Latino Family Involvement: An Exploratory Study of Latina Mother-Daughter Relationships and Their Effects on Educational Attainment and Resiliency

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LATINO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF LATINA MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND RESILIENCY

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

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Doctor of Philosophy

By

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ABSTRACT

Latino family involvement is an important issue in the field of education. Effective strategies to promote family involvement in the Latino community are vital for the educational attainment of Latino students and emotional wellbeing of Latino families. This study used focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations to examine Latino family involvement and the relationships and communication patterns between Latina mothers and daughters. The Latina mother-daughter relationship was studied in an effort to gain a better understanding of how this relationship affects a Latina daughter’s educational attainment and sense of resiliency. Results indicated that a positive relationship between a Latina mother and daughter can increase a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment and sense of resiliency. Additionally, a Latina daughter’s level of self-motivation can affect her level of educational attainment as well. Cultural narratives were found to be a common type of communication pattern used between Latina mothers and daughters. They were used to teach cultural values, life lessons, and experiential learning. By improving family involvement efforts within the Latino culture, Latino students will likely see drastic improvements in their overall levels of educational attainment and emotional wellbeing in schools. Implications for Latino students and families, schools that work with Latino families, and educational policy are also discussed.
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Chapter 1:

Introduction

In recent years, family involvement in schools has become an important issue in the field of education. An abundance of research exists describing the positive effects of family involvement on children’s academic development, self-esteem, and motivation to learn (Minke & Anderson, 2005; Nakagawa, Stafford, & Fisher, 2002; Pelco, Jacobson, Ries, & Melka, 2002; Ritblatt, Beatty, Cronan, & Ochoa, 2002). As a result, the role of families is no longer viewed as inconsequential to their children’s education. In fact, research has shown that families play a significant role in their children’s educational experiences and school success (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Hernandez, Hernandez, & Lopez, 2000; Lines, Miller, & Arthur-Stanley, 2011). As new education legislation is developed and passed, the topic of family involvement in schools will likely continue to be at the forefront of educational policy and research.

Due to the growing number of cultures represented socially, politically, and educationally throughout the United States, researchers have begun to look at topics such as family involvement from a multicultural perspective rather than a generic, one-size-fits-all perspective, designating individual cultures for specific areas of research. As one of the fastest growing populations, the Latino community has been targeted for many types of research, one of which is family involvement. As more Latino families participate in the American educational system, schools have faced the related cultural challenges, namely changing demographics, language issues, and family involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). No longer can the traditional European-American, middle-class school values be considered appropriate for all students and families. As Latino children gain in numbers in schools, efforts to retain them and help them succeed are not only needed, but also expected as educational standards. Because family involvement is viewed
as a necessary component of children’s school success (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Hernandez, et al., 2000), effective strategies to promote family involvement in the rising Latino culture are essential both for the educational advancement and emotional wellbeing of Latino students as well as the efficacy of Latino families.

**Definitions of Terms**

This section will outline the key terms that will be discussed throughout this study. Many of these terms have different meanings to different people, whether they are in the educational field or not; therefore, the development of a common language of terms is essential for the understanding of this study and its participants. These terms are listed in order of significance to the study rather than alphabetical order.

**Latino/a:** According to Marín and Marín's (1991) definition, a Latino/a is defined as: “a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (p. 23).

**Critical Race Theory (CRT):** “A framework that can be used to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly affect social structures, practices, and discourses” (Yosso, 2005, p. 168).

**Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit):** “The emerging field of legal scholarship that examines critically the social and legal positioning of Latinas/Latinos, especially Latinas/Latinos within the United States, to help rectify the shortcomings of existing social and legal conditions” (Valdes, 1998, p. 3). LatCrit addresses societal concerns in the Latino community, such as immigration, language rights, bilingual education, refugee status, census categories, legislation aimed at foreigners and immigrants, and assimilation practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

**Cultural narratives:** Cultural narratives include myths, folktales, dichos, consejos, autobiographical stories, and storytelling shared between family members (De La Vega, 2007; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Fernández, 2002). Cultural narratives can be used within Latino families to create an environment that encourages academic achievement for children (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Through cultural narratives, Latino parents, in particular
Latina mothers, communicate with their children about how to develop educational goals and to strive toward educational attainment (Romo et al., 2006). Cultural narratives are also viewed as important aspects of Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory because they provide people of color a voice for their experiences and a way to connect to others with similar encounters (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001).

**Family involvement:** Traditional forms of family involvement focus on “what parents do” to support their children’s educational efforts; these types of involvement include: helping with homework, volunteering at their children’s school or attending “back to school” nights (López, 2001). Family involvement can also be described as a dynamic process that is affected by a parent’s background and personal history, his/her relationships with the people in the school, the context in which the involvement occurs, the individual needs of his/her children, and the cultural resources of the parents and family (Pérez Carreón et al., 2005). Family involvement is also affected by the resources provided by a parent’s education, career, income level, and family life (Lareau, 2000).

**Latino family involvement:** According to López (2001), Latino families view the teaching of values as an important form of involvement in their children’s education. In the Latino culture, parents communicate with their children and typically express their involvement through cultural narratives. Cultural narratives and experiential learning are vital aspects of Latino family involvement. In the Latino culture, parent/family involvement is viewed as the parents’ ability to positively shape their children’s outlook on educational attainment. Latino family involvement is ongoing, and occurs over the lifespan of children, even when they are out of school (Delgado Gaitan, 1994).

**Consejos:** Spontaneous discussions between Latino children and family members that are tailored to the age of the children with the purpose of influencing children’s behaviors and attitudes (Valdés, 1996), providing nurturing advice during a Latino parent-child interaction (Delgado Gaitan, 1994), teaching moral lessons (Villenas & Moreno, 2001), and offering guidance and support (De La Vega, 2007).


Cuentos: Stories told to Latino children by parents, family members, and other important adults that serve the purpose of making connections between life circumstances in the past and how these circumstances can affect a person's future (Ayala, 2006).

Dichos: Sayings, expressions (De La Vega, 2007; Delgado, 2001), and teaching tools that are used to encourage children to pursue their educational aspirations (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Dichos, particularly between Latina mothers and daughters, allow parents to share cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs to support children as they navigate social institutions, including schools (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

Educational attainment: As discussed by Gándara (1982), educational attainment is the degree to which a person is able to achieve certain levels of education. It is influenced by a variety of personal, cultural, and societal factors. Educational attainment also requires a person to demonstrate satisfactory academic performance at lower levels of education before having opportunities to attain higher levels of education.

Resiliency: Resiliency can be described as the strengths and resources that lead to healthy development in youth (Larson, 2000). For young Latinas, resiliency includes strength, determination, a positive outlook on life, and a desire to better their lives (Gallegos-Castillo, 2006). It also includes a Latina girl's ability to look for hope and purpose regardless of the circumstances in her life (González, 2001). According to Espinoza-Herold (2007), cultural narratives can be viewed as a collection of resilience strategies that Latino family members use to strengthen bonds and offer support to each other. Young Latinas can develop resiliency when their family members and other adults use cultural narratives with them.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to consider the factors that influence Latino family involvement by considering the perceptions and beliefs of Latina mothers and daughters through the use of focus groups, in-depth interviews, and direct observations. By utilizing these research methods, Latina mothers and daughters were provided with opportunities to use their voices and reveal their personal stories, ideas, suggestions, and concerns about the topic of family
involvement. Different from much of the literature on this topic, this study shed light on the unique relationships between Latina mothers and daughters and how these relationships have the potential to affect a Latina daughter’s educational attainment and sense of resiliency. Within these relationships, it is common to hear cultural narratives being discussed between Latina mothers and daughters (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). This study also illuminated how cultural narratives are used in the Latino culture, and how they can be viewed as a non-traditional form of family involvement. The results of this study have implications for Latino families, schools that work with Latino families, and educational policy.

Research Significance

Factors identified in the literature influencing family involvement in schools include socioeconomic status, ethnicity, education level, and family structure (Coll, et al., 2002; Lareau, 2000; Moles, 1993; Peña, 2001). Although these factors are relevant in their effects on family involvement, there is another essential component—the unique relationship between families and schools—that may be amenable to change while the individual characteristics of a family generally are not subject to school influence (Feuerstein, 2000). An important aspect of the relationship between families and schools involves the perceptions of one by the other. Because families’ beliefs and perceptions weigh heavily as predictors of their involvement (Sheldon, 2002), schools need to make sure they are conveying the right messages to families. As research has demonstrated (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999; O’Connor, 2001), miscommunication and misperceptions are common, even if they are unintentional.

As schools move away from traditional parent involvement approaches, and move toward collaboration efforts and home-school partnerships, all members of the family need to be considered in the schools’ involvement approaches; therefore, all family members should have equal opportunities for involvement, including the children themselves (Lines et al., 2011). Because individual family members have different strengths and needs, family involvement approaches should be varied and culturally appropriate, particularly when working with Latino families. Although families from all cultures can benefit from involvement in schools, Latino families are in greater need of involvement efforts due to Latino students’ low levels of academic
achievement. By improving family involvement efforts within the Latino culture, Latino students will likely see drastic improvements in their overall levels of educational attainment and emotional wellbeing in schools. Additionally, by utilizing the strengths and resources of the Latino culture, family involvement efforts will have a higher chance of success and longevity.

Although research has demonstrated the factors that affect Latino family involvement (De La Vega, 2007; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Peña, 2001), there is a paucity of research on the use of focus groups with the Latino culture, and their use for studying Latino family involvement. Focus groups allow participants to be among others who may share similar experiences; this group experience helps participants to feel more secure and willing to share their feelings and experiences (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups provide Latino participants with a forum for sharing an important aspect of their culture: family cultural narratives (De La Vega, 2007; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). Critical race theory (CRT) explains the significance of providing people of color with an outlet for sharing their voices; by sharing their voices, the experiences of people of color can be acknowledged and validated as important sources of knowledge (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). Drawing on CRT and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) methods and theoretical frameworks is critical to our understanding of education for Latinas (Fernandez, 2002). Through the use of focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations, this study offered Latina participants an opportunity to voice their experiences through cultural stories and narratives and a way to connect to others with similar encounters (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

In an effort to tap into the strengths of the Latino culture, this study used focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations to examine Latino family involvement and the relationships and communication patterns between Latina mothers and daughters. As Denner and Guzman (2006) explain, “There is a dire need for research to examine the normal developmental processes of ethnic minority adolescents and the ways they succeed rather than how they fail” (p. 5). For this reason, this study considered: (1) the use of cultural narratives and their effect on Latino family involvement, and (2) the relationship between a Latina mother and daughter and its effect on a daughter’s educational attainment and resiliency. Additionally, there are three main reasons why this study was important. First, this study provided information about the perceptions
of family involvement in schools by Latina mothers and daughters—two groups who are underrepresented in the literature on this topic. Second, this study provided knowledge about the effects of using focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations with Latina mothers and daughters to discuss the topic of family involvement in schools. Third, this study provided an understanding of the use of cultural narratives in the Latino culture and how they are used to promote family involvement and emotional wellbeing within the Latino community.

Statement of the Problem

With a growing number of Latino students in schools, an analysis of the research in this area suggests a need for better approaches to involving Latino families in schools. Although the benefits of family involvement in schools have been demonstrated throughout the literature, a chasm exists between Latino families and their involvement in schools. This study reviewed the ways in which schools and Latino families can effectively bridge this gap, particularly in the areas of school and family outreach. Because many American schools function with European-American, middle-class values guiding their policies and practices, students and families from other cultures often find it difficult to adapt to the educational environment. This difficulty can be attributed, in part, to a breakdown in communication between schools and families from other cultures. As the foundation for many family involvement endeavors, schools’ communication efforts are not always implemented with cultural sensitivity in mind, particularly when working with Latino families (Pérez Carreón, et al., 2005).

Most schools provide a variety of formal activities through which parents and educators can communicate and participate, including open house events, parent-teacher conferences, and school assemblies (Delgado Gaitan, 1991). Although there are a number of school-related events that offer Latino families opportunities to communicate with school staff, it is the quality of these interactions, either positive or negative, that sets the tone for a Latino family’s involvement in school. As Delgado Gaitan (1994) explains, traditional definitions for family involvement limit the meaning of participation by discounting involvement that goes beyond attendance at school events and helping with homework. According to Deslandes and Bertrand (2005), families tend to be more involved if they perceive that school staff both want and expect their involvement.
Unfortunately, not all families and school staff communicate effectively with one another. For example, families and school staff may lack the knowledge and skills for interacting with each other, have limited opportunities for meaningful interactions, and experience psychological and cultural barriers that limit the understanding of one another (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). These interaction patterns are particularly common between families who are considered disadvantaged (racial and ethnic minority group members, people who experience economic impoverishment, families with limited parental education, people who live in stressful home situations, people who experience cultural discontinuities between home and school, and people who do not speak English) and their schools (Moles, 1993; Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). Often, these disadvantaged families are viewed as hindrances to their children’s education (O’Connor, 2001), and are perceived as lacking the knowledge and interest to support their children’s efforts in school (Moles, 1993). Additionally, families can experience self-perceptions of inferiority, disparities in power, barriers to participation, superiority attitudes from teachers, and intimidation tactics (O’Connor, 2001). Latino families, in particular, have been excluded from participating in traditional involvement activities due to poverty, social and linguistic isolation, prejudice, or limited schooling (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004).

As research has demonstrated, families need to feel welcome and accepted in their children’s schools before they will fully involve themselves (Benson & Martin, 2003; De La Vega, 2007; Peña, 2001). Authentic cross-cultural connections, based not just on tolerance, but on understanding and appreciation, are necessary if both students and families are to feel welcome and accepted by the school (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). When families develop a strong, positive attachment to the school, it is much more likely their children will develop positive attachments to the school as well (Comer & Haynes, 1991). Although the school plays a vital role in helping to create a positive attachment, developing a strong attachment to the school takes effort on the Latino family’s part as well. While schools need to provide the initial impetus for this attachment, Latino families can respond to schools’ outreach efforts by tapping into their cultural strengths, and providing a voice for their culture. Through the use of focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations, Latina mothers and daughters in this
study shared their experiences with one another, voiced their feelings and opinions, and also discussed strategies to influence family involvement practices in their schools and communities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does family involvement in schools manifest itself in the Latino culture, specifically in regards to Latina mothers and daughters?
2. What is the role of cultural narratives in Latino family involvement practices?
3. How does the mother-daughter relationship affect a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment?
4. How do cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment?
5. How does the mother-daughter relationship affect a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency?
6. How do cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency?

Summary

With new educational policies espousing its significance, family involvement in schools continues to be a relevant issue in the field of education. Due to the high dropout rate and low levels of educational attainment in the Latino culture, the topic of family involvement in schools is of extreme importance for Latino families. By listening to the voices of Latina mothers and daughters, we can develop new knowledge, levels of understanding, and approaches to family involvement within the Latino culture that will benefit many Latino students and families in American schools as well as the educators who work with them. In discussions about the topics of family involvement, educational attainment, and resiliency, it is important to take into account the ways in which these concepts are defined and understood by Latina mothers and daughters themselves (Ginorio & Huston, 2001). Listening to the voices of young Latinas is essential for gaining insight from their experiences and understanding the feelings they attach to those experiences (Hyams, 2006).

Latino families have many cultural strengths (De La Vega, 2007; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004), and school staff can capitalize on these strengths to benefit both Latino families and schools.
Latino families possess material and symbolic capital that can be effectively utilized to support their children and help schools carry out their educational goals (Vásquez, 2004). Through the use of focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations in this study, Latina mothers and daughters had multiple opportunities to share their personal experiences, ideas, and concerns about the topic of family involvement in schools. Through this study, I sought to make a contribution to the understanding of: (1) the use of focus groups with Latina mothers and daughters, (2) the effects of cultural narratives on Latino family involvement, and (3) the effects of the Latina mother-daughter relationship on a daughter's level of educational attainment and sense of resiliency.
Chapter 2:

Review of Literature

The following literature review will provide the context and rationale for this study and its participants by highlighting the relevant research on: (1) critical race theory, (2) Latino critical theory, (3) critical race theory in education, (4) Latina feminist pedagogy, (5) Latino resilience, (6) Latinos in the United States, (7) Latina mothers and daughters, (8) Latino family involvement, (9) Latinos and education, and (10) Latinos’ use of cultural narratives. It will also outline the more traditional definitions for parent and family involvement and discuss how to utilize a strengths-based approach to family involvement with the Latino culture.

Critical Race Theory

The following section will provide the theoretical framework for this study. It will outline the basic tenets of critical race theory (CRT), Latino critical theory, critical race theory in education and educational research, Latina feminist pedagogy, and also discuss how cultural narratives are an integral part of these theories.

As discussed by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), CRT is a movement led by activists and academics who believe in the study and transformation of the relationship among race, racism, and power. CRT utilizes a broad perspective, including economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and also emotions and unconscious thoughts to explain how race, racism, and power are related. CRT also emphasizes a social transformation approach with the goal of understanding and changing the social situation as well as discovering how society functions along racial and class systems in an effort to change it for the better. CRT has largely developed from the theoretical ideas of critical legal studies and radical feminism movements. Yosso (2005) describes CRT as “a framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly affect social structures, practices, and discourses” (p.
In recent years, the CRT movement has led to the development of critical theories for individual ethnic populations, including the development of Latino critical theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

**Latino Critical Theory**

According to Valdes (1998), Latino critical theory (LatCrit) can be defined as "the emerging field of legal scholarship that examines critically the social and legal positioning of Latinas/Latinos, especially Latinas/Latinos within the United States, to help rectify the shortcomings of existing social and legal conditions" (p. 3). LatCrit is built upon four interconnected functions: (1) the production of knowledge, (2) the advancement of transformation, (3) the expansion and connection of struggle(s), and (4) the cultivation of community and coalition. LatCrit has also brought attention to societal concerns in the Latino community, such as immigration, language rights, bilingual education, refugee status, census categories, legislation aimed at foreigners and immigrants, and assimilation practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Although LatCrit has primarily been utilized in the legal studies setting, researchers can incorporate the same theoretical ideas when considering the educational setting.

**Critical Race Theory in Education and Educational Research**

As CRT has expanded to individual ethnic populations and to settings outside the legal field, it has also become increasingly involved in the field of education. According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), a CRT framework in education incorporates (1) a focus on racism and how it relates to other forms of subordination such as gender and class, (2) a challenge to the dominant thinking, which supports the deficit model in education, (3) a focus on learning from the experiences of people of color, (4) a dedication to social justice as a solution to racial, gender, and class subordination, and (5) the use of an interdisciplinary approach to develop a better understanding of the experiences of people of color. CRT has become important to the field of education because the burden of changing disparities in schools continues to fall on people of color. Leaving racism unchallenged and pretending that race is a private, personal issue disregards the effects of race and racism on individual people, communities, and schools. As Molinary (2007) explains, "It’s neither a favor nor a courtesy to ignore someone’s ethnicity,
culture, or reality. It’s an omission, a negation. I am denied a significant, difficult, and yet
meaningful part of my experience” (p. 14).

As a newly developing theoretical framework in education, CRT was only recently
addressed in the field of education when Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) recognized the theory’s
relevance to the educational setting and presented it as an essential theory for guiding
educational research conducted with students of color (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). According to
Fernández (2002), the theoretical frameworks of CRT and LatCrit can provide valuable insight on
research conducted with people of color. Both CRT and LatCrit focus on race, gender, class, and
sexuality and identify these categories as social constructions that have daily, lasting effects on
people of color. These theories provide a framework for researchers to honor the stories and
cultural narratives of people of color—people who are often the subjects of educational inquiries,
but whose voices are often missing from the research.

As discussed by Fernández (2002), although the adult voices of people of color are often
missing from educational research, it is even more likely that the perspectives of youth and
students of color are not included. When youth’s voices in educational research are not heard,
their response to their educational settings, including their ability to cope and demonstrate
resilience, is also silenced. As described by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), “Without the
authentic voices of people of color, it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about
education in their communities” (p. 22). According to Dixson and Rousseau (2006), the essence
of voice within CRT is “the assertion and acknowledgment of the importance of the personal and
community experiences of people of color as sources of knowledge” (p. 35). If the voices of
people of color are disregarded, true knowledge of their lived experiences cannot be attained. In
the educational setting, CRT utilizes the method of storytelling as a way to gain knowledge about
the effects of race and racism on the experiences of students of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Cultural Narratives in Critical Race Theory

As discussed by Fernández (2002), embedded in CRT and LatCrit is the belief that
storytelling and cultural narratives are valuable to people of color. They allow people of color to
think about and reflect on their own personal experiences. Storytelling also allows people of color
to share their stories with others. Through their sharing, people of color invite members of the majority group to reexamine their existing views about minority groups and potentially alter them (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Voicing one’s reality through narrative can also be healing, empowering, and life-altering for people of color (Fernández, 2002).

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), critical race theorists utilize storytelling and narrative analysis to validate the cultural stories of minority group members as a way to develop a better understanding of how people view race. Critical race theorists use cultural narratives because they believe members of the majority racial group do not have an understanding of what it is like to be a person of color. Through cultural narratives, people of color can describe the reality of their lives and invite the majority group to learn about their experiences by showing them what life is like through the lens of a person of color. Stories such as these serve as a powerful medium for people of minority communities. Because racial discrimination can result in people blaming themselves or suffering in silence, cultural stories offer people a voice for their experiences and a way to connect to others with similar encounters. Cultural narratives also help to lessen the feelings of isolation people of color experience, while providing members of the majority group with an opportunity to develop a better understanding of these feelings and experiences. Because cultural stories offer people a human connection, the strength of these stories can contribute to an overall change in people’s belief systems by reminding them of their shared humanity.

Latina Feminist Pedagogy

According to Elenes, Gonzalez, Delgado Bernal, and Villenas (2001), educational research in critical pedagogy has existed primarily without the voices of Latinas. Due to the scarcity of Latina voices in this area, the idea of cultural knowledge was introduced as a way to develop a better understanding of the Latina relationships that exist in homes, schools, and communities. By rethinking traditional ideas of education, Latina feminist pedagogies—in particular, cultural narratives of consejos and educación—were demonstrated to function as cultural spaces in which teaching and learning can occur between Latino parents and children. Both consejos and educación shape a young Latina’s learning by providing messages and
lessons about being a woman, having expectations for yourself, and developing your own ideas. Latina feminist pedagogies take place between Latina women and girls in personal, everyday spaces, such as a daughter’s bedroom, a car ride to school, the steps of a church, or a grandmother’s kitchen. In these cultural spaces of home, school, and community, teaching and learning happens for Latinas on a daily basis.

*Latina Feminist Pedagogy in Education.* Cultural knowledge and feminist pedagogies in educational research currently serve a dual purpose: to eliminate cultural deficit models in schools and to offer new alternatives to traditional ideas about education (Elenes et al., 2001). In the higher education setting, Delgado Bernal (2001) furthers the discussion of feminist pedagogies by discussing pedagogies of the home—the language, customs, and learning that take place in the home and community—and their important function for Latina college students. A Latina student’s school experience is affected by many factors including her gender, skin color, class level, sexual orientation, language, and culture. Although González (2001) describes Latina students as “active thinkers who build on their cultural foundations to form identities and integrity, as well as to attain academic achievement” (p. 641), not everyone in the educational setting shares this belief about Latina students. Delgado Bernal (2001) describes pedagogies of the home as strategies of resistance to dispel the negative perceptions people might have about Latina students. What some people might consider deficits for Latina students—limited English skills, non-mainstream cultural and/or religious traditions, or family-related responsibilities—can actually be viewed as cultural strengths that Latina students bring to their educational experiences. Armed with cultural ways of knowing, Latina students are able to confront their experiences with sexism, racism, and classism in a powerful and supported way. By focusing on the strengths of cultural knowledge and a strong sense of self, Latina feminist pedagogies teach Latina students the tools and strategies to (1) navigate through their lives, (2) defy oppressive practices within their schools, and (3) be successful in their educational endeavors and futures (see also González, 2001).
Latina Mother-Daughter Pedagogy. Villenas and Moreno (2001) describe mother-daughter pedagogies as the “teaching and learning that occurs between mothers and daughters of color” (p. 673). Because Latina women are closely bonded with female family members across generations, a young Latina’s life and the cultural narratives that are part of her cannot be understood without also understanding the lives of her female relatives, in particular her mother and grandmother. Early in life, a Latina girl learns to pay careful attention to her female relatives by watching their behaviors and listening to their words (Villenas, 2006). One of the primary ways Latina mothers and grandmothers teach young Latinas their family culture is through “funds of knowledge,” which often take the form of consejos (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). According to Villenas and Moreno (2001), consejos are the ways in which cultural knowledge is created, passed on, and interpreted in the Latino culture. Consejos convey to young Latinas that they are an essential part of the Latino community as daughters and young women, and eventually, as mothers and wives. Using a female-centered view of education, Latina mothers can be viewed as the teachers in the family household who play an important role in passing on the knowledge of the Latino culture to their daughters.

Latino Resilience

As described by Fernández (2002), despite the difficulties that many Latinos face as a result of racism and other societal challenges, the strengths of the Latino culture help to foster a sense of resilience among Latinos. Inherent in CRT and LatCrit is the belief that Latinos and other people of color possess strengths through their experiences. Cultural narratives—the method by which people of color give voice to their experiences—can be viewed as a collection of resilience strategies that Latino family members use to strengthen bonds and offer support to each other as they encounter problems and perform the daily responsibilities in their lives (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

Building Resiliency in Young Latinas

As important as it is to consider the challenges young Latinas face, it is equally important to ascertain how they handle those challenges (Denner & Guzman, 2006). According to Larson
research in the field of youth development has seen a recent focus on understanding the strengths and resources that lead to healthy development in youth. A positive, strengths-based approach to youth development, positive youth development, has been theorized to counter the lack of evidence that demonstrates how youth become successful, caring, motivated, and capable adults. Just as Latino adults can use cultural narratives as a form of resiliency, young Latinas can also benefit from this strategy, particularly when their families and other adults use cultural narrative discussions to introduce concepts of social justice and equity and to socialize their daughters in ways that help them deal with racism and discrimination (see also De La Vega, 2007). Young Latinas receive the message that Latina women are powerful and strong in their character, purpose, and spirit. Cultural narratives allow Latina girls to view their families as role models of resiliency, hard work, and determination.

Having positive role models in their lives is important as young Latinas begin to consider their futures. As discussed by Markus and Nurius (1986), the idea of “possible selves” is a type of self-knowledge that requires a person to think about their potential and their future. Possible selves are the ideal selves people would like to become (successful self, loved self), but also the selves they are afraid of becoming (the depressed self, the unpopular self). Possible selves represent a person’s hopes, dreams, or fears, and stem from a person’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Although people can create any possible self for themselves, their ideas most often develop from their cultural and historical background, their families and other social networks, and information from the media. In the Latino culture, families have a significant influence on a Latina girl’s ideas about her possible selves and her potential in the future (Ginorio & Huston, 2001). According to Gallegos-Castillo (2006), despite the difficulties they might encounter, many young Latinas demonstrate strength, determination, a positive outlook on life, and a desire to better their lives. Although their lives may not be easy, Latina girls understand the importance of making good choices for themselves and of being their own best advocate. González (2001) describes one Latina girl’s experience:
What it means to succeed in this country is to have respect for yourself and for others. Not to let anybody step all over you, and to not have low self esteem. I want to be successful in school and in everything. Yes, I can do it. Like the saying goes, querer es poder (where there’s a will, there’s a way). So I will try my best and always believe in myself. Nothing is impossible unless you make it impossible (p. 651).

As they look to their futures, many Latina girls are able to recognize and honor their strengths and resiliency, and to look for hope and purpose regardless of the circumstances in their lives.

**Latinos in the United States**

Latino population growth in recent U.S. history has boomed. Currently the largest ethnic minority population group in the U.S. with more than 50.5 million people, Latinos represent approximately 16% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Between 2001 and 2010, the Latino population grew by 15.2 million, indicating a 43% growth rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The Latino population in the United States includes Mexican immigrants, Mexican Americans, Chicanos, Latin Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). Most recently, Latinos also include incoming groups from Central America and the Caribbean (Montero-Sieburth & Meléndez, 2007). Since the early 1990s, the number of unauthorized Latino immigrants, mainly from Mexico, has increased while the number of legal Latino immigrants has decreased (Montero-Sieburth & Meléndez, 2007). Of the Latinos currently residing in the U.S., some were born in the U.S. and speak English, having established a heritage and history in this country stretching back for generations; other Latinos are recent immigrants and speak Spanish as their primary language. As a result, Latinos can be considered both a new and an old population, made up of both recent immigrants and those who claim a history preceding the founding of the U.S. as a nation (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006). More than three quarters of the Latino population in the U.S. live in the West or South, and more than half of the Latino population live in California, Texas, and Florida (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In addition to these three states, the largest concentrations of Latinos reside in New York, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Colorado (Delgado Gaitan, 2004); however, states such as Iowa, Minnesota, Utah, Georgia, Tennessee, and Mississippi have recently experienced high levels of growth in the numbers of Latinos living there as well (Montero-Sieburth & Meléndez, 2007). Although Latinos share a common heritage of language, history, and culture, differences can be found within each ethnic
group, ranging from their socioeconomic level to their time of arrival in the U.S. (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). Group differences aside, Latinos also differ from non-Latinos in several ways that set them apart from other cultures in the U.S. including a disproportionate share in unskilled jobs, a common ancestral language, a significant number who are legally undocumented, and low education levels (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006).

