not want to involve “outsiders” that are not versed in education to make decisions for them: “If ordinary people, including poor people and people of color, become real participants, then institutions might actually change in ways that those who control the institutions may not want” (Oakes, 2000, p. 52).

Traditionally, school environments have not been accommodating to the needs of non-white parents. Cultural differences such as language barriers, lack of knowledge of the American educational system, and a feeling of uncertainty have hindered true cooperation between schools and minority parents. Even if

parents are English speakers; they are confused by the education jargon utilized by educators. Generally, Hispanic parents sometimes are not aware of how they are expected to be involved in their child's education. They do not understand the dynamics of the power they have concerning decision-making for their child's education, especially if they happen to have a disabled child. Hispanic parents feel uncomfortable when they clash with personnel either culturally or in status. Overall, parents feel inadequate compared to the professionals who 'know what they are talking about'. Regardless of all the barriers, minority parents of color are involved in their child's education:

These parents live in a constant battle for their children's educational rights. Often understanding the view that the school personnel hold of them, they still build up the courage to attend important school functions and make attempts to have their voices heard. And even when parents, particularly those who are immigrants of non-English speaking, have legitimate concerns regarding the educational endeavors of the school in relations to their children's well-being, they frequently refrain from challenging the school system for fear of being accused of being "out of line" or, worse yet, being disappointed through failed advocacy (Olivos, 2006, p. 53).

Charter schools in Arizona:

Charter schools were created in order to fulfill a noticeable void in the educational system: "Charter school law emerged as a response to parents

demanding greater latitude of free school choice and coalitions of parents as interest groups demanding their values be taught and respected at public-financed schools” (Bennett, 2008, p. 3). Vouchers were the first wave of possibilities to open more options for parents; however, it was a very costly approach. Arizona responded by permitting private individuals, for-profit and non-profit organizations to establish charter schools: “The Arizona Charter School Law of 1994 was considered exceptional even beyond the fact that it gave private entities and not just school districts the right to conduct public school” (Bennett, p. 4). The assumption was that these schools would appeal to their primary customers—parents and students who needed something out of the ordinary, something that would have the flexibility to create innovative programs.

In choosing charter schools, parents take a dramatic step from the norm. They take radical action by moving their children out of a district public school, most likely in their neighborhood, and enroll them in a school that offers them something different. In Arizona, 48.6% of charter school students are minorities and the average Arizona charter is about 38% minority (EDFacts, 2009, Arizona). This is significant percentage and action taken by parents to enroll their child in a charter school. Some may see this school as a ‘last chance’ opportunity, such as Alternative Charter Schools which are obligated to enroll a certain percentage of juveniles from detention centers after their release. However, this is not the case in most charter schools, especially elementary schools.

## Parental satisfaction with charter schools

The Morrison Institute (1999) looked at the satisfaction of parents with charter schools. Since charter schools were relatively new, the questions asked compared charter schools to district schools. Some findings pertinent to this study are:

Parents of charter school students and the students themselves are much more satisfied with the academic performance and attitude of the students at their charter schools than at their former schools.

Parents and students consider the teachers at charter schools to be their best feature. Other charter features rated highly by both groups included school size, class size, and attitude towards students and parents (Mulholland, p. i).

Many of these charter schools, especially at the high school level, are much smaller than the mega-schools in many metropolitan areas. Parents feel more comfortable in a smaller campus and with less people: “Smaller schools may lead to higher achievement... in addition to promoting a feeling of safety and security... Parents enjoy the smaller school atmosphere because their children are able to receive additional instruction in areas with which they may struggle” (Allen & Consolletti, 2007, p. 9).

As of the 2009-2010 academic year, the state of Arizona had 496 charter schools, serving approximately 100,000 students. Of those, close to seventy-one

percent (71%) qualified for free and reduced lunch if they applied to this program ([www.ade.gov/profile/publicview](http://www.ade.gov/profile/publicview)). Information provided by the Arizona Charter School Association Annual Conference (November 2-3, 2009), revealed parental satisfaction at the national level : “Charters outperform districts in terms of parental satisfaction levels, often by 50% margins; about 40% have waiting lists” (Maranto & Gau; PowerPoint presentation given November 2, 2009). Statewide, Arizona demonstrated an even higher satisfaction rate: “94.2% of responding parents rated their charter school an A or a B; and 90.8% felt their child had improved academically” (Maranto & Gau).

Arizona academic achievement statistics in charter schools is by and large promising. The Arizona Charter School Association Annual Conference reported the following data:

- Of the 15 schools with an average of 99% passing and above in math, 8 are charter schools.
- Of the 9 schools with an average of 99% passing and above in reading overall, 5 are charter schools.
- Of the 14 schools with 100 % passing in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading, 10 are charter schools.
- Of the 14 schools with 100% passing in 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading, 9 are charter schools.
- Of the 9 schools with 100% passing in high school reading, 7 are charter



- schools.
- Average charter schools passed 75% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders in reading compared to 70% in district schools.
- Average charter schools passed 72% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in reading compared to 70% in district schools.
- Of the 17 schools with 100% passing in 4<sup>th</sup> grade math, 12 are charter schools.
- Of the 10 schools with 100% passing in 8<sup>th</sup> grade math, 7 are charter schools.
- Of the 9 schools with 100% passing in HS math, 7 are charter schools.
- Average charter school passed 74% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders in math compared to 72% in district schools.
- Average charter school passed 70% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in math compared to 71% in district school.
- 94% of AZ charters are labeled Performing or higher compared to 97% of AZ district schools. (Maranto & Gua, pp. 3-4).

Given all this data, this study sought to identify what factors encouraged parental participation in their child's school and whether how this impacted the overall achievement of the child.

Research assumptions Why should anyone care if charter schools implement

culturally sensitive strategies to encourage Hispanic parents to be involved inschools? First of all, we presuppose that getting parents involved in their child's education is the right thing to do: "When educators involve minority parents as partners in their children's education, parents developed a sense of efficacy that communicates itself to their children, who in turn experience positive academic consequences" (Scribner, 1998, p. 18). The Hispanic student populations have been steadily growing, while mainstream white populations have been decreasing. This is and continues to have a great impact on the way educators work with Hispanic parents to bring about success for these students:

Strong growth in Hispanic enrollment is expected to continue for decades, according to a recently released U.S. Census Bureau population projection. The bureau projects that the Hispanic school-age population will increase by 166% by 2050 (to 28 million from 11 million in 2006), while the non-Hispanic school-age population will grow by 4% (to 45 million from 43 million) over this same period. In 2050, there will be more school-aged Hispanic children than school-aged non-Hispanic white children (Fry & Gonzales, August 26, 2008, p. i).

In order to reach the goals that federal and state mandates have imposed upon the schools, it is imperative to involve Hispanic parents in the education of their children:

In schools where parent involvement has been systematic, persistent, and well

organized, student achievement improves... Reaching out to the Latino community is a matter of building trust, as a platform for creating sustained collaborations with parents. Latino families need to know that educators are interested in meeting their needs and are respectful of their language and cultural differences. (Gaitan, 2003, p.16).

Of course the long term effect would be tremendous achievement for Hispanic children. As times change, even though it is a slow change, the goal is for these students to graduate in bigger numbers and continue on to success in post-secondary education:

More than three-quarters (77%) of Latinos ages 16 to 25 say that their parents think going to college is the most important thing to do after high school. Just 11% say their parents think getting a full-time job after high school is the most important thing to do (Lopez, October 7, 2009, p.3).

Therefore, it is incumbent upon educators to recognize this idea so that working with Hispanic parents becomes a priority.

This study examines the views of school administrators, teachers and Hispanic parents in charter schools with a high concentration of Hispanic students (at least 51%) to determine what kind of positive impact parental participation had on the overall achievement of the child. These schools have been in operation for at least five years or longer. This focus of this study was on discovery and not

testing of traditional hypotheses. The following over-arching questions will help generate a body of relevant information and descriptive data:

1. What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose the particular charter school?
2. What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child's education?
3. What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation for children at these charter schools?

This qualitative, grounded theory method was chosen keeping in mind the cultural ways of Hispanic parents. It is imperative to consider the way Hispanics communicate with someone they trust. Traditionally, Hispanic culture calls for an informal time to get to know and trust the other person:

Latinos tend to relate on a people and personal level. Instead of talking in generalities, they focus on the individual, the family, where people are from and personal preferences...Conversation, story-telling, and sharing personal experience are valued. Latinos will only self-disclose when they feel they have a personal relationship" (Bordas, November 2009, p. 1).

By utilizing grounded theory, the experiences of the parents, administrators and teachers were heard without having a preconceived outcome:

The goal of qualitative research is the development and validation of concepts which help us to understand, and evaluate, social phenomena in natural settings, giving due emphasis to the views and experiences of all the participants, in order to devise ways to improve human life. (Brusoni, PowerPoint presentation *Qualitative Methods in Economics*, Università degli Studi de Milano, retrieved on 04/19/2010)

This perspective is given equal weight as the interviews with administrators and focus groups with teachers. The researcher plays a key role making judgment calls from the data.

Parental involvement includes the partnership between three entities: parents, teachers and administrators. These are the three main groups responsible for the educational formation of the child. This study takes into account the answers to specific questions asked of charter school administrators, teachers, and Hispanic parents. It cannot be emphasized enough that student achievement is the purpose to this partnership: “When families make critical contributions to student achievement strategic efforts to improve their children’s academic achievement are much more effective...When parents are involved in school, children experience higher student achievement...When parents are involved in school, their children attend better schools” (Scribner, 1998, p. 4).

Justification/Need for Research

According to the 2009 *EDFacts State Profile-Arizona*, forty-one percent of Hispanic youth are served in Arizona schools; the national average being twenty-one percent. Yet, when assessing the statistical data concerning the success of Hispanic youth, the results are worrisome.

Table 1.1 AZ Graduates & dropouts rate: (ED *Facts*/CSPR SY 2007-08 for SY 2006-07).

Arizona Graduation and Dropout Rate

<u>Categories</u>	Graduation Rate %	Dropout Rates %
All Students	73.4	5.7
White	81.3	4.2
Black, non-Hispanic	72.3	5.8
Hispanic	64.7	7.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	85.5	2.8
American Indian/Alaskan Native	55.0	10.0
Economically Disadvantaged Students	64.7	6.2
Children with Disabilities	62.7	5.8
Limited English proficient students	45.6	8.0
Migrant	74.4	NA

According to the *Metropolitan Policy Program, Blueprint for American Prosperity: Unleashing the Potential of a Metropolitan Nation*: “Just over half of African American and Hispanic students-55 and 53 percent, respectively-graduate our nation’s public high schools within four years of enrolling in them” (Mead & Rotherham, 2008, p. 2). The information gathered from several sources shows the Hispanic graduation rate at 64.7%, fairing slightly better than the nation population, but still unacceptable. The dropout rate for Hispanics in Arizona is 7.2%, which is higher amount now because the actual number of Hispanic students continues to increase. On all accounts, Hispanic education must be improved. Involving parents is one, if not the best method, to ensure that everyone is working towards this same goal.

A Morrison Institute’s study looked at the reasons that parents have chosen charter school education over the traditional district appointed schools. They found the subsequent outcomes that deal with parental participation in charter schools:

- 1) Parents of charter school students and the students themselves are much more satisfied with the academic performance and attitudes of the students at their charter schools than at their former schools.
- 2) Parents and students consider the teachers at charter schools to be their best feature compared to the students’ former schools.

- 3) Other charter school features rated highly by both groups include school size, class size, and attitude toward students and attitudes towards parents (Mulholland, 1999, March, p. i).

By looking at the involvement of Hispanic parents through the lenses of charter school parents, teachers and administrators, this study formulated hypotheses on what is going on in these schools to fulfill the goals listed above.

Key points relating to this study in Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S §15-181) states the purpose of charter schools as follows:

- Charter Schools may be established to provide a learning environment that will improve pupil achievement.
- Charter Schools provide additional academic choices for parents and pupils.
- Charter schools are public schools that serve as alternatives to traditional public schools, and charter schools may not be subject to all of the requirements governing other public schools.

According to literature, charter schools were created to meet a need that was perceived to be lacking by parents in the public schools; it is important to investigate what charter schools have done to made inroads towards involving Hispanic parents in their children's education. Since charter schools are encouraged to be innovative without some of the restrictions of other public



schools, such as an elected school board and teacher and administrator certification requirements, conceivably, there might be some practices that these schools have implemented to promote parental participation. The primary objective for parental involvement is pupil achievement, especially for a population that statewide and nationwide has not attained at the level of others.

Scribner and Scribner (2001) reported that high performing schools working with Hispanics functioned differently in the way they addressed community and family involvement. They listed five areas that were crucial to working with these parents in order to achieve higher student achievement. It was important for these schools to work on:

- (a) Building on cultural values of Mexican American parents
- (b) Stressing personal contact with parents
- (c) Fostering communication with parents
- (d) Creating a warm environment for parents, and
- (e) Facilitating structural accommodations for parent involvement (p. 122).

Charter schools were designed to give parents and pupils choices in their education. Being relatively new in Arizona, it continues to be a challenge to serve Hispanic students, especially monolingual English speakers for lack of resources. Even so, many Hispanic parents have chosen to send their children to this “experiment”. What keeps the parents satisfied and involved is the responsibility

of the school leadership working with teachers and staff members.

There have been other studies that have looked at Hispanic participation in public schools; however, they have not looked at what charter schools are doing. This study proposed to explore the views of Hispanic parents, charter school administrators and teachers on their experience with parental involvement at their school and how this has had a positive impact in their child's overall achievement.

### Definitions

The following words are defined in order to help the reader understand what the researcher is referring to in the written text. This list is not conclusive as there may be some words the researcher may not predict need explanations. The following words are a combination of educational and qualitative research words:

AIMS test: Arizona Instrument Measurement of Standards. Students take the AIMS tests yearly beginning in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through high school. It is mandatory to pass the AIMS test in order to receive a diploma.

Alternative School: School must intend to serve students exclusively in one or more of the following categories: a) Students with documented history of disruptive behavior, b) students identified as dropouts, c) students in poor academic standing who are either severely behind on academic credits (more than one year) or have a demonstrated pattern of failing grades, d) Pregnant and/or parenting students, e) adjudicated youth. (Arizona Department of Education)

AMO: Annual Measurable Objectives (NCLB)

AYP: Annual Yearly Progress (NCLB)

Arizona Learns Achievement Profile: A school's AZ LEARNS Achievement Profile is based on changes in statewide AIMS math, reading and writing test scores over both the previous year and a longer period. The state gives schools one of six labels: excelling, highly performing, performing plus, performing, underperforming or failing.

Charter Schools: “A contract with a state or local agency that provides the school with public funds for a specific time. This contract frees charter schools from a number of regulations that otherwise apply to public schools. In exchange, the Charter schools are accountable for improving student performance and achieving goals set out in the charter” (Berman 1999 in Koger-Devich, 2000, p.18).

Community (in qualitative research): The researcher honors the role of the participants as the experts and cultivates the idea that the researcher is there to learn.

Culture: “unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that seem to permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or avoid talking about” (Deal, 1999, p. 2).

Culturally compatible: Actions taken with others in order to respect the unwritten

rules of their cultural traditions, norms, and expectations.

District schools: public schools governed by a publicly elected governing board.

Graduate rate: Arizona uses a four-year, adjusted cohort graduation rate for AYP determinations and reporting. Any student who receives a traditional high school diploma within the first four years of starting high school is considered a four-year graduate.

Hispanic: interchangeable with persons of Mexican, Mexican-American, and Latino ancestry.

Leadership: “the capacity to influence others by unleashing their power and potential to impact the greater good” (Blanchard, 2007, p.xix).

NCLB: No Child Left Behind.

Parent Participation: Parent, guardian, or caretaker who takes an interest in their student’s education and may be involved in school matters, decision making bodies, and/or academic, social and physical activities of their students.

Principal: Interchangeable with facilitator, director, lead, or administrator. Person in charge of a school setting.

Purity (in qualitative research): activities such as identification and isolation of variables.

Reciprocity: Assumes that the researcher and the participant come together as equals; each comes to the research to give something and gain something.

## Summary

Whether charter school or traditional district public school, it is imperative to be able to serve the first teachers of our Hispanic youth. In the Mexican/Mexican American community, being culturally sensitive is of even greater consequence since historically it has been difficult to find schools that respected the cultural way of life of this population, “their [Mexican origin families] lack of familiarity with U.S. schools led to much confusion and misunderstanding...Their concept of participating in their children’s education was raising good well-behaved individuals” (Valdes, 1996 in Hiatt, 2005, p. 117). Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) mention in Hiatt (2005) that schools that work to build a collaborative school community provide an affirmative condition:

Schools focused on fostering communication, building a warm and welcoming environment, and developing structures which encouraged parent growth and participation. Collaborative relationships were build on Hispanic values of fostering academic and social success of children through strengthening home and school relationships rather than volunteering and fundraising (pp.118-119).

Therefore, it is vital that schools make a conscious effort to develop and practice culturally compatible practices that serve both their interest and the needs

of Hispanic parents wanting to be involved in their child's education. By examining the cultural sensitive performance of charter schools, through the lenses of administrators, teachers, and Hispanic parents, it is anticipated that grounded discoveries will be found that reveal culturally compatible styles that produce greater participation of Hispanic parents in the schools and ultimately yield greater learning by Latino students.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Involving parents in the education of their child is constantly mentioned as one of the most important strategies that schools can employ in order to improve academic achievement:

Our work with parents must be understood as one of the most significant revolutionary acts that we carry out...our faith in the capacity of parents as subjects of history is every bit as important as the faith that we extend to their children in the classroom. Without such faith, we risk the danger of objectifying parents and falling prey to the infantilizing parent discourse of public school institutions and the disingenuous manner in which parents are often treated, wither by dismissing their concerns or coercing their participation in limiting and often repressive ways (Olivos, 2006, p 1).

However, for a variety of reasons, parental involvement is not always deemed or believed to be at the top of the list:

Teachers and administrators are busy people with multiple responsibilities. Family involvement may not be a priority among the many issues that compete for their attention each day. Scarce school resources, in terms of time, personnel, and funds, may make the adoption of any new initiatives seem unreasonable. There may also be provisions in union contracts and collective

bargaining agreements that limit the amount of time that educators can devote to family involvement activities. Tight budgets, a reality in most schools, may not support additional activities to encourage more family involvement (Carter, p. 20).

Schools granted governmental funding must establish process and procedures on what will be done to accomplish this goal. Many of the charter schools have smaller populations and do not receive as much federal assistance as district schools, so they have an even harder time accommodating positions that will assist in encouraging parental positions.

Schools also have difficulty putting parental participation policies into action partly due to false assumptions sometimes embedded in the culture of the school or district. *Educating our Children Together: A Sourcebook for Effective Family-School-Community Partnerships* commissioned for the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, outlined a few beliefs that thwart the relationship between home and school and answers to these erroneous notions:



Table 2.1-Educators' Assumptions that Hinder or Facilitate Home-School Collaboration

Assumptions that Hinder Collaboration	Assumptions that Facilitate Collaboration
Parents who don't attend school events about their children's success in school.	Not all parents can come to care school or feel comfortable about it; that doesn't mean they don't care.
Parents who are illiterate, non-English speaking or unemployed can't help their children with school.	All families have strengths and skills; they can contribute to their children's school success.
Parents from different ethnic and cultural racial backgrounds don't understand how to their children with school.	Parents from different ethnic and groups may have alternative and important ways of supporting their children.
It's up to parents to find out what is going on at school.	Schools have a responsibility to reach out to all parents.
Parent involvement is not worth educator's efforts.	Parent involvement pays off in student achievement, improved school.