With a disproportionate share of Latinos working in unskilled jobs and having low education levels, it is not surprising that Latinos often feel the impact of socioeconomic disadvantage within their families. According to Landale, Oropesa, and Bradatan (2006), a complex set of factors—the hardships of immigration, low levels of human capital, racial discrimination, and settlement patterns—are considered responsible for Latino poverty rates remaining high. In fact, 26.6% of Latinos currently live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In addition to the difficulties associated with poverty, Latinos also experience unemployment, underemployment, health crises, divorce, substance abuse, and a higher school dropout rate—all of which can prove overwhelming for Latino families (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). Life struggles, such as these, affect the children of these families as well, particularly in regards to their ability to effectively attain their education.

Latinas in the United States

Over 23 million Latinas currently live in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). As Libal (2005) explains, many of these Latinas are performing the same roles in their families today as the ones their ancestors performed in the past. Although Latinas have experienced increased opportunities in education and the labor force, they continue to be the primary person responsible for maintaining the family household, including cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children. As Carrasquillo (1991) explains, Latinas exercise their power and influence in the home, remaining the focus of their family’s lives. The way Latinas care for themselves becomes a matter of where they place their individual needs within the priorities created by the relationships with their families.

Latinas navigate their world by way of their race, gender, color, nationality, sexual orientation, class, ancestry, culture, and language (Hernandez-Truyol, 1998). They are unique in
the ways they are affected by their collective cultural experiences, the languages they speak, and the complexity of the relationships within their families (Delgado, 2002). With 46.7% of Latinas married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), family relationships are an important aspect of a Latina’s life. And family relationships become even more important when Latinas are the only adult in the household. For example, 20.6% of Latino households have a female householder without a spouse present (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Of these households headed by Latinas, 76.7% have at least three people living in the home and the median income for these female householders is $21,130. Many Latinas are employed in service, sales and office occupations (65.7%) and 24.1% of Latinas work in management and professional occupations. Although the majority of the Latina population in the U.S. is employed in the civilian labor force (87.9%), over 27.4% of Latinas still live below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

**Latina Identity.** As Molinary (2007) explains, Latinas define themselves in the context of many variables, including: family, community, ethnicity, religion, and culture. Latinas in the United States also confront two cultures, varying traditions, and different values, as they attempt to create a place for themselves. Latinas share an understanding of the tension and complexities that result from their experiences as both a Latina and an American. The following example by González (2001) describes one young Latina’s experience:

> Sometimes people do not like me because I am Mexicana but I do not care because culture makes me the person that I am. I value my culture and there is so much that I feel but cannot explain. As a Mexicana, I want to get ahead and be an example for other Mexicanos. Knowing that I am a Mexicana and that I am proud of my culture will help me to help other Mexicanos (p. 650).

According to Molinary (2007), Latinas in the U.S. face unique experiences as they learn to take what they need from both the Latino and American cultures in which they live to balance what they want for themselves. Although this balance can be difficult to achieve at times, growing up as both a Latina and an American can have its advantages. For example, Latinas in the U.S. (1) can navigate groups and experiences that others might find difficult, (2) have acquired skills and abilities through their experiences as a minority that help them deal with the traditional American culture, and (3) have the option to embrace both the Latino and American cultures. Delgado Bernal (2001) describes one Latina girl’s experience being bicultural:
I think it puts me in a kind of special place because I’m able to relate with two different ethnicities and so I’m able to take in each one. And I think it’s made me a stronger person because I’m able to see one side of something and also see another side and I can relate to both (p. 631).

According to Molinary (2007), as Latinas navigate two cultures, each with its own traditions and values, they attempt to find a place for themselves in their own individual way. Although each finds her own path, Latinas collectively face life’s challenges with an honor and dignity that highlights their commitment to their family, community, ethnicity, spirituality, and culture.

Latinas and Spirituality. According to González (2001), a Latina’s spirituality is enmeshed with her identity. Spirituality develops as a Latina’s way of learning from her home experiences, from her mother’s and elders’ cultural knowledge, and from her own beliefs and practices, all of which become her approach to daily living. For some Latinas, personal sources of spirituality are incorporated into more formal concepts of religion (Delgado Bernal, 2001). According to Libal (2005), the majority of Latinas are members of a Christian religion. Although the vast majority of Latinas are Catholic, three of the fastest growing Christian religions among Latinas are the Baptist, Pentecostal, and Latter-Day Saints religions. Religion can be an important source of strength and comfort for Latinas who may be experiencing life struggles. As Molinary (2007) explains, many Latinas acknowledge the fact that their faith influences how they live their lives. For this reason, the words duty, obligation, and expectation hang heavy on the conscience of many Latinas’ minds. Latinas are expected to be muchachas buenas—good girls, who have a duty and responsibility to others. They are raised to be part of a larger Latina culture: young women who are devoted to something other than themselves first. Many Latinas are inundated with faith-based rules from a very young age. These rules come from many different spiritual role models, including their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts, all of whom may model religious devotion. For many Latinas, their relationship with religion changes over time, from one that is directed by their families to one in which they choose the parts of religion that work for them. Regardless of the religion they choose or not, most Latinas consider themselves deeply spiritual (Rodriguez, 1999).
According to Delgado (2002), religion, faith, and spirituality provide the foundation for many Latinas’ concepts about themselves. A Latina’s espíritu (spirit) is an essential part of who she is; it refers to the totality of what sustains her in her life. For some Latinas, espíritu speaks as the voice of God within them; for others, it refers to their sense of oneness with the world. Regardless of how Latinas view their espíritu, their faith and spirituality help them determine whom they turn to for support and how they solve their problems. Most Latinas understand that health and wellness result from the integration of the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of a person’s body. Although each aspect is individually important, the combined health of all three offers the most powerful and useful benefits for Latinas.

Latina Values. As Delgado (2002) discusses, Latinas experience a bond through a shared similarity of messages (dichos) that they receive throughout their lives. The dichos that are passed on to Latinas by their family members help to form an understanding of how they should live their lives. The dichos of the Latino culture provide Latinas with guiding messages that serve as the building blocks and values in their lives. In addition to the dichos that Latinas share, there are other cultural expressions, which guide Latinas throughout their lives. Regardless of whether these phrases are spoken in Spanish or in English, they have an effect on the behavior of Latinas. These phrases include: (1) cuídate, mi hija – take care of yourself, my daughter; (2) la familia primero – family first; (3) hay que tener respeto – you must be respectful; and (4) hay que aguantar – you must tolerate and accept.

According to Delgado (2002), the phrase “cuídate, mi hija,” suggests that each Latina is the person who is most responsible for looking out for herself. This phrase describes the expectation that Latinas must take care of themselves, solve their own problems, and avoid getting into negative situations. This message is learned early on and is reaffirmed throughout a Latina’s life. At times, however, this message can make it difficult for Latinas to consider their own needs first. In fact, the second phrase, “la familia primero,” tells Latinas their families come first before anyone else. Unfortunately, this message is often misinterpreted among Latinas, and some Latinas believe caring for their families is separate from caring for themselves; sometimes,
going so far as to put themselves last because they believe they must focus on caring for their families first.

As Delgado (2002) explains, the third value of respeto (respect) conveys two different meanings to Latinas. First, it means respect based on age as well as on social, community, and professional standing. It also means Latinas will not intrude in someone else’s territory, and other people are not to intrude in what is considered a Latina’s territory. In essence, Latinas live by the philosophy of “I owe you respect, but you also owe me respect” (Delgado, 2002, p. 7). When Latinas live their lives by the values of cuidate, la familia primero, and respeto, the value of aguantar—to tolerate, to bear, to deal with things with a smile of acceptance—also becomes necessary.

According to Delgado (2002), aguantar is a common coping strategy for Latinas. Although it is common, it can also serve as a source of misinterpretation for what Latinas are actually feeling. For example, if a Latina is suffering, she will not complain. If her life is awful, she will not cry. If a Latina feels abandoned, she will not admit she is alone. Most Latinas are careful not to show these particular types of emotions, and particularly not to outsiders. The emotions Latinas do reveal are often much less than what they actually feel. All too often, the deeply ingrained ideas of respeto and la familia primero silence Latinas from showing others how they truly feel. Not only do Latinas feel their own sadness, hurt, and disappointment, but they also feel and experience those of their families as well. Because many Latinas believe that life is a series of hardships, aguantar is seen as the method for accepting whatever life offers. For many Latinas, aguantar enables them to cherish and appreciate what they have in their lives. Although many Latinas are socialized to aguantar, it is important, for their own wellness as well as their family’s wellbeing, for them to learn when not to aguantar. In order to establish a better balance between caring for themselves and caring for others, Latinas need to develop a strong sense of self in order to be able to apply the messages of cuidate, la familia primero, respeto, and aguantar in positive ways in their lives.
Family is the essence of the Latino culture. As Delgado Gaitan (2004) explains, the main social unit in the Latino culture is the family. This social unit is held in high regard as a resource for coping with life’s daily pressures. According to Carrasquillo (1991), one important function of the family is to provide emotional security, and companionship and parenthood appear to be the most significant sources of emotional security. Family members are also responsible for protection, care, and providing one another with shelter, food, and clothes. Additionally, there are expectations for young Latinos to contribute to the wellbeing of the family, and to stay in close physical contact with other family members, either by living at home, visiting frequently, or participating in family events (Molinary, 2007).

According to Carrasquillo (1991), there is no one Latino family type in the United States. In fact, there are a variety of family types that differ according to regional area, immigration status, education level, socio-economic level, age, and cultural assimilation. In general, Latino families are (1) relatively young; (2) larger than those of the general population, meaning they are twice as likely to have three or more children in the household; and (3) more likely than other ethnic cultures to be headed by women due to the rising Latino divorce rate, the number of births to single mothers and the number of women who emigrated without their husbands. Although some Latino households are headed by women, over 49.5% of Latino households are married-couple households, and of those households, 53.4% have at least 4 people living in the home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

As Delgado Gaitan (2004) discusses, Latino families can include: two-parent families; single-parent families; and/or extended families with grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins. Extended family members are relatives, extended either vertically or laterally, who are not part of the nuclear family. The extended family plays a vital role in Latino families. They have great power and influence over Latino family members when they make important life decisions, such as furthering their education or setting goals for their future (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and family friends are common visitors in Latino family homes (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). According to Carrasquillo (1991), grandparents, in particular, play
a highly respected role in the lives of Latino children. They are valued in Latino families for their knowledge as well as their ability to serve as role models and caretakers for Latino children. Most Latino families revolve around at least one of the grandparents, placing great emphasis on this family relationship (Rodriguez, 1999).

As Carrasquillo explains (1991), the word family in the Latino culture includes the extended family of several generations including grandparents, cousins, and compadres. Compadre is a term describing the relationship between two adult couples who are bound by a kinship related to the baptism of a child. Compadres play a significant role in the social development of a Latino family. They sustain strong friendship ties with parents and become important people in the lives of the children if the birth parents are absent. These close family friends are often given the status of relatives and treated like family members (Marín & Marín, 1991). Although the word family in the United States commonly refers to a nuclear family consisting of a mother, father, and their children, the word family in the Latino culture includes all relatives—those who live in the home, those who do not live in the same house, and those who live in a different city or country (Carrasquillo, 1991). According to Rodriguez (1991) the sanctity of the extended family, the belief in community, and the unique sense of compradazgo (godparenthood), reflects Latinos’ devotion to relationships. For generations, these are the ties that have held Latino families together, and Latino families that maintain these strong ties and connections find it easier to pass on their traditional Latino values (Delgado Gaitan, 2004).

Cultural Narratives among Latino Family Members

One powerful way Latino parents and family members teach Latino children values is through the cultural narratives of consejos, cuentos, and dichos. As described by Valdés (1996), consejos are important in Latino families because they are used to teach children role expectations, moral values, how to behave, and how to conduct themselves around others. The teaching of consejos is tailored to the age of the Latino child, and begins when children are young and considered able to understand. Consejos generally occur during any parent-child interaction and are repeated throughout a child’s life to ensure they are learned thoroughly. During these parent-child interactions, Latino parents guide the discussion for the primary purpose of teaching
the child an important lesson. Consejos, cuentos, and dichos are quite similar in many ways and are used for the same purpose. While consejos are described as both nurturing advice and counsel, dichos and cuentos are the means by which Latino family members present consejos to children. The sharing of cultural values through oral traditions like cultural narratives allows Latino families to bond with each other and provides Latino parents with a way to encourage their children to become strong, responsible young people (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

**Latino Family Values**

In the Latino culture, the family is considered the strongest means for passing down Latino cultural values and traditions from one generation to another (Vasquez, 2004). As Carrasquillo (1991) explains, a lot of Latino parents still practice the culture of their homeland, and want their children to follow their example. However, when Latino children attend American schools where American values are strongly emphasized, it is difficult for the children not to adopt those values and to stray from their family's cultural beliefs; this assimilation to American culture can cause tension and conflict between Latino parents and their children. Although Latino families in the U.S. face many challenges raising their children in a bicultural world, parents can help their children learn to thrive in American culture by creating a balance that allows children to retain the best of both the Latino and American cultures (Rodriguez, 1999; Vasquez, 2004). In the Latino culture, children are taught the important values of (1) respeto, (2) educación, (3) familia, (4) confianza, (5) simpatia, and (6) orgullo (De La Vega, 2007; Delgado Gaitan, 2004; Vasquez, 2004).

**Respeto.** As Vasquez (2004) explains, the Spanish term, respeto (respect) refers to a relationship between adults and children involving dependence and obedience. Although the term in English means having a high opinion of people and recognizing the importance of others, the English term does not convey the deference and approval-seeking that is expected when children relate to adults in the Latino culture. Through cultural narratives, Latino adults pass on the value that elders have wisdom and deserve respect (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). According to Vasquez (2004), Latino parents tell children stories about their family members’ and ancestors’ struggles, sacrifices, and accomplishments to teach children to value their cultural history and ancestry. In
this way, Latino parents provide their children with strong familial role models and help them to understand they are part of a family deserving of their respect. Valdés (1996) explains how respeto involves the ways that people present themselves to others, and also how they recognize the needs of the people with whom they interact. It also includes an understanding of role relationships, role boundaries, and the responsibilities associated with each familial role.

As Delgado Gaitan (2004) discusses, parental authority and respect in the Latino culture are highly valued and considered a form of love and nurturing. In most Latino families, children are expected to listen to their parents without question; if they do not, it is considered disrespectful. According to Vasquez (2004), Latino parents who are raising children in the U.S. need to learn how to balance the “old” respeto with the “new” respeto. Under the old respeto, Latino children are expected to offer absolute respect to their parents and other adults, even though adults are not expected to offer children respect in return. The acknowledgement of children’s feelings in adult-child interactions is seen as spoiling or harmful to children. The new respeto is similar to the old respeto; it preserves the positive aspects of the old respeto—acknowledging the worth of others, recognizing other people’s merits and personal qualities, deference to age, and maintaining self-discipline—but also includes acknowledging children’s feelings in adult-child interactions.

**Educación.** In the Latino culture, educación (education) not only includes the ideas of intellectual development and academic learning, but also the idea of personal development, including manners and moral values (Espinoza-Herold, 2007; Valdés, 1996). Although Latino families emphasize educational attainment and academic achievement, there is also an emphasis on discipline and proper behavior—a desire for their children to be “bien educado” (De La Vega, 2007). To be bien educado, means not only that Latinos know how to read and write, but that they also possess the qualities of respect, loyalty, compassion, hard work, and the ability to distinguish right from wrong (Rodriguez, 1999). As an important part of Latino culture, educación is a valued expectation that goes beyond academics and excelling in school to include how people behave themselves, how they act with others, how they support and respect other people, and how they behave in the presence of authority (Delgado Gaitan, 2004).
Regardless of the age of their children, Latino families view education as an important value and have high expectations for their children's educational attainment (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). Parents and other family members send a strong message to Latino children to do well academically and to remain in school, reinforcing these messages often (Romo & Falbo, 1996). As Latino children progress through school, Latino parents and family members play crucial roles in their children's educational attainment by providing emotional support, offering encouragement to help children achieve their educational goals, and serving as valuable resources when children choose academic and career paths (Rivera & Gallimore, 2006).

*Familia.* For Latinos, family permeates every aspect of life (Vasquez, 2004). As explained by Rodriguez (1999), *familia* (family) is a value that is particularly sacred to the Latino culture. Latino children learn values and build their sense of self-worth from being with family members who share stories about their Latino heritage and cultural traditions. In Latino families, children develop a sense of belonging and connection when they spend time with trusted family members. Latino children are never far from their families, neither physically nor emotionally, because they depend on their families for emotional and financial support as well as their sense of identity. Latinos' pride stems from their families, and families are viewed as safe havens, where family members can find emotional support and an escape from life stressors. It is common for extended family members to support Latino parents as they guide their children into becoming caring, responsible, and contributing members of the community.

The value of the family is one of the Latino culture’s strongest assets. Not only is family an asset, but family life is also a resource; at times, the only resource Latinos can turn to during trying times (Valdés, 1996). In the Latino culture, family serves as a support system throughout a person’s lifetime (Thakral & Vera, 2006). As discussed by Vasquez (2004), another aspect of Latino family life is familismo, or loyalty to the family. Familismo creates strong feelings of loyalty and is considered a valuable source of support. It ensures that the safety and welfare of the family come first before anything else. Latino families differ from traditional American families in this way because they are expected to put their family's needs first and their own needs second. Latino parents are often concerned their children will lose their family values by attending
American schools (López, 2001). Traditionally, American schools have utilized instructional approaches that are highly individualized and fairly competitive (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992); yet, many American schools emphasize competition without considering its effects on children who come from cultures that value cooperative efforts (Ogbu, 1982).

For many Latino children, their ideas about personal success, happiness, and individual accomplishments are deeply embedded in the wellbeing of their families (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). And for many Latino families, a person’s individual success is not as important as his/her ability to maintain familial ties across generations (Valdés, 1996). Although individual success might not be as important as familial bonds, Latino parents and other family members still send the message to Latino children to do well in school and to further their education (Romo & Falbo, 1996). These somewhat conflicting values of achieving educational success and maintaining familial bonds can create inner conflict for Latino children if circumstances arise, which force them to choose one value over the other. Latina girls, in particular, tend to have more responsibilities at home that stem from their emotional commitment to their families; this commitment to their families can affect their schooling and be an emotional burden for young Latinas (Delgado Bernal, 2001) as family responsibilities are often prioritized over an education that Latina girls feel is unsupportive to their family’s needs (Fernández, 2002). According to Molinary (2007), Latino children develop an understanding of the tension and complexities that can result from their experiences as both a Latino and an American. They learn to take what they need from both the Latino and American cultures to balance what they want for themselves. When Latino children face difficult life choices, they rely on an internalized sense of cultural values, an obligation to their families, and personal strength of character to help them make positive decisions for themselves (Flores, 2006).

Confianza. As described by De La Vega (2007), confianza is a Spanish term that is not easily translated in English because it encompasses more in the Latino culture than is defined by the English translation. The cultural context of the word confianza is deeply rooted in the Latino culture. Confianza develops from perceptions and mutual feelings of being welcomed, nurtured, valued, and trusted. It represents emotional connections to and respect for another person.
Confianza can also be manifested as confidence, self-confidence, or trust in others. Latino children have confianza toward family members who are readily available for them when they need advice, financial help, or emotional support (Sanna, 2006).

**Simpatia.** As explained by Vasquez (2004), simpatia is an important part of being bien educado. Although its meaning is close to the English translation of polite manners and common courtesy, it also includes conformity, whereby a person will do things he/she may not want to do, but believes they have to do for someone else’s sake. When Latino parents and family members teach the value of “old” simpatia, there is an emphasis on politeness, friendliness, agreeableness, holding one’s temper, and aguante (to endure one’s stress with acceptance). For Latino families in the U.S., it has become increasingly more important to establish a new value of simpatia—one that validates children’s feelings and allows them to adapt to the American culture with the support of their families, so that family conflicts can be avoided and communication is improved.

**Orgullo.** According to Vasquez (2004), orgullo (pride) is one of the most cherished of all Latino values. Orgullo represents personal dignity and self-respect, both of which are attained by following social norms that have been maintained in the Latino culture for centuries. Orgullo is the means by which Latinos pay respect to their heritage and ancestry. For many Latino families, a strong sense of orgullo is instilled in their children when they become bien educados, simpáticos, amable (nice, kind), and trabajadores (polite, gentle, kind, and diligent). Raising children to develop these values promotes orgullo in Latino families and ensures that these strong traditional values will continue on in future generations.

*Latina Mothers and Daughters*

As described by Espinoza-Herold (2007), the Latina mother is the central figure in the Latino family—the person who unifies the family and is responsible for preserving and maintaining the cultural identity of the family. Latina mothers take great pride in teaching their families the values, beliefs, and traditions of the Latino culture. A Latina mother is the person who Latina daughters look up to and try to emulate. According to Perez-Brown (2003), Latina mothers are the people who teach their daughters how to become women, wives and mothers, but the relationship between Latina mothers and daughters can be a complex one. Although Latina
mothers and daughters can share intense bonds, generational and cultural differences are common, particularly for Latinas who are raised in America. Young Latinas in the U.S. must learn to balance two cultures: the cultural values of their Latina mothers and those values they begin to create for themselves as young women living in America. Denner and Guzmán (2006) describe how young Latinas in the U.S. have the opportunity to be transcultural—when an individual identifies with one culture yet also incorporates behaviors from another culture. The transcultural process offers both challenges and opportunities for Latina girls because it allows them to reflect on their cultural values and beliefs as both a Latina and an American.

As Molinary (2007) explains, for Latinas who grow up in two cultures, it can be difficult to determine where to stand on issues of traditions and values; this difficulty can lead to disagreements between Latino parents and children, including mothers and daughters. Although disagreements between mothers and daughters are typical across cultures, it can be more complicated when the tension is due to cultural reasons. Many young Latinas are conflicted by their mother’s cultural beliefs and values because they are aware of the difference between how their mothers experience American culture and how they themselves experience it. Although there can be disagreements between Latina mothers and daughters concerning cultural rules and expectations, Latina daughters have a deep respect for their mothers even if they disagree with some of their customs and beliefs (Ayala, 2006).

**Latina Daughters**

Young Latinas come from diverse backgrounds with regard to their nationality, immigration status, rural/urban setting, language usage, and socio-economic level (Denner & Guzmán, 2006). According to Marlino and Wilson (2006), Latina girls have strong aspirations and life goals for themselves. They desire to attend college and graduate school, and strive to have professional and lucrative careers. Young Latinas also possess a deep desire to give back to their neighborhoods and communities in positive ways. As discussed by Thakral and Vera (2006), Latina girls have the ability to become successful, goal-oriented, and emotionally healthy; even though many young Latinas display these strengths, the majority of research has focused on their weaknesses and deficits. Although there is an abundance of research about the problems young
Latinas face—teen pregnancy, depression, violent behavior, and suicide—there is little information about the positive aspects of Latina girls’ lives. In recent years, research has shifted its focus from the problem behaviors of adolescents to one that identifies their strengths and resources in an effort to encourage the positive development and emotional wellbeing of all youth, including young Latinas (Larson, 2000).

A primary resource and source of strength for young Latinas is their families. According to Flores (2006), when Latina girls face life choices, such as the pressure to engage early in sex or to experiment with drugs or alcohol, they rely on an internalized sense of cultural values, an obligation to their families, and personal strength of character to help them make positive life choices. Latina girls’ behaviors demonstrate a respect for their parents; this respect for their parents’ values serves as a protective factor for young Latinas because they often consider how their behaviors will affect their parents and use family values as a reason to avoid risky situations.

**Cultural Narratives between Latina Mothers and Daughters**

The mother-daughter relationship is an important mechanism in identity development for Latina girls (Espín, 1999) because a Latina girl’s main source of information about her family’s rules and expectations comes from spoken and unspoken messages from her mother (Molinary, 2007). Messages about family values often come in the form of cultural narratives between Latina mothers and daughters (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). According to Valdés (1996), Latina mothers believe their parenting role requires them to give consejos as a way of guiding their children through life. In fact, when Latina mothers give consejos to their children, they often use a serious tone to demonstrate the importance of the discussion. Latina mothers use cultural narratives to pass along traditional values, beliefs, and customs in an effort to guide and support their daughters as they grow into young women (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

**Latinos and Education**

As Delgado Gaitan (2004) explains, the educational experience of Latinos in the U.S. is as varied as the culture itself. Latinos are educated along a continuum from those with low literacy skills to those who complete postgraduate professional education. Although some Latinos complete college and graduate school (10.1% college, 3.8% graduate school; U.S. Census
Bureau, 2012) a significant percentage of Latinos experience difficulty completing high school (17.6% dropout rate; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012), making them the largest dropout group by race/ethnicity in the U.S. By the year 2030, Latino students are estimated to make up approximately 25% of the total American school population (Ginorio & Huston, 2001), which makes their educational attainment even more of a critical issue.

As Schneider, Martinez, and Owens (2006) explain, many Latino students begin traditional schooling without the economic and social resources other students receive, which can result in initial disadvantages at school. Due, in part, to a low-income status, language differences, and parents' lack of knowledge about the U.S. educational system, these initial disadvantages continue to accumulate as Latino students experience prejudice, inadequate resources in their schools, and weak relationships with school staff. By early adolescence, Latino students may lose interest in school, fall behind academically, be at risk of dropping out during their first year in high school, or not be prepared academically for college (Delgado Gaitan, 2004).

For the children of Latino families who experience life struggles, attending school can offer them an escape from a difficult home environment (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). Although schools can serve as places of refuge for these Latino children, adjusting to the school culture can prove to be difficult. In fact, Latino students are more likely to experience (1) lower levels of educational attainment and academic achievement, (2) less access to quality educational programs, (3) an overrepresentation of students in special education, (4) segregation from non-Latino students, and (5) higher levels of school retention (Carasquillo, 1991). According to Trumbull et al. (2001), many educators' views of how children develop, learn, and communicate are shaped primarily by a European-American model, which represents what is normal for only a portion of their students. Because it is relatively rare that Latino students have teachers whose backgrounds match their own, they are often understood through this European-American lens (see also Romo & Falbo, 1996). Many teachers lack sufficient knowledge about the social, cultural, and family upbringing of Latino students, which can cause Latino youth to feel isolated and misunderstood in their schools (Gibson, Gándara, & Peterson Koyama, 2004).
Deficit Thinking in the Education of Latinos

Although Latino students bring to school who they are, what they believe, how they feel, and how they behave from a culture that is rich in history, language, values, customs, and practices (Delgado Gaitan, 2004), their cultural strengths are often ignored. According to Yosso (2005), deficit thinking is one of the most common forms of racism in American schools. Deficit thinking implies that students of color and their families are to blame for their low academic performance because these students come to school without American middle class cultural knowledge and skills, and their parents are viewed as not valuing or encouraging their children’s education. Deficit thinking is further reinforced by the negative portrayal of Latinos in the media, in politics, in discussions about welfare and immigration, and in the labor force, which can lead to the belief that Latino students are incapable of succeeding in school (Fernández, 2002).

Previous research and policy focused on changing Latino students and their family dynamics as a way of improving their academic achievement (Ybarra, 2004); however, current educational outcomes, such as high drop-out rates, grade retention, low test scores, and low college enrollments, necessitate finding better ways to help Latino students succeed in school (Valdés, 1996). Deficit models are counterproductive and ineffective; schools can be more effective when they utilize a strengths-based approach with Latino students and families and build upon the cultural and linguistic skills Latino students bring to the educational setting (Garcia & Stein, 1997). When working with Latino students and families, schools need to change their approach from a deficit model, where Latino families are blamed for their children’s educational deficits, to a resource model, where Latino students and families are valued for their cultural strengths and resources (Ramírez, 2004; De La Vega, 2007).

Latinas and Education

Although Latina girls currently represent the largest group of girls of color in the U.S., little is known about their educational needs, accomplishments, and learning problems (Ginorio & Huston, 2001). According to Libal (2005), Latina students who speak Spanish as their first language may experience language barriers in school, which can cause significant academic difficulties, particularly for Latina students who are first-generation immigrants. By the time these
students know English well enough to succeed in school, they may have already fallen too far behind or become too frustrated with school to catch up with their same-age peers. Additionally, Latina girls tend to have more household responsibilities than traditional American middle-class students—responsibilities that stem from their emotional commitment to their families, including cooking, cleaning, and caring for younger family members, all of which can ultimately affect their schooling (see also Delgado Bernal, 2001). This commitment to their families can be a significant emotional burden for young Latinas as they are expected to be role models not only for their siblings and families, but also for their communities (Delgado Bernal, 2001). Because the majority of schools are insensitive to family responsibilities and do not provide options to help Latina students, such as flexible class schedules, leniency for missed classes, or homework alternatives (Libal, 2005), family and work obligations are often prioritized over an education that Latina girls feel is inadequate (Fernández, 2002).

Finding ways to help young Latinas with their schooling requires an understanding of their current educational status and the factors that contribute to a Latina girl’s educational attainment. National educational statistics show that 30% of Latinas are high school graduates; 21.7% of Latinas have completed some college or an associate degree; 9% of Latinas have a bachelor degree; and only 3.2% of Latinas have an advanced degree (NCES, 2012). Both family support and peer influence are two influential factors that have been demonstrated to affect the educational attainment of Latina girls (Gándara, 1982; Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Romo, Kouyoumdjian, Nadeem, & Sigman, 2006).