(Carter, S. 2003, p.10)

## Hispanic Education in the United States

Quality education for Hispanics in the United States has been a cause of constant struggle. Mexicans came from a proud culture of indigenous people who valued education in their time: “Before the Spanish Conquest of 1519, Indians built extensive formal public school systems. Best known were those established by the Aztecs” (Weinberg, 1995, p. 140). Hispanic population inhabited this area now known as the southwest for hundreds of years before the American settlers arrived. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (signed February 2, 1848), set the border between Mexico and the United States until 1853, when the Gadsden Purchase was finalized. There are generations of Hispanics living in the areas of New Mexico, Arizona and California whose families were in this area before Anglo settlement: “The Mexican-origin population of the United States, as opposed to other recently arrived immigrant groups, include individuals who have been here for generations and who see themselves as the original settlers of parts of the United States as well as individuals who have arrived here relatively recently as both legal and illegal immigrants” (Valdés, 1996, p.24). The early settlers organized mission schools for both the native population and the settlers’ children. Once the United States government took over, around 1846, education for Hispanics became dismal: “Mexicans who chose to remain in the new American territories were guaranteed the rights of citizens...most Mexican-Americans occupied low rank...and all were subordinated to the Anglo...significant principally as cheap, exploitable labor” (Weinberg, p. 142).

Fortunately, they were not encamped in reservation schools like Native American populations, completely removed from their homes and families. Nevertheless, from the very beginning, they were not allowed to speak their native language-Spanish. This was, of course, a blow to the proud Mexicans who had held positions of power and authority. Education was a valued endeavor, yet, this came to an end. Things became worse when Hispanics of Mexican and Spanish descent began to lose their properties to the American white settlers because they didn't possess the 'right' documents to prove their ownership. Even though there were some valiant individuals who sought to correct this abuse, many families became instantly poor and at the mercy of these new invaders. Now their education became one of laborers-working the agricultural fields that they once owned and mineral mines where their bodies suffered due to the dangerous elements and conditions.

The process of opening up schools in the southwest was slow and minimized. There was no sympathy towards this population along with the Black and Native American culture. Mexicans were seen as a 'conquered' people who didn't deserve anything at all. The prevailing Anglo view was stated by a superintendent of those times:

Most of our Mexicans are of the lower class. They transplant onions, harvest them, etc. The less they know about everything, the better content they are.

You have doubtless heard that ignorance is bliss; it seems that is so when one

has to transplant onions...If a man has very much sense or education, he is not going to stick to this kind of work. So you see it is up to the white population to keep the Mexicans on his knees in an onion patch...This does not mix well with education (Weinberg, 1995, p. 146)

By the end of World War II, men came back to their hometowns having experienced the rest of the world. Many Hispanics came back to move from their rural homes to the cities in great numbers. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (commonly known as GI Bill), helped some of them go to school and open up their own businesses. Yet, the schools were still segregated and did not allow the culture of the student in the schools, especially speaking Spanish - not even at non-instructional times. Survivors of that era still recall being punished for this 'violation'.

The *Brown vs. Board of Education, Topeka* (1954) decided by United States Supreme Court had an impact on how to educate people of color: "In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation of students by race is unconstitutional. The Court also held that education is a right that must be available to all people on equal terms" (McNergney & McNergney, 2004, p.127). Arizona's reaction was slow to change; the old west mentality permeated the political system. Nobody, not even the federal government, was going to tell the legislators and school board members what to do. Even in present times, Arizona is considered insignificant to other states in terms of innovation: "Arizona in

particular has been omitted from the National discussion even though it has the third largest number of Mexican Americans of any other states, with a population that is nearly 25% Hispanic, and is becoming a major point of entry for immigrants” (Gonzales & De La Torre, May 2002, p. 289).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 changed the way that federal government got involved in education; pushing state and local board authority to the side on certain issues. This was President Johnson’s big investment on the War on Poverty. The hope was that ‘disadvantaged’ children living in poverty-people of color and rural white populations would benefit from resources made available for the first time through the influx of federal monies in schools with most needs: “school libraries, textbooks, and other instructional materials, counseling and health services, and remedial instruction” (McNergney & McNergney, 2004, pp.119-120).

In the late 1960’s, Hispanic high school and university student populations throughout the country organized protest against the educational establishment. The most significant boycott took place in East Los Angeles during March of 1968. There were thirty-one demands stemming from more Mexican-American educators, facilities that were safe and appropriate, usage of students’ culture in textbooks and classes, evaluation of grading system, and inclusion of parents in decision making (Weinberg, 1995, pp. 170-171). After decades of equity lawsuits filed in multiple states, finally, the nation’s youth had had enough: “The sight of

thousands of young Mexican-Americans demanding participation in decision-making even in limited areas of school governance disturbed school authorities” (Weinberg, p. 172)

In 1974, the United States Supreme Court unanimously ruled that “students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (*Lau v. Nichols*). Public schools had “an affirmative duty to provide non-English speaking students instruction in an understandable language” (ibid). The Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 was adopted stipulating conditions that local school districts had to follow, added federal monitoring, and allowed for lawsuits by the U.S. Attorney General to enforce language rights. The Bilingual Act further strengthened a federal commitment to bilingual education. However *Aspira v. Board of Education of the City of New York* decree affected a basic change in financing method: “Hitherto, funding for bilingual programs-such as they were-had come from federal sources on the theory that these services were “special” and thus not the responsibility of local authorities” (Weinberg, p. 374). Needless to say, bilingual funding was reduced only to what the federal government provided and bilingual instruction was cut in most school budgets.

‘English-Only’ movements began organizing to persuade voters to make English the official and only language government offices could use. In Arizona, Proposition 106 was passed in the early 1980’s, making English the official

language of the state. State offices were prohibited to offer services in any other language other than English. Luckily, this was challenged by Armando Ruiz, an Hispanic legislator in Arizona during this time. This particular law was thrown out as unconstitutional in *Ruiz v. Symington*.

Regardless of how little resources had been appropriated to schools to teach second language learners, on November 7, 2000, Arizonians past Proposition 203, commonly referred to as “English for Children”. This initiative was funded from outside the state. The findings were confusing and misleading; in summary, this initiative stated:

- The English language is the national public language of the United States of America and of the state of Arizona...and
- Immigrant parents are eager to have their children acquire a good knowledge of English, thereby allowing them to fully participate in the American Dream of economic and social advancement; and
- The government and the public schools of Arizona have a moral obligation and a constitutional duty to provide all of Arizona’s children...with these skills...literacy in the English language...
- The public schools of Arizona currently do an inadequate job of educating immigrant children, wasting financial resources on costly experimental language programs whose failure over the past two decades is demonstrated by the current high drop-out rates and low English literacy

levels of many immigrant children...

- Therefore it is resolved that all children in Arizona public schools shall be taught English as rapidly and effectively as possible. (Proposition 203)

Even before the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, mood of the country was such that there was no tolerance for anyone who was not an English speaker. *Proposition 203* was passed by the voters requiring educators not to speak any other language but English. Of course, bilingual education was practically eliminated and the state adopted English Immersion as the only form of second language instruction (<http://www.azcentral.com>; June 25, 2009). Now the voters were dictating what educators could do in their classrooms.

In 1988, the state of Arizona was allotting \$164 extra for instruction of English learners even though a survey determined that in those economic times, schools needed at least \$450 extra. *Flores v. Arizona* was filed in federal court declaring that the state failed to provide instruction for English language learners to make them proficient in English and enable them to master standard academic curriculum. In January 2000, U.S. District Court Judge Alfredo Marquez ruled that the State of Arizona was providing: “a funding level for English learners that was ‘arbitrary and capricious’ and failed to provide enough teachers, teachers’ aides, classrooms, materials and tutoring for these students” (<http://www.arizonaaea.org/politics.php?page=186>; retrieved April 22, 2010).



Over the course of several years, Arizona was ordered to comply with specific orders to correct this inequity; however, the legislature continued to allot substandard amounts for the education of second language learners. This continued to the point of being charged sanctions by Federal Judge Raner Collins. In March, 2006, when the Legislature failed to act, the State was fined \$500,000 per day. Fines totaling \$22 million dollars were assessed and eventually held in a fund to be distributed to school districts to support ELL instruction. In 2008, the state gave schools \$40 million to establish a new language-learning program, but placed a two-year limit on funding. In February 2008, the United States Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals heard arguments made by the Legislature and Superintendent Tom Horne that: “ Judge Collins is illegally ordering them to spend more money for ELL students/programs. They argue that components of HB2064 from March 2006 address the Flores Consent Order” (ibid). This circuit court overruled the motion and Arizona was ordered to comply with Judge Collin’s ruling. With 143,000 English learners at stake in 2009, the local Phoenix newspaper wrote:

State schools superintendent Tom Horne and the Legislature’s Republican leaders say the court is meddling in Arizona’s business. They ask the U.S. Supreme Court to step in. The justices agree to hear the case. The Supreme Court sends the case back to the appeals court, telling the court to consider

changes that Arizona has made in instructing English learners  
(<http://www.azcentral.com>.; June 25, 2009).

President George W. Bush signed into law the “No Child Left Behind” Act of 2001 that was suppose to encourage innovative programs to provide more choices for parents and students. States are held accountable for children’s learning, especially those learning a second language and with special education challenges. The State of Arizona implemented a high-stakes testing (AIMS) for grades three through ten. Students must pass this test in order to graduate from high school, regardless of any language difficulty a student might have. This has caused Hispanic students to drop-out or just give up and attain their General Education Development (GED) diploma and move forward. On the other hand, schools can no longer ignore the education of those who traditionally have not fared well in school-such as children of color, and poor, struggling students. Schools must find innovative ways to educate these children.

In recent years, state governments, including Arizona, have mandated that colleges and universities charge out-of-state tuition to any person that cannot demonstrate legal residency. This has had a discouraging effect on many Mexican students who are immigrants to the United States. An initiative called the “Dream Act” has been a source of discussion since 2001, at the federal level. This would allow students who had graduated from high school and were in good civil standing to be charged in-state tuition. There has been severe negativity towards immigrants, especially those coming from south of the United States.

Politicians get more votes from populations who want stricter laws, not humane laws. Students, as well as parents, have a tremendous fear of authority figures. Persons of authority who should be protecting the people are actually causing more stress. Some school officials are very aware of this insecurity and try to lessen the impact by providing classes on people rights, immigration services, English as a Second Language, and other services. Arizona children of Mexican or Latin American descent live in constant fear of not finding their parents at home after school day after day.

Not only have the students suffered from the lack of quality education and few opportunities, but Hispanic parents have not been valued for their participation in their children's education: "What teachers see is the children's failure and the confusions and misunderstandings experienced by the parents... The teachers respond as they do because, for the most part, they have little understanding about the everyday lives of children who are poor, non-English-speaking, and part of families struggling to survive" (Valdés, 1996, p. 191).

On the other hand, these parents have come to a totally foreign setting completely different from their homeland and struggle to make sense of an educational culture:

Mexican working-class parents bring to the United States goals, life plans, and experiences that do not help them make sense of what schools expect for their children. At the same time, schools expect a "standard" family, a family

whose “blueprints for living” are based on particular notions of achievement. They have little understanding about other ways of looking at the world and about other definitions of success...in order to understand how school failure comes to be constructed in the United States for and by newly arrived groups; one must have an understanding of the worlds from which these individuals come (Valdés, p. 5).

Unlike other immigrant groups that have chosen to become “American” and assimilate into an ‘American’ culture, Hispanics, especially in the southwest land, have close ties to the Motherland, even if it is only in a cultural sense. Even though the immediate family might have immigrated to the United States, they still have very close ties to the extended family left behind. These immigrants also tend to live in areas where they are most comfortable; where they can communicate in the language they know well and share the culture they hold dear to their hearts. For this population, schools are not a secure place. They feel completely lost in this setting; many times their language isn’t even spoken. They feel embarrassed not being able to express themselves and allow the administrators and teachers to take the lead. Yet, they continue to value who they are and pass this pride on to their children:

Specifically with respect to Hispanics, the school has failed to understand fully that Hispanics, as they work towards integration, want to remain Hispanic.

The historical role of the school as an agent for the assimilation of immigrants has not served this population well. Any school reform effort that does not

begin with the recognition that cultural pluralism is here to stay will fail”  
(Ruiz, January 1995).

Still, even though parents might feel uncomfortable in the educational environment, they learn to join forces to have their voices be heard when there is an injustice in the education of their children which is not acceptable:

Bicultural parents live in a constant battle for their children’s educational rights. Often understanding the view that the school personnel hold of them, they still build up the courage to attend important school functions and make attempts to have their voices heard. And even when bicultural parents, particularly those who are immigrants or non-English speaking, have legitimate concerns regarding the educational endeavors of the school in relation to their children’s well being, they frequently refrain from challenging the school system for fear of being accused of being ‘out of line’ or, worse yet, being disappointed through failed advocacy (Olivos, p.53).

#### History of Charter Schools

Charter schools came into existence as a result of various reports depicting public education in the United States as being substandard to other countries. It was promoted by parents and the community at large seeking a solution to their dissatisfaction with their schools. Politically, it upset the public school system that had been in existence since public schools were initiated. There was an outcry from boards of trustees, district officials, teachers unions and the like. It can probably be called one of the most intensive innovations in education:

Hill and Lake (2002) explain that charter school law, in general, is based on one or more charter school theories: (a) the innovation/experimentation theory, the purpose of which is to create new schools to serve as laboratories for successful teaching strategies; (b) the standard-based reform theory, the purpose of which is to free schools from some rules so they can meet higher expectations; (c) the new supply of public schools theory, the purpose of which is to open the system up to a set of new school providers; and (d) the competition/market theory, the purpose of which is to let parents' choice drive the entire school system to improve. (Bennett, 2008, p. 13).

In Arizona, the charter school movement took place with a similar viewpoint. Although other states had charter school legislation, Arizona's was considered one of the most progressive charter school laws at the time. It set the pace for other states in their efforts to open up charter schools:

Arizona State Charter School Law passed in 1994 is predicated: (a) experimental schools such as charter schools, which are interjected into the established educational system for the purpose of outperforming the existing model should perform at least as well as, indeed, according to the language of the law, better than ethnically similar traditional public schools on the state mandated reading, writing, and math criteria reference tests; and (b) all Arizona public school students, district and charter, should demonstrate increased proficiency on the AIMS scores as that is how the test is designed

(Franciosi, 2007 in Bennett, p. 15).

Charter schools truly embody the sense of entrepreneurship. The legislature in Arizona allowed private individuals, profit and nonprofit corporations and school districts to create and open up charter schools with the hope that they might be models to be replicated. Parents became a vital component to the development and success of charter schools because it provided them with a choice of schools that met their philosophies:

All charter schools are someone's creation. A visionary or more likely, a group of people, sees a need or opportunity and decides to start a school. To be effective, a charter school begins with a mission and stays mission-driven: Everyone associated with the school knows what it stands for and believes in its vision. Each school engages parents as real, not nominal partners. Each school fosters a culture that is highly collegial and focused on continuous improvement. And each effective charter school has a strong accountability system, not just to please its authorizers but also its "clients", the parents (USCS, p.1).

Fundamental to the charter school movement is the option of parental choice, especially for populations that typically did not have the economic means to be selective:

Parents described the potential for students to become more involved and to develop leadership skills more easily in a smaller school...Parents remarked

that students are less anonymous in charter schools and that their problems are noticed and addressed more quickly. Some parents also reported that the smaller size of the charter schools enable them to be more flexible and allow the parents to be more involved in school affairs (Mulholland,1999, p. 11).

Additionally, the Morrison Institute for Public Policy gives us informative data on how parents, in general, view their child's academic and social performance at the charter school. In general, parents expressed satisfaction with the items:



Table 2.2: Parents' perceptions of child's performance and attitudes at charter schools compared to previous school.

Item	a lot better	a little better	about the same	a little worse	a lot worse
How is your child doing academically at this school compared to previous school?	55%	24%	14%	6%	1%
How is your child's attitude towards school/learning compared to previous school?	60%	17%	17%	5%	1%
How does your child feel about his/her teacher compared to previous school?	58%	15%	21%	5%	1%
How does your child like his/her classmates compared to previous school?	39%	24%	35%	2%	0%

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy 1999

Additionally, the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at ASU added some insight as to why parents chose to take their child from their previous schools to the charter school, however, the issue of parental involvement was not addressed.

Table 2.3: Parent’s reasons for moving child from their former school to a charter school?

Percent	Reason
34%	Class size was too large
32%	Child was bored or under-challenged
29%	Negative social environment/interactions with classmates
29%	Teachers/staff at former school were not able/willing to help my child
28%	Child was doing poor academically
28%	Child’s self-esteem was low at former school
27%	Child was unhappy at former school
20%	Nothing wrong at former school, this school better met child’s needs
20%	Concern for child’s safety
16%	Former school was too large

Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy§1999

Ulpindo's extensive research found various authors who agreed that charter schools were able to help students with low self-esteem develop a positive self image, "Students attending alternative schools have higher self-esteem, more positive attitude toward school, improved school attendance, and decreased delinquent behaviors than when they attended traditional public schools (Hoxby, 1999; Martinez, Godwin, Kemmerer & Perna, 1995; Ogawa & Dulton, 1994; Rothstein, 2004, Schneider et al., 2002 in Ulpindo, 2008, p. 13).

Furthermore, the Morrison Institute investigated the fundamental practices of those charter schools which were successful with Hispanic students. Their findings outlined certain practices:

- (a) Emphasize the achievement of every child in the school, and expect everyone at the school to take responsibility for student performance;
- (b) ongoing assessments, tracking students monthly, weekly or even daily;
- (c) a principal who stays focused on student success;
- (d) collaborative solutions;
- (e) sticking with programs that work, and
- (f) focusing on individual performance (Bennett, p. 22).

The U.S. Charter Schools reported in *Successful Charter Schools* (retrieved May 19, 2009), that parents choose charter schools additionally because they were safe havens:

Even in neighborhoods known for rough public schools, these charter schools are peaceful and safe, without violence or disruption among the students.

Every school has developed strong expectations for student behavior and systems to help students to do their best (p. 6).

Charter school educators

Charter school administrators and teachers serving Hispanic populations are in a great position to practice innovative leadership skills in order to promote more parental involvement in their child's education. Contrary to the popular belief that Hispanic parents do not get involved with their student's education, various researchers such as Guadalupe Valdés, Gomez-Maciel (2003), Montoya-Gonzales (1996), C.M Ulpindo (2008), and Kent Scribner (1998) have proven this false: "Increased parental involvement based upon *values familiarity* between home and school, seems to suggest minority students experience higher levels of achievement when cultural norms and beliefs of parents and school personnel are more closely aligned" (Scribner, p. 20). Charter schools have given parents the opportunity to choose schools whose vision and mission fit those values they hold dear to their hearts. Because of the lack of restrictions in some areas,

parents, teachers and administrators have more flexibility to work together in the development and implementation of programs that promote greater parental participation in their child's education.