**Family Support.** According to Gándara (1982), Latinas who are successful in school describe their parents as hard-working role models who set good examples and have high expectations of their children. These Latino parents emphasize high-quality performance in school and all areas of life, and also encourage independence and self-reliance in their children. Throughout their schooling, successful Latinas relied on the emotional support of their parents to help them succeed, often attributing their accomplishments to the support of their families.

Latina mothers, in particular, play a significant role in their daughters’ educational attainment (Gándara, 1982; Romo et al., 2006). Espinoza-Herold (2007) discusses the use of
cultural narratives within Latino families and how this form of communication helps to create an environment that encourages academic achievement for children. Through cultural narratives, Latina mothers communicate with their daughters about how to develop educational goals and to strive toward educational attainment (Romo et al., 2006). Regardless of their own education level, Latina mothers are capable of having profound effects on the educational accomplishments and aspirations of their children (De La Vega, 2007; Espinoza-Herold, 2007; Gándara, 1982).

Peer Influence. According to Gibson et al. (2004), supportive relationships with peers are an important aspect of the academic success of Latino youth (see also Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu, & Friedlaender, 2004). Because Latino students are deeply concerned about what their peers think, their feelings of acceptance and attitude toward school are significantly affected by their relationships with their peers. As discussed by Ginorio and Huston (2001), for young Latinas who are still developing a sense of self, peers are extremely influential in determining whether Latina girls will develop a self that strives toward educational attainment. For some Latina girls, their peers may become resentful of their academic success, leading to teasing or harassment, which makes it difficult for some young Latinas to develop a sense of self that is both Latina and also successful in school. Since Latino students tend to select school peers from their own ethnic group (Gibson et al., 2004), they often have similar cultural values to their peers, which can make it easier for young Latinos to follow their parents’ rules and values both at school and home (Flores, 2006). Unfortunately, when Latino youth surround themselves with Latino peers who struggle academically and/or demonstrate negative attitudes and behaviors toward school, they limit their opportunities to develop relationships with students who display positive school attitudes and succeed academically (Gándara & Gibson, 2004). Although Latino parents have the strongest influence on their children’s long-term educational goals, peers have the most influence on young Latinos daily behaviors in school, including how much time they spend doing class work, whether they look forward to school each day, and how they behave at school (Gonzalez, 2004).
The following section will review the literature on parent involvement, family involvement, Latino family involvement, and the factors influencing Latino family involvement. This section will also consider how a non-traditional form of involvement—the use of cultural narratives—can be viewed as an appropriate, strengths-based alternative when considering involvement approaches to use with Latino students and families in schools.

Parent Involvement, Family Involvement, and Home-School Partnerships

Although parent involvement differs significantly from community to community, school to school, and parent to parent (Chavkin, 1993), almost all parents, regardless of ethnicity or minority status, are concerned about their children’s education and want to take an active role in their children’s academic success (Chavkin & Williams, 1993). According to Lightfoot (1978), when children attend schools, their families and life experiences go with them. Children bring their family experiences (the home they live in, the food they eat, their interactions with siblings, their relationships with parents) to school with them as part of their daily consciousness—the background knowledge that affects all of their school experiences. Lightfoot refers to this experience as “the invisible but pervasive presence of families” (p. 10). Because family involvement programs are most effective when they focus on improving relationships among the significant adults in the lives of children (Comer & Haynes, 1991), the knowledge that children keep their families and home experiences in their thoughts while they are at school is important for school staff to know as they implement family involvement programs in their schools. As explained by Pérez Carreón, Drake, and Barton (2005), traditional parent involvement approaches have focused on what parents do and how that matches or does not match with the needs of their child or the goals of the school (see also Lines et al., 2011). In most cases, parent involvement is much more than a parent deciding whether to participate in a school-related event. Parent involvement can be described as a dynamic and ever-changing process that is affected by a parent’s background and personal history, his/her relationships with the people in the school, the context in which the involvement occurs, the individual needs of his/her children, and the
cultural resources of the parent. It also appears to be highly affected by the resources provided by a parent's education, career, income level, and family life (Lareau, 2000).

Although family involvement in schools is directly related to academic success, many families are not involved in the ways school staff would like (Lareau, 2000). According to López (2001), marginalized parents who do not or are unable to participate in traditional forms of involvement (helping with homework, volunteering at school, or attending “back to school” nights) are presumed to be uninvolved in their children’s education. Although these parents are involved in their children’s lives and schooling in other ways, their efforts often go unnoticed by schools. While there are many different forms of parent involvement, only a select few are acknowledged by school systems. School staff often act under the assumption that there is only one right way for parents to be involved in schools (Lareau, 2000). Because parents have varied circumstances, feelings, and interests, they need to be given alternative choices to traditional forms of parent involvement (Moles, 1993). As discussed by Pérez Carreón et al. (2005), even when marginalized parents are highly involved in school-structured events and are described as ideal parents by school staff, they may view their roles in the schools differently, often feeling distant, confused, and disrespected for their opinions about their children’s education. Although research has demonstrated how to promote family involvement in schools, there is little known about how families relate to these school-directed programs and how, or if, they use them at home to influence their children’s education. When families have the opportunity to voice their ideas about involvement practices, regardless of whether their involvement ideas are school-based or concentrated in the home, schools will have better opportunities to develop effective family involvement programs. And the significance of including families’ voices becomes even more important when one considers that traditional family involvement practices are not powerful enough to address the plight of urban schools—schools that cater predominantly to students of color (Davies, 1993).

In the past, there has been more of an emphasis on how to involve families in the school setting rather than how we think about the family-school relationship as a way to support students as learners (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). According to Lines et al. (2011), new approaches to
family involvement emphasize family-school partnerships, two-way communication between school and home, and coordinated efforts by both families and schools to promote learning. Family-school partnering emphasizes: (1) student school success, (2) children’s learning as the shared responsibility of families and schools, and (3) the uniqueness of families and schools with regards to their cultures and expertise. Because families and schools have different values, traditions, belief systems, and communication patterns that can influence student learning, it is important for schools to develop ways for families and schools to share their cultural beliefs, a process referred to as cultural sharing. Through this process, families and school staff can learn to appreciate one another’s cultures. With its focus on cultural sharing, the family-school partnering approach has the potential to be extremely beneficial for schools that work with diverse student and family populations.

**Latino Family Involvement**

Although family involvement looks different for many families, traditional American middle-class educators often have ideas about what family involvement in schools should look like. Unfortunately, these ideas do not always coincide with family involvement ideas from other cultures—cultures, which have their own beliefs and ideas about family involvement in schools. In the Latino culture, the terms “education” and “parent involvement” do not convey the same meaning they do in the dominant American culture (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). López (2001) asserts that Latino parents perceive parent involvement drastically different than most school staff in American schools. In the Latino culture, parent involvement is not defined as the number of school-related events parents attend, but rather, the parents’ ability to positively shape their children’s outlook on educational attainment. As Delgado Gaitan (1994) explains, traditional definitions for family involvement limit the meaning of participation by discounting the broader meaning of involvement that goes beyond attendance at school events and helping with homework. In actuality, Latino family involvement is ongoing, and occurs over the lifespan of children, even when they are out of school. According to Pérez Carreón et al. (2005), most Latino parents believe that being involved in their children’s schooling is “the greatest expression of love and the greatest proof of care” they can offer their children (p. 482). To express their love and
care, Latino parents draw upon their cultural resources to actively support their children’s education in ways that match their values and expectations regarding education.

*Cultural Narratives and Experiential Learning.* For some Latino families, the mere act of talking to their children is a way for them to be involved and to know what is happening at school (De La Vega, 2007; Pérez Carreón et al., 2005). In the Latino culture, parents communicate with their children and typically express their involvement through cultural narratives. As discussed by Espinoza-Herold (2007), Latino parents, particularly Latina mothers, use cultural narratives to teach values and provide parental advice to their children. As parents of young Latinos, Latina mothers see it as their responsibility to educate their children not only in school matters, but also in the values of the Latino culture. According to López (2001), Latino families view the teaching of values as an important form of involvement in their children’s education. At times, the teaching of values goes beyond cultural narratives to include the idea of experiential learning. Many Latinos who are migrant workers attempt to teach their children the value of education by letting their children gain first-hand experience of field labor. Working side-by-side with their parents in the fields serves as a way for migrant children to learn the value of hard work and to view their potential future if they choose to limit themselves educationally. By exposing their children to the labors of field work, migrant parents demonstrate the struggles associated with this type of life while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of staying in school. In many ways experiential learning is the means by which Latino children develop, practice, and appreciate the value of education. Although cultural narratives and experiential learning are not types of involvement that are typically recognized by schools, they are vital aspects of the Latino culture—aspects that should be acknowledged, appreciated, and built upon if schools hope to build effective relationships with Latino students and families.

*Latino Families as Educators.* According to Carrasquillo (1991), Latino family life and parents’ interactions with their children at home, over any other demographic variable (including ethnicity, socioeconomic level, and age), determines their children’s success in school. Although Latino families are often unaware of their role as their children’s primary teachers, they are their children’s first and most influential teachers (see also Vasquez, 2004). Families provide the
social, emotional, and cultural support children need to do well in school (Comer & Haynes, 1991). Latino children’s ideas about personal success, happiness, and individual accomplishments are deeply embedded in the wellbeing of their families (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). As explained by Delgado Gaitan (1992), Latino children are socialized through personal interactions with parents and family members. An important aspect of this socialization process is the sharing of cultural values. Latino family members pass along cultural values to their children by modeling for them how to think, feel, and behave. One aspect of this process is socializing Latino children to value education. For some Latino families, educational values are shaped by the family’s socioeconomic level and the parents’ level of education. Many Latino parents view education as the pathway of economic mobility for their children, and consequently, value it greatly.

_Funds of Knowledge._ Funds of knowledge are the cultural resources—ideas, practices, traditions, and skills—of knowledge found in Latino families (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). They provide an understanding of the cultural systems from which Latino children develop, and are exchanged between generations and Latino family households with a meaningful purpose: to maintain the cultural connections that bind the Latino culture (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Cultural narratives are one type of funds of knowledge that serve to function as cultural connections between Latino parents and children (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) describe how funds of knowledge are transmitted to Latino children through an experimental process, whereby the children take an active role in their own learning. Within this process, Latino children are exposed to a variety of people and contexts in which funds of knowledge are used. They are expected to observe, ask questions, and practice the behavior of adults. Children are allowed to make errors and are encouraged to experiment until they are successful. This process provides Latino children with a “zone of comfort” where learning is self-directed, errors are accepted, and self-esteem is nurtured (p. 326). These zones of comfort and the supportive relationships that facilitate them become the foundation for a Latino child’s self-confidence and preparation for adulthood. As discussed by Espinoza-Herold (2007), because funds of knowledge are adaptable, they can be interpreted and applied in different ways.
depending on the context. As young Latinos encounter cultural and social difficulties in their lives, they can rely on their funds of knowledge as a resource and source of support.

Because parents are a valuable resource in understanding the needs and experiences of their own children (Comer & Haynes, 1991), it would be beneficial for schools to communicate with Latino parents and develop an understanding of the funds of knowledge in the Latino culture. This information would serve as a foundation for building effective relationships between schools and Latino students and families (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Using the funds of knowledge model, Latino students could be viewed as members of supportive families with valuable resources to contribute, and Latino parents could be seen as their children’s primary teachers—people who use their own funds of knowledge to guide their children into adulthood (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

Cultural Wealth and Cultural Capital. Yosso (2005) describes cultural wealth as the information, skills, talents, expertise, and connections that people of color utilize to counter the various forms of discrimination, marginalization, and oppression they experience in their lives. Cultural wealth can be used as a powerful tool against the cultural deficit-thinking model commonly used with Latino students in education. By acknowledging the cultural wealth of students of color, schools can work to improve their current educational practices and empower students of color to utilize and build upon the cultural strengths that already exist within their communities. One aspect of cultural wealth is aspirational capital, which is the ability to be hopeful and positive about one’s future, despite the difficulties a person faces in his/her life. People of color typically develop their aspirations through social and familial interactions—interactions that typically involve storytelling and advice. During these interactions, family and community members provide young people with specific strategies to confront difficult, oppressive situations they might encounter in their lives. Young people are encouraged to foster a sense of resilience by developing a belief in their life potential, even if their current situation is not one of prosperity or hope. Latino parents and other family members utilize stories of challenge and hardship as life lessons for young Latinos, effectively drawing from their cultural capital to support the social-emotional and academic wellbeing of their children (Pérez Carreón et al., 2005).
**Latino Home Learning Environment.** A tremendous amount of learning takes place in the Latino home (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). The Latino home environment is a complex layer of communication and cultural systems, which organize the daily life of the Latino family (Delgado Gaitan, 1992). Pérez Carreón et al. (2005) describe the experiences of one Latino father and his daily ritual of being with his sons as they completed their homework. Although he was not always able to offer assistance, this Latino parent believed that his presence enabled him to learn about what his children were studying, to motivate them to achieve, to show them the importance of school, and to demonstrate his concern for their learning—a practice he referred to as “enseñar con el ejemplo” (teaching by example) (p. 482). Being present during his children’s homework time allowed this parent to demonstrate care and involvement in their schooling. These rituals are important cultural practices within the Latino community, and allow Latino parents to develop identities as parents who are supportive of their children’s education.

According to Delgado Gaitan (1991), in order to maximize Latino students’ learning both at home and school, educators can make families co-teachers in the schooling process and create a sense of shared responsibility. This shared responsibility encourages Latino children to respect and appreciate their culture. When educators integrate the language, home activities, foods, and history of the Latino culture into their classroom and academic lessons, Latino children will learn to value their language, culture, and heritage even more. According to López (2001), Latino parents are often concerned their children will lose their Latino culture by immersing themselves in the school culture. These parents believe the success of their children lies in their ability to navigate both the home and school cultures in order to benefit from the learning opportunities available in both settings.

**Factors Influencing Latino Family Involvement**

Research has demonstrated a variety of factors influencing Latino family involvement in education, including (1) level of education and personal school experiences, (2) language concerns, (3) family responsibilities, (4) sense of self-efficacy, (5) role expectation, (6) familiarity with the school setting and culture, (7) perceptions of the school’s outreach efforts, and (8) sense
of power within the school setting (Cartledge & Lo, 2006; De La Vega, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Moles, 1993; Sheldon, 2002).

**Level of Education and Personal School Experiences.** According to Cartledge and Lo (2006), when parents have significant educational deficits in their own backgrounds, they often have little to no understanding of how to support the academic skills of their children (see also Romo & Falbo, 1996). Although most parents with limited incomes do not have the resources or level of education to be highly effective academic teachers of their children, they can still become partners with the school to support their children's learning. Because most parents have a strong desire to support their children's education, schools can better support parents' efforts by acquiring knowledge about parents' own school experiences (Trumbull et al., 2001). Although it is common for most schools to contact parents when problems with their children occur, parents need to hear more good news about their children rather than bad to lessen the effects of some parents’ memories of their own educational disappointments (Comer & Haynes, 1991).

Romo and Falbo (1996) discuss the experiences of Latino parents who are less educated and their difficulties assisting their children with their schooling. These parents often work long hours and are not as able to leave work for school-related issues or events without the risk of losing their employment. Longer work hours also mean less time monitoring their children as well as fewer opportunities to be available for daily routines before and after school. Additionally, these Latino parents experience low energy levels due to extended work hours, making it difficult for them to assist their children with homework, which is often too complicated for them to understand. They also experience difficulty supporting their children’s efforts in school because they have limited knowledge of how to be an effective advocate for their children’s education.

**Language Concerns.** The language of Latino children and families—either Spanish, English, or the use of both languages—is an incredible resource and strength (Delgado Gaitan, 2004; Garcia & Stein, 1997). According to Delgado Gaitan (2004), oral and written communication has a strong historic tradition in the Latino culture and within individual families, regardless of the education level of the parents. Latino parents who have limited written communication skills rely more heavily on oral communication to instill values in their children and to teach them how to
think and act in their daily lives. Learning language and culture is an important way for Latino children to develop ethnic identity and pride. As discussed by De La Vega (2007), when Latino families use Spanish within the home, cultural traditions are furthered, and open communication between parents and children is established more easily. Many Latino parents believe that having discussions with their children allows them to be involved in their children's lives and to know what is happening with their children's schooling. This form of parent-child communication is an integral part of parent involvement in the Latino culture.

Although language is considered a strength in the Latino culture, it can also be viewed as a hindrance for Latino parents who have limited literacy skills, either in their primary language or in English (Trumbull et al., 2001). As discussed by De La Vega (2007), English can be considered the language of power within American school systems; therefore, Latino parents are aware that a lack of English proficiency reflects negatively on them at their children's schools. As a result, some Latino parents feel a need to prove their knowledge and language skills to their children at home. Although Latino parents might prove their language skills at home, parents who speak Spanish as their primary language can experience difficulty developing effective communication with English-speaking school staff, understanding and assisting their children with their schoolwork, and voicing their concerns about their children's education (De La Vega, 2007; Moles, 1993; Pérez Carreón et al., 2005).

Family Responsibilities. According to Peña (2001), family circumstances exist beyond a Latino parent's education level and language skills that also influence their level of parent involvement in schools. Issues such as transportation and childcare play a considerable role in whether parents are able to be involved in their children's schools (see also Romo & Falbo, 1996). Families with limited access to transportation may find it difficult to participate in school-based activities and Latino parents with infants, toddlers, and young children are often unable to leave their homes due to the needs of their children. Single-parent Latino families do not always have someone who can watch their children when they attend school events, and paying for childcare can be a costly expense for many Latino families who struggle financially. One of the largest factors that prevents Latino parents from being involved in their children's school is their
work schedule. Many Latino families have two parents who work outside of the home, making it difficult for them to attend school events scheduled during the work day (Moles, 1993), and certain types of jobs offer Latino parents little flexibility for making changes in their work schedules to accommodate school events (Lareau, 2000). Even when school events are scheduled during more convenient times for working families, many Latino parents still deal with childcare and transportation issues (Moles, 1993).

According to Ritblatt et al. (2002), families who struggle socio-economically will focus their time and resources to help their own children first. Like any system, families use their resources for maintenance, survival, and interactions with other systems. When families have few resources, such as with low-income families or single-parent families, they will limit the number of resources they use for interactions and activities that take place outside of the family system, including school-related activities. Even the best involvement efforts by school staff can be ineffective when Latino families feel too overwhelmed with life’s difficulties, namely financial hardships and issues stemming from their cultural differences, to involve themselves in their children’s school (Peña, 2001; O’Connor, 2001).

**Sense of Self-Efficacy.** Self-efficacy is a person’s belief in his/her ability to be successful at something (Sheldon, 2002). According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), parents become involved in their children’s schooling because they believe in their own self-efficacy to help their children be successful in school. When parents have self-efficacy to help their children succeed in school, they believe (1) they possess the skills and knowledge necessary to help their children, (2) their children have the ability to learn what the parent has to teach them, and (3) they have the ability to find alternative sources of knowledge to help their children succeed if it becomes necessary. Parents may encounter difficulties in their attempts to help their children be successful in school; therefore, their self-efficacy is important because it provides parents with motivation to persist through difficulties. A parent’s sense of self-efficacy develops from four main sources: direct experience, vicarious experience, verbal encouragement, and emotional involvement. Parents who have successful direct experiences with involvement activities develop a stronger sense of efficacy. Parents who know other people who have had successful
involvement experiences develop vicarious experiences from those people's experiences, which can increase a parent's overall sense of self-efficacy. A parent's level of self-efficacy can also be increased when they are verbally encouraged by important people in their lives (their children, friends, family members, or their children's teachers) to believe their involvement will have a significant effect on their children's educational accomplishments. Parents who are emotionally involved in their children's educational success or whose sense of self-worth is emotionally connected to their children's school success will also have higher levels of self-efficacy than parents who are not as emotionally involved.

According to De La Vega (2007), Latino parents need to have confidence in the school and to trust school staff before they will become involved. As Latino parents build relationships with school staff and have opportunities to interact with them, the more their confidence and sense of self-efficacy will increase. As described by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), although parents' personal skills, knowledge, and abilities contribute to their sense of self-efficacy, it is parents' perceptions of their skills and knowledge that will affect how they choose to be involved in their children's schooling. Parents will primarily choose methods of involvement in which they believe they will be successful. This reasoning explains why parents tend to be more involved in their children's schooling when their children are young. Although younger children are typically more enthusiastic about their parents' involvement, their school work and activities are also more within the range of their parents' skills and abilities.

Role Expectation. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), parents who are involved in their children's schooling believe their role as parents includes being involved in their children's education. Parents develop their ideas about their parental role from observation and modeling of their own parents' involvement, their friends' and family members' involvement in schools, and their personal ideas about who their children should be (see also Trumbull et al., 2001). Development of the parental role is important because it allows the parent to create, consider, and participate in a variety of involvement activities with their children. Because the presence of the parental role is not enough to guarantee a parent's involvement in their children's education, parents must be willing to act on the role, which necessitates that they believe in their
own skills and knowledge to be involved. As explained by Trumbull et al. (2001), parents’ beliefs about their role in their children’s education also develop from their ideas about how their children should be raised. Some Latino parents place a high value on obedience and appropriate behavior with intentions of raising children who have a strong work ethic and are respectful toward adults; whereas, other Latino parents value self-respect and self-reliance—values that are more consistent with the beliefs of American middle-class parents and schools. When Latino parents and school staff have differing beliefs about parenting roles, conflicting relationships can develop. Because the social and cultural groups Latino parents belong to have a strong influence on the parenting roles they choose to accept, it is important for school staff to understand the parent’s role as it manifests itself within a specific culture or social group.

As discussed by Ramirez (2004), many American schools have the belief that parents will assume a certain amount of responsibility for their children’s educational success. Although this is a common belief among many American middle-class parents, Latino parents who are low-income, immigrants, or migrants are not as familiar with this role. They believe this role is the responsibility of the teachers and the schools. These same parents are often more concerned about the survival needs of their family, making their role as involved parents less of a priority. According to Trumbull et al. (2001), not all parents are comfortable with the academic role they are asked to take regarding their children’s education. Although teachers often ask parents to work with their children on academic skills at home, some Latino parents do not view this role as appropriate for themselves; they believe their children’s teachers are more effective in this role. For Latino parents who have limited schooling, they may not feel competent enough to teach their children academic skills at home, preferring to leave that responsibility to school staff. Romo and Falbo (1996) explain that many Latino parents recognize their own limitations and are surprised when school staff expect them to take greater responsibility for supporting their children’s efforts in school. Many Latino parents believe that they have done all they can to encourage their children’s educational success. They rely on school staff to be the educational experts and believe teachers should know how to best support their children’s education rather than themselves.
Familiarity with School Setting and Culture. According to Delgado Gaitan (1991), Latino families who have an understanding of the school’s expectations and the way in which the school functions are better advocates for their children than families who lack these skills. Not surprisingly, Latino families without this level of understanding encounter problems relating to their children’s schools. In order to actively involve themselves in their children’s schools, Latino families must become familiar with the school culture and how it operates. Latino parents play a pivotal role as “cultural translators” between home and school cultures even when they have limited knowledge about schools (Delgado Gaitan, 1994, p. 302). When Latino parents are able to establish relationships with school staff and make themselves known in their children's schools, they are able to improve their knowledge of the school's culture and to increase their ability to have an important influence on it (Pérez Carreón et al., 2005).

As described by Trumbull et al. (2001), all cultures, including school cultures, have aspects of both individualism and collectivism. Individualism is described as the level to which a culture values individual success and personal choice; whereas, collectivism is the level at which a culture emphasizes interdependent relationships, cultural responsibility, and the overall good of its group members. American culture has typically been described as individualistic, while many immigrant cultures are considered highly collectivistic. Although many immigrant cultures are described as collectivistic, the values and practices of immigrant families differ based on the amount of time they have spent in America, their level of education, their level of income, and other relevant cultural factors. Because individualism and collectivism manifest themselves in different ways in American schools, conflicts between these two approaches are demonstrated on a daily basis, and these conflicts can affect Latino families and the school experiences of Latino children in multiple ways.

Traditionally, American schools have utilized instructional approaches that are highly individualized and fairly competitive (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992); yet, many American schools emphasize competition without considering its effects on children who come from cultures that value cooperative efforts (Ogbu, 1982). According to Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992), students who come from collectivistic cultures—cultures, in which cooperative interactions
are believed to be valuable skills as well as required expectations of the culture—benefit from cooperative learning approaches because they are considered to be more culturally appropriate. Cooperative learning—learning that involves students working on academic tasks in mixed groups whereby each student's effort collectively contributes to the whole group's accomplishments—is considered to be a better match for children of the Latino culture because it is more compatible with their cultural beliefs, values, and home-learning experiences. Cooperative learning approaches have also been found to contribute to cross-cultural relationships among students in classroom settings.

**Perceptions of Schools’ Outreach Efforts.** Experiencing a high level of comfort with schools and school staff is particularly important for Latino families. According to Sheldon (2002), families’ beliefs and perceptions about their children’s school, including their interactions with teachers and school staff, are significant predictors of family involvement in schools. Although parent-teacher interactions can affect family involvement, some educators are reluctant to engage in family involvement activities due to their doubts about families’ abilities to make appropriate school-related decisions for their children. In some cases, teachers have experienced negative encounters with families in the past, making it difficult for them to view parents as valuable connections to the communities in which their schools are located, and these connections become particularly important when school staff do not live in the neighborhoods of the schools where they work (Comer & Haynes, 1991). As discussed by Romo and Falbo (1996), school staff sometimes treat Latino parents in ways that make their involvement in their children’s education difficult. At times, school staff approach Latino parents with an accusatory tone, placing blame on parents for their children’s academic difficulties; this approach often causes Latino parents to avoid any type of communication with school staff. Even when other adults attempt to advocate for Spanish-speaking Latino parents who are experiencing difficulty navigating the school structures, schools can make it difficult for these advocates to feel welcome as they act on Latino parents’ behalf. It is becoming more common for Latino parents to need “emotional stamina” as they deal with problems that occur when schools are perceived as unwelcoming.
According to Trumbull et al. (2001), Latino parents can and will partner with school staff when they are approached in a welcoming manner that matches their cultural beliefs; however, if the school culture is at odds with the cultural values and preferred communication style of its families, problems are likely to ensue. Cultural differences can lead people to perceive communicative acts in different, sometimes negative, ways. Contact that is intended to be friendly or welcoming can be interpreted as mean or aggressive by Latino parents; while other forms of contact can express messages of caring and understanding toward Latino families. For example, when talking to Latino parents about their children, school staff can show respect and develop positive relationships with families by choosing their words carefully. For some Latino parents, the use of certain words, such as "I" or "you," connotes a feeling of distance between their children's teacher and themselves. It is often more appropriate and better received by Latino parents to use the term "we" in discussions about Latino children. This word evokes a sense of teamwork between teachers and Latino parents, reminding them of their shared responsibility to help children succeed in school (see also Lines et al., 2011). Families from collectivistic cultures value personal relationships between people and prefer face-to-face contact when communicating rather than impersonal forms of contact, such as the telephone, email or written notes. Personal forms of contact such as home visits provide parents with opportunities to ask questions about their children's schooling in a comfortable, familiar setting and give educators a better understanding of a child's home life, including information about the child's strengths and interests (Moles, 1993).

Schools need to reach out differently to Latino families and do whatever it takes to make them partners in the pursuit of Latino student achievement (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). As Delgado Gaitan (1991) discusses, schools typically only reach out to families when they need assistance with a child who is misbehaving or struggling academically. Most educators do not recognize the value of involving families on a more consistent basis in an effort to prevent children's problems and promote positive development; instead, they utilize families to react to problems. A welcoming approach goes far in lessening the feeling that school staff only communicate with parents when they have negative information to share (Moles, 1993). Every negative interaction a
family experiences, particularly regarding their own children, gives them another reason to stay away from the school and away from school staff (Comer & Haynes, 1991). When Latino families are able to establish a reliable and trusting relationship with at least one person at their children's school, it can help to build the foundation for a more positive family involvement experience (Pérez Carreón et al., 2005).

*Sense of Power.* According to Delgado Gaitan (1994), communities, schools, and families—the major social contexts of learning—are places where power exists. People gain individual power from their social status and role within the context. For Latino parents within the educational setting, their power comes from their socioeconomic status, family status (single-parent family, two-parent family, or divorced family), and status as a Latino parent within the school. In schools and educational settings, where interactions between people are common, power favors some more than others with educators typically having more power than Latino parents. In fact, due to their inherent power, schools, through their programs and policies, often determine the approach Latino parents use to relate to the school and how they support their children's education. Latino parents can respond to the power differential between families and schools by asserting their power through the use of cultural resources, in particular their oral histories and traditions (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

Delgado Gaitan (1991) discusses three dimensions of power: (1) conventional, (2) non-conventional, and (3) parent group activities. Conventional types of parent involvement activities, such as parent-teacher conferences, demonstrate the power held by schools and their attempts to make the family conform to the school; whereas, non-conventional types of involvement activities (teaching parents about school curricula, working with parents to design learning activities at home, or providing resources that are relevant to the family's needs) demonstrate the schools' attempts to share power with parents. When coordinated effectively and with Latino families’ needs in mind, non-conventional activities can validate Latino parents’ social and cultural experiences, allowing them to feel a part of their children's education, and to achieve a better balance of power between the home and school. Through non-conventional types of activities, family involvement is viewed as an ongoing, joint decision-making process between the home
and school, rather than an isolated one-time occurrence that suits the schools’ needs. The last dimension of power involves groups of Latino parents who demonstrate their power by creating their own agendas, and inviting school staff to participate in a shared decision-making process about the policies and practices affecting their children’s education. Schools can facilitate this process by involving parents on a continuous basis, sharing responsibility with families for students’ learning, and promoting a joint decision-making environment.

Summary

Due to low levels of educational attainment and academic achievement, an overrepresentation of students in special education, higher levels of school retention, high dropout rates, low test scores, and low college enrollments (Carasquillo, 1991; Valdés, 1996), Latino students are in dire need of effective educational approaches to strengthen their academic skills and improve their social-emotional wellbeing in schools. Because Latino children’s ideas about personal success, happiness, and individual accomplishments are deeply embedded in the wellbeing of their families (Espinoza-Herold, 2007), schools’ efforts to reach out to Latino families and involve them in their children’s schooling are of utmost importance. Children bring their family and life experiences to school with them as the background knowledge that affects all of their school experiences (Lightfoot, 1978), and this knowledge is important for school staff to know as they implement family involvement programs for Latino families in their schools. With a growing number of Latino students in schools, an analysis of the research in this area suggests a need for better approaches to involve Latino families in schools.

As discussed by Fernández (2002), the theoretical frameworks of CRT and LatCrit offer an explanation for the importance of cultural narratives in the Latino culture. Inherent in CRT and LatCrit is the belief that Latinos and other people of color possess strengths through their experiences, and cultural narratives are the method by which people of color give voice to their experiences. Latino parents utilize cultural narratives as the main method for connecting their families and motivating their children’s educational efforts (Delgado Gaitan, 1994). According to Villenas and Moreno (2001), cultural narratives are the ways in which cultural knowledge is created, passed on, and interpreted in the Latino culture. They serve as a powerful
communication strategy for Latino families, allowing parents and children to demonstrate their care for one another by sharing important life experiences with each other (Delgado Gaitan, 1994).

Latina feminist pedagogy offers an additional explanation for the ways in which cultural narratives are used between Latina mothers and daughters. Early in life, young Latinas learn to pay attention to their female relatives by observing their behaviors and listening to their words (Villenas, 2006). As discussed by Villenas and Moreno (2001), because Latina women are closely bonded with female family members across generations, a young Latina’s life and the cultural narratives that are part of her cannot be understood without also understanding the lives of her female relatives, especially her mother. Latina mothers use cultural narratives to pass along traditional values, beliefs, and practices in an effort to guide and support their daughters as they grow into young women (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). They see it as their responsibility to educate their daughters not only in school matters, but also in the values of the Latino culture (Espinoza-Herold, 2007), and Latino mothers view the teaching of values as an important form of involvement in their children’s education (López, 2001). By using cultural narratives, Latina mothers can have profound effects on their daughters’ educational accomplishments and aspirations (De La Vega, 2007; Espinoza-Herold, 2007; Gándara, 1982) and play a significant role in their educational attainment (Romo et al., 2006). Although cultural narratives are not types of involvement that are typically recognized by schools, they are vital aspects of the Latino culture— aspects that should be acknowledged, appreciated, and built upon if schools hope to build effective relationships with Latino students and families (López, 2001).

Due, in part, to a low-income status, language differences, and parents’ lack of knowledge about the U.S. educational system, many Latino students begin school with initial disadvantages and may also experience discrimination, inadequate resources in their schools, and poor relationships with school staff (Schneider et al., 2006). Because of the conditions many Latino students face in their schools, there is a need to develop a more inclusive learning setting that includes the language, culture, and family experiences of Latino students as an integral part of their schooling and also encourages mutual respect and understanding within the school...
community (Diaz-Greenberg, 2003). The cultural resources, social networks, and values of Latino families have a significant effect on a Latino child's educational attainment and sense of resiliency (Valdés, 1996). As discussed by López et al. (2001), by understanding each Latino family's life experiences on a personal level rather than a professional one, schools can improve their involvement efforts with Latino families and establish more genuine and meaningful relationships with them. When schools focus their involvement efforts on the strengths of Latino families, they are "investing in the most essential source of human and environmental support for a child's educational development" (p. 282). One strengths-based way schools can support and invest in Latino families is to acknowledge the ways Latino parents are already involved in their children's education and find ways to include these involvement approaches in their educational policies and programs (López, 2001).
Chapter 3:

Method

The following chapter will outline the method, procedures, and participants for this study. It will (1) provide a rationale for the use of qualitative research, specifically the use of focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations, (2) discuss the focus group, interview, and observation procedures as well as the procedures for data analysis, and (3) describe the Latina participants involved in the study. Additionally, the background, qualifications, and beliefs of this researcher were examined to establish trustworthiness for this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does family involvement in schools manifest itself in the Latino culture, specifically in regards to Latina mothers and daughters?
2. What is the role of cultural narratives in Latino family involvement practices?
3. How does the mother-daughter relationship affect a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment?
4. How do cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment?
5. How does the mother-daughter relationship affect a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency?
6. How do cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency?

Qualitative Research

This section will provide a rationale for the use of qualitative research with this study and its participants. Qualitative research is a multi-faceted area of research that encompasses different methods and approaches, all of which are concerned with studying a person’s or people’s lived experiences (Sherman & Webb, 1988). According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy
(2004), qualitative research is distinctive from other types of research because of its diversity in theories, viewpoints, and methods, all of which make it particularly useful for understanding social and cultural experiences. Qualitative research provides researchers with the opportunity to study meaningful social and cultural experiences and to develop relevant theories pertaining to these experiences. Qualitative research also allows researchers to pose different types of questions than quantitative research by using a variety of methods, including interviews, focus groups, participant observation, oral histories, field notes/logs, and archival data. Because there are multiple research methods available for use in qualitative inquiry, researchers can utilize a broad range of data-gathering approaches and analysis techniques, which allows for a larger selection of research topics and a broader range of approaches to the same topic. Data derived from qualitative research can be described as "subjective, interpretive, process oriented, and holistic" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004, p. 3).

As explained by Sherman and Webb (1988), qualitative research attempts to understand a person's life experiences by getting as near as possible to how the person actually lives or feels his/her life experiences. Qualitative researchers allow people to voice their life experiences for themselves. Although qualitative research has a primary focus on people's behaviors, other important considerations of qualitative research include the goals and motivations behind people's behaviors. When conducting qualitative research, the goal is not to validate preconceived notions or ideas, but to seek out and discover new areas of insight. This type of research involves an interactive approach between researcher and participants, whereby the participants are the experts and teach the researcher first-hand about their life experiences (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991).

**Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research**

As discussed by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993), ethical considerations are an essential component of any qualitative research study. Some ethical issues to consider when utilizing qualitative research methods include (1) the researcher's intentions and the purpose of the study, (2) the protection of participants' anonymity and the use of pseudonyms, (3) the responsibility and determination of who makes decisions about the study's content, (4) an
awareness of the amount of time needed to complete the study, and (5) the number of participants who will be involved in the study. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), ethical issues of privacy and confidentiality, deception and consent, and trust and betrayal can develop during the course of a research study. Any ethical issue a researcher encounters must be handled with reason, thoughtfulness, and sensitivity to the participants and the research setting. When addressing ethical issues, most researchers are guided by levels of thinking that help them problem-solve ethical situations that might arise during their research. These levels of thinking include (1) a researcher's intuition, (2) the rules, standards, and codes a researcher abides by, (3) the principles or theories a researcher ascribes to, and (4) a researcher's personal values.

Qualitative Research with Latino Participants

According to Umana-Taylor and Bамaca (2004), the scarcity of research regarding Latino families has led many researchers to utilize qualitative methods in an effort to develop better theories about Latinos and the Latino culture. In many studies, focus groups and interviewing methods have proven to be more effective at establishing trust and rapport with hard-to-reach populations, such as the Latino population. When a lack of trust exists between participants and researchers, certain quantitative research methods, such as surveys or questionnaires, are not as effective due to participants' fears of being exploited, misrepresented, and/or data being misused.

As discussed by Marín and Marín (1991), certain Latino cultural values have the potential to affect research studies that involve Latino participants. The cultural value of simpatía emphasizes behaving in a way that encourages calm and friendly interpersonal relationships. When practicing simpatía, people behave respectfully toward others, show empathy for others' feelings, and attempt to maintain positive social relationships. Researchers need to be aware that this value may cause Latino participants to act in ways that may be disingenuous in an effort to "please" the researcher. One way researchers can respect the cultural value of simpatía in their studies is to work toward establishing positive relationships with Latino participants. By using multiple methods of data collection and establishing prolonged engagement with Latino participants, researchers can improve the chances that positive relationships will develop and that participants will demonstrate authenticity during the research process. Another cultural value that
may affect a research study with Latino participants is familialism. Familialism describes a
person's strong identification with and loyalty to their immediate and extended families. When
developing research studies with Latino participants, it is important to remember Latinos will be
more likely to participate in studies that respect familialism and appeal to Latino family values.

According to Marín and Marín (1991), Latinos in research settings have been found to
use extreme response sets, acquiescence response sets, socially desirable responses,
inaccurate reporting of behaviors, incomplete responses, and a low level of self-disclosure.
Because all of these factors have the potential to affect the validity of a study, it is crucial to utilize
a research method that has proven to be effective with Latino participants. Focus groups are one
type of qualitative research method that are considered to be culturally-sensitive (Madriz, 1998)
and have been found to be particularly useful when working with groups of people who have
limited power or influence, including people of color and those with limited income or education
(Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Although focus groups have been found to be useful with these types
of populations, additional research is needed to validate the usefulness of focus groups with
specific cultural groups (Jarrett, 1993). This study sought to contribute information about the use
of focus groups with the Latino population, specifically with Latina mothers and daughters.

Focus Group Methodology

Morgan (1997) describes focus groups as qualitative research methods that use group
interaction to obtain information about a topic chosen by the researcher. The researcher's topic
guides the focus of the study, but the information collected develops from the group interaction.
Focus groups are often considered group interviews—interviews that produce information and
insights that evolve from the interactions among group members. These interviews allow
researchers to study the similarities and differences among participants' opinions and
experiences. Focus groups can be viewed as a strong alternative to participant observation or
individual interviewing methods alone because they incorporate the strengths of both of these
types of methods.

As discussed by Morgan and Krueger (1993), the majority of research participants are
often not consciously aware of the behaviors, thoughts, and feelings researchers are attempting
to understand. Through the use of focus groups, researchers can utilize purposeful questioning to explore a variety of participants’ beliefs and opinions, many of which come about solely from the discussions and interactions among focus group participants. Because focus group participants often feel more secure among their peers and around people who have similar life experiences, they are typically more willing to reveal their thoughts and feelings in a group interview setting.

As discussed by Morgan (1997), the primary goal of focus groups is to learn about and discover participants’ experiences and feelings on a given subject by creating an open atmosphere where each participant feels comfortable sharing his/her point of view. Because people are not always able to express their beliefs and feelings easily, focus groups offer people an opportunity to listen to others’ experiences and to compare those experiences to their own. This insightful process allows focus group participants to become more aware of their own views and to reflect on the thoughts and ideas of others—ideas they might not have considered prior to their participation in the focus group. In an effort to develop further knowledge of the Latino culture, researchers have begun to utilize qualitative methods; particularly exploratory approaches such as focus groups, to better understand the experiences of Latinos (Umaña-Taylor & Bámaca, 2004).

Using Focus Groups with Latinos

As explained by Umaña-Taylor and Bámaca (2004), the strengths associated with focus group methods are particularly useful when working with Latinos. Due to the power differential often found between participants and researchers, members of underrepresented groups, such as Latinos, might be intimidated by the status of the researcher. Focus groups can be an effective method for establishing trust and rapport because they allow participants to have direct contact with researchers. Researchers can also lessen the intimidation factor by creating a setting in which the participants are considered the experts from whom the researcher seeks to learn. When Latino participants are placed together in a focus group setting, they are more likely to feel comfortable in the expert role and to believe their experiences are important and worthy of sharing. Focus groups also provide researchers with a way to collect data from all participants, regardless of their literacy skills, because participants are able to share their thoughts and
feelings verbally during group discussions. Additionally, focus groups allow researchers to clarify questions or terms that participants might not understand when these items are presented to them in a survey or questionnaire format.

**Focus Groups with Latina Mothers and Daughters**

This study provided Latina women and their daughters with opportunities to discuss their ideas about family involvement in schools, cultural narratives, and the mother-daughter relationship during focus group sessions. The following section will outline the reasons why this qualitative method was used for this study and its participants.

According to Madriz (1998), focus groups can be used to develop a better understanding of the attitudes, beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and motivations of Latina women. Focus groups act as a form of "collective testimony" that provide the researcher access to the life experiences of Latina women (p. 116). For generations, Latina women have used these types of testimonies during interactions with their female relatives and friends. As members of a culture where familism is valued (Vasquez, 2004), and closeness with extended families is expected, Latina women are comfortable communicating with each other and sharing their experiences with other women because it is a common practice within the Latino culture. Focus groups can be considered an experience with which many Latina women are familiar.

Madriz (1998) describes focus group interviewing as an appropriate methodology for conducting research with Latinas because it provides the researcher with an effective approach for listening to the experiences of Latina women and an opportunity to gain a better understanding of their thoughts and feelings. Focus groups can serve as a way of validating the life experiences of Latina women and providing them with a collaborative forum for the expression of their thoughts and feelings. The group dynamic and discussion format of focus groups helps to alleviate the social concerns of participants who might be shy or withdrawn, offering them a supportive and empathetic atmosphere in which they can feel safe to express their thoughts and feelings. This aspect of the focus group process became evident during the mothers’ focus group as described in my field notes:
It felt very much like a support group and that they were encouraging each other with different things that their daughters had experienced and one Mom even cried at one point, not a lot, but cried a little bit because she was kind of emotional about something she was talking about and the other Moms really supported her through that (Field notes, 3/25/12).

Seemingly simple verbal exchanges and topics of commonality during focus groups can open doors to deeper levels of disclosure, intimacy, and rapport among female participants of color (Jarrett, 1993), and raising important questions with Latina parents in small groups is an effective method for prompting parents to have discussions with others (Delgado Gaitan, 2004).

*Voice and Cultural Narratives in Focus Groups.* As Delgado Gaitan (2004) explains, life stories and cultural narratives are the means by which people interpret their life experiences. People use cultural narratives and story-telling to provide explanations and a rationale for how they manage the daily rituals and emotional situations of their lives. According to Madriz (1998), the focus group setting is one context where female participants can use their voice to share their experiences. This type of experience is particularly important for women of color whose voices have traditionally gone unheard or purposely been silenced. In the focus group setting, Latina women can discover that they share similar ideas and encounter the same life difficulties as other women; this acknowledgment can lead to the realization that, as Latina women, their beliefs and experiences are important and worthy (see also Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Voicing one’s reality through story-telling and cultural narratives can be healing, empowering, and life-altering for people of color (Fernández, 2002). As discussed by Madriz (1998), when Latina women share their life stories with other women, it increases their level of awareness about women's issues and presents opportunities for them to effect change in their communities. Focus groups provide Latina women with a collaborative outlet to share their voices; this type of collaboration is missing from other qualitative methods such as individual interviews or case studies. Although focus groups offer participants a collaborative outlet, other qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and direct observations, offer benefits to research as well, particularly when they are combined with focus group methods. During this study, a qualitative design was utilized, in which focus groups, in-depth phenomenological interviews, and participant observation were used as research methods.
Phenomenological Study

The following section will discuss phenomenological study, narrative research, in-depth interviews, and the phenomenological interviewing approach, and provide a rationale for their use as methods for this study and its participants. As explained by Rossman and Rallis (2003), phenomenological study involves the investigation of the lived experiences of a small number of people. This type of study requires extensive and prolonged involvement with participants, often through the use of in-depth interviews. Through this process, the researcher attempts to explore the hidden meanings of participants’ experiences and how participants explain and interpret these experiences. Researchers who employ the phenomenological approach encourage participants to use dialogue and reflection to reveal the deeper meaning of their experiences. Under the topic of phenomenological study is the area of narrative research. Narrative research focuses on storytelling and how the act of telling stories is a significant means in which people represent and explain their life experiences. Researchers who utilize both phenomenological study and narrative research abide by the belief that storytelling is essential to the understanding of people’s lives; this belief is a primary reason why some researchers choose narratives as their qualitative method to explore meaning in people's lives.

In-Depth Interviews

According to Seidman (2006), interviews serve as a powerful way for researchers to consider important educational and social issues by providing them with a method for understanding how these issues affect a person’s life. Because sharing personal narratives has been the primary way throughout history that people have made sense of their life experiences, researchers who employ in-depth interviews have an interest in understanding the life experiences of people and the meaning they ascribe to their experiences. Many researchers utilize an interviewing approach because they believe a person's individual story has value and worth.

As explained by Rossman and Rallis (2003), guided, in-depth interviews are one type of method commonly used in qualitative research. Using this approach, a researcher develops topics for inquiry, but maintains an open mind about exploring topics that participants reveal
during the interview. Effective interviewers are skilled listeners and are deeply interested in the lives of other people. They have excellent interpersonal skills, ask relevant questions, and recognize when it is necessary to probe for elaboration or clarification. Using open-ended questions and requests for elaboration, the researcher helps participants reveal their interpretations of their experiences while also respecting how participants choose to respond. The participant's ideas about the research topic should be revealed, as the participant wants them to, not as the researcher does. The researcher's responsibility is to reveal the process participants experience as they respond to questions during the interview. Researchers journey with participants as they voice their thoughts and beliefs about the topic of study.

According to Eriandson et al. (1993), interviews in qualitative research are like a personal interaction between a researcher and participant rather than a formal question-and-answer session. The interview process involves multiple interconnected steps: choosing interviewees, preparation before the interview, beginning the interview, maintaining the flow of information during the interview, and closing the interview appropriately. Effective in-depth interviews are developed using an organized plan with a focus on the questions and issues the researcher wants to study. An important aspect of this plan is the researcher's attempts to ensure that participants feel comfortable before and during the interview process. By giving participants relevant information about the study, an assurance of their anonymity, an explanation of how the interview data will be used, and confirmation of the interviewing timeline, participants will feel more at ease throughout the interview process. One of the best strategies for an effective interview is for researchers to be genuine and act natural while interacting with participants. Another way to help participants feel comfortable at the beginning of the interview is to provide sufficient time for pleasantries and small talk. Giving participants an opportunity to start off the interview with relaxed conversation will set a comfortable tone for the remainder of the interview. Although interviews require verbal interactions, both words and gestures are important aspects of interviewing. Because verbal and non-verbal communication have different meanings in different cultures, researchers and participants need to be able to understand each other's vocabulary and non-verbal communication as much as possible.
**Phenomenological Interviewing**

As discussed by Seidman (2006), researchers who utilize a phenomenological interviewing method rely on open-ended questions during their interviews—a technique that allows researchers to build upon and explore participants’ responses. This technique aids researchers in obtaining a participant's reconstruction of his/her experiences concerning the topic being studied. A person’s experiences typically have more meaning and are more easily understood within the context of their lives and the lives of those close to them. To develop a better understanding of these contexts, the phenomenological interviewing approach involves conducting three separate interviews with each participant. In the first interview, the researcher attempts to put the participant’s experience in context by asking the participant to reconstruct their early experiences about the research topic up to the present time. During the second interview, the participant is asked to discuss the details of his/her present life experiences regarding the research topic. The third interview allows participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences concerning the research topic. Each interview lasts approximately 90 minutes, which has been determined to be an appropriate amount of time for participants to believe they are being taken seriously. The three-interview format is most effective when researchers can schedule each interview from three days to a week apart. This spacing allows the participant time to consider the previous interview without losing the connection to the next interview. The number of interviews and the time dedicated to each interview has a positive effect on the development of the relationship between the researcher and the participants. This interviewing timeline provides the researcher with several opportunities to establish a positive relationship with participants.

**Validity and Reliability of Phenomenological Interviews.** According to Seidman (2006), there are several characteristics of the three-interview format that can contribute to the validity of a research study. This type of method places participants’ experiences in a life context. It encourages researchers to interview participants over a one to three-week time frame to account for situations (illness, emergency, or family obligation) that might affect the quality of a particular interview and to allow time to check for the internal consistency of participants' comments. It also encourages researchers to interview several participants in an effort to connect their experiences
and to compare their comments to one another. Because the goal is to understand how participants understand and make meaning of their experiences, validity can be more easily accomplished when the interview format allows participants to make sense of their experiences and for the researcher to understand their experiences as well. Although researchers can attempt to minimize the effects that the interview setting has on how participants reconstruct their experiences, interactions between the researcher and the participants will have an effect on the interviewing outcomes. Researchers who utilize the phenomenological interviewing approach ask questions, respond to participants, share their own experiences, and also interpret, describe, and analyze participants’ reconstructions of their experiences. This type of approach acknowledges and affirms the interviewing role of the researcher as the primary research tool, and any meaning or interpretation that comes from the interviewing process is a direct result of the participants’ interactions with the researcher.

**Observation**

The following section will discuss observation, participant observation, and provide an explanation for their use with this study and with Latina participants. Observation provides researchers with an effective method for studying the daily behaviors, routines, and interactions of people in particular settings (Darlington & Scott, 2002). It requires detailed note-taking and documentation of behaviors, experiences, and social interactions (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Observation requires little effort on the participants’ part, and allows researchers to study social situations and interactions as they occur rather than relying on someone else’s perceptions of those situations and interactions (Darlington & Scott, 2002). Researchers who utilize observation methods are guided by the assumption that behaviors have a specific purpose and demonstrate a person’s inner thoughts and feelings (Rossman & Rallis, 2003); however, because a person’s inner thoughts and feelings cannot be observed, researchers are limited to observing participants’ outward behaviors (Darlington & Scott, 2002).

As explained by Rossman and Rallis (2003), qualitative researchers often approach observation settings with broad topics of interest, which allows them to be open to studying and finding patterns within participants’ behaviors without preconceived notions of what they will find.
The observation process allows researchers to study participants' behaviors and interpret meaning to those behaviors. Because observation by itself cannot give us information about why people behave in certain ways or what their behavior means to them, it is common to combine the methods of observation and interviewing in qualitative research (Darlington & Scott, 2002). Observation plays a significant role in interviewing research because a participant's gestures, facial expressions, and non-verbal communication patterns are just as important as their verbal responses (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Ely et al., 1991). For this study, observations of Latina participants were conducted to supplement information gathered during the focus group and in-depth interview sessions.

**Participant Observation**

According to Ely et al. (1991), participant observation can be described as “ongoing and intensive observing, listening, and speaking” in the research setting (p. 42). Participant observation also includes a broad range of types and levels of participation, which can differ depending on the setting and the participants. Regardless of the researchers' attempts to remain an outside observer, their very presence influences the participants and settings they are studying (see also Darlington & Scott, 2002). As discussed by Darlington and Scott (2002), participants who know they are being watched may change their behavior in a variety of ways, whether they are consciously aware of it or not. Although the researcher’s role in observation and the boundaries of participation need to be made clear before the researcher enters the setting, the researcher’s role should also be flexible enough to accommodate changes in the setting and/or the participants themselves. Having a well-defined role while observing helps researchers to monitor the process and to decide whether boundaries need to be modified. Clarity and consistency of the researcher’s role can also be beneficial for the participants being observed. When participants become accepting of the researcher in the observing role, then researchers often have an easier time gathering observation data. Participants who have a clear understanding of the reasons why researchers are observing can become less distracted by the researcher’s presence in the setting; this can lead to participant behaviors that are more natural and also lowers the risks of researchers having negative effects on the setting.
As discussed by Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005), participant observation requires researchers to become very familiar with the daily experiences of the people they are studying. Researchers often attempt to accomplish this level of familiarity by immersing themselves in the research setting. The immersion process requires researchers to: (1) be with their participants, (2) learn how participants respond to specific situations, (3) discover how participants experience their lives, and (4) understand how participants find meaning in their life experiences. By immersing themselves in the setting, researchers have an opportunity to join participants as they experience their daily lives. This process allows researchers to view life experiences from the participants’ perspectives, which can lead to a better understanding of the participants themselves. When utilizing participant observation, qualitative researchers should strive to incorporate trustworthiness and ethical standards in their studies by: (1) using observation only when it is necessary to accomplish the goals of the study; (2) becoming aware of the potential effects caused by a researcher’s participation; (3) making attempts to address the effects that could negatively alter the participant-researcher relationship or the study itself; and (4) documenting the participant observation approaches that were effective or not in the research findings (Ely et al., 1991).

Participants

The following section will describe the participants who were involved in this study. For the purposes of this study, a female participant was recruited if she identified as a Latina using Marín and Marín’s (1991) definition of a Latino/a: “a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (p. 23). The daughters’ sample included: five Latina women, age 18-21, who have sophomore or junior standing at the University of Denver (DU). Four of the daughters are part of the Volunteers In Partnership (VIP) program at the University, and three of them participate in the Latina sorority on campus. All of the daughters spoke English, and three of them also spoke Spanish. Because this study considered the relationships and communication patterns between Latina mothers and daughters, the mothers of the Latina students were also invited to participate in the study. It was necessary for mother and daughter participants to live in close proximity to each other for the
purpose of participating in the focus group, interview, and observation sessions. The mothers’
sample included: five Latina women, three of whom fell in the 46-55 age range and two of whom
fell in the 36-45 age range. Educationally, the mothers varied in their experiences: one mother
completed ninth grade, one mother received her General Educational Development (GED), one
mother completed high school, one mother completed community college, and one mother
completed a college degree. All of the mothers spoke English, and three of them also spoke
Spanish.

Latinos as Research Participants

According to Marín and Marín (1991), researchers have generally found that Latinos are
willing and interested participants in research studies. It is believed that Latinos have a desire to
participate in research that they believe may benefit their entire cultural community or that
promise social good as an outcome. There are several factors that can affect whether Latinos
would be likely to participate in research studies. These factors include: the length of the research
procedures, the type of physical effort required, the environmental requirements of the study, the
topic being researched, and the perceived benefits to oneself or the entire Latino community.
Latinos might also be more cautious about participating in research if personal information is
asked about their income or immigration status. In an effort to promote research participation,
researchers can become more informed about the Latino community and work to establish ethical
integrity and professional legitimacy in their study. Integrity and legitimacy can be established
through careful attention to the way the research study is presented to potential Latino
participants and by paying close attention to the Latino community’s expectations, beliefs, and
values regarding the research topic.

While recruiting participants for this study, I discussed the importance of Latino family
involvement, the reasons why I developed my study, and also explained how my mother came to
be my inspiration for this study. I also showed potential participants two pictures—one of my
mother and another one with my parents and me at my college graduation. I believe this personal
approach during the recruitment process helped to establish the integrity and legitimacy of my
study, and also helped for potential participants to see me as a person first, and then, a researcher.

Factors affecting Latina Participation. Madriz (1998) explains the importance of recruitment strategies when involving Latina participants. Impersonal strategies (phone calls, emails, or mailed letters) can be ineffective when recruiting Latina women with lower socioeconomic status, but the use of a personal approach (face to face contact) through individual contacts can have a better effect on recruitment efforts. Even when researchers use a personal recruiting approach, some Latina women still feel concerned about participating in research studies if they are recent immigrants, undocumented, participate in the welfare system, or have non-traditional living arrangements. Additionally, Latina women may experience difficulty participating in research because of their roles as caregivers and keepers of the family household. Due to their family responsibilities, it can be difficult for Latina women to keep their research commitments, such as keeping scheduled appointments or arriving on time for their appointments. Transportation can also be an issue affecting Latina women’s research participation. Another factor that can affect the research participation of Latina women is the cultural value of simpatia, which emphasizes polite and friendly relationships. This value might interfere with research participation because Latina women are more likely to agree to participate in research studies in an effort to be polite, although they have no actual intentions of participating.

During the recruitment process, a personal face-to-face approach was much more effective with both Latina mothers and daughters when inviting them to participate in the study. No one expressed concern about participating due to their citizenship status, but a few Latina mothers stated they would only be able to participate if it fit within the schedule of their work and family responsibilities. And several of the Latina daughters stated they would only be able to participate if the timeframe fit with their school and work schedules. Although some Latina daughters agreed to participate and then were not able to, citing their school and work responsibilities as the reason, they had expressed great interest in the topics and methods of my
study and contacted me several times, so I do not believe the cultural value of simpatia had an effect on their participation, but rather the numerous responsibilities in their lives.

Accessibility

As discussed by Seidman (2006), an important aspect of the research process is the development of the relationship between the researcher and the participants. Prior to selecting participants for a research study, the researcher must have access to participants and establish contact with them. The ways researchers gain access and make initial contact can affect the researcher-participant relationship throughout the research process; therefore, it is particularly important for researchers to show respect to participants during the initial recruitment process. Access can be gained by establishing relationships with people who control access to potential participants; these people are known as formal and informal gatekeepers. Accessibility to Latina participants may be difficult for many reasons, some of which include: immigration status, language difficulties, social isolation, and family responsibilities (Madriz, 1998).