### The Principal as Culturally Competent Leader

Studies have shown that effective leaders are key to building a culture that is welcoming and purpose-driven; an institution highly regarded by the entire community: "Building and enhancing the school's character is the key to establishing its credibility among students, teachers, parents, and administrators and externally in the broader community (Sergiovanni, 2009, p.18). Charter school principals are in a situation where they have the best world for innovation and flexibility in developing this culture. The final outcome, of course, is to provide children with an opportunity to gain ground in the academic realm and dedicated principals are fundamental to this success: "A recent research summary found that a school's leader was second only in importance to the school's teaching staff in determining academic achievement. In schools serving high percentages of students from low-income families... leadership is even more important (Leithwood, K, Seashore, K., Anderson, S. & Wahlstrom, K. 2005 in NGA, November 2008, p. 2-3).

Principals must have some experience or understanding of Hispanic cultural values in order to accommodate parents and students in matters that are important. This helps to open the doors to communication. Dr. Juana Bordas of Mestiza

Leadership International published some suggestions for schools on how to be culturally sensitive to Hispanic parents (Appendix E). The subsequent list is a summary of each of the indicators to assist in dealing with Hispanic parents:

- The integrating factor of the Latino culture is the family and group closeness...to provide material assistance and emotional support.
- Latinos tend to relate to persons on a personal level.
- Getting along with people is extremely important to Latinos...This includes being polite, respectful and courtesy.
- Showing respect especially for someone who is older; has knowledge or a position of authority is a key value...Latinos indicate respect through their body language, voice tone, deference and manners.
- Being a person of confidence is a high compliment...loyalty and trust, are central.
- The idea of “*destino*”, (destiny) or that outside forces govern one’s life is a key belief of many Latinos...connotes an acceptance ‘life’s way’ and a deep faith that a force greater than oneself is guiding one’s efforts.
- Sharing resources, cooperation, and helping one another is expected.
- Latinos place a higher value on conformity and obedience. Respect for age and tradition might inhibit the tendency to ‘try new things’, change quickly and support untried innovations...Latinos typically focus more on the present, spend less time thinking about the future and planning for it.
- Latinos value their feelings, are encouraged to fully express them and

have fewer restrictions about showing deep emotions...Latinos are a contact culture and feel comfortable when physically close to others.

- Latinos celebrate life...Latinos focus on the process and the people (Bordas, J., November 2009).

It is incumbent upon the principal to be the leader dispelling erroneous beliefs that educators might have about the Hispanic children they teach and their parents. This deficit theory leads to low expectations. Therefore, administrators must have an in depth understanding of the values of Hispanics in order to know how to help parents contribute to the education of their children: “Disadvantaged communities must be seen as asset-based contributors so schools can become mirrors of the home and community culture.”(Guerra, P.L & Valverde, L.A., October 2007, p.41).

### Summary

The road to educational opportunity for Mexicans in the Southwest has been a difficult one. Promises and policies agreed to by governmental officials have been broken repeatedly. Of course, the fiscal resources have been minimal, even though the need has been great. All along the way, Mexican parents had to fight just to get the educational opportunities their children deserved. The struggle continues as the culture and language of the Hispanic people are disrespected through English-only laws, criminal immigration laws, poor schools, etc.

Charter schools were invented to serve a specific purpose. That purpose is to give parents a choice on the type of education that they wish for their children to have. Education is more than just passing a standardized test or entrance exam into college. It is also to have character and values that parents wish their children to have. Parents are more willing to take notice of their children's future goals when given the opportunity to play a decisive role in their children's education.

Serving in Hispanic communities necessitates understanding the intimate beliefs that the parents hold dear to their hearts. Hispanic parents need to be personally connected to the school personnel so they can feel comfortable in participating in all aspects of their child's education. The principal plays a critical role working with staff and parents in order for the Hispanic students to feel they are supported and can close the "cultural gap" that has existed between them and the school. By respecting parents and students' culture, there is an opportunity to share the educational culture of the school with parents in order to reach goals that are mutually accepted:

If the education of Latinos is to improve in the future, to the point that all students are learning at grade level, then public schools will have to be redefined and specifically tailored to match up with the traditional culture of Mexico and particularly the blended culture created by the Mexican American experience in the United States. By adopting a new educational philosophy



toward the utilization of the Latino student's family culture, schools will need to be *transformed* so as to represent and incorporate this new cultural approach to teaching and learning (Valverde, 2006, p. 19).

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

This study was performed as a qualitative research project, utilizing Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), attempting to understand the human behavior within the context of the relationship between the charter school staff and Hispanic parents: “Grounded theory is a *general methodology* for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 158). The focus was on culturally sensitive practices used by the charter school staff to encourage the involvement of Hispanic parents. Two groups were interviewed individually- Hispanic parents and school administrators. Teachers were interviewed in a focus group setting.

Grounded theory investigates the different voices regarding an issue in order to identify a new paradigm, a new hypothesis, or a new way of looking at data gathered: “Theory evolves during the actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection” (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 158). In this study, data triangulation: “the use of a variety of data sources in a study” (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 46), was employed among the data collected from the three entities- parents, administrators, and teachers. Grounded theory differs from other research methodologies:

1. The conceptual framework is generated from the data rather than from previous studies, although previous studies help to guide and influence the final outcome of the work.

2. The researcher attempts to discover dominant processes in the social scene rather than describing the unit under study.
3. Significant data are compared to other data pieces rather than comparing totals of indices...
4. The collection of data may be modified according to the advancing theory; that is, false leads are dropped, or more penetrating questions are asked as deemed necessary.
5. Rather than following a series of linear steps, the investigator works within a matrix of which several research processes are in operation at once... the investigator examines data as they arrive, and begins to code, categorize, conceptualize, and to write the first few thoughts concerning the research report almost from the beginning of the study (Stern, February 1980, p. 21).

#### Participants and site selection

Hispanic parents, charter school administrators and teachers were the primary data sources who helped paint an in-depth portrait of charter school's practices that encourage Hispanic parental participation. The researcher honored the role of the participant as the one who is knowledgeable about the practices and cultivates the idea that the researcher is there to learn. The process of analysis was to group data for commonality, and code by emerging themes or categories in order to formulate hypotheses about how charter schools involve Hispanic

parents: “Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relations to the data during the course of the research...” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 5).

In order to have a context and framed boundary of this probe, demographic information on charter schools was collected from the Arizona Department of Education, Arizona Charter School Governing Board, and *Greatschools.net*, an on-line data bank of all schools in the United States: “Sources of data are the same: interviews and field observations, as well as documents of all kinds”. (Denzin & Lincoln, pp. 159-160). The data collected included charter schools that match the following criteria:

- a. Serves Hispanic student population of 51% or more.
- b. Operates in the Phoenix metropolitan area.
- c. Has been operating for at least five years.
- d. Is not a district sponsored alternative/charter school.
- e. Is an on-site school compared to on-line or e-learning school.

Additional information collected was school size, grade levels serviced, home language information, free/reduced lunch program information, Arizona Learns rating, and No Child Left Behind (AYP) rating. School possibilities were a combination of elementary and secondary schools. Typically, parents are

naturally involved more in schools when children are in elementary school, however, the focus here is to see what practices are being utilized in charter schools, therefore, we have included high school settings that are not electronic-based (Table 3.1). Utilizing the different scenarios provide an opportunity to compare the information to see if there are similar or opposing strategies utilized to involve parents: “With the focus on substantive area...the generation of theory can be achieved by a comparative analysis between or among different kinds of substantive areas...” (Glaser & Strauss, p. 32).

Table 3.1: Selective information on schools used in research

School (Fictitious Name)	Grades served	Student count	% of Hispanic students	Primary Home Language: Spines
Victoria Martínez ES	K-8	350	97%	96%
Jóvita Payán ES	K-6	128	95%	91%
Reyes V. Ruiz HS	9-12	178	97%	88%
Oscar Romero CP	9-12	317	92%	74%

Pilot Study

In preparation of the official study, a pilot study was done with a Montessori program in order to test the interview questions: “It is a good idea to do a pilot study. Pre-interviews with selected key participants and a brief period of observation and document review can assist the researcher...focus on particular

areas that may have been unclear previously” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 42)

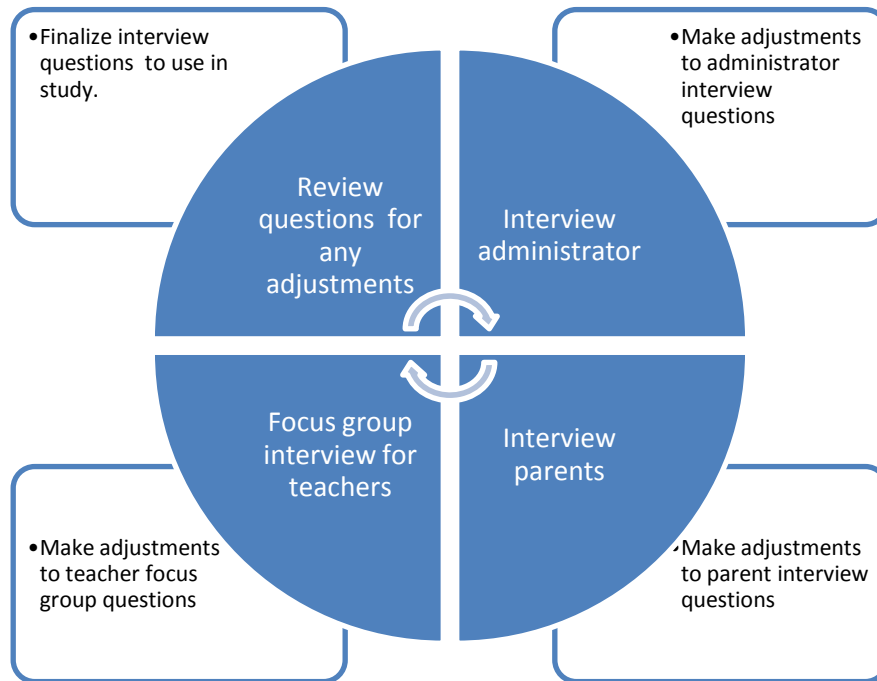
The demographics at the pilot school were:

- 94% Hispanic,
- serves one hundred K-3 students,
- located in Phoenix,
- original director since 1995

The purpose of this pilot was to field test a basic set of questions that administrators, parents, and teachers will be asked. The pilot study was useful in two ways: (1) to make sure interviewees, especially parents, understood the questions and there are no confusing elements and 2) the interview responses gave an indication of variables that might be relevant to deal with in order to maintain the purity of the scientific method: “Joint collection, coding, and analysis of data are the underlying operation. The generation of theory, coupled with the notion of theory as process, requires that all three operations be done together as much as possible” (Glaser & Strauss, p. 43).

The administrator was interviewed first taking about an hour and a half to complete. Clarification on the questions that were confusing was taken into consideration before the official interviews. Two parents, both English speakers were interviewed. They responded appropriately to each of the Interview Questions. Lastly, two teachers from the program were interviewed.

Figure 1: Procedure implemented in Pilot Study:



### Procedure for Study

In order to respect the culture in the school and to establish trustworthiness, the researcher met with individual administrators to give an overview of the study being done:

By establishing trust and rapport at the beginning of the study, the researcher is better able to capture the nuance and meaning of each participant's life from the participant's point of view. This also ensures that participants will be more willing to share everything...with the researcher" (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 40).

Conversation was held in order to discuss the following terms:

- 1) The administrator agreed to meet with the researcher in a maximum of two, one-hour intervals to be interviewed on general information about the school and formal questions designed for study.
- 2) The administrator recommends parents to be interviewed and determines how contact will be made.
- 3) The researcher agrees to keep identity of all interviewees private.
- 4) Staff interview time and place was designated by the administrator taking into account the availability of staff without interfering with school responsibilities.
- 5) The researcher agreed to share information gathered at a future time with identities being protected.

Once the interviews were set, the researcher interviewed the administrators from each school first. This set the background for the teacher and parental interviews. The administrators' responses gave much detail. Administrators had been at the charter school for a number of years (See Chapter 4). Two administrators had been previous teachers at the charter school before moving into administration. In three out of four schools, the teacher focus group was held next for interviews. Teachers answered seven questions compared to ten for the other two groups. Every teacher was given an opportunity to speak on all seven questions. Those who chose not to speak to every inquiry consented to a lead teacher to give the majority of responses. This happened only for a few



questions in one of the four schools where some of the teachers did not have enough time at the school (Martinez School) to give a full response. Parents were interviewed on-campus or off-campus depending on their family needs. Thirteen of seventeen parents spoke only Spanish.

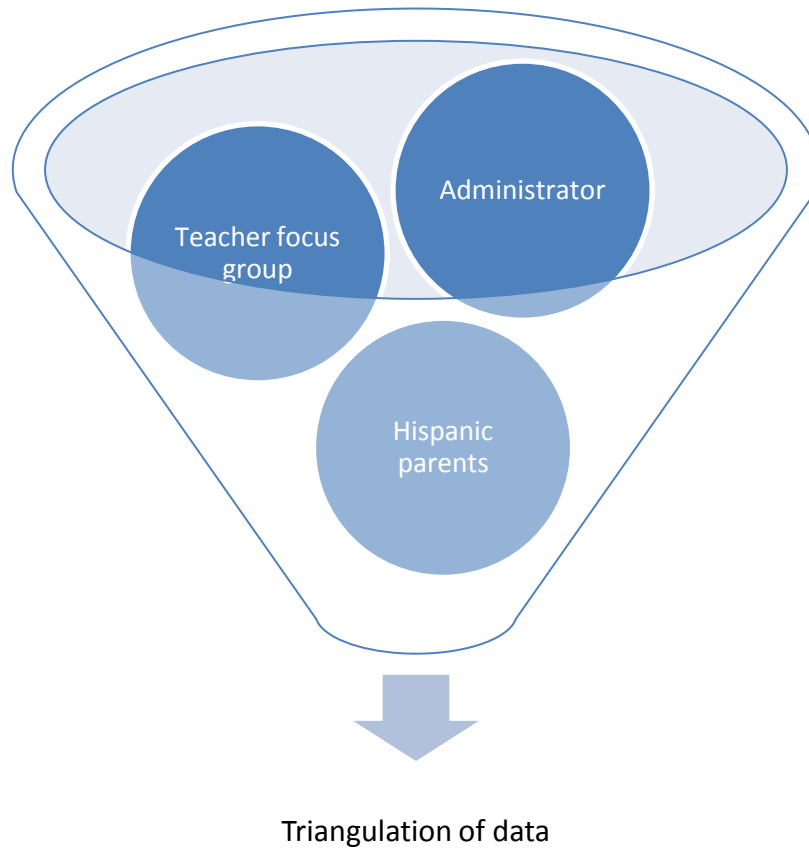
Responses to each of the three set of questions were correlated to three

Guiding Questions:

1. What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose the particular charter school?
2. What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child's education?
3. What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation for children at these charter schools?

Interviewees' responses were given equal voice (Figure 3.2) because it is assumed that they are the 'experts' in answering the Guiding Questions.

Figure 2: Triangulation of data



This study employed interview questions formulated by the researcher based upon cultural sensitivity practices in literature reviews (Valdes, 1996; Bordas, 2009; Scribner, 1998; Olivos, 2006). The data was transcribed correlated into the three Guiding Questions. Emerging themes were categorized in order to organize similarities and to formulate hypotheses (Chapter 5):

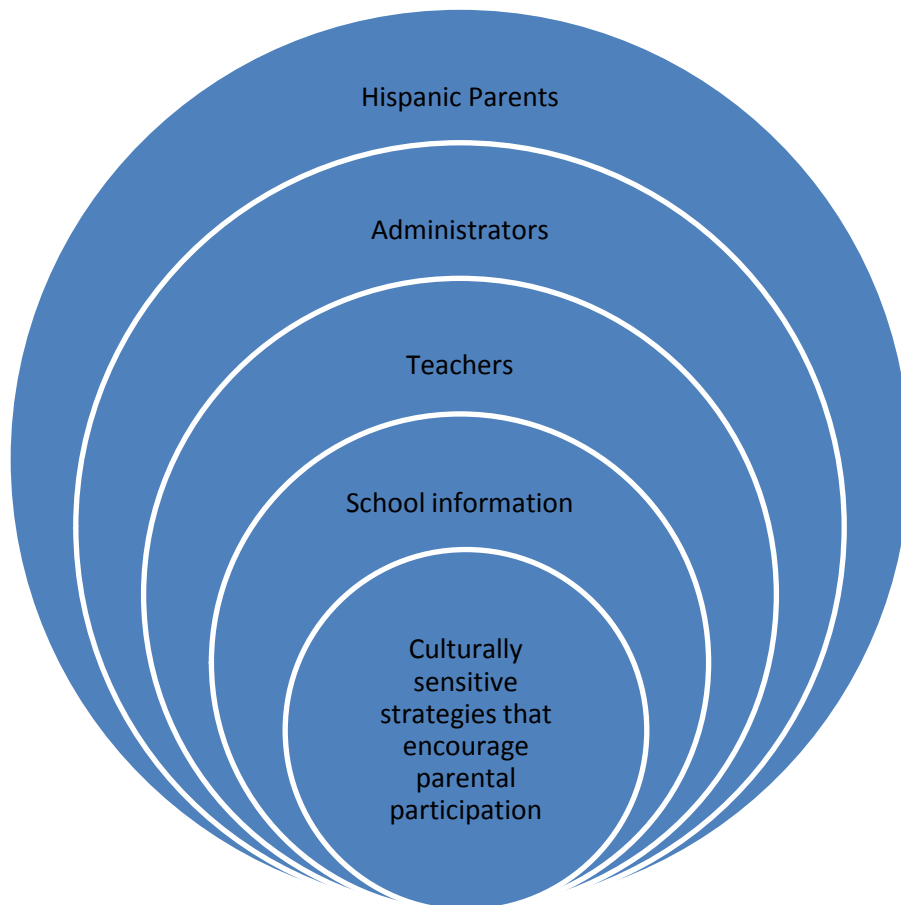
generalizations not only help delimit a grounded theory's boundaries of applicability; more important, they help us broaden the theory so that it is more generally applicable and has greater explanatory and predictive power. By comparing where the facts are similar or different, we can generate properties of categories that increase the categories' generality and explanatory power" (Glaser & Strauss, p. 24).

General information was gathered from administrators in order to identify variables that might have an impact on this study, such as:

- A. How long has the administrator been at this particular charter school?
- B. Has the administrator been in other schools-charter, private, or district schools?
- C. Is the administrator also the founder of the charter school?
- D. Does the administrator have an education certification from the State of Arizona?
- E. Does the administrator have any other administrative credentials or experience? If yes, in what areas?
- F. What experience has the administrator had in working with Hispanic parents?

Once the Interview Questions from administrators, teachers, and Hispanic parents were gathered, transcribed, correlated to the three Guiding Questions, all the information from these, school demographics and written responses from administrators were utilized to form hypothesis. Figure 3.4 shows how each piece of information was utilized.

Figure 3: Data compilation on culturally sensitive strategies that encourage Hispanic parental involvement.



## Interviews

Administrators were the first group interviewed since it is assumed that they have more of a practical knowledge base having the responsibility of promoting parental involvement with their staff and parents. Administrators who choose to participate in this study generously answered the following ten Interview

### Questions:

1. Tell me about the Hispanic families at this school.
2. Why do you believe Hispanic parents decide to bring their children to this school?
3. What kind of experience do Hispanic parents have when they are looking to put their children here?
4. How does the staff make Hispanic parents feel comfortable at this school?
5. What does the staff do to make communication easy for Hispanic parents?
6. What does the school do to encourage Hispanic parents to be involved in their children's education?
7. What are the expectations for parental involvement?
8. Explain how Hispanic parents "voices" are heard at this school?
9. What opportunities are made available for Hispanic parents to help the school and their children?
10. How are the community and school joined in the education of Hispanic children?