For this study, email contact was made with the volunteer manager of the Denver Scholarship Foundation (DSF) in May of 2011 in an effort to establish communication with the organization for potential recruitment and accessibility purposes. Through email correspondence with the volunteer manager, I expressed my desire to possibly volunteer for DSF and also my hope to recruit potential participants from their organization. The volunteer manager asked me to contact her when my proposal was approved, so I could be put in touch with the appropriate people at DSF to discuss my study. Email contact was initiated with DSF again in January of 2012 and I was encouraged to work directly with the local colleges and universities to recruit participants. I was provided with a list of local campuses where several Latina DSF students were attending.

Email contact was also made with the Associate Provost for Multicultural Excellence at DU in February 2012 to ask for permission to recruit students who were affiliated with the Center for Multicultural Excellence (CME) on the DU campus. The Associate Provost forwarded my email to the Assistant Provost for Inclusive Excellence at CME who contacted me and replied:
I am happy to help you in recruiting students for your study. What would help me is if you were to draft a short invitation to participate. Once you do that, I will be happy to forward it to all our student groups and can also send it to a sorted list of students who fit your criterion. Thank you so much for doing such important research for our community (J. Leyba, personal communication, February 24, 2012).

Although I did not end up recruiting students from CME because I had acquired a tentative pool of participants by the beginning of March 2012, the Assistant Provost at CME was extremely helpful and supportive during the recruitment process.

The majority of participants were recruited from the Volunteers in Partnership (VIP) program at DU. The VIP program works with college students who graduated from local Colorado high schools, and many of their Latina students fit the research criteria for this study. I have accessibility to the VIP program, having worked for the program as a graduate assistant for several years and also as a first-year student seminar facilitator. Because several of the Latina VIP students also participate in the Latina sorority on campus, a recruitment letter was emailed to all of the sorority members by way of a Latina VIP student who served as the sorority president during the 2011-2012 school year.

Making Contact with Potential Participants. As discussed by Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), the first step in finding potential participants involves initial contact, in which people are invited to participate in the research study. Initial contact can occur by telephone, email, regular mail, or in person. Seidman (2006) discusses how the researcher-participant relationship begins the first time the participant is approached about the study. Because researchers are more familiar with their research studies and are in a better position to be able to answer questions about their research, initial contact should be made by the researchers themselves rather than a third party contact person. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), at the point of initial contact, potential participants should be asked qualifying questions (race/ethnicity, gender, age, family role, level of education) to ensure they meet the participant criteria. If the person meets the research criteria, the potential participant should be provided with a description of the research study, including an explanation of the research methods that will be used and the participant’s expected role during the study. Potential participants should also be provided with information
about compensation, the approximate timeline for the study, and potential locations for research sessions.

During an initial recruitment attempt in May of 2011 at an end-of-year gathering for VIP students, I made an announcement about my study and asked students to write their contact information on a sign-up sheet if they fit the participant criteria and were interested in participating. At that time, nine Latina students expressed interest in participating in the study. Of the original nine students who expressed interest, two participated in the pilot study for my research, but the rest of the students did not participate. During the second recruitment attempt in September of 2011 at a VIP meeting, I made another announcement about my study and asked interested students to write down their contact information. At that time, ten Latina students voiced their interest to participate in the study. Of those ten students, four participated in the focus group portion of the study, and one student participated in the focus group, interview, and observation sessions. The fifth student who participated in the focus group session was initially told about the study in October of 2011 when she approached me while I was conducting a pilot study session at DU. I told her about the study and obtained her contact information, promising to contact her prior to the focus group portion of the study. Although she is not currently involved with the VIP program, I worked with her through the VIP program when she was a high school student.

According to Seidman (2006), important information about a research study can also be shared during a contact visit. Contact visits occur before the actual research sessions and help the researcher to select appropriate participants for their studies. These visits are instrumental for building the foundation of the researcher-participant relationship by helping to establish mutual trust and respect between researchers and participants. Contact visits do not have to occur individually; researchers can meet with groups of potential participants, which can save time by allowing the researcher to explain the study and participant expectations to several people at one time. When researchers take time to conduct contact visits, they are saying to potential participants, “You are important. I take you seriously. I respect my work and you enough to want to meet with you to explain the project” (p. 47). During contact visits, researchers can utilize
participant information forms (see Appendix A), which can be used to facilitate communication between the researcher and participant, and also to document information about potential participants.

Using the lists of interested students I had gathered at the VIP meetings, I emailed all of the students to ask about their availability for a group contact visit. After realizing the difficulty of trying to coordinate the schedules of so many people (both mothers and daughters), I scheduled three dates/times for contact visits and allowed potential participants to choose the date/time that worked with their schedule. I wrote the following in my field notes:

I decided to have three separate information meetings to give people more flexibility with their schedules. I have come to the realization that I might have to have individual information meetings for each of my potential participants. My original intention was to have one information meeting, so everyone could meet each other prior to the focus groups, but I’m learning that getting people to contact you back and coordinating other people’s schedules can be difficult (Field notes, 2/11/12).

The first contact visit took place in February of 2012 at a Denver public library with one Latina student, her mother, and her baby brother. I began the meeting by thanking them for coming, and then I passed out snacks and drinks, while we talked about the student’s brother, the weather, the library location, and the distance they traveled. After we finished our small talk, I showed them the two pictures of my family, and discussed the reasons why I developed my study. I also provided them with details about the topics and methods I would be using in my study. We ate while we talked and they asked several questions about the timeline and what I was hoping to achieve through my study. They completed the Participant Information form and I reviewed the Informed Consent Letter with them, allowing them to ask questions before they signed it. They shared a lot about their relationship with each other and expressed their enthusiasm to participate in my study. Later that day, I wrote the following in my field notes:

I realized how important it was that I take the time to meet with them individually and to talk to them about my study. The face time with them and the personal nature of the meeting helped them to get to know me and to understand the reasons why I want to do my study (Field notes, 2/11/12).

The second contact visit was conducted at a local coffee shop with another Latina student and her mother. After the success of the first meeting, I was happy to take the time to meet individually with two more potential participants. The mother had a lot of questions about my
study, and she seemed quite comfortable sharing her opinions about the topic of family involvement in the Latino culture. Both the student and her mother completed the Participant Information form and signed the Informed Consent Letter. They also expressed their enthusiasm to participate in the study. The third contact meeting occurred at the home of a Latina student and her mother. Although I was not sure if it was appropriate for me to go to their house as the researcher, I agreed because they invited me and it was more convenient for them to meet at their home. They offered me food and shared many personal stories with me. I felt comfortable in their home, talking to them about my study and answering their questions. Due to the personal nature of this visit, this meeting marked the beginning of an emotional change that occurred in me during this research process. I included the following thoughts in my field notes:

I had a strong realization of the importance of honoring my participants and not taking for granted their time and the things they share with me. I also realized the emotional attachments I will likely end up forming with many of these participants. I ended up staying at their house for 2 hours and 45 minutes, and A. texted me while I was driving home, wishing me a safe drive home and thanking me for coming over and listening to them. I’m still in such awe that my potential participants would thank me for anything. I am so thankful to them for being willing to participate that it always surprises me so much when they say thank you to me (Field notes, 2/16/12).

Although three of the contact visits occurred in one week’s time, it was extremely difficult to coordinate dates for the remaining meetings. Due to the students’ busy schedules at the end of the academic quarter, I was not able to schedule another contact visit until March of 2012, at which point, I met with two Latina students and their mothers. This visit was the first time I was able to meet with more than one Latina student and her mother. The meeting went extremely well and it also gave me an indication of how the focus group sessions might go. I made the following comments in my field notes:

I couldn’t believe how well everyone was getting along with each other. It was like a group of old friends, talking and laughing like we’d known each other for years! I felt hopeful that I had chosen the right method for my study—focus groups. After watching the dynamic of the women interacting with each other during our conversation, I was hopeful that the actual focus groups would be similar with women feeling comfortable talking and answering questions (Field notes, 3/11/12).

Both of the Latina students as well as their mothers agreed to participate in the study and all of them completed the Participant Information forms and signed the Informed Consent letters. At the
completion of that meeting, a total of five Latina students and five mothers had agreed to participate in the study, for a total of ten participants.

**Purposeful Sampling**

As discussed by Patton (2002), qualitative research typically utilizes small participant samples, which are selected purposefully and strategically. Purposeful sampling is the process by which researchers choose small participant samples based on the purpose of the study. It involves the selection of “information-rich cases” that are carefully chosen for in-depth study (p. 230). Researchers choose information-rich cases based on the participant’s ability to provide a high level of information and experience about the topics, themes, and questions of the study. These cases can provide researchers with deep levels of understanding and insight about the lives of specific participants rather than generalizations about large participant samples. In qualitative research, the significance of the results and the study has more to do with the skills of the researcher and the strength of the individual cases than it does with the size of the participant sample. The specific type and number of cases chosen for a research study are dependent on the purpose of the study, what cases researchers believe they can learn the most from, and the resources available to the researchers. Homogenous sampling is a type of purposeful sampling that involves assembling a particular subgroup of participants—participants who have something in common that is also pertinent to the research topic. Participants are chosen if they are identified as having specific knowledge or life experiences that are deemed beneficial to the study (see also Krueger & Casey, 2000). Focus groups are often formed using homogenous sampling to identify groups of people with similar backgrounds and experiences. For this study, homogenous sampling was used to form the focus group for Latina students: females age 18-21, who identified themselves as Latina, and were sophomores or juniors in academic standing at DU. Because the Latina students were chosen based on these specific research criteria, and their mothers were asked to participate if the student fit the research criteria, it was not possible to specify the characteristics of the mothers’ focus group. The only criteria the mothers were required to have in common were their identification as Latina and their ability to speak English.
Informed Consent

As discussed by Seidman (2006), during qualitative studies, researchers invite participants to discuss and reflect on their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and life experiences as they relate to research topics. As participants develop rapport with researchers, they begin to feel more open and willing to share difficult life experiences. At times, a participant's openness can result in their feeling emotionally distressed or vulnerable as they share their life experiences; for this reason, research protocols, such as informed consent forms, are used to protect participants from the inherent risks associated with research participation. Informed consent is an important aspect of the research process; it attempts to reduce the risks participants may encounter when they agree to participate in research studies. Rossman and Rallis (2003) discuss the ethical importance of obtaining informed consent. Informed consent abides by the following ethical guidelines: (1) participants are made aware of the study's purpose and are informed of the audience who may read the findings, (2) participants agree with and understand what their participation entails, (3) participants give consent to participate of their own free will, and (4) participants understand that they have the choice to leave the study at any time without prejudice. Informed consent ensures that participants are not misled about their role in the study and that they understand their participation is completely voluntary. For this study, two letters of informed consent were developed using Seidman’s (2006) eight major parts of informed consent—one letter for the focus group portion of the study (see Appendix B) and one letter for the interview and observation portions of the study (Appendix C). All ten Latina participants signed the informed consent letter prior to their participation in the study.

Procedures

This section will outline the procedures that were used during the study, including a study timeline (see Table 1), preparations for the study, and important factors that were considered during the focus group, interview, and observation sessions.
Table 1

*Dissertation Timeline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Month(s)/Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of Participants</td>
<td>May 2011 – February 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study for Latina daughters</td>
<td>October 2011, December 2011, April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study for Latina mothers</td>
<td>February 2012, April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Meetings</td>
<td>February – March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group for Latina mothers</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group for Latina daughters</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with Latina mother</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with Latina daughter</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations with Latina mother</td>
<td>May 2012 and daughter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Preparations for the Study*

After an appropriate number of potential Latina participants were recruited and contacted, I scheduled contact visits (information meetings) for interested participants to obtain specific information about the research study. During these meetings, Latina participants were (1) given information about the timeline for the study, (2) provided with an explanation of what was expected of them as participants, and (3) allowed to ask any questions about the study or myself as the researcher. This session served as the first opportunity for participants to get to know me as the researcher and to decide whether they would like to participate in the study. During this session, I described the focus group format to the participants, detailing how Latina mothers and daughters would be in separate groups discussing issues about family involvement in schools, education, and their relationships with one another. Attempts were also made to set up the focus group sessions to be similar to discussions between groups of friends, in which participants feel
relaxed, open, and at ease during the conversations (Jarrett, 1993). The phenomenological interviewing format and the observation process were also described.

Other preparations for the study included (1) asking participants about their schedules and availability for focus group and interview sessions, (2) assessing the amount of food and drink that would be necessary for the focus group and interview sessions, and (3) identifying potential location sites for the focus group and interview sessions.

Focus Group Considerations

During the study, Latina mothers and daughters participated in separate focus group sessions. Each focus group session (1) consisted of 5 participants, (2) lasted a duration of 1 ½ to 2 hours, and (3) was tape-recorded for transcription and data collection purposes. Additionally, field notes/logs were written immediately following each focus group session.

Group Characteristics. According to Madriz (1998), focus groups are often more effective when they consist of participants who share similarities regarding their age, gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic level. Similarities among participants help to promote participation during focus group discussions and also provide a foundation for common experiences and life situations. Focus groups can also be put together by choosing participants who are connected to each other through their friendships, community activities, religious affiliations, or children’s schools. For this study, Latina student participants were chosen for their similarities in age and year in school because their gender and race/ethnicity were already prerequisites for participation in the study. The decision was made to have Latina mothers and daughters meet during separate focus group sessions. As discussed by Madriz (1998), having Latina mothers and daughters in the same focus group might restrict participation during focus group discussions because of their differing life experiences. Many Latino children are also raised to demonstrate respeto toward adults and elders; therefore, if Latina mothers and daughters participate in the same focus group, Latina daughters might hold back from sharing their beliefs and ideas out of respect to their mothers. After one of my contact visits, I expressed the following thoughts in my field notes:
P. and C. talked the most, while J. and S. sat quietly listening to their moms. I realized it was a good idea to separate the mothers and daughters into separate focus groups. The moms definitely overshadowed their daughters during our conversation and I realized that dynamic would probably also play out during the focus groups as well (Field notes, 3/12/12).

**Showing Respect to Latina Participants.** Because respect is an important value in the Latino culture, it is essential that the researcher conveys respect toward Latina participants throughout the course of the research study. Madriz (1998) describes the importance of the researcher's role as a person who has the privilege of listening to people discuss their life experiences and the opportunity to be invited into their lives. During focus groups, researchers can demonstrate their respect toward participants by making efforts to minimize their own effects on the research process and instead making conscious decisions to improve their participants’ ability to express themselves and voice their own experiences. Another way researchers can show respect to participants is by creating an informal setting during focus group sessions; this can be accomplished when the researcher dresses informally and speaks informally to participants. Allowing time for casual conversations before the focus group discussions begin can also help create an informal setting. These conversations can take place among the Latina participants themselves and also between the participants and the researcher. Although researchers and participants play different roles during research studies, researchers can do their best to establish equity during the research process by finding “a balance between means and ends, between what is sought and what is given, between process and product, and a sense of fairness and justice that pervades the relationship between participant and researcher” (Seidman, 2006, p. 109).

During the focus group sessions for this study, I dressed casually and made sure there was time for casual conversations before and after the focus groups. The casual conversations before the focus groups helped to create a comfortable setting for the mothers and daughters to talk. I also did my best to respect the participants’ ability to express themselves while responding to the questions. I made the following comments in my field notes after the mothers’ focus group:

One thing that was difficult for me was knowing how much to allow somebody to talk about something and let them deviate from the topic before gently intervening to let somebody else talk. I think in the context of the focus group and because I was on a time
constraint, I was feeling a little bit nervous about letting people talk too much and I wanted to make sure that I heard everybody’s voice. I felt like I was kind of facilitating in that way and trying to make sure that everybody had an opportunity to answer the question and to feel like their voice was heard. I didn’t want to affect the flow of the discussion or make them feel like what they had to say wasn’t important, and so, I think I struggled a little bit with that this time. Out of respect to the Moms and out of respect to women who are older than me, I wanted to make sure that I wasn’t cutting them off and that I was actually listening to their thoughts. So, that was a bit of a struggle (Field notes, 3/25/12).

Although this aspect of the focus group was challenging for me, I believe I was able to facilitate the group in a productive way and make sure that everyone’s voice felt heard during the process.

Language Concerns. When conducting research studies with Latino participants who may speak more than one language or a language other than English, it is important to ask which language they would prefer to use while taking part in the study, and it is preferable to conduct interactions with Latino participants in the language of their choice (Marín & Marín, 1991). As discussed by Madriz (1998), an important factor in lessening the distance between researchers and participants is the language spoken during research studies. For many research participants who are also immigrants, being able to speak the language of their birth country helps to establish bonding relationships among participants who are asked to interact with each other. Conducting focus group sessions in the preferred language of the participants can help facilitate interactions among participants and improve the researcher’s ability to lead a successful focus group.

As a Latina researcher who grew up with the Spanish language spoken in my home, I understand numerous words and phrases in the Spanish language and can speak a moderate level of Spanish. My parents, grandparents, and several family members speak Spanish, and even though I was taught to speak both English and Spanish as a young child, my primary language is English. Because I do not consider myself fluent enough in the Spanish language to conduct focus groups and interview sessions for research purposes, it was necessary to recruit Latina women who were able to voice their experiences in English. Although speaking Spanish was not discouraged during participant interactions during this study, it was necessary for participants to be able to explain themselves in English if I needed clarification about something.
that was said during focus group or interview sessions in order to fully understand their thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Espín, 1999).

A small amount of Spanish was spoken during both the mothers’ focus group as well as the daughters’ focus group, but the participants who spoke Spanish were able to explain their thoughts in English as well. After the mothers’ focus group, I commented on the languages spoken in my field notes:

I had one Mom who seemed kind of shy initially, and I think it was partially because of the language barrier. She said that she didn’t speak English very well and yet she speaks it excellently, but you could tell that she would probably be more comfortable speaking in Spanish. Luckily, there were two other Moms who also spoke Spanish, so I made sure to say at the beginning that if anyone wanted to say something in Spanish that it was okay, but that hopefully, they could explain it in English for those of us who didn’t understand Spanish very well and who probably needed that translation. And that happened a few times where somebody threw in a Spanish word and then the other Moms helped explain it in English (Field notes, 3/25/12).

**Focus Group Setting.** As discussed by Madriz (1998), when conducting focus groups, it is important to consider the setting and location for individual sessions. Comfortable and familiar settings will help participants feel more at ease while participating in the research study. Making attempts to accommodate participants by offering to have focus group sessions at convenient times and in well-known locations, such as schools, churches, homes, or community centers, can go far with helping participants to feel more comfortable during the research process. After participants were chosen for the study, attempts were made to find centralized location sites for the focus group sessions by considering local recreation centers, public libraries, and the DU campus as potential sites. Knowing that several of my mother participants lived outside of Denver, I considered a few locations closer to where they lived. After some unsuccessful attempts to find a library or recreation center for us to meet, I asked my participants if someone would be willing to host the focus group at their home. I made this decision after having one of my contact visits at the home of two of my participants and remembering the level of comfort during the visit. I decided it might help my participants to feel more comfortable if we were in someone’s home for the focus group session. Two of the five participants agreed to host the focus group in their home, and we met in the home of the participant who lived in the most central location. I assured the participant that I would provide the food, drinks, and other necessities for the focus group in order
to minimize the inconvenience to her and her family. I wrote the following thoughts in my field notes:

The setting was awesome! I feel like things were much more comfortable because we were in a home rather than in a library or at DU or some other academic setting. I feel like the Moms felt comfortable, and it just felt relaxed, like a group of women just having a conversation about their daughters (Field notes, 3/25/12).

Living closer to DU and having a higher level of comfort with the DU campus, the Latina students made a unanimous decision to have their focus group at DU. This setting was familiar and comfortable to the students.

Another important aspect of the focus group setting is providing refreshments for participants. According to Madriz (1998), food is an important part of discussion experiences for many Latina women. Having food during focus groups helps to create more of a social setting where participants can feel comfortable interacting with other Latina women who encounter similar life circumstances. During the focus group sessions for this study, food and drinks were provided for participants, and this appeared to contribute to the social atmosphere of the focus groups.

Participants’ Self-Disclosure. Another aspect of the focus group setting involves the participants’ level of disclosure. According to Morgan (1993), as participants begin to feel comfortable sharing their life experiences during focus group sessions, it is important for the researcher to create an atmosphere that is safe for self-disclosure. Focus groups with difficult topics as their point of focus need to have boundaries in place that allow participants to make appropriate disclosures without encouraging participants to say things that are outside the purposes of the research study. As described by Morgan (1998), it is the researcher’s responsibility to set boundaries that will minimize potentially stressful situations and prevent invasions of privacy. Boundary setting can be accomplished by defining the appropriate limits of the discussion at the beginning of each focus group. Because researchers may ask participants questions that are stress inducing, it is important for them to be able to monitor and recognize the signs of stress in order to guide the discussion in a comfortable direction for all participants.
Researchers can also set boundaries by avoiding questions that could potentially cause participants to feel stressed or uncomfortable as a result of their self-disclosure.

At the beginning of both the mothers’ and daughters’ focus groups, I made an announcement to participants that they did not have to answer any questions or discuss anything they did not feel comfortable discussing. I also reminded them of the information in the Informed Consent letter, stating that if they felt emotionally distressed at any point during the study, a list of counseling resources could be provided to them.

Compensation. As discussed by Marín and Marín (1991), many Latinos who struggle financially, have several children to care for, or work multiple jobs can experience additional hardships when they are asked to participate in research studies. To alleviate the difficulties brought upon by participating in research, participants should be compensated and the type of compensation should be equal to the amount of work expected of them during the research process. Compensation does not have to be monetary; it can be offered as services or donations to a particular neighborhood or community group. According to Madriz (1998), although monetary incentives can increase some participants’ desire to be a part of a research study, other participants will refuse money for their participation. When working with Latina participants, a refusal to be compensated should be recognized as an important belief in the Latina culture because some Latina women do not feel comfortable being rewarded monetarily for “un favor a una amiga” (a favor to a friend) (p. 120). If participants feel uncomfortable accepting monetary compensation, researchers can offer professional services and/or knowledge as compensation to individual Latina participants, the entire focus group, or whole communities. This type of compensation can come in the form of relevant presentations to groups of students or adults, participation in an event or activity of the participant’s choosing, or utilizing the researcher’s accessibility to provide an educational life experience, such as a college visit for participants or their children.

For this study, Latina participants were offered a variety of compensation choices including: gift cards to restaurants and stores, offers to do educational presentations to community or church groups, and college visits for their children and families. Four of the five
participants from the mothers’ focus group declined compensation for their participation during the study. Many of them thanked me for conducting the study and expressed their gratitude for being able to participate in the study. The fifth participant, who also participated in the interview and observation sessions, requested that I do a presentation at a summer camp held for families who have adopted children from Latin American countries. She believed my knowledge as a school psychologist might be useful to parents and families who attend this camp. In June 2012, I facilitated both a round-table discussion and a panel presentation at the Latin American Heritage Camp held in Granby, Colorado. Two of the five daughter participants also refused compensation for their participation in the study. Of the remaining three participants, one requested a gift certificate to a Denver restaurant, another participant requested movie tickets, and the other participant requested a Target gift card.

**Availability of Childcare and Transportation.** As explained by Madriz (1998), some Latina participants bring their children with them to focus group sessions because of their responsibilities as mothers and caregivers and/or the difficulty of finding childcare. For some focus group sessions, particularly those that take place in people’s homes, young Latino children often feel more comfortable staying close to their mothers, while older children are usually comfortable enough to play in another room. At times, it may be necessary for Latina participants to check on their children, which can create distractions and longer focus group sessions; however, it can also contribute to a more comfortable, less formal feeling for participants. Providing childcare for Latina participants who bring their children to research sessions allows them to participate and share their experiences as Latina women and mothers and also helps them to feel less burdened by their motherly responsibilities while they participate in the focus group discussions.

For this study, Latina participants were allowed to bring their children to the focus group sessions, but childcare was not necessary because the majority of participants did not have young children who required childcare and the participants who have young children did not bring them to the sessions. Participants were also asked about their transportation needs prior to the focus group sessions. All of the participants were able to provide their own transportation to and from the focus group sessions.
Focus Group Questions. According to Krueger (1998), the development of effective focus
group questions takes time and planning on the researcher’s part. Important guidelines to
consider when developing focus group questions include: clarifying the topic to be studied,
brainstorming ideas, creating drafts of questions, revising questions, considering your audience,
and paying attention to time, clarity, cultural, and language constraints. Regardless of the
procedure used to develop focus group questions, the main purpose of the focus group is to
collect accurate information in a comfortable yet effective group setting; this can be accomplished
through careful question development and successful moderation of individual focus group
sessions (Jarrett, 1993). For this study, one set of focus group questions was formulated using
the main topics of the study (Knodel, 1993) and another set of focus group questions was
developed using question categories (Krueger, 1998; See Appendices D & E).

Prior to the focus groups, I met with two Latina students who were not eligible to be in the
study because their mothers did not speak English well enough to participate in the focus groups.
Because these students met the research criteria in all other areas, I decided to invite them to be
participants in my pilot study. Although they were not participating in the actual study, I reviewed
the Informed Consent letter with them, so that they were aware of the potential risks and benefits
of their participation, and they both agreed to sign it. I offered them compensation for their time as
well. We met in October of 2011 to review the first set of focus group questions and again in
December of 2011 to review the second set of focus group questions. While reviewing the
questions, the students offered suggestions regarding the wording of the questions and also
helped me to decide a logical order to the questions. I made the following comments in my field
notes after meeting with them the first time:

When I first started recruiting participants for my study, I realized that I would be limited to
choosing students whose mothers spoke English. Although there were several students
who wanted to participate, some of them were eliminated from the participant pool
because they told me their mothers did not speak English very well. After identifying
several students whose mothers did not speak English that well, I realized they would be
good candidates for my pilot study. I chose two Latina students from the VIP program
who I had known for a while. I told them it was okay to be honest about anything that
didn’t make sense and they provided great feedback about the questions. I realized that
the level of our relationship with each other was extremely helpful in influencing their
ability to be open with their feedback about my questions (Field notes, 10/14/11).
I reviewed both sets of questions with the students, and decided to use the set of focus group questions, which were developed using question categories (Krueger, 1998; See Appendices D & E). After listening to the students attempt to answer the questions during the pilot study, that set of questions seemed more conducive for creating a conversation-like atmosphere during the focus groups.

In February of 2012, I met with a graduate student in the Child, Family and School Psychology (CFSP) program whom I had asked to be a peer debriefer. Because I had already decided to use a certain set of focus group questions after meeting with the students in my pilot study, I asked my peer debriefer to review only one set of focus group questions. She provided me with specific suggestions and helpful feedback about the wording and order of the questions.

**Interview Considerations**

In addition to the focus group sessions, one Latina mother and one Latina daughter were asked to participate in separate phenomenological interviews during this study. The phenomenological interviewing process involved a three-interview format, in which each interview (1) lasted approximately two hours, (2) was scheduled from three days to a week apart, and (3) was tape-recorded for transcription and data collection purposes. Field notes/logs were also written immediately following each of the interview sessions. Many of the previously mentioned focus group considerations were also considered during the interviewing process including showing respect to Latina participants, language concerns, interview setting, confidentiality and self-disclosure, compensation, and transportation. Interview participants were chosen from the pool of focus group participants based on (1) their willingness and availability to participate in the interviewing process, (2) their responses during the focus group sessions, (3) their ability to express themselves and share their experiences during the focus group sessions, (4) their perceived relationship with their mother/daughter, and (5) their potential to be “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

The mother and daughter who participated in the interview sessions were chosen because (1) they were available to participate and expressed a lot of enthusiasm about the study, (2) they used personal stories to explain their answers and also used humor to communicate their
ideas, (3) they appeared to be comfortable sharing their experiences and brought up interesting
topics for discussion that were not covered in the focus group questions, and (4) they described
their relationship as one that is balanced between parent and friend. The mother-daughter pair
also demonstrated potential to be information-rich cases because the daughter has mixed Latino
heritage (Mexican and Puerto Rican descent); the daughter lived at home with her family; there is
a younger Latina daughter in the family; the mother and daughter described close relationships
within the family; the parents were still married; the mother was a working mother; the mother
spoke Spanish; and the mother came from a close family herself.

Interview Questions. As described by Seidman (2006), the in-depth phenomenological
interviewing process utilizes open-ended questions to build upon and explore participants’
responses. The researcher aims to have participants recreate their experiences as these
experiences relate to the topic of study. Interview questions for this study were developed to
provide information about Latina participants’ early life experiences, current life experiences, and
how they interpret the meaning of their life experiences (see Appendices F & G).

Similar to the process conducted prior to the focus group sessions, another pilot study
was conducted in April of 2012 to review the interview questions for the Latina daughter who
would be participating in the interviews. One of the Latina students who had helped during the
first pilot study met with me again to give me feedback about the interview questions. During our
discussion, she answered the interview questions herself, and if they did not make sense to her,
she asked for clarification and gave suggestions about how to reword them. I made the following
comments in my field log after meeting with her:

Although the questions made sense to me when I developed them, it’s so important to get
honest feedback about how the questions sound to a person who is trying to answer
them. And now, having had some time between the time when I wrote the questions, and
looking at them now with potential participants, I realize that some of my questions were
vague or unclear to people. I realize that I have to let go of my own insecurities about my
dissertation preparation to be open to hearing ideas from people (Field log, 12/2/11).