The charter school administrators recommended names and of two to six Hispanic parents who could participate in the study. Parental interview responses were organized by school and correlated to the three Guiding Questions. The intent of this study was to identify the practices implemented by charter schools to involve Hispanic parents; therefore, parent data is assumed to have as much weight as the others. It is understood that there might be some biases if the administrator has parents who are ‘favorites’, however, over the course of the study, different opinions and feedback produce hypotheses:

Our logic of *ongoing inclusion* of groups must be differentiated from the logic used in comparative analyses that are focused mainly on accurate evidence for description and verification. That logic, one of preplanned inclusion and exclusion, warns the analyst away from comparing “non-comparable” groups...To be included in the planned set, a group must have “enough features in common...To be excluded, it must show a ‘fundamental difference’ from the others (Glaser & Strauss, p. 50).

Even though the term “parent” was used very loosely to include any legal caretaker, all the parents interviewed were the biological parents. Questions concerning the placement of the child in the school were asked, but no specific name, test scores, or other personal academic data was collected for any child. Rather, the parents’ perspective on the success of their child was given great consideration. Parents chose a preferred site for the interview in order to help

them feel comfortable and to accommodate their needs. Some had small children, elderly parents, or had no transportation. At all cases, initial contact was made by telephone. Most interviews were done on the campus setting; two parents preferred to meet off campus. Thirteen parents were Spanish speakers only, in which case, the researcher conducted the interview in Spanish and translated for the data collection.

#### Hispanic Parent Interview: Interview questions for parents in English

1. Share some information about your family.
2. Why did you decide on this school?
3. How do you feel your child or children are doing at this school compared to other schools?
4. What does the administration do to make you feel comfortable?
5. What has the administration done to make communication easy for you?
6. What has the administrator done to encourage you to be involved in your child's education?
7. What do you think are the expectations placed on you as a parent?
8. Explain how your "voice" is heard at this school.
9. What opportunities are made available for you to help the school and your child's education?
10. How are the community and school joined in the education of children?

## Teacher Data Collection

Small group sessions were held with these staff for about half an hour to an hour, so that they could voice their views on practices that might not have been identified by the administrator or the parents. This recording was very informal:

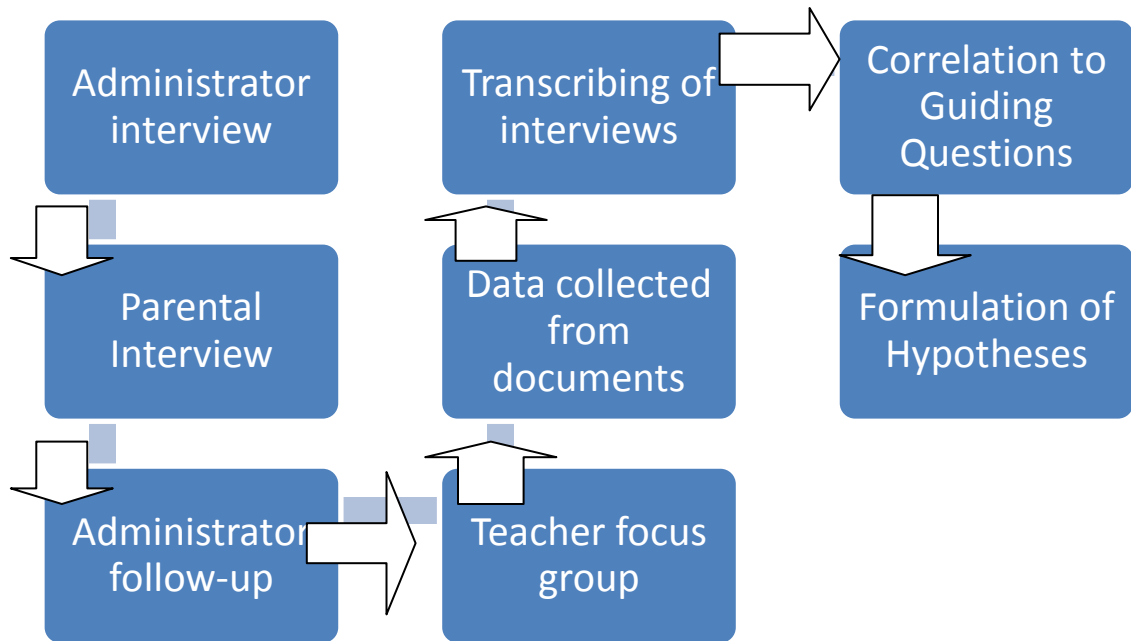
In this stage, a tentative conceptual framework is generated using the data as reference. The investigator attempts to discover the main problems in the social scene from the point of view of the interactants, or actors (or subjects participating in the study), and how these interactants deal with the problems. Carefully comparing all data as they are received, the investigator makes a choice regarding the relative salience of the problems presented in the scene under study (Stern, p. 21).

### Focus group questions for teachers

1. How does this school promote a comfortable environment for families?
2. How does this school reach out to the Hispanic community, including parents?
3. How does this school communicate with parents?
4. What opportunities are made available to help parents be involved in their children's education?
5. What are the expectations held for parents?
6. Why do parents bring their children to this particular charter school?
7. How are Hispanic "voices" heard at this school?



Figure 4: Steps in interview process



From all the data gathered through interviews of the three groups, questionnaires submitted by administrators and other sources, the goal was to formulate hypotheses through this process: “Our strategy of comparative analysis for generating theory puts a high emphasis on *theory as process*; that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not as a perfected product. The discussion form of formulating theory gives a feeling of ‘ever-developing’ to the theory, allows it to become quite rich, complex, and dense, and makes it fit and relevance easy to comprehend”. (Glaser & Strauss, p.32).

#### Researcher

The researcher in a qualitative study is interested in the process of data

gathering, deriving meaning from data, and is the primary vehicle for collection of data. This calls for the researcher to be involved in the fieldwork, report the descriptive data, and induce emerging themes from reality. Being completely oblivious to the experiences and some familiarity with the focus of the study or the sites being utilized is practically impossible, however: “The qualitative researcher’s challenge is to demonstrate that this personal interest will not bias the study” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.28). The interviewer engaged in interacting with the contributors and deciphering their insights that represent multiple concepts of reality based on their spoken word. When the researcher states an observation made, it is made clear that it is an observation only. The hypotheses presented are also derived from the spoken word.

### Summary

The purpose of collecting descriptive data from each of the groups-parents, administrators, and teachers, was to form hypotheses upon the nature of parent involvement in charter schools. By collecting data sets, analysis was aided by triangulation. The methodology utilized is Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) since by using this method, the researcher can report data from the different charter schools and generate theories on what these schools do to involve Hispanic parents in the education of their children and its effects on student achievement.

Three groups participated in interviews and focus group: administrators,

teachers and Hispanic parents. A conceptual framework was generated from this significant data by utilizing existing research as a base, examining the data, and categorizing in order for the researcher to conceptualize hypotheses of Hispanic parental involvement in charter schools.

The primary data sources were Hispanic parents, charter school administrators and teachers. Along with public written information available, they help paint a detailed portrait of these particular charter school's practices that encourage Hispanic parental participation. The sites chosen had the following criteria:

- Serves Hispanic student population of 51% or more.
- Located in the Phoenix metropolitan area.
- Operating for at least five years or more
- Not a district sponsored alternative/charter school.
- On-site school compared to on-line or e-learning school.

A pilot study was conducted for the purpose of 1) clarifying any misunderstood questions in the interview, and 2) to prepare to codify, classify and make general assumptions of themes that might arise.

Interview questions were prepared by the researcher taking into account what literature recommended as culturally important to Hispanic populations. These questions attempted to gather information on culturally sensitive practices

that charter schools utilize in order to attract Hispanic parents' involvement. Parents, teachers and administrators' identification were protected as much as possible by utilizing fictitious names.

Interviews were conducted with charter school administrators at length in order to get a clear picture of all that is occurring in the school to promote parental involvement. Of the three groups, administrators had more information at hand, especially any historical implications. The researcher was the responsible party for interviewing, translating, classifying and formulating new paradigms on Hispanic parent involvement. This necessitated that the researcher attempt to be as objective as possible in order to produce information that is useful and relevant to other schools, whether charter schools or district public schools.

## Chapter 4

### Data Analysis and Results

This chapter will give a portrait of the participating charter schools and present the data gathered on Hispanic parent involvement, through the lenses of three groups: school administrators, teachers and Hispanic parents. Qualitative data and narratives from formal interviews of the three groups from four different schools was transcribed and then categorized by relevance to the three guiding questions of this study:

- 1) What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose this particular charter school?
- 2) What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administrator utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental participation?
- 3) What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation at these charter schools?

The researcher also requested that administrators respond to a separate questionnaire on their qualifications and experience in order to give the reader a view of their qualifications. Demographic information was gathered on the schools from Internet sources (Arizona Department of Education and [www.greatschools.net](http://www.greatschools.net)) and is included herein (Table 4.1) to offer insight on these four particular charter schools without identifying their actual names. This information will be presented first before proceeding to the findings from the

interviews.

The four participant schools met the criteria as pointed out in Chapter 3:

- a. Serves Hispanic student population of 51% or more.
- b. Operates in the Phoenix metropolitan area.
- c. Has been in operation for at least five years.
- d. Is not a district sponsored alternative/charter school.
- e. Is an on-site school compared to on-line or e-learning school.

Three other schools chose not to participate in this study because administrators had a concern with their lack of time availability.

#### Data Collection

Individual administrators were approached ahead of time for about an hour each to discuss the purpose of the study, the procedure for the interviews and to set up interviews. The questions for all three groups-administrators, teachers and parents- were shared with the administrators so that they would be aware of what was going to be asked. They also discussed with the researcher how they would set the interview times for teachers, the next group to be interviewed, so that teaching time would not be lost. The administrators were responsible for recommending and making the initial contact with parents. The

intent was to inform the teachers and parents of the study by the administration above the purpose of the study, time commitment and confidentiality to be honored. Even though administrators knew who the teachers and parents were, they were not privy to any of the responses given by individual parents or staff.

In total thirty-seven (37) persons were interviewed: four (4) administrators; seventeen (17) teachers in three groups of four and one group of five, and sixteen (16) parents. This included one couple and the rest were single-parent interviews. The length of the interview was approximately an hour for each administrator and teacher group. Parent interview time fluctuated from forty minutes to an hour and a half. All but two parental interviews took place on the campus in a private setting. Two parents chose to meet in a private location outside the school to accommodate their family needs.

Each of the three groups was asked a specific number of questions: ten for administrators, ten for parents and seven for the four teachers' focus group. (The design of the questionnaires is explained in Chapter 3). Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Of the sixteen parents interviewed, thirteen parents preferred to be interviewed in Spanish, which the researcher (a Spanish speaker) accommodated. Transcriptions were translated as close to the words and message that the parents shared in their interviews and reviewed by a third party knowledgeable in Spanish. Transcribing and translating took approximately two to

three hours each; in total seventy-five hours were spent by the researcher in this process.

The qualitative data are organized by groups interviewed: administrators, teachers, and parents. The researcher organized the transcribed data in the following manner: a) by direct responses; b) from this vast amount of responses, the researcher extracted key wording that best corresponded to the three guiding questions mentioned in paragraph one; c) key wording were further grouped together by related subtopics; d) these subtopics were given subheadings based on literature support; e) finally, these data are presented in various table.

#### Confidentiality

Each administrator expressed much interest in having their school partake in this study. Of the seven potential schools approached to partake in this study, four were very punctual and cooperative in setting time aside to answer the questions presented by the interviewer and organizing a method of assembling teachers and parents to share their thoughts. Administrators were able to examine all of the questions ahead of time to make sure they felt comfortable and that staff and parents would not feel threatened by the questions. The administrator knew the names of the teachers and parents interviewed, but names were not recorded or transcribed, therefore, the administrator could not trace any comments back to any individual. No school, administrator, teacher or parent names were identified in any way. The



researcher did not record any participants' names. This was done intentionally so that all parties could express their opinions freely.

Additionally, the schools have pseudo names to make sure as much confidentiality as possible is maintained. The fictitious names were chosen by the researcher. They are names of "heroes" in the researcher's personal life:

- A. Victoria Martinez Elementary School
- B. Reyes V. Ruiz Alternative High School
- C. Oscar Romero High School
- D. Jóvita M. Payán Elementary School.

#### Description of Schools

During the time of this study, Arizona utilized "AZ Learns Achievement Profiles" to designate schools' overall yearly performance. For elementary schools and middle schools, the profiles are based on data from three statewide sources: Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) results, Measurement of Academic Performance (MAP) results, and whether or not the school made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) through the federal "No Child Left Behind" mandate. For high schools, the criterion differs. The state AIMS results, AYP status and graduation/dropout rates are used (for definitions of terms, see Chapter One).

Arizona schools are identified as:

- Excelling
- Performing Plus
- Performing
- Underperforming
- Failure to meet academic standards or pending

Additionally, Alternative Schools, such as Reyes V. Ruiz High School can only have a rating of “Performing” or “Underperforming” since they are obligated to provide services to students who are referred by the judicial system and in a very high risk category. At the time of the study, this school was rated as Performing.

The table below shows some demographic information gathered on these four particular schools from Internet sources (Arizona Department of Education and Greatschools.net). This table does not contain every bit of information, solely information pertinent to this study. It gives a “snapshot” of their status and population in general (AZ Learns status, Student Count, Free and Reduced Status) and, in particular, to the Hispanic student population( Hispanic Students, English Language Learners, and Home language in Spanish (further definitions and explanations may be found in Chapter One).

Table 4.1: Selected school demographics information based upon 2008 information according to criteria and school in study. (Fictitious names used for schools)

Criteria	Martinez ES	Ruiz HS	Romero CP	Payán ES
<u>AZ Learns</u>	Performing Plus	Performing	Performing	Underperforming
<u>Student count</u>	350	178	317	128
Hispanic				
<u>Student %</u>	97%	97%	92%	98%
Free/Reduced				
<u>Status %</u>	91%	No data*	71%	95%
<u>ELL students</u>	21%	5%	27%	21%
Home				
<u>Language</u> (Spanish)	96%	88%	74%	83%

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 \*This school does not participate in the National School Lunch Program & School Breakfast Program thereby this data was not reported.

## Administrators

The first part of this section displays information on administrator's educational and professional qualifications, experience with Hispanic populations, charter schools, and other schools. School administrators were asked to submit written response via email to the following questions in order to assess administrators' experience and skill level.

1. Has the administrator been in other schools-charter, private, or district schools?
2. Is the administrator also the founder of the charter school?
3. Does the administrator have an education certificate from the State of Arizona?
4. Does the administrator have any other administrative credentials or experience? If yes, in what areas?
5. What experience has the administrator had in working with Hispanic parents?

Table 4.2 summarizes the information submitted by the administrators at the charter schools in this study. The information is not meant to be extensive but to give a brief picture of the administrators in these charter schools. Some of the characteristics were such as their bilingualism and their Hispanic background was not asked in these five questions, however, it was information that was related in the general Interviews conducted with all four administrators.

Table 4.2: Summary of administrators' characteristics by school

Summary of Questions	Martinez ES	Ruiz HS	Romero CP	Payán ES
Time at Charter?	6 years	15 years	7 years	10 years
Worked in other schools?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Charter founder?	No	Yes	No	No
AZ Certified?	Yes	No	No	Yes
Other credentials or experience?	Yes, teacher	Yes	No	Yes, teacher
Experience with Hispanic population?	12 years	20 years	7 years	20 years
Hispanic or non-Hispanic?	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	

For this study administrators were asked ten Interview Questions correlated to the three “Guiding Questions” stated earlier in this chapter and the main premise for this investigation. The first Interview Question was utilized as an “ice-breaker”. The other nine were used to answer one of the three Guiding Questions as listed later in this section. The ten Interview Questions for administrators were:

1. Tell me about the Hispanic families at this school.
2. Why do you believe Hispanic parents decide to bring their children to this school?
3. What kind of experience do Hispanic parents have when they are looking to put their children here?
4. How does the staff make Hispanic parents feel comfortable at this school?
5. What does the staff do to make communication easy for Hispanic parents?
6. What does the school do to encourage Hispanic parents to be involved in their children’s education?
7. What are the expectations for Hispanic parental involvement?
8. Explain how Hispanic parents “voices” are heard at this school.
9. What opportunities are made available for Hispanic parents to help the school and their children?
10. How are the community and school joined in the education of Hispanic children?

From the ten questions asked in the interview with administrators, Question #1 was used as an ice-breaker. The other nine correlated to the Three Guiding Questions. Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed by the researcher by school and administrator. Each Interview Question was linked to one of the Three Guiding Questions as they correlated appropriately (not in numerical order).

The following table demonstrates interview questions correlated to Guiding Question # 1 relating to School Selection.

Table 4.3: Interview questions correlated to Guiding Question # 1 on School Selection

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Correlated Interview Questions to Question #1: What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to their particular charter school?

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Interview Question #2: Why do you believe Hispanic parents decide to bring their children to this school?

Interview Question #3: What kind of experience do Hispanic parents have when they are looking to put their children here?

Interview Question #5: What does the staff do to make communication easy for Hispanic parents?

Interview Question #8: Explain how Hispanic parents' "voices" are heard at this school?

---

The findings listed in Table 4.4 lists the administrators’ responses as they were synthesized and put into appropriate categories. The enumerations after each indicator demonstrates how many schools, out of four, indicated a similar or same comment. Each indicator must have been mentioned by at least three out of four school administrators to qualify for inclusion.

Table 4.4: Administrators’ responses in categories correlated to Guiding Question #1

<u>Categories</u>	Corresponding <u>indicators</u> from administrators’ responses to Guiding Question #1: “School Selection”
<u>Personal Interaction</u>	Small setting provides welcoming environment (4/4) Parents’ needs are accommodated/feeling of family (4/4) Tailored, prescriptive attention to children needs (4/4)
<u>Goal-Oriented</u>	School campaign for post secondary education (3/4)
<u>Family services</u>	School provides family services (3/4)
<u>Language</u>	Communication in language of the home facilitates participation (4/4)
<u>Accommodation</u>	Assist in education of child (4/4)
<u>Parent education</u>	Parent Agreements helps bring parents on board (3/4)
<u>Communication</u>	Parent Centers with liaison promotes involvement (2/4)
<u>Community-based</u>	School entrenched in community service work (3/4)



The following table demonstrates the administrators' interview questions correlated to Guiding Question # 2 dealing with Parental Involvement. Three of the interview questions dealt with methods administrators believed encouraged parental involvement in the school.

Table 4.5: Interview questions correlated to Guiding Question #2: Parental Involvement.

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Correlating Interview Question to Guiding Question #2: What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child's education?

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<u>Interview Question #4:</u>	How does the staff make Hispanic parents feel comfortable at this school?
<u>Interview Question #6:</u>	What does the school do to encourage Hispanic parents to be involved in their children's education?
<u>Interview Question #7:</u>	What are the expectations for parental involvement?

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The researcher identified three categories which would describe the indicators mentioned by the school administrators in the area of Parental Involvement. This information is shown in Table 4.6. Again, the enumeration signifies the number of schools (4) that mentioned similar indicator.

Table 4.6: Administrators’ responses in subheading form, relative to Guiding Question #2: Parent Participation.