I also met with my peer debriefer in April of 2012 to review the questions for the Latina mother’s
interview. She provided similar feedback about the phrasing of questions and also provided
insight about how the mother might respond to the order of the questions.
Observation Considerations

There are many factors to consider when conducting observations in research settings. As explained by Darlington and Scott (2002), the research purpose should serve as a guide when making decisions about what, when, where, who, and how to observe, and all of these decisions should be planned carefully and understood clearly. Because observing is an act that requires much focus and attention, observation sessions should only last long enough to capture the behaviors being studied; this will ensure that researchers will be able to sustain their concentration during the sessions and also be able to remember what information to document after the observation. According to Ely et al. (1991), qualitative researchers go through several stages during the participant observation process, starting with a broad focus and then narrowing to specific participant behaviors based on information that emerges from the data collection and analysis process. “Keep writing, listening, and looking” are words that can serve as the researcher’s motto during the beginning stages of observation when it would be beneficial for researchers to plan to observe and document as much information as they can without ascertaining the importance of the data collected (p. 48). Another important aspect of observation is the bracketing process. Within the bracketing process, researchers are expected to acknowledge and separate their own beliefs, feelings, and biases in the research setting—“to bracket them”—in an effort to be open-minded about what they may discover during the research process (p. 50).

As discussed by Darlington and Scott (2002), during the later stages of observation, the type of observation data collected will depend on the research purpose and how the data will be analyzed. When collecting observation data, it is important for the researcher to write their field notes/logs as quickly as possible after the observation sessions. Field notes should differentiate between participants’ direct quotes, paraphrases, and general recollections by the researcher. Writing brief notes during the observations allows researchers to write more detailed notes after the observations have been completed, but also serves as a more unobtrusive method of collecting data during the observations. In an effort to lessen researcher bias and improve rigor and credibility during the observation process (1) the assumptions and preconceptions of the
researcher should be documented, (2) the purpose and focus of the observation should be clear, and (3) the abilities and limitations of the researcher to observe and record accurate data should be considered carefully (Darlington & Scott, 2002).

For this study, observations were conducted with the Latina mother and daughter who participated in the interview process on three different days for approximately ninety minutes to two hours each time (see Appendix H). The mother-daughter pair was observed during family interactions, which were pre-determined following a discussion between the mother-daughter pair and me. Although notes were not written during the observations because of the participatory nature of the observations and my direct involvement during these family interactions, I used my phone as a tape recorder to document my thoughts, feelings, and interpretations immediately after the observations were completed. Additionally, field notes/logs were written after each observation, but no longer than 24 hours after the completion of each observation.

**Trustworthiness**

As discussed by Ely et al. (1991), trustworthiness in qualitative research can be demonstrated when a research study is conducted with integrity and when information is gathered that reflects the true experiences of the participants. Establishing trustworthiness ensures that research studies are based on ethical considerations about the involvement of participants, the collection and analysis of data, the researcher’s approach to objectivity, and the presentation of findings. Trustworthiness is not a set of procedures a researcher abides by, but “a personal belief system” that guides the entire qualitative research process (p. 93).

**Alternatives to Generalizability**

As discussed by Seidman (2006), many researchers develop their studies with the hope of being able to generalize their findings to a larger population than their individual research sample. The goal of a qualitative researcher, however, is to delve so deeply during the research process that generalizability is replaced by a thorough and convincing portrayal of people’s life experiences. When researchers are able to portray participants’ experiences effectively and in great depth, two alternatives to generalizability arise. First, the researcher may find common experiences among participants who are involved in the research process. Although individual
participants may lead different lives, connections among their experiences can help other people see patterns and similarities, and these patterns can be explored and considered by non-participants. Second, when researchers describe participants’ experiences and are able to present them in a public format, non-participants have the ability to relate to participants’ experiences, which can lead to a better understanding and appreciation for the complex ways in which people’s lives interact.

Credibility and Rigor in Data Collection

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), qualitative researchers can demonstrate credibility and rigor in their methods and procedures through their attempts to establish trustworthiness in their studies. Credibility involves establishing the truthfulness of a qualitative research study. A credible study includes (1) information that stems from participants’ beliefs and ideas, (2) a careful analysis by the researcher of his/her role, and (3) a logical, well-defined approach to the study and its findings. Demonstrating a rigorous approach to a study requires the researcher to show (1) appropriate method choices that are based on a theoretical framework, (2) a persuasive and clear line of reasoning, and (3) a coherent and logical process for data documentation and analysis. Credibility and rigor can be demonstrated through a variety of means, including prolonged engagement, triangulation, a clear stance and approach to the research, and thorough documentation of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. For this study, credibility and rigor during the data collection process was established through (1) prolonged engagement during the course of the study, (2) triangulation, (3) a well-defined approach to the research, and (4) detailed documentation of the data collection process.

Prolonged Engagement. As explained by Rossman and Rallis (2003), demonstrating prolonged engagement requires the researcher to be in the research setting for extended periods of time or to spend considerable amounts of time with individual participants. Prolonged engagement prevents researchers from making conclusions based on brief glimpses of participants or their settings. The length of time spent with participants or in the setting is dependent on the researcher’s time and the time needed to complete the research study based on its questions and methods (Ely et al., 1991). This study followed the subsequent timeline: (1)
Latina mothers and daughters participated in separate focus groups, (2) one Latina mother and one Latina daughter from each focus group were interviewed three times over a three-week period, and (3) the Latina mother-daughter pair who participated in the interviews were observed during family interactions in a natural setting on three separate days. Because the focus groups only consisted of two sessions, initial information was collected from the group interviews, but explored in depth during the individual interviewing process as well as the observation process in an effort to establish prolonged engagement.

**Triangulation.** Researchers can strive to establish trustworthiness by demonstrating triangulation—the convergence of data gathered by different methods—in their studies (Ely et al., 1991). According to Patton (2002), triangulation has the potential to strengthen a research study when researchers choose to incorporate multiple methods, measures, researchers, or perspectives within their research studies. Research studies that utilize multiple methods can yield different types of data, providing researchers with a way to cross-check their data. Multiple method studies are not as susceptible to errors, which are more commonly found in studies that use only one research method. Triangulation allows researchers to test the consistency of their data methods and results; this is important because different data methods can generate different findings even when the research topic remains the same. Triangulation can reveal inconsistencies in data results, which offers researchers an opportunity to consider the research topic in different ways. Inconsistencies also allow researchers to reconsider their methodological framework and review their results or to acknowledge the inconsistencies as different, yet equally significant findings (Ely et al., 1991). In an effort to establish triangulation, this study utilized methodological triangulation—the use of multiple methods to study an individual phenomenon—by combining the qualitative methods of focus groups, interviews, and observations to study Latino family involvement and Latina mother-daughter relationships (Patton, 2002).

**Research Approach.** Researchers can contribute to the credibility and rigor of their studies by demonstrating a clear approach to their research (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The theoretical framework and rationale for the methods chosen have been outlined in previous sections, detailing the approach to the proposed research study.
Data Collection Process. This study utilized three main methods of data collection: field notes, field logs, and audiotapes of focus group and interview sessions. As explained by Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005), field notes are researchers' way of documenting what is seen, heard, and experienced in the research setting. Field notes consist of descriptions, perceptions, feelings, and interpretations of researchers' experiences in the field (see also Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In the observation setting, it is best for the researcher to be as unobtrusive as possible while writing field notes (Ely et al., 1991). According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), field notes should include as many details as possible with thick descriptions of participants' behaviors, emotions, and social interactions. Field notes can also include tables, checklists, diagrams, and drawings to help create data out of what is seen and heard.

As discussed by Ely et al. (1991), field logs are extensions of field notes and provide researchers with an opportunity to include additional details, thoughts, feelings, and interpretations about researchers’ experiences in the field. The field log is the place where researchers can compile all of their data; it is meant to be written chronologically during the research process, documenting all of the information researchers discover and their interpretations of how they discovered it. It is important for researchers to put as much detailed information as possible into their logs because “the log is the data,” and only information that is recorded in the log is available for data analysis (p. 69). Because data analysis stems from the log, the log allows researchers to develop interpretations from the data and reflect on them over the course of the research. The field log also serves as an outlet for researchers to confront and examine themselves during the research process, becoming a place where researchers can voice and question their thoughts, feelings, and decisions about their methods. Although the log provides researchers with a space to voice their ideas and assumptions, they must ensure that documentation is included in their logs that either proves or disproves these ideas.

In addition to field notes and logs, audiotaping is another method researchers can use to collect data during focus group and interview sessions. As discussed by Ely et al. (1991), audiotaping allows researchers to listen to and interpret the tone of people's voices as they reflect on participants’ spoken words. Audiotapes also provide opportunities for repeated analysis and a
way for researchers to verify information in their field notes and logs. Most participants are willing to be audiotaped and feel comfortable being audiotaped in the research setting despite the presence of a tape recorder. Audiotapes are also transcribed to help researchers remember experiences, describe important details, and consider new perspectives about the data. Researchers can utilize audiotaping for the purpose of both triangulation and data analysis. For this study, field notes and logs were written throughout the research process and audiotaping was used during focus group and interview sessions. Audiotaping was utilized during the mothers’ focus group, but the recording equipment malfunctioned; therefore, my dissertation advisor was contacted, and she instructed me to summarize information that I could recall from the focus group and send it to my participants to confirm the accuracy of my summary. An email was sent to all five participants with a summary from the focus group. Three of the five participants responded to my request and confirmed the summary. Another participant was contacted by phone and confirmed the summary, and the last participant was contacted by phone to remind her to review the summary. She apologized for not returning my email, stating that she rarely checks her email. She also stated that she would review the summary, but I did not receive any contact from her regarding the summary.

**Being a Latina Researcher**

My personal qualifications as a Latina researcher also served to contribute to the trustworthiness of the proposed study. Currently, I work as a school psychologist in a large school district in Colorado. My job has provided me with experience facilitating groups with students and adults, working individually with students of various ages, observing students and families, and conducting meetings with parents and school staff in the education setting. As a result, I feel comfortable and confident working with groups of students, communicating with parents and families, and observing students and families in different settings. As a school psychologist, I also have experience organizing large amounts of observation, testing, and interview data to develop interpretations about individual students. During my time in graduate school, I also worked as a graduate assistant for the VIP program at DU from April of 2005 to June of 2008. As a graduate assistant, I served in a mentoring/counseling role for the VIP students, the majority of whom were
students of color, and supervised them while they conducted workshops with high school and middle school students in the Denver area. For the past six years, I have also facilitated a seminar for first-year students in the VIP program. This weekly seminar occurs during the first quarter of the students’ freshman year and provides them with a support system as they adjust to college. Facilitating this seminar has provided me with extensive practice leading discussions with college-aged students of color.

As a Latina woman, I have many personal experiences with family involvement and mother-daughter relationships—the primary topics of this study. Although many of my female relatives live far away from me now, they still give me consejos when we see each other or talk on the phone. They also continue to serve as my role models for how to be a Latina woman. Listening to and observing my mother and other female relatives are acts that are ingrained in my being; they will continue for the remainder of my life. Growing up, my family, including my extended family, was extremely involved in many aspects of my life. By helping me with school assignments, attending my sporting events, and encouraging me to lead a spiritual/religious life, my family demonstrated their involvement in my life. My family was particularly involved in my education. As a young child, my parents sent me to a Catholic school to enhance my spiritual upbringing. My religion was an important aspect of my early learning and my parents had high expectations of me academically and behaviorally. Discussions about college and future careers were common, even as a young child. My parents and other family members frequently asked about school and my future plans. This support continued as I progressed in my schooling. During high school, my academic and athletic accomplishments were celebrated by all members of my family. College became even more of an expectation and I worked hard in school to ensure I would get into a good college and also to make my family proud. During my undergraduate years, my family continued to support my academic endeavors and graduate school became the next goal to achieve. Although none of my grandparents went to college, my parents and many of my aunts and uncles are college graduates and successful professionals. They served as role models and sources of support for me throughout my schooling, and my family continues to encourage me even now as I work toward the completion of my doctorate. In so many ways, I
have seen the positive effects of my family’s involvement on my life. These effects are the main reasons why I chose this research study and its topics, methods, and participants. Knowing how my family and my relationship with my mother have influenced my life led me to consider how other Latino families are able to influence their daughters’ lives. Through this study, I hope to expand on my own personal knowledge of Latino family involvement, cultural narratives, and mother-daughter relationships by contributing new information about these topics through the eyes and experiences of the Latina participants involved in this study.

According to Marín and Marín (1991), researchers who have the same ethnicity as their participants can help to establish a sense of trust, enhance rapport, and make participants more willing to disclose; thus, affecting the quality of the research findings (see also Jarrett, 1993). When the researcher and participants share the same ethnicity, it can help participants feel that they share experiences or have things in common with the researcher, which can be beneficial in studies where establishing rapport is important (see also Madriz, 1998). Shared experiences and a shared culture can make researchers of color more qualified to effectively investigate and understand topics in their own ethnic and cultural communities. Although shared experiences can increase trust and rapport between researchers and their participants, it is important for researchers to encourage participants to share their true experiences, so participants do not feel they have to live up to researchers’ expectations of what their experiences should be like (Espín, 1999). I commented on this aspect of the research experience in my field log after my first interview with the Latina daughter:

I was a little concerned at first because when I was explaining the interviews and the types of interviews that we were going to be doing, she mentioned something about my needing the interview to be about education. I told her that I wanted her to feel comfortable answering the questions however she wanted to answer them and to not really think about what I was trying to get at, that I would use whatever information she talked about in my study, and that it didn't have to be about anything that she thought I needed. So, I was concerned that she was going into the interview feeling that way, but I was glad that she voiced it, so that I could clarify that for her. And so, she wouldn't have that as an expectation going in that she was trying to do something for me or get the information that I needed. Hopefully, she felt comfortable and I think the way that she was talking and the answers that she gave that she did feel comfortable and it didn’t feel insincere or not genuine (Field log, 4/12/12).
As discussed by Marín and Marín (1991), researchers of color can heighten the quality of their studies by adding their cultural perspectives to the topic of study, which can contribute to a better understanding and analysis of the study findings. These perspectives can also influence researchers’ decisions to include topics, questions, or considerations that might not be included by researchers of cultural backgrounds that are different from their participants.

Although comfort and familiarity with research participants and settings have their advantages in research, Ely et al. (1991) discuss the importance of “making the familiar unfamiliar” in research studies (p. 124). When researchers share common experiences with participants or are familiar with the settings of their studies, they have a tendency to assume a certain level of understanding about those participants and settings. In these studies, it becomes even more important for researchers to not make assumptions based on their own cultural beliefs or personal knowledge about participants or settings. Issues of familiarity require researchers to (1) be open-minded and capable of reflecting on their role within the research process, (2) have the strength to challenge their own expectations and beliefs, (3) demonstrate self-awareness of personal values and ideas that may affect the study, and (4) display integrity within the research process.

During this study, there were multiple times, in which I had to remind myself that I was the researcher and not a psychologist while interacting with participants. On several occasions, I felt myself reverting to my role as a psychologist, so it was necessary to be mindful of my comments and reactions to my participants. After the mothers’ focus group, I commented on this aspect of the research process in my field notes:

I found myself having to really step out of my normal psychologist role and not to necessarily, like comfort or affirm what people were saying because I was the researcher and not the psychologist. And so, I had to step back and say to myself, “No, you don’t have to agree with that statement or disagree with that statement, you can let the other people in the group react to what was said.” And so, I tried to remain very quiet other than introducing the questions and making sure that the conversation didn’t get too off topic (Field notes, 3/25/12).

After the focus groups were conducted, I began the interviewing phase of my data collection.

After the second interview with the Latina daughter, I reflected on the changes I felt during the interview process in my field notes:
Choosing her to be a part of my study to begin with and particularly being able to go to her house for interviews and to meet with her mom and having her family there and around has really changed the researcher-participant relationship. I think she's now becoming more comfortable sharing a lot more. Which makes the answers during the interview and the depth of her answers a lot deeper. I think I'm starting to understand her experiences a lot more. Now that we are a lot closer and it does feel more like a big sister/little sister type of relationship, I don't really think that there would be any going back to a researcher-participant, but I think I have to be careful to make sure that I'm still respecting the process and ensuring that I'm treating Ana not so much that I'm not treating her with respect, but that I'm maybe losing my focus. I'm still asking the questions from my study, but I definitely felt like today I was stepping more out of the researcher role and starting to become more in the psychologist role or more of a big sister role. And I think maybe just setting aside time where that can happen, but then also making sure that within the interview sessions that they are more structured and I remember my role more (Field notes, 4/19/12).

Following that interview, I was able to make conscious decisions about my role during this research process and consequently, set up additional time for small talk during and after the interviews to preserve the time during the actual interview sessions.

Data Analysis

As discussed by Ely et al. (1991), qualitative data can be analyzed in many different ways. The analysis of qualitative data is a careful, time-consuming process whereby researchers consider their methods and find ways to organize their data into meaningful results. The researcher is responsible for finding meaning and making sense of their data, and the results are the researcher's interpretation of what has been learned during the research process. Data analysis is a personal and individual process because each researcher will analyze and interpret qualitative data in his/her own way. This section will describe the data analysis process for this study, including the analysis of focus group, interview, and observation data. This section will also describe how credibility and rigor were established during the data analysis process for this study.

Developing Categories and Themes

According to Ely et al. (1991), qualitative studies allow researchers to develop their own way of organizing data in ways that make sense to them, and many researchers choose category and theme development as methods to help them organize and find meaning in their results. During data collection, researchers develop tentative categories by writing down their thoughts and feelings about the data in their field notes and logs. During the data analysis process, researchers familiarize themselves with their data and continue to create categories and
subcategories in an effort to find connections in their data. This process also requires researchers
to consider, analyze, test, revise, and evaluate categorical fit. Through this process, researchers
can use their data to build upon existing theories or to consider new ones. Another common and
similar approach in data analysis is the development of themes. A theme can be described as a
statement of significance that is found in all or most of the relevant data. It can also be an
individual statement that is not found throughout the data, but still has important emotional value
or factual worth on its own. Themes are the researcher’s way of introducing their overall
impressions of participants’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the research setting.

For this study, both categories and themes were developed using data from focus groups,
interviews, and observations. During this process, transcriptions and field notes and logs were
reviewed and relevant data were highlighted. Once pertinent data were identified, information was
bracketed and designated a color that corresponded with a tentative category. Data were sorted
by category, and these categories were combined into larger and different categories as the data
continued to be analyzed. Initial categories included: education, mother-daughter relationship,
cultural narratives, resiliency, family involvement, dad’s involvement, identity, self-
motivation/independence, mother’s role, daughter’s independence, changing relationships,
learning and self-growth, social justice, and home environment. Theme development stemmed
from this categorization process. Categories were charted visually under tentative theme
headings and were evaluated for their fit within the themes. Family Involvement, Education, and
Resiliency were identified as preliminary themes, but after further evaluation, the themes of
Personal Growth and Family Involvement resonated strongest amongst the data.

Credibility and Rigor in Data Analysis

As discussed by Ely et al. (1991), credibility and rigor in data analysis can be
demonstrated through a variety of ways, including negative case analysis, peer support, and
member checking. For this study, credibility and rigor during the data analysis process was
established through (1) negative case analysis, (2) peer support, and (3) member checking.

Negative Case Analysis. According to Ely et al. (1991), the process of data analysis
includes searching for evidence that confirms initial conclusions, categories, and themes. This
process also includes acknowledging evidence that runs counter to the researcher’s findings and
deciding how to present that information; this is known as negative case analysis. Negative case
analysis involves the analysis of results that challenge a researcher’s emerging conclusions and
categorical meanings. During the data analysis process, researchers may identify negative cases
and/or discrepant cases. Negative cases materialize as exceptions to developing categories and
themes, whereas, discrepant cases appear as variations of developing categories and themes.
Qualitative researchers use the data analysis process to validate their ideas and also to modify
their ideas when the data compels them to do so. The negative case analysis will be discussed in
the category and theme analysis section of chapter four.

Peer Support during Data Analysis. As discussed by Ely et al. (1991), a researcher’s
peers can help to establish and maintain credibility in qualitative studies by participating in
support groups and peer checking during the data analysis process. Support groups provide
researchers with a forum to voice their thoughts, opinions, and observations about their data, and
an opportunity to get advice and listen to new ideas. Support group members can offer
assistance, encouragement, honesty, and commitment in their efforts to help fellow researchers
produce significant and credible studies. Attempts were made to form a support group during this
research process, but the two doctoral students from the College of Education at DU who were
suggested to me by one of my dissertation committee members were unavailable. I emailed the
students in February 2012 and both of them responded to my initial email contact. One of them
responded that she would be willing to assist me; however, when I contacted her the second time,
I did not receive a response. I took her lack of response as an indication that she was no longer
available to assist me with my dissertation. The other student cited her many school, work, and
family responsibilities as the reasons why she would not be available to help me.

Another form of peer involvement that helps to establish credibility in qualitative studies is
peer checking. The peer checking process involves a researcher establishing agreement about
some of his/her findings with at least one other person. Peers are usually chosen from the
researcher’s support group and are asked to develop categories and themes from sections of the
researcher’s field notes and/or field log. The peers’ findings are then compared to those of the
researcher to establish agreement among the findings. If agreement is not established, it is the researcher’s responsibility to try to understand the peers’ line of reasoning and to voice their agreement and acceptance of the peers’ findings or to provide a rationale for their disagreement with the peers’ ideas. For this study, the peer debriefer who assisted me with the development of my focus group and interview questions also assisted me during the data analysis process. She reviewed the data within my tentative categories, evaluated the appropriateness and fit of categories, offered suggestions for placement of data, and helped to rename certain categories.

Member Checking. As explained by Ely et al. (1991), member checking is another important aspect of establishing credibility in qualitative research. Member checking requires researchers to periodically verify their developing interpretations and conclusions with their participants. This process allows participants to offer feedback about the researcher’s findings and to confirm data gathered through other methods, such as observations. Feedback from member checking is dependent on the research topic, the data provided to participants for checking, the relationship between the researcher and the participants, and the setting where the checking takes place. Although member checking has the potential to create problems in some research studies, it is still important for researchers to discuss their developing interpretations and conclusions with their participants. These discussions help researchers to develop rapport with participants and to lessen the power differential that is common between researchers and participants by allowing participants to become a part of the data analysis process.

As part of the member-checking process, participants were sent portions of the findings that included: (1) summaries and direct quotes from focus group or interview sessions and (2) observation information to confirm the accuracy of participants’ words, meanings, and actions. Participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback and/or change the wording of their information to indicate what they actually intended to say. The member-checking process was explained to participants during the data collection process in an effort to develop rapport and help participants feel more comfortable with the research process. After the daughters’ focus group, one of the Latina students reflected on the focus group experience in an email:
I really enjoyed the focus group today and I'm excited to see how the end product turns out. I was just wondering if I could possibly reword one of my answers? I think the question was how have our moms influenced our education and who we are today? I was thinking about my answer and as I thought about it after the fact I think my answer came out more negative than I wanted it to be (S. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

This student was able to answer the question in a way she was more comfortable with in her email and that information was included in the focus group data. After participants were sent their quotes and summaries, three of the participants made grammatical changes and deleted extraneous words (“like,” “you know”) from their information and the remaining participants confirmed the accuracy of their quotes and summaries without making any changes.

Focus Group Analysis

Effective analysis and interpretation of focus group data can generate valuable information that is not attainable from other research methods, and the analysis approach requires researchers to engage in a careful thought process (Knodel, 1993). According to Krueger (1998), the data analysis process is guided by the researcher's plan, which offers direction on theme development, ideas about comparison, and an overall focus for the analysis process. Because focus groups involve groups of participants, data is acquired through the group process, whereby participants influence one another, learn from each other, and affect other participants' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Analysis of focus group data can be complicated because participants may respond to questions with different words, but their responses may have similar meanings. It is the researcher’s responsibility to compare, analyze, and present participants’ responses in their findings, and this process begins with a careful consideration of participants’ words. Researchers must take into account the strength and tone of participants’ responses, the consistency of their responses, and the details within their responses. During this process, researchers look for patterns of thoughts, feelings, and ideas among participants’ responses, and then use those patterns to develop categories and themes based on their interpretive assertions.

Although researchers consider participants’ responses carefully, an effective analysis of focus group data involves more than just the analysis of participants’ words. It is important for researchers to also consider other communicative factors, such as body language, facial
expressions, and gestures. These factors will also affect the researcher’s overall analysis and interpretation of focus group data. And researchers who are involved in the data collection process themselves have a better chance of accurately interpreting their data and of building rapport with their participants (Knodel, 1993).

**Interview Analysis**

As discussed by Seidman (2006), it is important for researchers who analyze interview data to have an open mind, to look to the words to find what is relevant or interesting, and to read interview transcripts without subjectivity or preconceptions. Because in-depth interviews produce a large amount of text for analysis, the information has to be reduced in order to identify what is significant and interesting in the data. Reducing interview data allows researchers to begin the process of analysis and interpretation. One way researchers can reduce interview text is to mark the sections they believe are interesting and significant. As researchers go through the reducing process, which requires careful reading and judgment, they can check with participants to ensure that participants agree with what sections they have designated as important; this is a form of member checking. Although issues of conflict, hope, or frustration might be designated as interesting or significant, researchers should also note issues of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, and power, and how these issues can potentially affect participants. After marking sections of importance in interview text, researchers can look for patterns and begin organizing sections into categories, and then similar categories can be linked together to form themes. Once categories and themes are organized, they can be labeled and classified, which is often referred to as coding in the analysis process. To help organize this process, researchers should use a notation system as they are categorizing and labeling, so they will know where to find the data in the original transcript. For this study, I used participants’ first names (or pseudonyms when requested), the number of the interview in the three-interview sequence, and individual page numbers of the transcript on which the text initially appeared as my notation system.

Because interviews and self-narratives follow an individualized format, pattern, or line of reasoning that can be used for analysis and interpretive purposes (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008), it is important for researchers to consider the ways in which participants respond to
interview questions. According to Seidman (2006), some participants will share exciting and intense life experiences during interviews; it is the researcher’s responsibility to use their judgment to decide whether these experiences are typical and representative of the participants’ overall experiences or are merely unique to a particular situation. Participants might also share statements and experiences during interviews that are inconsistent or contradict previous experiences they may have shared. Using negative case analysis, researchers try to understand and interpret these contradictory experiences along with participants’ other interview data. As an important part of the analysis process, researchers should also reflect on what they have learned from conducting the interviews, reviewing the transcripts, identifying sections of interest, and organizing the data into categories and themes. For this study, I reflected on the data analysis process in my field notes and log.

Observation Analysis

As discussed by Darlington and Scott (2002), researchers have complete control over what information is documented as observation data for analysis purposes. During observations, researchers engage in a filtering process, whereby they observe a behavior or interaction and then make a decision whether it is significant or interesting enough to be documented. This process is influenced by the research purpose, the researcher’s theoretical framework, and the researcher’s beliefs and preconceptions. Because there is an inherent risk of making presumptions when conducting observations in research, it is important for researchers to put precautionary measures in place to avoid their own bias and misinterpretation. One way researchers can avoid bias and misinterpretation is by understanding and familiarizing themselves with the research setting and its participants. Another way researchers can avoid problems during data analysis is by checking observation information with research participants for verification of data, which serves as another form of member checking. All observation data that were presented in the results and discussion sections were shown to participants, verified for accuracy, and participants were allowed to designate whether the data could be included.
Summary

This study incorporated a variety of qualitative research methods including focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observations. These methods were used with Latina mother and daughter participants to explore the topics of family involvement in schools, cultural narratives, and mother-daughter relationships in the Latino culture. Focus groups, interviews, and observations were chosen as methods for this study because they can be used to develop a better understanding about the attitudes, beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and motivations of Latina women (Madriz, 1998). Participants were chosen based on their ability to provide a high level of information and experience about the topics, themes, and questions of this study (Patton, 2002). Special considerations were made during the focus group, interview, and observation sessions. These considerations included: showing respect to Latina participants, addressing language concerns, creating comfortable settings, ensuring confidentiality and safe self-disclosure, and providing compensation and convenient location sites. Focus group and interview questions were developed following appropriate guidelines and three primary methods of data collection (field notes, field logs, and audiotapes) were used during this study.

Qualitative researchers demonstrate credibility and rigor in their methods and procedures through their attempts to establish trustworthiness in their studies (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Credibility and rigor were established during the data collection process by demonstrating (1) prolonged engagement during the course of the study, (2) triangulation, (3) a well-defined approach to the research, and (4) detailed documentation of the data collection process. My personal qualifications as a Latina researcher also served to contribute to the trustworthiness of this study. Both categories and themes were developed using data from focus groups, interviews, and observations, and credibility and rigor during the data analysis process were established through (1) negative case analysis, (2) peer support, and (3) member checking. I also used a personal notation system during data analysis to identify categories, themes, and original placement of participants’ responses in the transcript text. Through this study, I sought to expand on my personal knowledge of Latino family involvement, cultural narratives, and mother-daughter
relationships by contributing new information about these topics through the eyes and experiences of the Latina participants involved in this study.
Chapter 4:

Results

This chapter will discuss the findings related to this study, including the participants and relevant data analysis. It will also include a description of the relationships between the Latina mothers and daughters who participated in this study as told through the words and voices of the participants. This section will also introduce the categories and themes that emerged from the data and their pertinence to the participants and research topics of this study.

*Latina Mothers and Daughters*

This section will describe the Latina mothers and daughters who were the primary focus of this study. These women shared their thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the topics of family involvement, education, resiliency, and mother-daughter relationships. Not only did they share their thoughts and feelings about these topics with me, but most importantly, with each other. This sharing process allowed these women, who ordinarily might never have met each other, to come together and share important aspects of their lives. In this section, I will present excerpts from our focus group discussions to portray the relationships and life experiences of these women using their own words and voices. In many cases, pseudonyms were not used because many of the mothers and daughters felt comfortable having their real names used in the study. Tables 2 and 3 provide information about the Latina mother and daughter participants.
### Table 2

**Latina Mother Participants**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Angélica</th>
<th>Christine</th>
<th>Margie</th>
<th>Monica</th>
<th>Paula</th>
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### Table 3

**Latina Daughter Participants**

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<th>Miriam</th>
<th>Orlinda</th>
<th>Sarah</th>
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</table>
Monica and Orlinda

Sometimes, you meet a mother and daughter, and you watch them interact with each other, and it is so natural and comfortable, like two best friends. Anyone who meets Monica and Orlinda would describe them in that way. At times, Orlinda seems more like the “mom” with her maturity and confidence as compared to Monica’s fun-loving and easy-going personality. Likely one of the most driven and focused students on the DU campus, Orlinda presents herself with a great deal of self-respect, which she credits her mom for instilling in her. Over time, they have cultivated a relationship built on trust, honesty, and affection. Orlinda describes her relationship with her mother in this way:

I think that the relationship that my mom and I have is something that I've always admired and truly been grateful for. I feel that that's attributed to the fact that she had me when she was sixteen and I feel that we kind of grew up together which in turn kind of made us best friends. I guess we might have a weird relationship because I do tell my mom everything. I mean, we talk about everything, literally everything and we laugh about it, and we're open, and I'm not ashamed of anything with her. We pick each other up. We make each other laugh. It's just a very unique kind of relationship and I really do think that it is because we kind of grew up together. I'm very grateful for what we've shared, and the memories, and just the friendship that we have (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

As a teen mom, Monica described the difficulty of having a daughter so young and yet she believes “growing up” with her daughter is what allowed them to build such a close relationship.

Monica shared her thoughts about Orlinda during the focus group:

The thing that makes me smile about her is the sincerity in her when she looks at me and holds my hands and she tells me, “Mom, I love you. Thank you for everything.” I mean that brings me a huge smile (M. B., March 25, 2012).

Of all the mothers and daughters who participated in this study, many would agree that Monica and Orlinda have a unique relationship that may not be typical of most mothers and daughters. Laughter is their constant companion, but communication has been the key to their relationship.

Orlinda commented on their communication:

I think our communication is very open and I think that's what keeps our relationship healthy because when we hurt each other, we communicate to each other in a loving way. We never let things…and it's never to the point that we're angry for more than a couple of hours. We've always been the kind of people that come to each other and say, “OK, you know what? This hurt my feelings,” or, “This isn't working,” or even just communicating, “You know what? I need you as a friend. You're my best friend and
something happened today.” It works both ways. It’s really incredible, I think, the way that my mom and I get along, because when I have a bad day, she’s there for me and she’ll come to my house or when she has a bad day, I’m there for her, and it’s mutual (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Although it is not rare to find mothers and daughters who get along so well, it can be rare to hear mothers and daughters voice their appreciation for each other so often. When Orlinda talks about her mom, there is a great deal of love and respect in her voice:

I think the core of who I am is what my mom has taught me. I feel that I see so much in my mom, and there’s a lot of things that she’s taught me that I’ve taken with me and that have made me the person that I am today. I’m grateful to my mom for teaching me like, that being outspoken and being honest, and learning who I want to be and how I want to be seen, and the way that I want to treat other people, and show them that they can be treated (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Sustaining a relationship like Monica and Orlinda’s would appear to take little effort, but both would likely agree that it is the little things that keep their relationship so strong. Orlinda described how her mom shows her that she cares:

If she knows I’m busy, she’ll be the kind of person that’ll text me, “Mija, have a wonderful day, I love you,” or if it’s snowing out, she knows I ride my bike, she’ll text me in the morning, “Mija, it’s going to snow today” (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Although the relationship between Orlinda and Monica has always been strong, it appears that this mother-daughter relationship will continue to grow even stronger.

Paula and Jamie

Some mothers know how fortunate they are to have children and consider themselves blessed when they do. For Paula, her daughter, Jamie has always been a blessing to her. Although Paula always wanted more children, a medical condition prevented her from fulfilling that wish. She explains, “I was thankful that God gave me one, at least, and she happened to be a girl” (P. B., personal communication, March 25, 2012). Because Jamie is quiet by nature, her and her mom might seem like polar opposites to the outside observer. Paula’s sense of humor and friendly and outgoing personality can sometimes overshadow Jamie’s soft-spoken demeanor when they are together, but Jamie has also been known to come to life around her mom.

Although they engage in playful banter with each other, they also have a deep respect for one another. Not one to seek the spotlight, Jamie’s personality shines most one-on-one with people or
in small groups. She is known for her helpfulness, friendliness, and caring nature toward others.

Paula described her relationship with her daughter in this way:

Jamie and I are very close, and I value the honesty, trust and communication in our mother and daughter relationship. She can tell me anything and I will listen to whatever she has to say. And I will not judge her. Because of my sickness I asked God to help me guide my daughter. And to keep me going so I can see her accomplish what she set out to do in her life. I hope she will remember everything I said and taught her. I have built my whole life around her. Jamie is my greatest accomplishment. I love her very much and she knows that (P. B., personal communication, April 1, 2012).

The bond between Jamie and her mother developed early, but has grown over the years through mutual respect and a strong desire to remain close. Jamie described her relationship with her mom:

We are definitely very close. I tell her just about everything. Not all the stuff that I tell all my friends. I have to make some distinction between what I can tell my mom and what I can tell my friends, but we've definitely gotten a lot closer since from when I was little, but I've always been pretty close to my mom. I still go home every weekend because I'm so attached to home. So, it wasn't only my mom I was close to. It was also her parents and I've noticed her relationship with her parents – like, even though she's an adult, she still would see them often. So now that I'm getting older, even though I'm living on campus, I still want to see her as often as she saw her parents. I just really enjoy her company (J. M., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Both Paula and Jamie enjoy spending time together and Paula's devotion to her daughter is evident as she described her hopes and dreams for Jamie:

My hopes are for my daughter not to give up her dreams. Let her intelligence take her as far as possible. Be very independent, and remember where she came from and who she is. I encourage her by not pushing her. Letting her make her own decisions and stand behind her. Telling her that it is ok to make mistakes, those are life lessons. Giving advice, love, and recognition (P. B., personal communication, April 1, 2012).

Life lessons and values can be learned from a variety of people in a child's life, but in Jamie's case, she gives all the credit to her mom:

Your core, how your values, and all the lessons you learned like, turn you into the person that you are. So, I mean, my values may have changed a little, but I feel like it's the same core that my mom – like, my mom always being around to support me and make me feel good about who I am allowed me to actually grow as a person and the values she's taught me, I feel, have made me the person I am today, and I'm pretty happy about that (J. M., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Although Paula believes Jamie has always been her blessing, I believe Jamie would agree that she is equally blessed to have Paula as her mom.
Chris and Sarah

Although some mothers and daughters have close relationships early on, sometimes, distance and life changes can bring them even closer. Sarah described her relationship with her mom before she left for college: “My mom – it's always been me and her. So, she was just my best friend, the only person I had around all the time” (S. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012). For Sarah, the start of her college career brought on a deeper level of appreciation for her mom. She described her newfound appreciation for her mom after leaving for college:

Our relationship has improved a lot more since high school because I think coming to college, I learned how much I value all the things that she does for me. I don't think I realized that as much until I had to come here, and I had to do my own laundry and I had to find my own food. It's changed now that I'm in college. I appreciate our relationship a lot more (S. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Based on first impressions, Sarah can appear to be quite shy, but those who know her would describe her as smart, motivated, and sarcastically funny. She is comfortable in groups; having played team sports for many years, and expresses a great deal of care and concern for her family, including her extended family. Sarah is often “in awe” of her mom because Chris is social, easy to get along with, and quick to laugh. She has a protective, nurturing way about her, and expresses a lot of admiration for her daughter. They enjoy spending time together and share many personality characteristics in common. Chris described one characteristic they share:

“Something that she does that makes me smile is her sense of humor. It's very unique. It's similar to mine and she just makes me laugh” (C. R., personal communication, March 25, 2012).

Although some Latina mothers are not able to be involved in their children's lives due to family or work responsibilities, this was not the case for Chris. She was very involved in Sarah’s school and sports activities throughout her life, and Sarah described the effect her mom’s constant presence had on her life:

I think my mom has always pushed me and she has always been present and concerned about my life emotionally as well as physically too. She was at every school and sporting event and she did whatever she could to be there. I think I'm so appreciative of this because looking back she really instilled that she would always be there for me in any way that I needed her and that she was really interested in what I was doing in my life (S. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).
Many of the Latina mothers talked about the difficulty of maintaining an appropriate balance between the amount of support they offer their daughters and how much they encourage their daughter’s independence. Sarah described her mom’s supportive approach to parenting:

She always encouraged me to try new things and to stick things out when I wanted to give up. I’m glad she pushed me because I met a lot of new friends and learned a lot about myself and the limits I could be pushed too. She helped teach me that I am a lot stronger than I think I am at times and that anything worth having never comes easily. So although I feel like there have been times when she pushed me too much I feel like the pros of her pushing and constantly motivating me sort of outweigh the cons because I know I wouldn’t be as driven to succeed or as strong-willed as I am today (S. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

After years of building a solid foundation and a strong relationship, Chris and Sarah are testament to the fact that sometimes when parents say they are doing something for your own good, they actually mean it.

Angélica and Miriam

Some mothers are not the only women in their daughter’s lives. Women who have sisters know that sisters can have close bonds as well. Angélica and Miriam have developed a close relationship in recent years, but for many years, Miriam’s relationship with her sister was the most important female relationship in her life. Miriam explained how her relationship with her mom changed after she moved out of the house:

When I was younger, like, I was really more reserved with my mom. Like, I always had my sister, so my sister's been like, the person that I mainly communicated with. My mom’s always been there for us though. She's always been open with us and she's always communicated with us. Like, I feel like I was more reserved with my problems when I was younger because I didn't know if I should talk about them with my mom or not because like, she was more of a – not an authority figure, but like, somebody you don’t really communicate that way with like you would a friend, and then now, and especially since I've moved out now, we'll hang out a lot more and we’ll talk a lot more, and I'll call her and I’ll talk to her for like, hours. So, I feel like the communication has opened up a lot since I’ve been gone. I feel like our relationship has gotten so much better, and I can communicate with her like, about anything, like things I would have never thought that I would tell my mom. Like, I tell her everything (M. E., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Being in the company of Angélica and Miriam, it is easy to see the warmth and affection they have for one another. Unlike some of the other mother-daughter pairs, Angélica and Miriam are most comfortable speaking Spanish to each other. They are also very affectionate with each other, greeting and saying goodbye to each other with hugs and kisses. Miriam has a great deal
of respect for her mother, deferring to her when they are in conversations, and allowing her mom to answer questions first. Angélica also has a lot of respect for Miriam, valuing her daughter’s opinion and asking for it. She also wants the best for Miriam and voices how proud she is of her daughter often. Miriam discussed one of the values her mom has taught her:

She taught me self worth. To like always put yourself first, even though it may seem selfish. I feel like – it’s hard. I don’t know. It’s hard to do that, I feel, but, she’s always taught me to do that. And once you put yourself first, you’ll be able to help other people (M. E., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Miriam has a lot of her mom’s personality characteristics. She is sweet, calm, and respectful to others. Highly motivated as well, she is deeply committed to furthering her education and does not take her learning for granted. She also expresses a strong desire to better herself, her community, and the world around her.

Although Angélica presents as quiet, she can be quite talkative and passionate about certain topics, especially when you ask her about her views on education. As a paraprofessional in an elementary school, Angélica has worked in the education field for several years. She has a big heart for children, and Latino children, in particular. She has a deep connection to her Latino roots and is passionate about family involvement issues in the Latino community. Angélica asked a lot of questions about my study and was very enthusiastic about participating in it. Her care and concern for Latino families is evident in her choice of work and her desire to help the Latino community. Angélica and Miriam are a mother and daughter who share a lot in common, including a care and concern for the Latino community.

**Margie and Ana**

Some mothers and daughters are able to find the perfect balance between friendship and parent-child relationship. Margie and Ana are an excellent example of that. From their communication and interactions with each other to their affection and silliness together, Margie and Ana’s relationship is one that many mothers and daughters would want to emulate. As the mother-daughter pair who participated in the interview and observation parts of the study, I developed a deeper understanding of Margie and Ana’s relationship because of our increased contact. Many of the positive qualities about their relationship stem from Margie’s beliefs about
being a mother and her ability to incorporate those beliefs into her parenting. She described how her life changed after she became a mom:

When they became part of my life, I couldn't imagine not having had them. It has just made my life so much more complete for probably so many different reasons. Because I can share things that I love with them, like theater and music and reading and going for a walk, because they have so many amazing questions or things they share with me. Because they challenge me, because they make me try to be a better person, a better example (M. R., personal communication, April 29, 2012).

Anyone who meets Margie knows that she is a calm, patient, and helpful person, which probably made her the perfect parent to match her daughter's creative, inquisitive, energetic, and fun-loving personality. Margie described Ana's unique personality as a child:

She's always been a stubborn kid. So, I just learned at very little, she had her own personality, she'd sometimes wear, want to wear the same clothes for a week. Somebody gave her these under, you know like slip, a full slip, I don't know what you call it, the one-piece slip and they were cute. Somebody had given them to her and one was blue and one was white and she wanted to wear them on top of her clothes. So she went like that to school a bunch of times. I guess because she seemed more independent than I thought I was, and I was just encouraging that because I wanted her to be not shy like me. I just wanted her to be more independent and she always was, like from day one (M. R., personal communication, April 29, 2012).

As a nurse who works with people who are homeless, Margie has served as a caring role model for Ana. She is kindhearted, thoughtful, and accepting of people. Because Margie's parenting style allowed Ana to explore who she was and to be comfortable being herself, Ana grew to become a self-confident, independent, and resilient young woman. Ana has used Margie's example and support as the inspiration from which to grow as a person. Ana described how well her mom understands her:

I kind of just grew up with the support which I don't think everybody does, but just the support of someone who sort of understands how Ana works, understands how Ana's brain works. Probably could predict my actions before I could (A. G., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

There is mutual admiration between Margie and Ana, and they enjoy spending time together, and it is the nature of their time together that appears to have solidified their relationship. Whether they are cooking, eating, exercising, singing, or dancing, their priority is to spend time together as a family. Ana described her relationship with her mom:

So, I think now, our relationship is much more connected, much stronger. We actually try to make things that we do together, like workout together or cook together, or just share with each other and I don't have a problem being supported by her, and noticing her
feelings too, because your mom is sort of like a superhero sometimes, and you don't think
that like she is struggling with anything, but like, noticing (A. G., personal communication,
April 22, 2012).

Both Margie and Ana have noticed how their relationship has changed and become stronger in
recent years. Life events and changing circumstances have caused both of them to realize how
much they need and value each other. Margie described her approach to parenting Ana:

I try to be as open and supportive as I can with Ana. Though we are close, I still feel she
needs guidance, and I try to be a positive female role model, not because I want her to be
like me, but because I want her to feel like a very capable woman and person who can do
anything. My mom was ALWAYS there for us; I want to do the same (M. R., personal
communication, April 19, 2012).

Sometimes, good parenting practices are passed down from one generation to the next. Margie
often credited her mother for instilling strong values in her and serving as a parenting role model
for her. In many ways, it appears that Margie is doing the same for Ana.

First Interview. Having spent the most amount of time with Margie and Ana, there were
several things I learned by listening to their experiences. During the first set of interviews, both
Margie and Ana discussed the importance of school and education as well as pride in their Latino
culture. They also mentioned the cultural value of family, and particularly, how important it is to
spend time together as a family. Being present for life events such as soccer games, piano
recitals, and birthday parties is a way for their family to express involvement and support. Ana
also described a story-telling, experience-sharing type of relationship between her mother and
herself. By being open and sharing her experiences with Ana, Margie hopes her daughter will
learn to become more resilient and have a positive attitude toward life. And Ana has recognized
the value of listening to her mother's experiences and learning from them. Margie also believes
she has tried to encourage Ana to be herself throughout her life, letting her personality emerge
naturally. Ana described feeling free to be herself and explore her interests in multiple areas of
her life. Margie also supported Ana's academic exploration, acknowledging her daughter's
intellectual gifts and differences, and allowing her to change schools when Ana's academic needs
were not being met. Ana felt this support from her mom, and it helped her to develop self-
confidence in her academic abilities. Although Margie's parents provided a different type of
involvement during her schooling (not as able to help with homework or advocate for her with her
Second Interview. During the second set of interviews, Margie and Ana discussed the ideas of support, trust, and unconditional love. Because Margie trusted her daughter to make good choices for herself when Ana went through a difficult time in her life, Ana gained the strength to believe in herself and came to realize how valuable her mother’s unconditional love was. Through this experience, Ana realized that children still need their parents even as they are becoming adults themselves. And Margie learned that a parent’s role is to be supportive throughout your child’s life, not just when they are young. Her parenting has changed, as her children have grown older. Margie described her attempts to be flexible as she balances the varying needs of her children. From Margie’s perspective, a mother’s role is multi-dimensional and varied, depending on what the family needs at any given time. In addition to her mother’s love and support, Ana attributes her ability to persevere and succeed to her cultural strengths and Latina identity. Educationally, Ana describes how her identity provides her with confidence and a unique perspective in her classes. As a Latina student, she also has access to a support network of other students of color through the One Community, a coalition of all of the multicultural organizations on the DU campus. Being a Latina is a positive thing in Ana’s life and she gains great personal strength from her Latina identity.

Third Interview. For the third set of interviews, Margie and Ana reflected on their family and cultural values. Margie believes it is important to expose children to their cultural heritage and language in order for children to develop pride in their culture. She views family as the primary means for passing on culture and values, and Ana believes as children grow older, they can adapt the values they were raised with to become their own personal values depending on which values suit them. Margie also believes that family experiences are where children learn about the good and the bad in the world, and that it is important for parents to have honest discussions with their children, even if family members have negative experiences (drug use, alcoholism, divorce, or violence). Margie described using these types of discussions as teaching moments, and Ana described her mother as someone who cares for her children above all else and always has their
best interests in mind. Margie and Ana have learned how much they need and rely on each other, and that the challenges they have encountered have made their relationship stronger.

Observation. After completing the interviews, I was able to observe Margie and Ana within their home and with the other members of their family. This process helped me to understand their relationship even more and to observe their roles within their family. As the mother, Margie plays many different roles that are so vital to the well being of her family. She works part-time, cooks the majority of her family’s meals, cleans their home, helps with homework, and drives her children to their practices and appointments. She also talks to her children, hugs her children, and laughs with her children. Margie is a mother who believes in showing her children how to do things. She has expectations that they will help with household chores, so rather than do things for them; she will model how to perform tasks (cooking preparation, for example), and then allow her children to practice under her guidance. Margie and her husband share many parenting and household responsibilities, communicate effectively with each other, and present to their children as a united front. Their relationship has provided their children with a positive home environment and a strong family foundation. Parental love is demonstrated through affection, care giving, kind words, and acts of service (cooking, cleaning, and driving). As the big sister in the family, Ana is a role model for her younger siblings as well as her extended family members. She is a successful college student and is paving the way for her younger siblings to follow her example. Because of the seven-year age difference between Ana and her younger sister, Ana has also learned how to be a mother figure to her little sister by following her mom’s example. Within the family, Ana has more responsibilities because of her age, and although she has more independence as a college student, she is still expected to help with household chores when she is home and also to attend family events as often as possible. Ana brings much joy to her family through her sense of humor, story-telling, and playful nature. Laughter is often heard in their home and the majority of their interactions, both verbal and nonverbal, are positive. There is also a sense of teamwork, as all members of the family try to help each other and take care of each other when they are together. Family routines, such as cooking and eating meals, watching TV, or going on walks, also promote a sense of togetherness. The children are respectful and obedient toward their parents; often
times, they are helpful and thoughtful without being asked, and when they are reminded about homework, chores, or other responsibilities, they do what is expected of them. This family is similar to many busy families with their work schedules, school tasks, and daily responsibilities, but despite the stressfulness that often takes over family life, there is a sense of warmth, love, and affection in this family home.

Category and Theme Analysis

The following section will describe the categories and themes that emerged from the data of this study. Although the research study was guided by questions that dealt with topics of family involvement, educational attainment, mother-daughter relationships, and resiliency, additional categories and themes were explored as the data were analyzed. After numerous groupings and manipulation of preliminary categories and themes, two primary themes surfaced: family involvement and personal growth. Within each theme were smaller categories that also emerged from the data including: cultural narratives, educational experiences, mother's role, mother-daughter relationships, appreciation for learning, building resiliency, identity formation, and making a difference. During the data analysis process, a negative case also surfaced and its analysis will be discussed in this section as well.

Family Involvement

In the Latino culture, the family is considered the strongest means for passing down Latino cultural values and traditions from one generation to another (Vasquez, 2004). In the explanation below, Ana discussed her ideas about family:

I think that a family is where you get your first set of values, whether or not you stick to it in the end or not. It's where you get your initial sense of how you trust people. Obviously like, values, I already said, but just like, you learn how you trust people, how you relate to people. People who come from really affectionate families stay affectionate, sometimes, for a really long time or forever, and people who come from more detached families, I think that really defines the kind of person you start becoming, too, and I think that a kid learns from his or her family how to relate to the rest of society as well (A. G., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

Sometimes, just being with your family can have a positive effect on a child's life. In the example below, Margie described her childhood experiences with her family:

So, me and my brothers and sisters, we grew up very close. We had a tiny apartment and we shared one bathroom. We were very close, very simple; rice and beans every
day. We grew up a very tight, close family, very Catholic family. We’d go to church every Sunday. I think very simple, we grew up playing, sometimes, especially the girls, not always, we would go out there and play softball with the boys outside in the alley because that’s all you had, in the alley and then we had to watch to not break windows. But mostly the boys would be outside and me and my sister, who were the oldest, would be inside because we’d, especially in the summer, we were my Mom’s helpers. I just felt it was a very good, very positive growing up environment (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

Family involvement manifests itself in different ways for different families, but for many Latino families, as evidenced by the women in this study, a family’s purpose is to pass on cultural values, support educational efforts, share positive interactions, and demonstrate love and care for one another.

* Cultural Narratives. The sharing of cultural values through oral traditions like cultural narratives allows Latino families to bond with each other and provides Latino parents with a way to encourage their children to become strong, responsible young people (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

In Ana’s explanation below, she explained how cultural narratives have been told to her throughout her life:

> I think I’ve just always been told, like I always have known what struggles my grandparents have gone through. I know that they worked in factories. I’ve always known and not shamefully and then, I’ve always known the environment that my parents have both grown up in and how my dad grew up in some little part of Chicago where there was a nuclear power waste plant or something like where people just don’t get treated with the same kind of dignity, I guess, as you would in a suburb. And so, I think just always knowing those stories and hearing those stories. It was never specifically told to me you have to do better but, I think, I just have always felt that I’m in a really lucky, good situation and this is my foundation (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).

In the example below, Margie described a cultural narrative about her grandfather that her mother used to tell her and her siblings:

> The minute he heard that somebody had a baby, he would send one of his daughters because with her mom he had seven daughters and one son. He would send one of his daughters to stay a couple of weeks. He would send a bunch of the garden stuff, vegetables, whatever they were growing; and he would go take the daughter and the horse and take a big sack of stuff and she always remembered that about him, that he was very giving. So that’s what she would say when we’d say “Mom, they’re saying they need $20 but you don't know, maybe they want it for drinking and stuff.” And she said, “If they really need it for what they say they need it, then I feel good about giving it.” Because we would say, “Don’t be stupid,” and she would give that example about her dad. (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

These examples demonstrate how messages about family values are communicated through cultural narratives between Latina mothers and daughters (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).
Educational Experiences. As Latino children progress through school, Latino parents and family members play crucial roles in their children's educational attainment by providing emotional support and offering encouragement to help children achieve their educational goals (Rivera & Gallimore, 2006). In the following example, Orlinda described her mom's emotional support:

She was always there for me emotionally. She would stay up nights with me. She would make me laugh. She knew she couldn't help me with the materials, but she was always there and exactly what Miriam said. She was always, "Do what makes you happy and always try your best, and know that that's all that you can do," and I think that that counts for so much more than her maybe baking cookies for me or going to some event (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

The emotional support offered by Latino families is often considered to be more important than their ability to help their children with school assignments (Nesman, 2000). Even with the emotional support of their families, many Latino students go to school without the economic and social resources other students receive, which can result in initial disadvantages at school (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006). Orlinda discussed the struggles she encountered in school:

The way that we have to deal with education, I think, is very different than a lot of people, than the privileged people because I feel like we struggle twice as hard. Things don't come easy. I was in the IB program my freshman year and same thing. I was competing against an entire group of white students who didn't even talk to me because I was the only Latina. Every homework assignment had to be done on a computer. I didn't have a computer. I spent hours at the library. It took me two hours to commute to GW and two hours back, and I feel like there's so many things that people don't take into consideration. A lot of the minorities or people who come from low socioeconomic status, they have to work while they're in school. I think that's very important to note that our education experience is not the same as a lot of other people. We don't get it easy (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

These disadvantages can be compounded by the fact that it is relatively rare for Latino students to have teachers whose backgrounds match their own, meaning they are often understood through a European-American lens (Trumbull et al., 2001). Many teachers lack sufficient knowledge about the social, cultural, and family upbringing of Latino students, which can cause Latino youth to feel isolated and misunderstood (Gibson, Gándara, & Peterson Koyama, 2004).

Ana described her experience with one of her college professors:

I think it was very much he liked to adopt brown kids under his wing. Like, "I'm so glad you're in college." Like, "Let's push you forward." I think for me I felt the need to fill his stereotype if that makes sense in some ways. It sounds so bad. If someone's making assumptions about you – you're poor and you're from an immigrant family and you're
whatever. For me, I felt like I needed to fit that mold. I needed to fit those expectations. I just felt like I had been set in a mold and I couldn't break out of it. Eventually, after I finished that class I was like "I totally let him present me and feel in his brain at least that that's who I was because of the color of my skin, because of my name." That made me very uncomfortable (A. G., personal communication, April 19, 2012).

When Latino students are disadvantaged economically or feel isolated in schools, the emotional support of their families is even more crucial to their ability to succeed academically.

The Mother’s Role. As described by Espinoza-Herold (2007), the Latina mother is the central figure in the Latino family—the person who unifies the family and is responsible for preserving and maintaining the cultural identity of the family. Latina mothers take great pride in teaching their families the values, beliefs, and traditions of the Latino culture. Jamie described her mother’s influence on her life:

My values may have changed a little, but I feel like it's the same core that my mom – like, my mom always being around to support me and make me feel good about who I am allowed me to actually grow as a person and the values she's taught me, I feel, have made me the person I am today, and I'm pretty happy about that (J. M., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Mothers often understand the important role they play in their family’s lives, but most are typically humble about the importance of their role. Margie described her roles within her family:

Hopefully, a little bit of a teacher. A lot of a supporter. Definitely, a little bit of a conflict manager, referee. I don’t like that role too much, but maybe it happens in most families. A giver, you know, what does the family need? So, it's a little bit of a lot of different things to make the family work. But, I think that in a way, that’s the role of a lot of women. So just, somehow get this unit of different people with different moods and different ideas to sort of still be together. So, you know, like they say, the glue, I don’t know, all that stuff. It’s cliché, but it really is a little bit of all of that (M. R., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

Although Margie understands that she plays a number of roles, she is not always aware of the positive effects her actions have on her family. I commented on Margie’s motherly role after my first observation:

Margie is a role model a lot even though she doesn’t realize maybe what she’s doing, but she’s kind of organizing things and showing Ana and Rosa what to do, and Ana and Rosa just kind of fall in line and help where they are needed to help and they do need some direction with that, but it just seems like something that they do every day, and it feels very functional and very loving and very caring (Field Notes, 5/6/12).
The mothers who participated in this study were very humble and often had difficulty taking any sort of credit for their daughters' accomplishments, preferring to give credit to the daughters themselves.

Mother-Daughter Relationships. Latina mothers are the people who teach their daughters how to become women, wives, and mothers, and they can share intense bonds with each other (Perez-Brown, 2003). The women in this study demonstrated their deep bonds with each other through their words and actions. Ana described her ideas about what a mother-daughter relationship should be:

I think a lot of times that relationship of sort of like, “This person can always support you and be there for you because like, she cares about you more than anything else or more than anyone else,” is the way it should be (A. G., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

It is natural for mother-daughter relationships to evolve, as daughters get older and life circumstances change. Margie described how her relationship with Ana has changed:

I think that, hopefully, we’re at a point where we’re – and hopefully we’ve always been, but maybe even more now where we’re very honest with each other in the relationship. And where we both need each other and express that. I mean, she calls me, and I call her a lot (M. R., personal communication, April 29, 2012).