<u>Category</u>	Corresponding <u>indicators</u> from administrators’ response to Guiding Question #2: What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administrator utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child’s education?
<u>Staff experienced w/ Hispanic culture</u>	Administrator hires staff that has experience with Hispanic culture (4/4) Parents have high expectations of schools (3/4)
<u>Leadership-building</u>	Community Academic Nights (3/4) Listen, explain, education parents (4/4) Parents partner in social behavior of children (3/4)
<u>Administrators’ Involvement</u>	Administrator participates in academic monitoring (3/4) Administrator sensitive to Hispanic culture and issue (4/4)

The third Guiding Question treats the issue of the Benefits of Hispanic parental involvement in the education of the child. The following table lists two Interview Questions that were asked of administrators correlated to this issue.

Table 4.7: Interview questions correlated to Guiding Question #3 on the benefits of parental involvement:

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Correlated Interview Questions to Guiding Question #3: What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation for children at these charter schools?

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Interview Question #9	What opportunities are made available for Hispanic parents to help the school and their children?
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Interview Question #10	How is the community and school joined in the education of Hispanic children?
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Lastly, the researcher identified the indicators from the vast amount of information from administrators on the issue of the benefits of having Hispanic parents involved in the education of their child in their schools and categorized this data. Below is Table 4.8 reporting these findings.

Table 4.8: Administrators' responses by category and corresponding indicators  
 from administrators' responses relating to Guiding Question # 3: Benefits

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<u>Category</u>	Corresponding <u>indicators</u> from administrators' responses to Guiding Question #3: What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation at charter schools?
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<u>Family community</u>	<p>Small environment helps to recognize everyone (4/4)</p> <p>Multiple children attend same school (4/4)</p> <p>Communication with parents on a daily basis (3/4)</p> <p>Families feel safe and comfortable (4/4)</p>
<u>Knowledge of Academic success</u>	<p>Parent knows where the child is academically, so does the Teacher, principal, paraprofessionals (3/4)</p> <p>We identify struggling students/close the gap very quickly (3/4)</p>
<u>High Parental commitment</u>	<p>Parent workshops have a high participation (3/4)</p> <p>Parent/Teacher Conferences exceed expectations (3/4)</p> <p>Parents volunteer at school (3/4)</p>

---

## Teachers

Teachers were interviewed in four focused groups at each of their respective school sites. In all, there were eighteen (18) teachers that were interviewed in a small group setting at each of the four schools. At the elementary schools, all the teachers were females, whereas, in the high schools there was a mixture of male and female. There was an array of different ages, qualifications and experiences.

In order to respect the teaching time, administrators set up non-critical time for teachers to meet with the interviewer. At Ruiz High School, students were on fall break; however, teachers had professional development and had plenty of time to be interviewed. Two schools were interviewed after the school day (Romero & Payán) and the fourth school (Martinez School) allowed teachers to be interviewed during their professional hour. Even though the teachers answered as completely as possible, it was important to maintain a time frame for the school in session.

All the teachers were encouraged to speak honestly to each of the Interview Questions. Names were not recorded nor transcribed in order to protect the confidentiality as much as possible. Teachers were asked to keep what was said confidential, however, it could not be guaranteed.

Below is a brief summary of the amount of teachers that were interviewed at

each school, when this interview took place, and the length of time to complete the interview. Additionally, the researcher stated the years of experience teachers had in education whether in charter schools, district, private or a combination of all of these.

Table 4.9: Teachers interview arrangements and range of teaching experience by schools.

School	No. of Teachers	No. of Male/Female	Teaching experience	Interview Period	Time Duration
Martinez	4	4/female	3 > 3 yrs 1 < 20 yrs	Curriculum Planning Period	40 min
Ruiz HS	4	2/female 2/male	2 > 3 yrs 2 < 20 yrs	Fall Break	75 min
Romero CP	5	2/female 3/male	2 > 5 yrs 2 < 10 yrs	After-school	60 min
Payán ES	5	5/female	4 > 5 yrs 1 < 10 yrs	After-school	80 min

Teachers were asked seven Interview Questions relating to Hispanic parental involvement. These were designed differently from the other two groups in order to tailor to their experiences as a teacher. They are as follows:

1. How does this school provide a comfortable environment for Hispanic families?
2. What does the school do to reach out to the Hispanic community?
3. How does the school communicate with parents?
4. What opportunities are made available for parents to be involved in their child's education?
5. What are the expectations for parents?
6. Why do you think parents bring their children to this particular charter school?
7. How are Hispanic parents' voices heard?

Teacher interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed by the researcher according to what individual teacher said. Teachers were informed of confidentiality on behalf of the researcher, but could not guarantee, only request, total confidentiality be kept within the group interviewed. School names and teachers names were not listed in order provide as much confidentiality in this report as possible. All teachers spoke to all or some of the Interview Questions. Teachers with more experience at the charter school were more aware of the historical aspects of parental involvement in their school. However, teachers

would give their input or, at times, just say that they agreed with a particular comment.

As was done with administrators, the researcher sought key responses from questions one through seven pertinent to the focus of this study based on the three Guiding Questions listed earlier in this chapter.

Seven questions posed to teachers were correlated to the three Guiding Questions. The following table demonstrates interview questions correlated to Guiding Question 1.

Table 4.10: Teachers' responses in subheading form, relative to Guiding Question #1: Selection

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Correlated Interview Questions to Guiding Question #1: What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to their particular charter school?

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<u>Interview Question #1</u>	How does this school provide a comfortable environment for Hispanic families?
<u>Interview Question # 2</u>	What does the school do to reach out to the Hispanic community?
<u>Interview Question #</u>	Why do you think parents bring their children to this particular charter school?

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Once the Interview Questions were correlated to the Guiding Questions, the researcher listed the Categories with corresponding indicators from the teachers' responses. The enumeration after each indicator demonstrates how many schools, out of four, indicated similar or the same comment. Each indicator must have been mentioned by at least three out of four teacher focus groups to qualify for this section.

Table 4.11: Teacher focus group responses in Categories correlated to Guiding Question #1: School Selection.

<u>Categories</u>	Corresponding <u>indicators</u> from teachers' responses to
utilized in	Questions #1: What culturally compatible methods are
charter	order to attract Hispanic parents to choose this particular
	school?
<u>Family-oriented</u>	Services to families (4/4)
	Multiple families/familiarity with extended family (4/4)
<u>Accommodate</u>	Use Spanish language (4/4)
<u>Parents' needs</u>	Open Door Policy-inviting, accessible (4/4)
<u>Strong</u>	Rigorous academics (3/4)
<u>Environmental</u>	Strong discipline
<u>Factors</u>	Small, safe campus (4/4)
	Individual attention (3/4)
<u>Relationships</u>	"We care" (teachers) (4/4)

Table 4.12 demonstrates teacher Interview Questions correlated to Guiding Question #2.

Table 4.12: Interview questions correlated to Guiding Question 2: Greater Parental Involvement

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Correlated Interview Question to Guiding Question #2: What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administrator utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child's education?

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Interview Question #3            How does the school communicate with parents?

Interview Question #5            What are the expectations for parents?

---

From the responses given by teachers from all four schools, the researcher selected specific Indicators that related to Guiding Question # 2 from the Interview Questions # 3 and #5. The researcher then identified a major Category that appropriately described the grouping of Indicators. Following is the teacher responses to Guiding Question # 2 by Category and Indicator listed in table format:

Table 4.13: Teachers’ responses (Indicators) in Categories correlated to Guiding Question #2: Parental Involvement

<u>Category</u>	Corresponding indicators from teachers’ responses to Guiding Question #2: What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child’s education?
<u>Communication with parents</u>	Bilingual (4/4) Big participation in Parent/Teacher Conferences (3/4) Phone calls (3/4) Parent Center (2/4) Teacher Visibility (4/4) Knowing parents’/students’ names (4/4) Informal meetings/conversations (3/4) “Deliberate” invitations for academic workshops, performances, visitations to school and classes for adults and extended family (3/4)
<u>Parent Expectations</u>	Provide homework environment (3/4) Be available (4/4) Parent Agreements (uniform, attendance, conference, bus, time, etc.) (3/4)

The third Guiding Question is associated with the Benefits of Parental Involvement in schools. Interview Question #4 was listed in Table form related to this topic:

Table 4.14: Teacher interview questions correlated to Guiding Question# 3: Benefits.

<u>Interview Question #4</u>	What opportunities are made available for parents to be involved in their child’s education?
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Table 4.15: Teachers responses Categorized with correlated Indicators relating to Guiding Question # 3: Benefits.

<u>Categories</u>	Corresponding <u>indicators</u> from teachers’ responses to Guiding Question #3: Benefits
<u>Volunteerism</u>	Parents get involved in classroom/school (3/4)
<u>Physical presence</u>	Parents attend Parent-Teacher Conferences (4/4)
<u>Work with academic</u>	Parents work with children at home (3/4)

## Parents

Parents were the third party interviewed for this study. All of the parents were Hispanic; thirteen of sixteen parents were monolingual Spanish speakers. The researcher, who is fully bilingual, conducted these interviews in Spanish. Most of the parents, with the exception of two, were interviewed in a private area on campus. Two parents requested to meet outside of campus (both from Ruiz HS) because of family obligations. The interviews took place in a private setting (one at a restaurant away from clients and another took place on Saturday, in a public park where younger children could play). Six parents had little children between newborn to four accompany them. These interviews lasted a little longer in order to accommodate the needs of the children. Interview times ranged from about forty minutes to an hour and a half each. All parental interviews (except the Saturday one mentioned above) were done during the week in the daytime before children were dismissed from school.

The following table was compiled from information given by parents. The purpose of this study was to interview Hispanic parents regardless of their language or migratory status. Language was an item that differed between the majority of the parents, who are monolingual, and three English speaking parents. It is not intended to be extensive, but to give a “snapshot” of the families interviewed.

Table 4.16: Characteristics of families interviewed according to charter schools:

Information	V. Martínez			R.V.Ruiz			O. Romero			J. Payán		
No. of parents Interviewed	3			3			3			7 (1 couple)		
-----												
Spanish- Primary home Language?	2			1			3			6 (1 couple)		
-----												
No. of children at charter?	5	4	4	2	4	2	4	2	2	2	3	4
										1	1	4
-----												
Have had Children in District school?	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
										N	Y	N
-----												
Satisfied with Charter school?	Y	Y	N/Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
										Y	Y	Y

Parents' interviews were recorded and transcribed in the same manner as administrators and teachers. The transcriptions in Spanish were translated by the researcher as close to the actual language and message used. No names were requested nor recorded by the researcher. Confidentiality was stressed so that persons interviewed would feel comfortable in their responses.

In all, parents were asked ten Interview Questions. Answers from Question number one was used to prepare Table 4.16 and also as an icebreaker so that parents could feel at ease with the process. The Interview Questions asked were:

1. Tell me about your family.
2. Why did you choose this charter school?
3. How does the school make communication easier for parents?
4. How is your child progressing at this school?
5. What did the school do to make you feel comfortable?
6. What has the school done to involve parents in the education of their children?
7. How are parents' voices heard at this school?
8. What opportunities are made available for parents to get involved in their child's education?
9. What are the expectations for parents?
10. How are the community and school united in the education of children?

Parental interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher then sought key responses from questions two through nine pertinent to the focus of this study based on three Guiding Questions:

1. What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose the particular charter school?
2. What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child's education?
3. What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation for children at these charter schools?

From the ten questions asked in the interview with parents, Interview Question #1 asked the parents to talk about the one thing they knew a lot about- their family, in order to make them feel at ease with the researcher and questions asked. The other nine correlated to the three Guiding Questions. The following table demonstrates interview questions correlated to Guiding Question #1: What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose the particular charter school?



Table 4.17: Parental interview questions correlated to Guiding Question 1: School Selection

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Interview Questions Correlated to Guiding Question #1: What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose the particular charter school?

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<u>Interview Question #2</u>	Why did you choose this charter school?
<u>Interview Question #5</u>	What did the school do to make you feel comfortable?

---

Once the interview questions were correlated to the Guiding Questions, the researcher listed Categories corresponding to the Indicators from the parents’ responses. Enumeration after each indicator demonstrates how many schools, out of four, specified similar or the same comment, except “Parent Centers/Liaisons”. These were mentioned only by two of the campuses, but they were repeatedly mentioned by all three groups-administrators, teachers and especially, Hispanic parents. It appeared to have a profound effect on parental involvement in these two schools. Along with the Parent Center was the liaison that organized parents and some of the tasks that teachers needed parents’ help. All other Indicators were mentioned by at least three out of four schools to qualify for this section, even if multiple parents from the same school mentioned comparable Indicator. In this manner, the indicators below demonstrate collective ideas from all four schools.

Table 4.18: Parent’s responses by Category and Indicators correlated to Guiding Question #1: School Selection

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<u>Categories</u>	Indicators correlated to Guiding Question #1: What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose this particular charter school?
<u>Basic needs</u>	Small school-individualized attention (4/4) Spanish is spoken (4/4) Lots of discipline...very strict (4/4)
<u>Welcoming</u>	<i>Muy educados</i> (Cultured, educated, sophisticated)
<u>Environment</u>	Treat parents and students well, like family (4/4) Principal is encouraging (3/4) Faith in the school
<u>Communication</u>	School/Principal keeps parents informed (4/4) More communication with teachers (3/4) Explain how system works (4/4) Orientation-set of expectations (4/4)
<u>Personal</u>	Heard it was a good school (4/4)
<u>Relations</u>	Parent Center (2/4)

---

Guiding Question #2 dealt with the culturally compatible methods used in these charter schools to encourage Hispanic parental participation. The following table outlines the Interview Questions that correlated to Guiding Question: What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child’s education?

Table 4.19: Parental Interview Questions correlated to Guiding Question 2:  
Parental Involvement

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Parents’ Interview Questions correlated to Guiding Question #2: What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child’s education?

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Interview Question #3      How does the school make communication easier for parents?

Interview Question #6      What has the school done to involve parents in the education of their children?

Interview Question #7      How are parents “voices” heard at this school?

Interview Question #10      How are the community and school united in the education of children?

---

Following is the parents' responses broken down into Categories and Indicators that correlate to Guiding Question # 2 taken from Interview Questions #3, #6, #7, and # 10.

Table 4.20: Parents' responses in subheading form, relative to Guiding Question #2: Parent Involvement

<u>Category</u>	Corresponding <u>Indicators</u> from parents' responses to Guiding Question #2: What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child's education?
<u>Support for parents</u>	Parent Center/Liaison (2/4)
<u>Positive atmosphere</u>	Children get good grades...encouraged by that (4/4) Children like school...happy (4/4) Teamwork (students/teachers/parents) (3/4)
<u>Exchange of ideas</u>	Written notices (4/4) Let us know how we can help child (4/4) Meetings/changes in school/give one's opinions (3/4) Provide educational workshops (3/4)
<u>Access to personnel</u>	Communication with teacher on child's progress (3/4) Volunteering in the school (3/4) Access to teachers (4/4) Principal calls parents (4/4)
<u>Caring Leadership</u>	Principal supports students (4/4)
<u>Community involvement</u>	Donations given from different organizations (4/4/) School like family (4/4) Multiple related families in school (4/4)

Continuing to Guiding Question #3, Table (4.21) identifies the Interview Questions that correlated to Question #3: Benefits

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Table 4.21: Parental Interview Questions correlated to Guiding Question #3:

What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parental participation at the charter school?

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Interview Question #4                      How is your child progressing at this school?

Interview Question #8                      What opportunities are made available for parents to get involved?

Interview Question #9                      What are the expectations of parents?

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The last table in this section deals with Hispanic parents' responses submitted on what are the benefits of Parental Involvement in charter schools. The responses were grouped by similarity and a Category created to synthesize all of the responses or "Indicators" and presented in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22: Parents' responses by subheadings and corresponding indicators relating to Guiding Question # 3: Benefits

<u>Categories</u>	Corresponding indicators from parents' responses to Guiding Question # 3: What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation at charter schools?
<u>Student achievement</u>	Very good progress overall (4/4) Multiple children in school (4/4) Help students prepare to go to college (2/4)
<u>Parental Involvement</u>	Give children encouragement (4/4) Positive role models (4/4) Help children at home (3/4) Stay in contact with school (4/4)
<u>School Partnership</u>	Teachers help students (4/4) Students have academic, social, and physical opportunities (4/4) Parents volunteer in classrooms, cultural events, fundraisers (3/4) Parents and students are happy with the school (4/4) Work as a team

## Summary

Table 4.23 displays a summary outlining all of the categories mentioned by all three groups interviewed-administrators, teachers and parents. They are organized by the three Guiding Questions on School Selection, Parent Involvement, and Benefits of this involvement. As would be expected some of the categories are comparable among the different groups. Also, there are some Categories that were not mentioned by all participants, yet, they might have an impact on the hypotheses to be formed in Chapter 5.

Table 4.23: Summary of Categories according to the three groups and three Guiding Questions.

Guiding Questions	Administrators	Teachers	Parents
<u>School Selection</u>	Environment Personal Interaction Goal-Oriented Family Services Language Accommodations Parent Education Communication Community Based	Family oriented Accommodation/ Parent needs Environmental Relationships	Welcoming Communication Personal relations
<u>Parent Involvement</u>	Staff experience w/Hispanics Leadership building Adm. support	Communication w/ parents Parent expectation	Positive atmosphere Exchange of ideas Access to personnel Caring leadership
<u>Benefits</u>	Family community Knowledge of Academic Success	Volunteerism Physical presence Work w/Academics	School achievement Parent involvement School participation



The next three tables will identify the common Categories for each of the three groups and by specific Guiding Question. These will be the basis upon which our hypotheses will be formed in Chapter 5. As may be identified, from Table 4.22, not all the categories were mentioned by one or two of the groups, therefore, they were eliminated from the following tables.

Table 4.24: Common Categories according to the three groups and Guiding Question 1: School Selection

Guiding Question #1	Administrators	Teachers	Parents
School Selection			
a	Personal interaction	Relationships	Personal relations
b	Environment	Environment	Small campus
c	Language	Accommodations	Spanish language
d	Communication	Many forms of communication	Communication
e	Family services	Family oriented	“Feels like family”

Table 4.25: Common Categories according to the three groups and Guiding Question 2:  
Parental participation

Guiding Question #2	Administrators	Teachers	Parents
a	Staff experienced w/ Hispanic culture	Communication w Parents	Positive atmosphere Access to personnel
b.	Leadership building	Parent	Exchange of ideas

Table 4.26: Common Categories according to the three groups and Guiding Question 3:  
Benefits

Guiding Question #3	Administrators	Teachers	Parents
a.	Family community	Volunteerism	School partnership
b.	Knowledge of academic success	Work with Academic program	School environment
c.	High Parental commitment	Physical presence	Parental involvement

Chapter four reports various demographic information gathered from interviews, questionnaires, and Internet sources in order to get a “birds’ eye” view of participating charter schools and administrators, teachers and Hispanic parents. The crux of this chapter was the findings compiled from the interviews with the three groups- administrators, teachers and Hispanic parents.

Three different sets of Interview Questions were asked to the groups according to the role they played in the school. Administrators and parents were asked ten questions each that were similar in content but the wording accommodated their information base. Teachers were asked seven questions, which again were similar, but appropriate to knowledge they would have as teachers.

The Interview Questions (except #1 for administrators and #1 for parents) were matched with one of the three Guiding Questions on School Selection, Parental Involvement, and Benefits of this participation.

Finally, only the commonalities among the three groups relating to the Guiding Questions are presented as Categories that best describe the indicators or responses mentioned. These Categories will serve as the grounds upon which hypotheses will be formed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Dr. Kent Scribner (1998) studied Hispanic parental involvement in Phoenix, Arizona district schools by three levels of participation. Guadalupe Valdés (1996) lived with Mexican immigrant families in Texas for a number of years conducting an anthropological study of their views on health and education. There have been other researchers (Olivos, 2006; Ulpindo, 2008; Gomez-Maciel, 2003; Montoya-Gonzales, 1996; Bordas, November, 2009; Gaitan, 2004; Gonzalez, 1998) that have examined different aspects of Mexican/Mexican-American involvement in the education of their children. This Qualitative Grounded Theory study sought to determine hypothesis based on the responses posed to administrators, teachers and Hispanic parents correlated to three Guiding Questions: 1) What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose the particular charter school? 2) What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child's education? 3) What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation for children at these charter schools.

This chapter offers hypotheses, based on the three Guiding Questions, on the practices charter schools provide in order to encourage Hispanic parents to a) select charter schools, b) get involved in the education of their children, and c)

the benefits of this involvement as displayed in Tables 4.24, 4.25 and 4.26.

Reference to contemporary research in related areas will assist in substantiating the hypotheses. The chapter will be organized in the subsequent manner:

Part I will present hypothesis on the common “Categories” (see Table 4.24) administrators, teachers and parents agree upon for Guiding Question 1: What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to the particular charter school?

Part II will present hypotheses on the common “Categories” (see Table 4.25) agreed upon by the three groups on Guiding Question 2: What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child’s education?

Part III will discuss the features in the common “Categories” (see Table 4.26) which the groups concurred upon for the third guiding question: What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parental participation for children at these charter schools?

Part IV will present a summary of this study.

Part V will offer recommendations for further inquiry.

Part I: What culturally compatible methods are utilized in order to attract Hispanic parents to choose the particular charter school?

The following section will provide hypotheses formulated by the researcher for Guiding Question 1- selection of charter school based on Table 5.4.24 below.

Table 5.4.24: Common Categories according to the three groups and Guiding Question 1: School Selection

Guiding Question #1	Administrator	Teachers	Parents
<b>School Selection</b>			
a.	Personal interaction	Relationships	Personal relations
b.	Environment	Environment factors	Small campus
c.	Language Accommodations	Accommodations	Spanish language
d.	Communication	Communication	Communicaftion
e.	Family services	Family oriented	Feels like family

**Hypothesis 5.1.a: Personal Interactions/Relationships:** If charter schools provide a culture that promotes Personal Interactions/Relationships, then parents will be attracted to enroll their child.

Researchers found that staff members created a welcoming environment for parents by building on their cultural values: stressing personal contact and communication while facilitating structural accommodations that encourage parental involvement” (Lopez, G.R., Scribner, J.D., Mahitvanichcha, K.: 2001, Summer, p.255).

When administrators, teachers and parents were asked why they thought

parents choose their particular charter school, they all agreed that personal interactions were key. Parents, teachers and administrators pointed out that their school had a “feeling of family”. One of the parents at Romero College Prep mentioned how comfortable the school felt when first arriving at the school:

Well, before I lived very far and I was looking for a school around here. I went to many schools and I didn’t like the personnel. I came here and they attended to me very well. They made me feel like family. That is why I choose this school.

Teachers at all the four schools spoke of how their school “felt like family” and their satisfaction with this:

I think our school is more like a family too. If someone needs something, we are right there to help. In the big district schools, nobody knows what is going on with the family. We are more like a family. We are close. Everybody knows everybody (Martinez School, Teacher).

Even though the administrator at Payán School felt teachers sometimes did a little too much, she admired the way they made special adjustments for parents and families thus promoting a positive relationship:

I think the staff is very accommodating with parents. They realize that these parents need a lot of support. A lot of them work long hours. So, many teachers are willing to keep the kids in their classrooms until the parents can

come and pick them up.

Parents considered having a personal relationship with teachers as their way of being involved with the school in supporting their child:

One time, a bad word came out of my daughter. I said, 'Is this what they are teaching you at school?' She goes, 'No'. Why are you talking like that? She said, 'Well maybe it is the school.' 'Well, let me call the school right now and ask them, "Is this what you guys are teaching my daughter?" She's like, 'You will mom?' 'Yeah'. I'm not going to tolerate it. All I have to do is call the school and talk to (Mr. B). He's always available if I have a problem.'" (Ruiz HS, Parent)

**Hypothesis 5.1.b: Environment:** An environment that is safe and caring will attract parents to charter schools:

Research has shown that smaller schools may lead to higher achievement and can be more advantageous for learning, in addition to promoting a feeling of safety and security within the school. Parents enjoy the smaller school atmosphere because their children are able to receive additional instruction in areas with which they may struggle (Allen, J., 2007, p. 9).

The size of the school provided an environment that parents considered comfortable. The biggest campus, Romero College Prep was in the same campus, but in a different area apart from the Intermediate and Primary schools. Yet, it



was still considerably smaller than any regular district high school with two thousand or more students which is common place in the Phoenix area. Also, since all the schools were small, in at least three schools (Martinez, Romero, and Payán) parents were known by the principal and vice versa, parents knew the administrator. At Ruiz High School, the administrator met with parents at the initial interview time and, if there was a conference held for a specific student. The small settings of these charter schools provided an approachable environment for Hispanic parents:

I'm a single parent of five and I have four kids in this school...It's a little tiny school where I can actually know all the teachers, the teachers know me, I know the principal and everybody. I like it (Martinez School, Parent).

The charter school administrators at Martinez, Romero and Payán mentioned how their small school community was one where children and their families were recognized and acknowledged: "They come into a very small community. We don't have numbers here; we know exactly the name of every child...We get to know all the students, all the families. So they get a different experience" (Martinez School, Administrator). At Ruiz High School, students were known very well by the principal and staff, but most parents were not as easily identified. However, the administrator met with every parent at least once before admitting the students: "I interview every single family...So we know right away what the issues are. The parents appreciate that." Administrators

conveyed that they believed families felt safe and comfortable with the facilities and staff:

I think Hispanic parents prefer the small school...they can easily maneuver and don't have to fear that they will get lost. They will experience a very settled environment where kids are in small classes, teachers know each and every one of the kids, and the students are actively learning. It will be different from the big high school scenario where parents feel intimidated by the sheer size of the school and amount of people (Ruiz HS).

One of the byproduct of being small campus is being on top of discipline issues and the ability to provide a safe environment. All four schools took pride in having a secure environment. Even the Alternative high school reported a very vigilant and strict discipline approach:

I'm smiling at this one because we have had requests from parents to sit in class with their child. We welcome it. As you can imagine, for teenagers, it's mortifying...we have a very strong disciplinary program that adheres to enforcement. It has rules that you probably wouldn't have to face at another school, but it works (Ruiz HS, Teacher).

At Romero College Prep, an experienced charter school teacher related:

I think from my experience with this school and feedback from parents there is a concern on many parents' part for the safety for the child; security, and also

enroll students here definitely for less exposure to problems. I had the occasion where the student transferred over here and I inquired, ‘Why are you here? Why did you bring your child here?’ “Well, at this other school, there are too many problems that they are exposed to.’ Be it drugs, ditching school, avoiding violence, fighting, etc.’ So parents have achieved a degree of comfort, a sense of security, peace of mind by coming here and knowing that their child has a good opportunity to success here.

**Hypothesis 5.1.c: Language accommodation:** By accommodating the language needs of Hispanic parents, charter schools will be able to draw parents to these schools.

Language brings to life the group’s identity and concept of self. It is the means to express the various parts that make up the group’s totality. It is not only the tool of communicating the culture but also the means of learning about all things (Valverde, L.A., 2001, p.23).

As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, thirteen of the parents in this study spoke only Spanish and the percentage of Spanish as the primary home language was very high in all four schools. Accommodating language needs for parents was especially vital. Three out of the four administrators were fluent in both English and Spanish. All four of the schools had a number of staff who assisted in translating for parents in conferences or in customer service issues:

As a person recently arrived from Mexico, well, they (other schools) aren't going to speak to you in Spanish. But here, there are a lot of persons that speak Spanish. I like that a lot because you can communicate with a lot of people (Romero CP, Parent)

Teachers recognized the importance of having various people speak the language of the parents to better assist them:

I think, we, have been deliberate in accommodating language needs. We put in place the right people and assistance to be able to communicate to the parents in Spanish because, of course, our parents are predominately Hispanic. A lot of the parents are monolingual, so we try hard to extend to them all the communication that is needed in Spanish so that they understand (Romero CP, Teacher).

Printed materials sent out to parents were in both languages at all schools. Doing this was not a special task, but good customer service as well:

I think basically, what we do, from the time the parent steps through our doors, we make them feel welcomed. They love that fact that there is somebody who is bilingual. I always hire bilingual front office staff so we can speak to the parent. And they really, really appreciate that (Ruiz HS, Administrator).

Acknowledging and accommodating parents' language needs was an important practice in all four school: "A couple of them have told me how

uncomfortable it is to go to another school and the secretaries don't even want to acknowledge them because it's too much trouble to get an interpreter”

(Administrator, Payán School). Since Payán School started out as a dual language school, all but the bus driver and one of the teachers spoke Spanish:

We decided on this school in the first place because of the Spanish language. It's bilingual and that helped my other children a lot; the older ones had been here. They learned Spanish, to read it and write it, to understand it and learn English too. The older ones speak two languages. My youngest daughter, no, because she was at another school, a district school, and there it's only English...Now she writes and speaks it better (Payán School, Parent).

At Martinez School, the administrator came to the realization during the interview that only two of the teaching staff was bilingual in Spanish, however, there were plenty of support staff that could assist the parents at any time they needed translations.

**Hypothesis 5.1.d: Communication:** Being in constant communication with Hispanic parents attracts them to charter schools:

Latino families and their behavior relative to supporting the children in their educational endeavors are enormously diverse. No one can judge from afar:

- The family is a system of interlacing communications.

- Latino families communicate and engage in literacy and homework activities just as they do in family religious activities on Sundays and special occasions.
- They day-in, day-out communication is reflective and constitutive.
- Their continuous interaction is constituted according to their social, cultural, and emotional environment (Delgado-Gaitan, C., 1990, p. 60).

All four charter schools in this study had a parental agreement which articulated the mission of the school expectations held for parents at the particular charter school rules and regulations that students would be held accountable. At Ruiz High School, the administrator met with all new families coming into the school to explain the parental agreement:

They (parent and student) have to go through an orientation so that everything is clear. Parents know what the expectations are from us for them. As a parent, what do you expect to do? And then, what do we expect your child to do. So there is a lot. The information sharing process is so that they don't slip out of the loop (Ruiz HS, administrator).

Every year, parents were mandated to attend a similar meeting where they would explain any new additions or changes.

At Payán School, the social worker was in charge of making sure parents understood the contents of the agreement, especially the fifteen hours of

mandatory school service by parents:

We have the Parent Agreement that parents sign at the beginning of the year and that is basically a list of expectations for parents, academically, behavior-wise, what we are asking of them. And that includes sending your students to school on time, making sure that they wear their uniform, participate in the fifteen hours, come to events, and attend open houses, Parent Teacher Conferences (Teacher).

Likewise, the parent liaison at Romero College Prep worked with parents initially to make sure that the mission of the school was agreeable with them:

I remember they asked my son, ‘Why do you want to come to this school?’ They gave him a questionnaire to fill out. ‘What are your expectations?’ As parents, we were given one too. And we filled it out, ‘Why did you pick this school?’ I felt very good when I came here for the first time (Parent).

Being in constant communication with parents via phone calls was mentioned by teachers and parents. Parents would leave their personal cell numbers with the teachers so that they could contact them at anytime: “Over here, the principal and teachers keep an eye on him (son). He’s doing well right now...But he goofs off and I get those phone calls when he’s goofing off and messing around” (Ruiz HS, Parent).

At Martinez school, one of the lead teachers stated:

We go over concerns they might have. We discuss these with them. This is my sixth year here, and I know that we did very well last year. We send out flyers telling them we want to have that time and sit down with them. They understand that yes, they want to know what's going on with their child. So we send out letters and we call them (Martinez School, Teacher).

**Hypothesis 5.1.e: Family Services:** Providing family services helps Hispanic parents fulfill their needs.

It is proposed that the new Latino school be a full-service community agent that patterns itself much like the supermarket of today. What specifically? The following should be provided: medical, legal, employment, and municipal services; instructional programs for parents and adults from the community; and a recreation/entertainment venue (Valverde, L. 2001, p.80).

Even though Martinez School did not provide the entire services listed above, providing social services was an absolutely must for Martinez School. The district office was a social service agency which provides assistance to families in issues of immigration, counseling, GED, ESL classes, home health care and other services. Martinez School had this resource available to its populations readily. At Payán School, the new social worker position was a positive move in being able to provide resources to parents. The social worker was also the liaison between the parents and the school. The administrator related that the staff and



teachers at this school were very accommodating to the needs of parents: “They realize that these parents need a lot of support.” At Ruiz College Prep, the administrator mentioned that they encouraged parents to communicate needs that they might have and they would help on an individual basis, but not in any structured program. Concern was expressed, though, on the situation that many families were in, yet, the school was not able to do anything but encourage the students not to lose hope:

Many of the families we have right now are struggling due to some of the immigration issues... The children fear that they might go home and not find their parent there or that something will transpire that will interrupt their education. There is a lot of anxiety with the Hispanic population that we serve right now. The administrator at Romero College Prep did not mention in particular services in this area but the concern here was just as profound:

When the students come to the office and we are talking to them, we notice the struggles that go on at home, especially now that there are not that many jobs out there. We struggle trying to figure out what to do. Some of them even come here and try to sell tamales, just food, around here. Or they say, ‘What can I do? Just give me whatever.’ Sometimes, we can’t.

Even though the charter school did not have all the services that district schools can provide, the teaching and administrative staff believed that their school did everything in their power to assist families when in need:

Although we don't provide on-campus counseling or things like that, I feel like we still try to go out of our way to help families that need those services, to try to provide them or find them some ways to help them to get those services that are needed affordably or free. This encourages people to continue to stay with us and new ones to come (Romero CP, Teacher).

Part II: What culturally compatible methods does the charter school administration utilize in order to encourage Hispanic parental involvement in their child's education?

In this second section, the findings from school administrators, teachers and parents (See Chart 5.4.24 below) are utilized in the development of hypotheses on what culturally compatible methods the school utilizes in order to encourage Hispanic parent involvement in their child's education (Guiding Question 2). As would be expected, many of the characteristics of the schools that attract parents to charter schools in the first place may also be significant in persuading parents to get involved in the education of their child. The hypotheses below reflect this study's venue-charter schools. However the hypotheses might apply to other educational settings, such as large district schools or private schools.

Table 5.4.25: Common Categories according to the three groups and Guiding Question 2: Parental participation.

Guiding Question #1	Administrators	Teachers	Parents
School Selection			
a	Personal interaction	Relationships	Personal relations
b	Environment	Environment	Small campus
c	Language	Accommodations	Spanish language
d	Communication	Many forms of communication	Communication
e	Family services	Family oriented	“Feels like family”

**Hypothesis 5.2.a: Staff experienced with Hispanic community** Staff that understands and respects Hispanic culture will have better working relationship with Hispanic parents.

Not only must educators tell parents that they are equally as important as the school, they must tell the students how important their homes and communities are. Having a partnership allows educators to tap a rich source of cultural knowledge and personal experiences. Mexican American families want their children to succeed in schools, and educators have an important responsibility

to work with these students and their families (Feyl, N.C. & Gonzalez, D.L., October 1995, p. 2).

Administrators made it a priority to hire personnel experienced in working with Hispanic communities even if they do not necessarily speak Spanish: “Teachers that work here have experience working at other schools with Hispanics in other communities” (Romero CP, Administrator). Front office staff and support staff in all four schools were bilingual in order to assist the population at their schools as stated well by the administrator of Ruiz High School:

I always hire bilingual front office staff so we can speak to the parent. And they really, really appreciate that. So that makes them feel good when they walk in and someone is actually helping the, is assisting them, cares about their child.

Teachers and administrators interviewed expressed heart-felt sentiments for the Hispanic culture. They mentioned how Hispanic parents were “humble”, “hard working” and “supportive”. In Table 4.2, three of four administrators could identify themselves as Hispanic (Martinez, Romero, and Payán). One directly stated being able to identify with the immigrant Hispanic population and their struggles (Romero). School personnel, moreover, gave parents high accolades:

I think it’s important for people to realize that Hispanic parents, at least in the

Phoenix area, want their kids to succeed and go to school...over time, you will see the family understand that their child is going to impact the next generation or even their own family dramatically. If you can help one to earn their diploma, it really helps to break down the barriers for many, many others in the family. I think families understand how important that is. I think educators really need to know this (Ruiz HS, Administrator).

It is important to develop a working relationship and stay in contact with parents: "Parent involvement...views parents' interaction with schools, teachers and their children's schoolwork as essential to school success" (Valdés, 1996, p. 194). Parent Teacher Conferences were very important vehicles to be able to involve parents in the education of their child in all four schools. Because of the nature of elementary parents, schools such as Martinez and Payán had more success in getting parents to attend. At Martinez School, it was mandatory to attend the scheduled conferences. It was very important to have this face to face communication with parents in order to know where the child was in academics and how parent could help the child: If parents could not attend, there would be a home visit by the principal and other personnel:

I require that all of my teachers have a hundred percent Parent Teacher Conferences. They have been able to meet the one hundred percent over the last four years...They always ask if we can do it over the phone. We tell them that if they can't come to the school, we will do a home visit. And it involve

one of the administrators, either myself, my assistant principal, my reading interventionist, or my reading coach. We tell the parents, ‘Your child’s education is important to us and, if you can’t come to us, we will go to you.’ Usually, after the first home visit, we see the parents more at the school (Martinez School, Administrator).

Teacher and parents at Romero CP were also encouraged to communicate with each other prior to the conferences:

So we want parents to know right away what is happening, not to wait for nine weeks before they find out at conferences, ‘Well, you kid is not doing good.’ We want to make sure we can avoid that and have more communication with them (Administrator).

Likewise, teachers made themselves available to parents above and beyond expectations at formal conference times. All of the teachers, in all four schools, expressed openness about parents meeting with them and even joining them as they taught:

We do a lot of Open Door Policies inviting our parents to the classrooms to talk to the teachers. And we accommodate according to their working schedule. When it comes to Parent-Teacher Conferences, we are here late compared to other schools in the district to accommodate to parents and that opens the door for them to want to come here and speak to the teachers to find

out what's going on. They are not restricted to, 'Well, you can't with the teacher until 3:30 or 4:00.' We have the Open Door Policy for parents-that makes a difference (Romero CP, Teacher).

Conferences at Ruiz High School took on another form. Students are issued a grade report which parents sign and students return. If parents wish to meet with teachers, they indicate it on the form. Otherwise, parents are called in for a mandatory conference if a student is struggling in class:

The parents know we will communicate with them. If their child is struggling, not passing classes, they know that they will be getting a phone call once a week. If they are earning a "D" or below (75% is the requirement for credit)...They (parents) need to find time somehow to come down here. I will make an effort to accommodate them if there is no possible way that they can come, to have a phone conference (Administrator).

Teachers and administrators at charter schools are very visible because of the small size of the schools and also because they manage duties that a larger staff might do at a district school. At Ruiz High School, one of the parents mentioned how she was impressed by the vigilance of school staff in making sure the students were safe:

There was a fight. I went to pick up my daughter and I saw the principal get in her car and she was following these kids. They went to a park and were going

to fight, but they took action. We saw another teacher...but they took action right away and that's what I like (Ruiz HS, Parent).

These schools had multiple gatherings whether sporting events or academic meetings. Because the teachers attended these also, parents were able to connect with staff members. They would take the opportunity to converse with them at these get-togethers:

I think they feel very comfortable talking to these staff members at meetings and events and on an everyday basis when they come in. I think that is one thing that makes them feel comfortable (Romero CP, Teacher)

Having personal interactions and relationships among charter school personnel and Hispanic parents was mentioned time and time again by administrators, teachers and parents in all four schools. Parents interviewed were very pleased by the way they were treated by the principal, staff, and teachers. As a parent at Ruiz HS remarked, "*Son muy educados y personas muy finas y me tratan como persona.*" (They are very educated and fine people and they treat me as a person.) In the Hispanic culture, this is an extremely profound statement about the respect for the school staff as stated by various staff at Payán School:

Likewise, administrators and teachers expressed their sincere affection to the parents: "We have the best parents...Yes we do...They go above and beyond what we need from them...They really care about this school and their kids".



Providing individual attention to students was a selling point for all four schools. The administrator at Martinez School mentioned how they are able to “work with particular population needs to close academic gap” through “tailored, prescriptive approach to needs of the child” (Administrator). Ruiz High School’s administrator stated it another way by saying: “We understand their issues” and therefore could work and help students have success. Even though R.V.Ruiz is an alternative high school and is obligated to accept high risk students, they pride themselves in being able to keep students free of discipline issues and this helps them succeed in their school work. At Romero College Prep, teachers were in agreement that it was important for parents, even at the junior high and high school levels, to be accountable for the achievement of their child: “In the end, it is for parents to know how their kids are doing. We need their support.” At Payán School, the small school environment allowed parents to be in constant communication on how their children were doing: “They feel that we have taken time to talk to them about the progress of their kids” (Administrator).

Parents also mentioned repeatedly the personal attention that their children received by staff: “There are few students, so they give more individual attention to each child...In the other schools, it’s like they’re too big and they don’t pay much attention to the children.” (Payán School, Parent) This feeling was prevalent among parents regardless of what grade level their child was attending:

Just last week, my daughters told me that they were leaving when the social

worker or counselor called them in. She told them, ‘I’m really pleased because you, both of you, have earned a GPA of 3.75. So then, they always do things like this to make them feel good. And well, this motivates them to keep moving forward (Ruiz HS, Parent).

**Hypothesis 5.2.b: Leadership Building.** Developing leadership skills in charter school parents encourages high parental expectations and exchange of ideas.

Parental involvement classes made them feel recognized as important to the school community and helped them realize the power and influence they can have by participating in the education of their children (Hiatt-Michael, D., 2005, p. 121).

Educating parents on the school, its programs, and teaching strategies to help students at homework and/or discipline were all significant factors in involving Hispanic parents in the education of their children. Martinez and Payán Elementary Schools encourage parents to attend academic workshops in order that parents can help children or at least understand what teachers are doing with their children. Understanding how the curriculum is organized and taught can have an immense impact on parents helping the students: “Teachers are required to provide training for parents in the area of reading and mathematics once a month. So the skills that they are teaching the children at home are provided in the workshop” (Martinez School, Administrator).

The high school interviews did not give any hint at any academic workshops for parents. The interest there was more in the area of helping parents with teens, talking to them about college and the financial obligations that they were involved in, and other matters dealing with teens:

Because a lot of parents don't understand how high school functions, they need to be told that the grades affect their credits, how many credits they need to graduate, and it's not as simple as grade school where they could be promoted even if they failed a class or two... Somehow, this gets lost with these parents (Ruiz HS, Administrator).

At Payán School, leadership training took place along with the academic workshops: "(Tribes) instructed the parents on what kind of questions to ask; what kind of things to look for in report cards. They had to look at the reading levels and grades. It helped parents a lot (Payán School, administrator).

Teachers at Romero College Prep selected parents to join the "Board of Service" which made decisions affecting their school level and also participated in helping out the school: "I tell them (parents) that is why we are here as a parent. If there is something they don't like to speak up so the school will improve" (Romero CP, Parent). The administrator reports to this board on the general progress of the students and the board, in turn, reports to other parents via meetings. Parents can join this board at any time.

All four schools included orientations and individual interviews to explain their programs. At the high school level, having college financial nights was important for the older students' parents of Ruiz High School as seniors were preparing for college. Helping parents understand the need for them to share financial information with the student to qualify for assistance was a major hurdle: "They (parents) have to share their tax information with their child in order to apply for financial aid. A lot of them are reluctant to share personal information of this kind (Ruiz HS, Administrator).

All four school administrators and the teachers said their school has an Open Door Policy. The administrators made it very clear that they make themselves available to parents beyond other things: "We always listen to parents....With a small charter schools, it's all about having the parents' voices heard." (Ruiz HS) Parents are also encouraged to speak to other personnel that can assist them (counselor, front office staff, teachers, etc.) There is no need to request a meeting ahead of time:

Sometimes when I wanted to see the teacher, they could not see me until I set up an appointment every single time. And well, here it is different. I call and immediately they return my call...They also adapt to your time availability. At the other school, it wasn't this way...So I like this school very much" (Romero CP, Parent).

Communication with parents took place in formal events such as Parent-

Teacher Conferences, through phone calls, written notices and also through informal conversations with teachers, administrators and parents. Teachers in three schools (Martinez, Romero, and Payán) felt very comfortable in speaking to parents in this casual and even familiar manner:

Through personal experience, I've had parents that don't hesitate to be very frank and opened. Whether it's at Parent-Teacher Conferences, or just a discussion, or we might run into the parent here at school. They will be very opened. It could be a friendly criticism, a very harsh criticism; or an expressing of pleasure at the results or some effort or students performance. So, I think that has been breed over time. The parents are comfortable enough they don't feel they have to hold back. And a lot of them are very good suggestions. I think the teachers have had a big part in opening that line of communication with them. They won't hesitate to say anything (Romero CP, Teacher).

Part III: What are the benefits of greater Hispanic parent participation for children at these charter schools?

In this third section, the findings from school administrators, teachers and parents (See Chart 5.4.26 below) are utilized in the development of hypotheses on what are the benefits of this Hispanic parent participation for the overall success of children in these charter schools.

Table 5.4.26: Common Categories according to the three groups and Guiding Question 3: Benefits

Guiding Question #3	Administrators	Teachers	Parents
<b>Benefits</b>			
a.	Family community	Volunteerism	School partnership
b.	Knowledge of Academic success	Work with Academic	School Achievement
c.	High Parental commitment	Physical presence	Parental involvement

**Hypothesis 5.3.a: Home/School Partnership.** Charter schools that promote Hispanic parental involvement develop a school partnership with volunteering families:

Effective Schools Involve Parents and the Community. They involve parents and community members in the teaching and learning activities of the school, include them in the decision-making process, have them serve as resources to extend the efforts of the school, and depend on them to be advocates as well as to provide good public relations for the school. They make sure that parents are involved in all aspects of their children’s learning (Sergiovanni, T., 2000,

p. 199).

Most of the parents when asked about the school working with the community considered the parents, teachers and staff of the school as “the community”. They expressed the importance of working in partnership with each other for the success of the children:

We are a team for the education of the children. Well, the teachers are fundamental in the educational system. The parent should help guide in the personal and moral...Both are as important as the other. The teachers guide, they educate. And we should strive in having them know right from wrong (Payán, Parent).

Two of the four schools (Romero College Prep and Payán School) created a Parent Center in order to provide a space for parents to gather, work, and share their skills and abilities. Both centers are very vibrant with parental activity as observed when the researcher visited the schools. Parents have the availability of computers and printers for their use. The environment is “home-like” with daily refreshments. This area also serves for trainings and meetings. There is an array of equipment and materials to be able to make classroom materials needed for instruction or for special events: “Well, the school has established a Parent Center where the parents get involved in the school, with the students, with the teachers” (Romero CP, Parent) Both administrators stressed how important this center was for the involvement of parents in their schools, even though at Payán School, the

Parent Center was small but very busy. It was in right outside the principal's office.

In addition, both centers have a person who acts as a liaison between the parents and school personnel. This position assisted the parents in various ways:

She (social worker) also created this area out here, with coffee and donuts. We have one of the staff members donate donuts once a week for the rest of the year...On Mondays and Tuesdays, the social worker has a modified schedule, so she comes in late on those days so she can stay until seven in the evening. That way, parents can come in and use the computers and get any information that they need. The idea of the Parent Center is also to get parents to come in and work on different projects and complete the fifteen hours...So we are excited about that. It's always been an idea that we have had (Payán School, Administrator).

The other two schools did not have any physical space available to give to parents. At Martinez School, parents would help out in the classroom directly: "I always encourage my parents to come to the classroom. If they had a day off, they come in and work with their child. It really helps, especially in the lower grades (Martinez School, Teacher). Yet, at Martinez School and Ruiz High School, the administrators stated how difficult it was to involve parents in the school since the opportunities in high school were limited.



These school administrators (Martinez School and Ruiz High School) expressed concern about not being able to convince parents to become an organized group, such as PTA or such other organization. At Martinez school, parents were involved with activities as set by the school, such as helping teachers make materials, clean-ups, and other events, but they did not take a decision making role within the school: “We are looking at the spectrum of things. I would like to do a questionnaire asking, ‘Why are you not as involved?’ and see what the response is” (Martinez School, Administrator). At Ruiz School, there was the same concern, except that the administrator mentioned that it was difficult to identify what parents could do since they were “limited in opportunities at the high school level” (Administrator). However, parents did attend the mandatory meetings and conferences. Administrators at Martinez and Ruiz felt that parents were satisfied with the work of the school and therefore, left issues in their hands: “So, there is pretty much a general consensus that they have faith in us that we are going to do the right thing. And they like the way things are going” (Ruiz HS, Administrator).

**Hypothesis 5.3.b: Academics.** Hispanic parents involved in charter schools grasp the academics of their children and see significant progress:

Schools that function as focused communities where unique values are important, schools where caring for each other is the norm, schools where academic matters count, and schools where social covenants are establish that

bring parents, teachers, students, and others together in a shared commitment to the common good are able to use the values of the lifeworld and to get surprising good results (Sergiovanni, T., 2000, p.17).

Academic success is an important subject to address since this is the primary purpose of all schools for children. Parents want their children to learn as much as possible and be triumphant in life. This is one of the benefits of a good school, with good teachers, and hopefully involved parents: “Strong parent involvement is one factor that research has shown time and time again to have positive effects on academic achievement and school attitudes” (Ovando, C., Collier, V, Combs, M., 2003, p. 382).

Teachers stressed time and time again how important it was for parents to team up with them in providing a homework environment for children. Levels of education and English language capacity were not a disadvantage. Support for teachers and their children was demonstrated by providing opportunity for their children to study and learn at full capacity:

Well, they always tell me when the child needs help. I also have to help him out of school. They tell me, ‘This child is very low this semester. We need to give him this (work). Please help him out at home.’ And yes, we help him. We buy whatever any of our kids need. We put them to read to see how many words they can read per minutes. I go and buy them little clocks, timers, and we try to help in that way or to color or whatever it may be. For the little ones,

they don't understand anything. And for the big ones, well, they know already. But there are times when the big ones classes are difficult too. They need more, like computers and such. Sometimes he goes to a friend's house, next door and he helps him with his work. But what the principal likes is that we give encouragement to the children, not just to leave them alone (Martinez School, Parent).

A high school parent related:

I imagine that they expect that the parents get involved more; that they help their students more. That they stay on top of what is happening in the school. That the parents help; that they focus more on helping the parents because of the kids of today! They are unbearable! (Romero CP, Parent)

A teacher at Ruiz High School mentioned:

Also, on the academic side, every week we look to see who is struggling. If the grade is very poor or if it's something repeated, generally, a phone call is made. We will tell the parents about the situation and that some remedy must be involved. Sometimes we will just make a phone call because homework was assigned and wasn't done. Many times, parents have no idea that it hasn't been done.

At Payán School, it was just as important to find out what parents knew and didn't know about the curriculum so that staff could plan for the Parent Academic

Nights:

We have also provided surveys to parents to see what they knew about our curriculum, just so we could see what they knew. We put lines for comments on anything they were concerned with so that we could address what their needs were. We collected the surveys. There was a group, called Curriculum and Assessment tea. We collected them and put them in a graph form and deciphered what each of those ratings meant. From that, we built a lot of the programs that we are running this school year (Teacher).

As an offshoot of the parents being involved in the academics of the charter school was the opinion that students and parents should be prepared well for college. At Martinez School, high school and college success was stressed to the students and in meetings with parents:

We have a College Fair, and that would not happen in other elementary schools. We have a high school fair; so that way, parents start thinking about what is the trajectory that I want my child to follow, where do I see them going from here? (Administrator)

Ruiz High School provided financial aid nights for parents: “With the seniors, we do a lot of college awareness with the parents... We given them information on financial aid, scholarship opportunities, all of that so that parents are aware that they have to help their child.” (Teacher) At Romero College Prep, this preparation

was limited mostly to students falling short of working with parents: “The ultimate goal is for students to go to college or university... We have workshops for students for college prep, but not for parents” (Administrator).

At the elementary level, the administrator at Martinez School spoke about the importance of promoting high school and college:

We have activities that provide our kids to start thinking about college, such as a College Fair. This would not happen in other elementary schools. We have high school fair, so, that way, parents start thinking about what is the trajectory that I want my child to follow, where do I see them going from here?

**Hypothesis 5.3.c: Physical Presence.** Encouraging Hispanic parents to be physically present in charter schools encourages student achievement:

They remembered these schools as “home away from home,” places where they were nourished, supported, protected, encouraged, and held accountable. These students recalled their teachers having faith and conviction in the students’ abilities; being demanding, yet, supportive and encouraging; and instilling that students have high aspirations to be the best they could be (Gay, G., 2000, p. 47).

Being physically available for conferences, events, meetings and other such gatherings was a positive way for parents to get involved in the schools and all three groups welcomed it: “Simply by your presence, your children will see you

at the school, and that has a tremendous impact for them. And that makes all the differences!” (Payán School, Parent). In three schools, (Martinez, Romero, and Payán) teachers, parents and administrators felt comfortable with the availability of parents whenever there was Parent-Teacher Conferences, sports events, student performances:

This school is about ninety-nine percent Latino. Most are straight from Mexico or either first or second generation from Mexico. In terms of education, we find a range from those who have their Bachelors’ or Masters’ degrees to those who don’t have any post-secondary education. We get the same support from both ends. They are supportive of the endeavors of the schools and others (Martinez School, Administrator).

At Ruiz High School, sentiments were expressed by at least one teacher but acknowledged by the others that many parents were unengaged in their child’s education:

I’m going to tell you, in all the reading I’ve done, and I don’t want to sound disparaging, but we don’t expect much from parents. If we get it, it’s terrific. But if you hold out for an expectation, you might be holding out for something that might not happen. A lot of parents, unfortunately, are not involved in their child’s education.

Elementary schools have an easier time getting parents to volunteer in the

classroom and at school events. This was no different in the two elementary charter schools studied:

I had a parent come in this morning because she was off of work and school. She set it up about a week ago. She worked with the kids in the listening center. She enjoyed it. She said, ‘This is great; I’m really enjoying it. I feel really important helping out (Martinez School, Teacher).

However, the schools with a designated Parent Center and a liaison were able to coordinate the parent activities. There were parents constantly in the centers.

The parents at the four charter schools expressed their satisfaction with the charter school, with the exception of one parent at Martinez School whose daughter had had a number of homeroom teachers this year alone. Payán School was attempting to retain their charter with the Charter Board while parents were hopeful and willing to do anything to have the school succeed: “I believe that because we are in such great need of help, it has made the parents make a commitment to help in the education of our children...I believe in this school” (Payán School, Parent).

A veteran teacher who started with the inception of Ruiz High School mentioned:

A couple of thoughts come to mind. One of them, I sheepishly admit, parents bring their kids here because it’s gone full circle and I’m getting children from students I taught. So they still believe and have faith in our school.

All four schools had different academic programs yet parents that were interviewed were fully committed to doing whatever it took to see their child succeed. At Ruiz High School, there was one parent who hesitated, however, even this parent had nothing but praises for the staff and children's accomplishments: "I have heard many commentaries behind my back...I know the reason why I put my daughters here...When my oldest daughter got to know this school, her grades got better (Ruiz HS, Parent).

Parental commitment was physically evident in most schools (Martinez, Payán, and Romero). Parents, teachers, and administrators were pleased with the interaction among the three groups in facilitating the education of children: "I think family involvement is pretty high here. At least compared to other schools I have been in before. (Payán School, Teacher).

Whereas parents have limited choice of what public school to enroll their child, charter schools do not have assigned boundaries and are only limited by the capacity of their facility. Hispanic parents appreciated when school personnel, whether it is the administrator, teachers, or support staff make the environment a welcoming one. This can include having personnel that can help monolingual Spanish speaking parents in their language.

Being sensitive to social needs of families, especially immigrant families, helps families meet needs of their child necessary for their success. Experiencing



a small, safe and welcoming environment promotes a “feeling of family” encourages families to recommend the school to others, especially their own extended family.

Promoting Hispanic parental involvement in their child’s education can take many forms. Some parents will naturally be more involved than others for a number of reasons. In this study, the groups interviewed agreed upon certain factors. Having staff sensitive to Hispanic culture and language was one of these. It was helpful to have staff speak Spanish, but having respect and the availability of Spanish speakers was sufficient. All schools had an “Open Policy” to speak to the principal. Having access to personnel to speak about the progress of the child’s progress, either academically or behavioral was key in having open communication, formal and informal. Parent-Teacher Conferences, Open House, informal conversations-all of these were essential to feeling involved in the child’s education. Knowing that the administrator was knowledgeable about their child’s progress was something that demonstrated the care given to the children. Additionally, the schools offered opportunities for parents to know specifically how they could help their child through Parent Academies or by mandatory Orientations. All of this persuaded parents to be committed to be involved in the education of their child.

Being in a “family community” where parents are recognized for their presence in the school is central to the encouragement of students, school staff,

and other parents. It also promotes continuous communication on the child's progress and allows parents to be able to implement helpful strategies at home. It is vital that all persons involved in the education of child keep close eye on his or her progress in order to "close the gap very quickly". Volunteering in the school, attending workshops, being present at events, Parent-Teacher Conferences-all opportunities such as these allows children to see their parents as positive role models. Hispanic parents, in this study believe that working as a team to better the education of children is a key component to an optimistic and constructive.

Recommendations for further inquiry.

Schools with Parent Centers and a liaison seemed to have the most success in organizing parents into PTA groups or Board of Service (Romero and Payán). The other two school administrators, at Ruiz High school and Martinez School mentioned how difficult it had been to get parents involved in this type of formal organization: "it is very difficult to organize the parents into some formal association or group because of many, many circumstances." (Ruiz High School) Even at Martinez School which, through its charter holder, provided many family services fell short of parents serving in leadership roles:

It's interesting because this is one of the areas that we struggle in: organizing parents in a formal manner. To be honest, as much as we provide for our parents, I'm not sure if it's fear because of immigration status, but we used to see parents more involved in terms of committees.

It's gotten down to one or two people who participate.

The two schools (Payán and Romero CP) that had liaisons expressed more success in organizing parents in a PTA and Parent Board of Service. However, the role was not studied in depth. Further research would help identify what strategies are utilized by parent liaisons to further the involvement of Hispanic parents in any school, charter or district.

Lastly, this qualitative study presented hypotheses based upon findings from interviews with charter administrators, teachers and Hispanic parents. It could be processed as a quantitative measure to give numerical evidence to the hypotheses.

In attempting to give parents choices in the education of their children, we have seen the use of Magnet Schools, Open Enrollment, Vouchers and recently Charter Schools were authorized. But, charter schools were not created in Arizona with the intention of meeting the educational needs of Hispanic or other children of color. The promoters of charter schools were from elite group of ultra-conservatives.

Nonetheless, specific charter schools in minority neighborhoods obviously attract the population closest to the schools. There have been some schools built with the premise of serving Hispanic children, such as the Dual language school in this study. Of these four schools, three of the schools were purposely built to

serve the Hispanic community by their founders. Then there are Charter schools built in minority areas which are “for profit”. These are not founded by individuals or organizations looking to serve minority children, but see the schools as a corporate business.

This study interviewed parents who were pleased with the progress of their individual children. Parents enthusiastically supported the practices implemented in the charter school because it met their cultural ways and they saw their children succeeding and happy. Even in the Underperforming school, parents were willing to do anything they could to help the school so the state would not close it.

Charter schools have their place in the education of Hispanic children just as much as district schools. There is plenty of research for best practices in educating Hispanic children that must be adhered to by quality leadership. With the continuous growth of this population, it is no longer an option to meet the cultural and academic needs of Hispanic students. Finally, including Hispanic parents in all aspects of involvement is a necessity. Giving their children the best education is of top priority for Hispanics, whether immigrants or native born. As a parent mentioned in this study: “The only thing I can give my children is an education. Nobody can take that away. I don’t have anything else that is worth as much” (Payán School).

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APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON SCHOOLS IN STUDY

### **Victoria Martinez Elementary School**

This school was opened by a charitable organization that has served the Phoenix Hispanic since 1920. It is highly regarded for its long-standing assistance in many social programs. The school located between a very busy freeway, industrial buildings, and older residential homes in Phoenix. It serves grades K-8 and has recently established a daycare and preschool which is to capacity. This area is new, but the school buildings are older model modules. They were in the process of completing a gymnasium which will give the school more classrooms also. Regardless of the older facilities, children find space to play soccer or jump rope in between the buildings.

### **Reyes V. Ruiz High School**

The campus for this Alternative high school is in a very busy intersection in Central Phoenix. The building was meant to be office space, not classrooms. However, it is beneficial since the space is small and the classes are small. It does not have additional facilities for food facilities, however, classes are in session from 8:00-1:00 and there are many food establishments in the immediate area. The school utilizes a local YMCA facility for physical education. Transportation is provided for this program.

This school began as a program to help overage, under –credit, but very capable high school students pick up college credits in order to advance their



studies. When charter school legislation was passed, parents recommended they turn the program into a charter school program so that younger students could attend. The school is classified as an Alternative school which mandates service referrals from the juvenile court system. Other students can attend also.

### **Oscar Romero College Prep**

This campus is within a primary and elementary school. Over the course of more than fifteen years, it has bought facilities in the immediate area. It is off a main street so that public transportation is easily available for students in this school. Since it has grades K-12 within its campus, there is the availability of all the children in the household to attend in one locale. Its buildings are a combination of older modules to permanent buildings secured through grants and gifts.

Romero College Prep was opened as an effort of community members to provide an alternative to the violence that was happening in the community. Located immediately off a main street in Phoenix where cruising took place, the community members, including the Catholic pastor at the time, held demonstrations on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights to get the city to prohibit it. Every weekend there was a rival gang members throwing up signs and shooting at each other. Finally, a young sixteen year old died in the arms of one of the members. Not only did this open the eyes of the city to prohibit cruising, it also prompted community members to approach a local legislator and

then Arizona State Superintendent Graham to consider charter school legislation. They were one of the first charters granted in Arizona.

### **Jóvita Payán Elementary School**

At first sight, this school looks small, but has all the accommodations needed for the hundred and twenty-some students. The indoor space is open so that there is a lot of interaction between the staff and parents. Classrooms are well kept and attractive for the population they serve. The surrounding area has a number of public housing and older homes (more than 30 years).

This charter school appealed to a parent population that wanted their children to learn Spanish or maintain their Spanish learning. Because of current legislation, they were obligated to close their middle school for lack of enrollment. However, the elementary school was kept opened. However, the school had not met the appropriate ratings and had converted their program to a regular program.

APPENDIX B

“UTILIZING HISPANIC CULTURAL VALUES TO ENHANCE  
EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS”

Utilized with permission by Dr. Juana Bordas (11/23/3009) from Mestiza Leadership International.

## **La Familia**

The integrating factor of the Latino culture is the family and group closeness. Latinos look to the family to provide material assistance and emotional support. This includes checking with family members about how they see various behaviors and attitudes, and being influenced by other's perceptions and feelings. It is a collective culture where mutual dependency is expected.

- Get to know your students' family make-up. Include family members when possible; inquire about how the family is doing.
- Promote a friendly 'family' and casual atmosphere in the school environment when meeting with parents or family member.
- Expect Latinos to 'check in' or have to discuss issues with family members first.
- Invite extended family to participate in school activities-provide babysitting and food
- Provide flexibility to deal with family issues and needs.
- Remember that immigrant families may not understand how educational institutions operate and may be intimidated to engage because of language barriers and feeling inadequate.
- Utilize groups and work teams, and cooperative learning practices.

## **Personalismo**

Latinos tend to relate on a people and personal level. Instead of talking in generalities, they focus on the individual, the family, where people are from and personal preference. This includes valuing individualism, a person's 'inner-self' and uniqueness. Conversation, story-telling, and sharing personal experiences are valued. Latinos will only self-disclose when they feel they have a personal relationship. In traditional Latino culture, this protected one's honor or pride. This was especially important to Latino males.

- Take a personal interest in Latino families and co-workers: develop relationships first on a personal and then on the professional level.
- Provide outreach services utilizing people to connect to the Hispanic community-acting as bridges between the school and Hispanic families.
- Accentuate people & relationships with warm, friendly & encouraging behavior.
- Spend more time building rapport before discussing the issue at hand.

- Emphasize personal dignity, honor and ‘good name’ in feedback, evaluations or comments: be sensitive to a person’s pride
- Allow students and families to share personal stories and to talk about their family histories, where they are from, and their traditions.

### **Being Simpatico**

Getting along with people is extremely important to Latinos who place a high value on smooth, pleasant social relationships. They tend to acquiesce to the wishes of others and agree with them in order to be seen as *simpatico* (easy to get along with/congenial). This includes politeness, being respectful and courteous. Small talk and taking a personal interest in people are ways to show respect and regard. In surveys, for example, Latinos respond that they tend to carry out socially desirable actions and attitudes and avoid reporting less desirable ones. Being ‘*bien educado*’ (well-educated) in the Latino culture means knowing how [to] act towards others and taking their feeling into consideration.

- Be polite and courteous: respond in a cooperative, pleasant and friendly manner.
- Indicate how certain behaviors and actions are expected and valued by others.
- Provide training in conflict management, assertiveness and open communication to Latino staff.
- Emphasize being *simpatico* as value that promotes positive relationships.
- Initiate contact with parents and families in a warm manner before dealing with student problems or making requests. Engage in ‘small talk’ or conversations to build rapport.
- Recognize that Hispanic students may not ask for directions if they do not understand and think it is rude to question a teacher or share ideas that are different than other students.

### **Respeto**

Showing respect especially for someone who is old, has knowledge or a position or authority is a key value. For traditional Latinos, the emphasis on hierarchy and status means showing a greater deference and respect toward certain powerful groups of people, such as doctors, priests and teachers. Because of *personalismo*, respect for the individual runs even deeper. This includes the way a person lives, how they act, contributions made or past history.

Latinos indicate respect through their body language, voice tone, deference and manners. They tend to offer profuse thanks, praise and apologies. They may communicate indirectly which many see as evasive, but it is intended to be courteous and respectful.

- Look for areas where mutual respect can be emphasized.
- Realize that a higher education and position might inhibit honest interaction and promote deference.
- Link respect to *personalismo*: being a good mother, an ‘elder’, strength to overcome obstacles
- Recognize skills learned through immigration, working class jobs, and the “Universidad de la vida!”
- Always give constructive feedback and criticism in private and in an empathetic manner.

### **Confianza-Trust**

Being a person of ‘confianza’ is a high compliment in the Latino culture. Relationships and communication, which are built on loyalty and trust, are central. This includes being able to ‘count’ on someone. The saying ‘*mi palabra es la ley*’ (my word is the law) emphasizes the importance of doing what you say you are going to do. In the Latino culture people rely on one another.

- Indicate you are a person who can be trusted and stress confidentiality. Keep appointment and follow through on commitments.
- Build trust by offering continuity and consistency in services: *confianza takes time.*
- Introduce students and new co-workers personally and spend time ensuring that the school transition is a smooth and courteous.
- Realize that ‘checking up’, and supervising activities may be seen as a lack of trust to Hispanic Employees. Let Hispanic students know you value their personal integrity and trust them to do their best they can.
- Utilize Latino loyalty and relationship orientation to build a supportive culture and to inspire and energize other employees.

### **Destino-Así Es La Vida**

The idea of *destino* (destiny) or that outside forces govern one’s life is a key belief of many Latinos. Two traditional sayings that reflect this belief are: *Si Dios quiere* (if God wills it) and *esta en las manos de Dios* (It’s in God’s hands.) Anthropologists have described as fatalistic and interpreted this tendency as resignation, passivity, procrastination or a lack of initiative. This is in sharp contrast to the Euro-American belief that “God helps those who help themselves,” and that individual effort can chart one’s course.

In reality, *así es la vida* (that’s the way life is) connotes an acceptance ‘life’s way’ and a deep faith that a force greater than oneself is guiding one’s efforts. Try as one may, it is impossible to control chance, serendipity, or unplanned events. Latinos see life as a dance-a balance between individual effort and lessons that life brings.

- Recognize that acceptance may not be passivity.
- Be clear on expectations that support initiative and reward pro-activity.
- Provide support and information on the importance of goal achievement, planning and taking initiative.
- Define assertiveness as a trait that can help students achieve on behalf of their group, family and to advance culture.
- Utilize Latino acceptance to reduce stress and ‘go with the flow.’

### **Cooperation and Generosidad**

The emphasis on relationships, trust, respect and courtesy are central to the Latino value of cooperation and looking out for the well being of the group. Unlike cultures that emphasize individualism, Latinos emphasize ‘we’, belonging and group benefit. ‘Mutualism and reciprocity’ typify the preferred interaction.

In traditional families, it is embarrassing to ‘have more’ or to advance ahead of the group. Sharing resources, cooperation, and helping one another is expected. This is also evident in the high value placed on generosity. The saying *Mi Casa es su Casa* (my house is your house) reflects this value.

- Support mutuality and helping one another: accept offers to volunteer, set up opportunities to contribute and share. Ask students to bring food, cultural objects, and pictures to share
- Point out the value of cooperation particularly in a team setting.
- Note the positive role of healthy and appropriate competition and the importance of individual competency in building a high performing team or in student achievement (we all succeed when each one does their best.)
- Emphasize serving the common good, the Latino community, client needs.
- Utilize the Latino preference for cooperation to build a team culture and reinforce collaborative leadership principles and cooperative learning.

### **Traditions-Time Orientation**

Coming from a traditional culture, Latinos place a higher value on conformity and obedience. Respect for age and tradition might inhibit the tendency to ‘try new things’, change quickly and support untried innovations—or even question their elders. Latinos are connected to their ‘roots’ or their past and tend to see change as needing to be more continuous. Time orientation is also a factor. Latinos typically focus more on the present, spend less time thinking about the future and planning for it. This is partly due to *fatalism* and the belief that the future is uncertain. Tomorrow is up to God’s will. The typical Euro-American approach is to start with *now* and project into the future. The past is past and

doesn't need to get in the way.

Latinos have a more flexible orientation towards time. Meeting deadlines, being on time for appointments and work may present a conflict. The focus is on relating to people in the moment, so the passage of time is not in immediate awareness. Highly efficient or 'clock minded' people may be seen as impolite or insulting.

- Recognize that teachers in Spanish are 'maestros' or 'masters' and are respected as having knowledge and 'knowing what is best'. Latino parents might hesitate to criticize or to give honest feedback about their child's progress. This may also affect their participation—as they hesitate to 'tell the teacher' or school how to do things.
- Whenever possible link a new idea or action to something that worked in the past. Take a conservative-step-by-step approach- 'paso a paso!' Emphasize the 'tried and true'.
- Provide support, mentoring and information to assist with 'promotion anxiety', fear of taking risks and learning new areas.
- Structure in time for social conversation in the classroom, in meetings or appointments. This builds on the 'oral tradition' of the culture and on respect and *personalismo*.
- Make expectations around time clear.
- Utilize Latinos 'present orientation' to effectively stay focused [on] current issues.
- Honor Hispanic History and pride in past achievements.

### **Sentimientos- Emotionality and Closeness**

Latinos value their feelings, are encouraged to fully express them and have fewer restrictions about showing deep emotions. Several studies seem to confirm this tendency. For example, Latinos who respond to surveys are more likely to choose the extreme response categories (strong agree, strongly disagree) than the middle categories, to a greater degree than Euro-Americans. This emotional nature may make cultures that are more intellectually orientated and self-contained uncomfortable or generate a feeling that Latinos are volatile or overreacting. Ideas and opinions expressed may appear 'emotionally charged' and can lead to misunderstandings.

Latinos are a contact culture and feel comfortable when physically close to others. They stand closer when they converse, use a louder tone of voice, talk with their hands and are more likely to touch each other during a conversation. This preference is related to their close, mutually dependent relationships, and their frequent expression of warm feelings.

- Allow Latinos space to fully express their feelings and energize your interactions with them.



- Recognize that Hispanics are kinetic learners and need to fully engage in the learning process. This includes sharing and talking with others.
- Realize that ‘professionalism’ may seem cold and distant and be interpreted as not caring.
- Explain the need for safety practices, rules, and procedures in a personal way.
- Understand the need for touch and physically reassurance in a non-sexual way.
- Validate the role that expressing emotions plays in health and well being.
- Utilize Latino’s emotional expressiveness to build an organization culture where feeling can be validated and shared openly.

### **Fiesta/Gozar la Vida**

When people think of the Latino culture, they often picture bright flowers, music, spicy food, and people talking and having fun. Latinos celebrate life. They love having *Fiestas* where people gather together to enjoy one another, *converser*, dance and sing. Latinos celebrate many occasions with parties and enjoy groups of family and friends. Unlike Euro-Americans who tend to focus on production and ‘getting things done,’ Latinos focus on the process and the people. Enjoying the journey is as important as getting there. ‘Gozando la vida,’ literally means enjoying life. In a stress filled world, where people feel stretched and overwhelmed, this Latino value can bring balance and fulfillment to communities and organizations. Southwest Airlines has tapped into this concept and is leading the field for customer and employee satisfaction:

- Recognize and celebrate special occasions on a personal and organizational level.
- Utilize the Latino value of enjoying life and ‘the process or journey’ to emphasis greater student and employee satisfaction and involvement.
- Create a work/school environment that is fun and energizes people. Utilize music, movement, dance, story- telling and art.
- Remember that ‘happy’ people and students who feel recognized and valued are more productive.
- Plan ‘time out’s’ - - coffee breaks, staff luncheons, social time before meetings etc.
- Make enjoying work a priority; create a committee to see how this can be done and continue to happen.
- Remember to ask yourself, “Am I having fun, yet?”

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS (SPANISH)

## Appendix C: Interview Questions for Parents (Spanish)

1. Platiqueme de su familia.
2. ¿Por qué decidió en esta escuela chárter?
3. ¿Cómo está progresando su hijo/a o hijos/hijas en esta escuela en comparación a otras escuelas?
4. ¿Cómo lo/la trataron el/la directora para que se sintiera comfortable?
5. ¿Qué han hecho el/la director(a) para hacer la comunicación más fácil para usted?
6. ¿Qué ha hecho el/la director(a) para animarlo/a a involucrarse en la educación de su hijo/a?
7. ¿Cuáles son las expectativas de usted como padre/madre de familia?
8. ¿Explique cómo es escuchada su “voz” en esta escuela?
9. ¿Cuáles oportunidades son disponibles para que pueda ayudar a la escuela y su hijo/a?
10. ¿Cómo están unida la escuela y la comunidad en la educación de los niños?

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD/HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL FORM

Appendix D: Institutional Review Board/Human Subjects approval form

**lruiz1**

- **Did You Know?**
- **ORIA HIPAA Compliance Brief**
- **Recent posts**
- **News aggregator**
- **Log out**

- [View](#)  
**lruiz1**

**Personal Information** -----

**First Name**

Leticia

**Last Name**

Ruiz

**Campus**

Main

**Department**

Policy Leadership & Curriculum

**Job Title**

Research Specialist PRN

**History** -----

**Member for**

1 year 11 weeks

APPENDIX F  
PARENTS' PROFILE

Victoria Martinez School

Characteristic	Parent's Language	Parent's Schooling	Aspirations for child	Social Economic	Native/ Immigrant
Parent 1	Sp.	<HS	HS	Low	Immigrant
Parent 2	Eng	HS	College	Low	Native
Parent 3	Sp.	<HS	College	Low	Immigrant

Reyes V. Ruiz High School

Characteristic	Parent's Language	Parent's Schooling	Aspirations for child	Social Economic	Native/ Immigrant
Parent 1	Eng.	HS	College	Low	Native
Parent 2	Eng	HS	College	Low	Native
Parent 3	Sp.	<HS	College	Low	Immigrant

Oscar Romero College Prep

Characteristic	Parent's Language	Parent's Schooling	Aspirations for child	Social Economic	Native/ Immigrant
Parent 1	Sp.	<HS	College	Low	Immigrant
Parent 2	Sp.	<HS	College	Low	Immigrant
Parent 3	Sp.	<HS	College	Low	Immigrant

Jóvita Payán School

Characteristic	Parent's Language	Parent's Schooling	Aspirations for child	Social Economic	Native/ Immigrant
Parent 1	Spanish	<HS	HS	Low	Immigrant
Parent 2	Spanish	<HS	College	Low	Immigrant
Parent 3	Spanish	HS	College	Low	Immigrant
Parent 4	Spanish	<HS	HS	Low	Immigrant
Parent 5/6	Spanish	<HS	HS	Low	Immigrant
Parent 7	Spanish	HS	College	High/Low	Immigrant

As the data presents, this study had a high number of Hispanic parents who were immigrants, therefore, their strongest language was Spanish. Most were in a low income level, some struggling to find work. Many were mothers who stayed home while the husband worked. Even though they struggled financially, they expressed their desire to remain in the United States since their children were accustomed to the American schools. Some of the parents in the Dual Language program related that they were very supportive of this curriculum in case they were forced to leave the country

School aspirations for their child were based on the child's capabilities, not their economic levels or other factors. All of them considered the importance of receiving a good education. This had been one of the reasons they chosen and remained in the particular charter school.