Verbal communication is important in any relationship and yet, a lot can be said about two people when their body language and nonverbal communication is observed. I commented on Ana and Margie’s interactions after the first observation:

Ana and Margie interact very naturally together and it appears that they’ve, over years, built that kind of relationship, which is a very helping relationship and they’re just very calm with each other and there's a lot of smiling and a lot of laughter and it never feels forced. It's just very genuine and they enjoy each other's company and it doesn't feel necessarily like a friendship. It definitely feels like a mother-daughter type of relationship where Margie is kind of the leader in the kitchen or in the household and Ana is definitely an important person in the family setting because she's oldest and has seen a lot of the things that her mom does and so, she's counted on to help a lot and yet, she does it without, you know, with some direction, but without having to be asked and there is no “why do I have to help with this”...it's just expected and part of how the family works together (Field notes, 5/6/12).

As demonstrated by Ana, Latina girls learn to pay careful attention to their female relatives by watching their behaviors and listening to their words (Villenas, 2006). Although Latina mother-daughter relationships exist within the larger family dynamics, they are hugely significant on their own.
Personal Growth

Personal growth emerged as a salient theme throughout the data. The idea of personal growth developed after reading numerous examples of how the mothers and daughters had demonstrated personal growth in their lives. These examples included: (1) participants’ perspectives on their changing educational experiences, (2) participants’ reflections on their identity development, (3) participants’ experiences with resiliency, and (4) participants’ desire to better the world around them. Smaller categories that surfaced within this theme included: appreciation for learning, building resiliency, identity formation, and making a difference.

Appreciation for Learning. For some students, there comes a time when education is not just something that you do, but something that you are. When this happens, a greater appreciation for learning develops and students become active rather than passive participants in their schooling. For many of the participants in this study, their educational experiences took on a deeper meaning during their time in college. Miriam described how her ideas about education changed:

Before I just saw it like a means to an end, but I don't feel like I valued it as much at all. Like at all, at all. I just thought it was something you need to do and now, I just feel like, it's self-rewarding. You learn stuff and it helps you grow as a person, and before, I just thought of it as a means to get to the career I wanted, to get to the lifestyle I wanted. And now, I'm just so happy to be in college and to be learning, and to be taking classes, and for every second, to get homework, and you know, I'm not like happy all the time when I have to study, but you learn so much. It really broadens your mind and I feel like it helps a lot with how you see the world and how you see yourself, and it helps you grow as a person (M. E., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Not only can education lead to self-growth, but many of the Latina students also view their education as an opportunity to teach new ideas to their families. A Latina student’s learning does not happen in isolation—it is shared with the rest of her family. Sarah discussed her views on education and how she involves her family:

I like to learn new things and get new perspectives and be a very well-rounded person, and my views of education, I think, have changed a lot since high school because I was so – I think I was very driven to get into college. I treated education more as a means to an end and now, I think I value learning for how it changes me as a person and all that I get from learning, and the things that I can tell and share with other people, with my family too, to help kind of open their minds and perspectives to new things (S. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).
Latina mothers who have experienced non-traditional educational opportunities, such as studying abroad or living in another country, often have broader views on education. Shortly after college, Margie took advantage of an opportunity to live in Peru, which turned out to be life changing for her in many ways. One of the ways this experience changed her was by causing her to reevaluate her ideas about education and learning, particularly regarding her own children.

Margie reflected on her experience in Peru and discussed her views on education:

> So it was just learning – it was education in so many ways. It was the first time maybe that I heard about peace and justice issues and trying to kind of – it was just education in so many ways. That's why I feel like it's not just school. Even though I would be disappointed – I would be very disappointed if my kids didn't go to college. If they're doing something like they're living – they're doing something that where they're growing then I would understand that as education too. So it's not just college, but it's just everything else (M. R., personal communication, April 29, 2012).

As demonstrated by the women in this study, an appreciation for learning does not always come from traditional settings like the classroom; it can be cultivated from life experiences as well.

**Building Resiliency.** As described by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), “Without the authentic voices of people of color, it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities” (p. 22). Using the Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework in education, many of the Latina students in this study used cultural narratives to demonstrate their experiences with resiliency. Ana described her experiences after returning from studying abroad:

> But personally, I went abroad and I felt completely shaken. I did not feel like I was myself anymore. I think that's what bothered me the most is when my dad was like "You're not yourself." And my dad is actually the one who put the vocabulary word “broken” into the mix. “You're so broken,” I didn't want to be. I think I accepted it for a little while. I think I had tried so hard to make sure everything was ok that when I finally stopped trying, I just admitted defeat and was like I'm just sick. Sick is kind of the word I used, but when he said “broken,” I wasn't completely against it. It's kind of a hard word, but I think the thing I wanted – I just wanted to be normal again. And once I decided that I was still worth going back to school and fighting for it, like I stood and I fought. I found some determination somewhere and I don't know how that happened because I was so tired. I think that sometimes the situation just calls for it and you just have to (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).

In the educational setting, CRT utilizes the method of storytelling as a way to gain knowledge about the effects of race and racism on the experiences of students of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Through their sharing, people of color can describe the reality of their lives and invite the majority group to learn about their experiences by showing them what life is like through the lens
of a person of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Orlinda described her ability to overcome her negative thinking:

I started to hold grudges. I was so angry that I felt like so many others had it easy and I didn't and I was mad, and I was mad that I was excluded. I felt like I wasn't valued or acknowledged by other people, and there was a point in my life where I think I was kind of racist. I was like, “You know what? That person has it all. That white person, that rich white person has it all,” and I got to the point where I was like that, and I had to check myself, and I was like, I just have to work twice as hard and let it be known that, “So what? I'm a woman and I'm poor and my parents didn't go to college, and my parents have no clue what I'm talking about half the time, and it's OK, and I don't have to hate other people because I'm different, and I should just feel good,” but I really had to just check myself because there was a point in my life where I was just so angry and I was like, “That's not OK” (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Cultural narratives also help to lessen the feelings of isolation people of color experience, while providing members of the majority group with an opportunity to develop a better understanding of these feelings and experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Ana shared her experiences as a Latina student and her support system on campus:

For me the way I'm connected to the One Community (a coalition of all of the multicultural organizations on the DU campus) is through my Latina sorority. That's where your friends come from, that's where your support comes from. That's where you have your base. If I wanted to complain about how horrible my teacher was yesterday because “he was racist” or whatever, all of the One Community members already understand that. They're in those classrooms – they all understand that, so it's very supportive. I think that's what keeps Latinos on this campus or any student on this campus is that there's like a subculture. So that's why so many students are joining either an SA (Student Alliance) or they're pledging for a multicultural fraternity or sorority. Not because maybe they ever thought they wanted to be in a sorority because I know I didn't, but it's because that's where your support comes from. That's where your educational support network is (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).

Throughout this study, many of the Latina students used cultural narratives to share their experiences and demonstrate their resiliency.

Identity Formation. One of the most important criteria for participation in this study was being able to identify oneself as “Latina.” For many of the mothers and daughters in this study, culture and family played large roles in the development of their Latina identity. Ana discussed her thoughts about cultural pride:

Holding onto those cultural values, I think, really makes you sort of who you are later because you're acknowledging that difference, but you're acknowledging it as like, a sense of pride, a sense of cultural pride as opposed to feeling like a minority or feeling different or letting anybody else treat you different (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).
Many young Latinas in the U.S. are learning to balance two cultures: the cultural values of their Latina mothers and those values they begin to create for themselves as young women living in America (Perez-Brown, 2003). Margie described her experience of living in another country and how it connected her to her cultural roots:

I started getting interested in just living in a Latin American country so that I could, in a way, find my own roots. Because I grew up so sheltered, very supportive but sheltered, it was the first time, even than in college, that I was kind of on my own and thinking on my own and learning a lot about the Latino culture in a really different community than I was aware of. The experience was, probably the keyest experience in my life of going beyond myself, my neighborhood, my family, to try to broaden my culture. That experience helped me to just feel more like, like a world citizen, but most importantly like a Latino citizen understanding another culture (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

Denner and Guzmán (2006) describe how young Latinas in the U.S. have the opportunity to be transcultural—when an individual identifies with one culture yet also incorporates behaviors from another culture. The transcultural process offers both challenges and opportunities for Latina girls because it allows them to reflect on their cultural values and beliefs as both a Latina and an American. Orlinda discussed her challenges advocating for herself as a Latina:

It's sometimes very difficult to articulate or to, in a polite manner, speak up and speak as the person who has gone through that. I feel like in a lot of my classes, it's like, well, we'll touch the subject and it's like, “How do I tell these people that the people that they're talking about is me?” I'm the person that didn't have water to shower every day. We'd have to share a pot of beans. I'm that person. How do I say, “You know what? What you're saying is wrong and I know because I've been there.” And I feel like a lot of the time, I have not allowed myself to speak up only because at the time, I was so angry and that was not the right time to speak up. Sometimes, I choose not to speak up because I don't want to make it seem like I'm trying to evoke pity, “Oh, she's the poor Mexican or the poor Latina that just wants everyone to know she was poor and she had it rough and she lived next to the projects or whatever,” and another part of me is like, “Well, no, I'm not trying to do that. I'm trying to share what I've been through in a manner to bring light to a subject where a lot of people are wrong” (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Sometimes challenging circumstances can lead to stronger identity development and a greater awareness of how your culture is an integral part of who you are. Ana described how she has learned to appreciate her Latina identity:

And then, also I think my culture gives me a very unique perspective in my classes that I've finally kind of learned how to put to use. And so like, when I'm sitting in a policy class, I'm never sitting in a policy class as just a student. I'm sitting in a policy class as a Latina student because I just hear things differently. I see things differently and I've just accepted that that's sort of my lens (A. G., personal communication, April 19, 2012).
As Latinas navigate two cultures, each with its own traditions and values, they attempt to find a place for themselves in their own individual way (Molinary, 2007).

*Making a Difference.* According to Marlino and Wilson (2006), Latina girls have strong aspirations and life goals for themselves. They desire to attend college and graduate school, and strive to have successful professional careers. Young Latinas also possess a deep desire to give back to their neighborhoods and communities in positive ways. Many of the mothers and daughters in this study expressed a strong desire to make a difference in their communities and to give back to their families. Margie discussed her upbringing and her desire to give back:

And you know for me, we grew up in a really poor neighborhood, but we had a whole family. We had parents – two parents. A lot of people don't have two parents and I always felt like I need to give back. I need to give something. I need to pass what I've been given or what I've been blessed with. We grew up very poor, but again just having two parents can be more complete than growing up with more money and just having one parent (M. R., personal communication, April 29, 2012).

Similar to Margie, Ana also credited her mother for inspiring her humanitarian goals:

I really want to work in a non-profit. I really want to work to help people. I think this is kind of interesting because my aspirations, I think, have a lot to do with my mom. She has worked as a nurse at a non-profit for the entire time she’s been in Colorado. So, twenty years. She loves it and I know that that's her passion, that she loves helping people and I think that she kind of imparted that on me. When I was younger I knew what my mom did as a living, and I volunteered at her clinic once I got old enough. She took on some projects and created some things that made a difference in her work and I think that I want to do that, except go a little farther. Like, definitely make substantial public change (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).

For many of the Latina students, their desire to make a difference hit much closer to home with several of them naming family members as people whose lives they wanted to affect. Sarah discussed her wish to be a role model for her younger family members:

I want to be a big role model to – I have three cousins in particular. I feel like their mother so much because I have such a close connection to them and they're like, fifteen, ten, and seven, and I just want so much for them in their lives, and I want to be able to show them that they can have so much and just kind of show them a different life for themselves, and I guess I just see a lot in them as people, and I know that they can do a lot with their lives if given the right direction (S. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

High-achieving Latino students often express an interest in being role models for their younger family members (Nesman, Barobs-Gahr, & Medrano, 2000). Although some Latina mothers and daughters in this study encountered difficulty in their lives, rather than focusing their efforts on
taking care of themselves or bettering their own lives, their need to give back and make a
difference in others' lives was stronger.

Negative Case Analysis

During the data analysis process, a recurring theme developed, which ran counter to the
developing themes of family involvement and personal growth. Within these themes, family
support and encouragement emerged as primary influences on a daughter’s ability to pursue her
education; however, during the focus group discussions and interviews, both the mothers and
daughters discussed self-motivation as a key factor that influenced their educational attainment.
Because self-motivation did not fit within the parameters of the other themes, it was determined to
be a negative case. Latina mothers described many of their daughters as perfectionists and
overachievers, and Latina daughters gave several examples of being self-motivated at different
points in their lives. Ana discussed her self-confidence and motivation when she started college:

I think when I first started college I didn't have a specific motivation. I just had this
mentality of like I know that I'm amazing. I know that I can accomplish a lot of things. I've
always been a very big go-getter and I know I can handle a lot of schoolwork and I know I
can handle a lot. For me it was – I just want to do it. It was part of my go-getter plan. In
my mind there was no reason that somebody could just not go to college or just not
challenge themselves. That was just my mentality (A. G., personal communication, April
19, 2012).

And several of the Latina students demonstrated self-motivation before they started college.

Orlinda described how she demonstrated her independence in high school:

The other part is that I've always been so independent that I would just do things on my
own. I would be like, "OK, mom, I'm going to go to this club. I'm coming home at this time.
I'll be home at this time." I was always just kind of out there doing my own thing and
taking care of my own activities, and making sure that I was doing what I needed to do to
get into college (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Regardless of the age at which point the Latina students became self-motivated, each one of
them had a personal example of being self-motivated. Some of the Latina mothers even noticed
this trait in their daughters at an early age. Preferring to give credit to her daughter, Margie
downplayed her effects on Ana's learning:

But for the most part, forever, for most of her career, I can't take credit for that. She was
such an eager learner that I didn’t have to do a lot at a certain point. She was just a self-
motivator. She just kind of did her own, she just took it with her, and then I would just find
her support, like take her to the library. Maybe I've motivated her by early on introducing
her to books, introducing her to plays, and introducing her to things. (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

Although self-motivation can possibly be attributed to family influence, I would argue that self-motivation is also a personality trait and that the Latina daughters in this study should be recognized for their drive and determination to continue their education. Orlinda discussed her efforts to motivate herself:

I felt like I pushed myself and I worked hard, and why would I mess things up? Why would I? You kind of – through time, I think that you just develop your own ideas and what you want to do, and why you take things so seriously. I don't feel like my mom was pushy or anything, and I'm a perfectionist, and my mom's like, "Why are you like this? I didn't push you. I didn't mold you into this," but I feel it also depends on what kind of person you are. Some people don't want to do great things in life and they do need that role model, and other people just know that they want to do great things in life (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Many of the Latina students in this study gave examples of self-motivation as a factor that has influenced their ability to do well in school. Although being self-motivated has played a role in allowing them to further their education, several other factors have also affected their ability to succeed, namely their cultural strengths and support from their families.

Summary

Using the qualitative research methods of focus groups, interviews, and observations with Latina participants, the topics of Latino family involvement, educational attainment, mother-daughter relationships, and resiliency were explored in this study. The results from this study yielded relevant data on these topics and additional themes emerged during the data analysis process as well. Family involvement and personal growth emerged as the primary themes of this study. Within these themes, categories of significance also surfaced including: cultural narratives, educational experiences, mother’s role, mother-daughter relationships, appreciation for learning, building resiliency, identity formation, and making a difference.

The qualitative nature of this study and its methods allowed Latina mothers and daughters to share the experiences of their lives, to reflect on those experiences, and to hear the experiences of other Latinas. In an effort to ensure the accuracy of their experiences, all of the participants were given opportunities to review their statements, clarify their thoughts, and change any of their wordings. Although the participants’ personalities and experiences were varied, there
was a common element in all of the mother-daughter relationships—a close bond within the individual mother-daughter pairs. Some of the results from this study were consistent with previous findings in the literature about Latino family involvement and the relationships between Latina mothers and daughters, but some of the findings were surprising, in particular, the idea of self-motivation as a highly influential factor in Latina daughters' educational attainment and Latina participants' strong desire to make a difference in their communities and in the lives of their families. The results from this study are intended to contribute to the growing need for information about the Latino culture and Latino family involvement, and specifically, about the lives of Latina women.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will review the theoretical framework for this study as well as the relevant topics discussed throughout the study. It will also discuss the purpose of this study and review the research questions that guided this study. Implications for Latino families and schools that have Latino populations will be introduced, including how schools can utilize a strengths-based approach to Latino family involvement. The limitations of this study will also be discussed as well as recommendations for areas of future research as related to the findings of this study.

Theoretical Framework and Research Topics

Critical race theory (CRT) was the guiding theoretical framework for this study. CRT discusses the significance of providing people of color with an outlet for sharing their voices, and when people of color are allowed to share their voices, their experiences can be acknowledged and validated as important sources of knowledge (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). The CRT movement led to the development of critical theories for individual ethnic populations, including the development of Latino critical theory (LatCrit) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). LatCrit has brought attention to societal concerns in the Latino community, such as immigration, language rights, refugee status, census categories, legislation aimed at foreigners and immigrants, assimilation practices, and educational practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). According to Fernández (2002), the theoretical frameworks of CRT and LatCrit can provide valuable insight on research conducted with people of color. Both CRT and LatCrit focus on race, gender, class, and sexuality and identify these categories as social constructions that have enduring effects on people of color. These theories provide a framework for researchers to honor the stories and cultural narratives of people of color. During this research process, CRT and LatCrit provided the framework to honor the experiences of the Latina mothers and daughters involved in this study.
In the educational setting, CRT researchers have utilized the method of storytelling as a way to gain knowledge about the effects of race and racism on the experiences of students of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As discussed by Fernández (2002), embedded in CRT and LatCrit is the belief that storytelling and cultural narratives are valuable to people of color. They allow people of color to think about and reflect on their own experiences. Storytelling also allows people of color to share their stories with others. Through their sharing, people of color invite members of the majority group to consider their existing views about minority groups and possibly change them (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Sharing personal stories and experiences can also be empowering and life-changing for people of color (Fernández, 2002). In addition to CRT and LatCrit, Latina feminist pedagogies offer important lessons for school staff who work with Latina students and for policy-makers who advocate for Latina students in the educational setting. In educational research, Latina feminist pedagogies serve a dual purpose: to eliminate cultural deficit models in schools and to offer new alternatives to traditional ideas about education (Elenes et al., 2001). By focusing on the strengths of cultural knowledge and a strong sense of self, Latina feminist pedagogies teach Latina students the tools and strategies to (1) navigate through their lives, (2) defy oppressive practices within their schools, and (3) be successful in their educational endeavors and futures (see also González, 2001). Many of the mothers and daughters in this study embody the practice of Latina feminist pedagogies as the foundation for their positive approach to life.

By listening to the stories of the Latina participants, valuable information was learned about Latina students’ educational experiences and how their relationships with their mothers have affected their lives. Knowledge was also gathered about Latina mothers’ educational support for their daughters and how they teach their daughters cultural values and life lessons. Although only ten Latina women were involved in this study, the similarities of their stories and the knowledge gained from their experiences have contributed to the growing body of research about Latina women. The theories of CRT and LatCrit remind us of our responsibility to listen to the experiences of people of color. The more we listen to the experiences of Latina women, the more we can appreciate their vital history and all they have to offer. Although there are still people in
educational settings who might not give Latina women a voice to represent themselves, it is clear that Latina women of all ages have important information to share about themselves and their culture. It is our responsibility to make sure their voices are heard.

*Family Involvement in Education*

As explained by Pérez Carreón, Drake, and Barton (2005), traditional family involvement approaches have focused on what parents do and how that does or does not coincide with the needs of their child or the goals of the school (see also Lines et al., 2011). In most cases, family involvement is much more than a parent deciding whether to participate in a school-related event. Family involvement can be described as a dynamic and ever-changing process that is affected by a parent’s background and personal history, his/her relationships with the people in the school, the context in which the involvement occurs, the individual needs of his/her children, and the cultural resources of the parent. A parent’s level of involvement can also be affected by his/her education, career, income level, and family life (Lareau, 2000). Almost all parents, regardless of ethnicity or minority status, are concerned about their children’s education and want to take an active role in their children’s academic success (Chavkin & Williams, 1993). The Latina mothers in this study were very concerned about their daughter’s education and took an active role in their daughter’s educational success.

Over the course of this study, I learned a lot about family involvement and what this topic means to Latina women. There are many different ideas about what family involvement means and how it manifests itself in individual families. The idea that family involvement is the same for all families is not realistic. How can one approach to family involvement be appropriate for all? By asking families what involvement means to them, schools can learn from families and work to establish an intentional involvement approach for their schools and communities. School staff can also ask parents about their own childhood experiences with involvement; these responses are particularly important if parents did not have positive school experiences themselves. Schools should also take on the task of reaching out to families, and be their own role models for involvement by asking themselves the question: how can schools be more involved with families instead of families always having to be involved in schools? We need to broaden our ideas of
family involvement and move away from the idea that involvement is only school-based and education-focused. The terms people use to describe “involvement” are not as important as what it actually means and looks like to students, families, and staff in schools.

*Latino Family Involvement*

Although students from all cultures can benefit from their family’s involvement in schools, Latino students are in greater need of family involvement efforts due to their low levels of educational attainment. In the Latino culture, parent involvement is not defined as the number of school events parents attend, but rather, the parents’ ability to positively shape their children’s views on education (López, 2001). As Delgado Gaitan (1994) explains, traditional definitions for family involvement limit the meaning of participation because they do not include types of involvement that go beyond attendance at school events and helping with homework. Latino family involvement is ongoing and occurs over the lifespan of children, even when they are out of school. As the number of Latino students in schools continues to increase, it is important for school personnel to recognize the varied types of involvement within the Latino community as valuable for Latino students. Many of the Latina mothers in this study demonstrated their involvement in ways that school staff might not recognize as involvement. By recognizing existing family involvement efforts within the Latino culture, Latino students will likely see drastic improvements in their overall levels of educational attainment and emotional wellbeing in schools.

Latino family involvement is an important issue for people in the Latino community. Family relationships are important to Latino families and should be honored when working in the Latino community. Cultural narratives are a strong form of Latino family involvement that should also be honored in the Latino culture. All too often, school staff assume that a lack of presence on the Latino parent’s part indicates a lack of involvement; however, all Latino families have strengths and regardless of a parent’s education level, Latino parents still care about education and value its importance for their children. Assuming good intentions can go far in developing relationships with Latino families. Involvement might vary between Latino mothers and fathers, so it is important to ask about the involvement efforts of both parents as well as extended family members. Mothers and fathers are often involved in different ways. How can schools involve all
members of Latino families? Latino parents want the best for their children, but they do not always know how to provide it. School staff can reach out to Latino parents and ask if they would like help. School staff would also benefit from asking Latino students how they see their parents as involved. What types of involvement are important to Latino students? Their answers will help school personnel develop a better understanding of how Latino students want their parents to be involved.

Renewed Purpose of Study

During this study, Latina mothers and daughters were provided with opportunities to share their experiences and ideas about family involvement and other relevant topics. Different from much of the literature on this topic, this study explored the topic of Latino family involvement by considering the relationships between Latina mothers and daughters and how these relationships affect a Latina daughter’s educational attainment and sense of resiliency. As evidenced by the women who participated in this study, cultural narratives are a common pedagogical practice used in the Latino culture that can be viewed as a non-traditional form of family involvement. By introducing cultural narratives as a common form of Latino family involvement, the results of this study have implications for Latino families, schools that work with Latino families, and educational policy.

After hearing the stories of the Latina mothers and daughters in this study, the purpose of the study grew to have greater meaning. The findings from this study are intended to open the eyes of school staff and policy-makers who might have a negative view of Latino families and students. By listening to the experiences of Latino families, the practice of deficit-thinking in schools can be changed to a strengths-based approach—one that recognizes the strengths of Latino students and families. High-achieving, self-confident, and resilient Latina students exist, and each Latina student has the ability to reach their greatest potential. Highly-motivated, hard-working, and loving Latina parents exist, and have the ability to help their children reach their greatest potential. Schools can partner with Latino families to improve the educational attainment and resiliency for all Latino students; it is not a one-sided responsibility. True change that will increase the educational attainment and resiliency for all Latino students will take committed
effort on both sides. Many Latino families are already prepared for this challenge; now schools just have to believe in them.

Research Questions

The following section will provide information about the research questions that guided this study. Each question will be analyzed individually and data will be presented to offer insight about the questions.

Research Question One

The first research question asked: *How does family involvement in schools manifest itself in the Latino culture, specifically in regards to Latina mothers and daughters?* Traditional forms of family involvement focus on “what parents do” to support their children's educational efforts; these types of involvement include: helping with homework, volunteering at their children's school, or attending “back to school” nights (López, 2001). Family involvement is also affected by the resources provided by a parent's education, career, income level, and family life (Lareau, 2000).

In Latino families, mothers play an important role in family involvement. Ana described her mother’s efforts to help her with her schoolwork:

> She also does random things that have been so helpful. I was reading this book in Spanish for class and I was struggling with it because it was a really complicated book and so, she got it for me at the library. I didn't even tell her the name of the book. She must have just seen the book I was reading and she got the English version, and gave it to me. She was like, “This is so you can reference it and make sure you know what's going on,” or I had another Spanish class where I didn't understand the book, and so, she actually read the book a little bit with me and said, “OK, this is sort of what I'm getting from this, maybe this will help so that you can write your paper,” and that's been really helpful (A. G., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

This example shows how family involvement manifests itself in regards to Latina mothers and daughters because Margie showed her involvement through her efforts to help Ana with her schoolwork. Margie paid attention to her daughter’s classes and assignments, and consequently, knew of Ana’s struggles with some of her Spanish classes. She provided her daughter with support by simplifying some of Ana’s academic work, experiencing some of Ana's assignments, and making herself available for discussions about Ana’s assignments.

Cultural narratives and experiential learning are vital aspects of Latino family involvement (López, 2001). Latina mothers can be viewed as the teachers in the family household who play
an important role in passing on the knowledge of the Latino culture to their daughters (Villenas & Moreno, 2001). Ana described her mother’s cultural influence:

I think culture was really important to her growing up in the household, but she was good at teaching different culture. So, we always had the food. We always heard her speaking Spanish. The language was really important too. Pride in your culture and who you are. I think we’ve learned a lot more about our culture and the greatness of it. Traditions are really important too. Religious faith is very cultural. I think for Latino culture, family is a huge value and the value of bettering yourself (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).

I believe this description shows how family involvement manifests itself between Latina mothers and daughters because Ana describes how Margie was highly involved in teaching her about her cultural heritage. By exposing Ana to cultural food, language, and traditions, Margie made purposeful decisions to provide her daughter with these types of experiences.

As described by Espinoza-Herold (2007), the Latina mother is the central figure in the Latino family—the person who unifies the family and is responsible for preserving and maintaining the cultural identity of the family. Many Latina daughters look up to and try to emulate their mothers. Margie recalled the cultural values her mother imparted on her:

So go to school was probably the biggest thing and I don't know in what words but my mom, I mean the words were be good to people. I'm trying to think in what words that was said, but just maybe in the way that they lived their lives, and then definitely for them Catholicism, not just religion but particularly Catholicism. For my mom, just being a good person, being an honest person, being a responsible person if you say you’re going to do something, you do it. Not being a thief, not taking things that aren't yours. Just that if you work hard, I know it's the American Dream but it might not always be true that if you work hard you will somehow succeed, depending on what you measure. And again it was never about having lots of money or the picket fence, but just succeed in having choices and doing something you want to do and being happy (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

This example shows how family involvement manifests itself in the Latino culture because Margie discusses the values her mother taught to her and her siblings. Living her life by example and teaching values to her children were two ways Margie’s mother demonstrated involvement in their lives.

Funds of knowledge are the cultural resources of knowledge found in Latino families (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) describe how funds of knowledge are transmitted to Latino children through an experimental process, whereby the children take an active role in their own learning. They are expected to observe, ask questions, and practice the
behavior of adults. These interactions and the supportive relationships that facilitate them become the foundation for a Latino child’s self-confidence and preparation for adulthood. In my first observation, I noted how Margie’s children helped her in the kitchen:

Ana, Margie, and Rosa were all in the kitchen getting stuff ready and it seemed like a scenario that had happened numerous times, just the ease that they were working together and their communication with each other how they interacted and "hand me this" and "you do that" type of communication and it was just an expectation that Ana and Rosa would be helping Margie and Margie wasn't doing it all by herself. You could tell that was an expectation, and that they were comfortable doing it. And even Rosa who's only twelve was also expected to help and Margie checked on her and made sure that she was doing things in the best way that she could, making sure that she had the tools that she needed and checking to make sure that she was supported; whereas, Ana had a lot more independence with that because she was older (Field notes, 5/6/12).

I believe this observation demonstrates family involvement between Latina mothers and daughters because Margie’s involvement is manifested in her approach to experiential learning. Ana and her siblings are expected to contribute to family responsibilities; however, during these family interactions, the children are provided with modeling, and given feedback and encouragement during the process.

In the Latino culture, parent involvement is not defined as the number of school-related events parents attend, but rather, the parents’ ability to positively shape their children’s outlook on educational attainment (López, 2001). Parents become involved in their children's schooling because they believe in their own self-efficacy to help their children be successful in school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Margie described her experiences advocating for Ana’s educational needs:

I could always tell she was really bright and she needed something more. She was kind of bored in third grade and the teachers in kindergarten, first and second grade, I get this great report like “Ana's amazing.” In third grade the teacher's like “Ana's really kind of challenging,” and I thought, you know, “Challenging?” Then I started to say, “She's probably bored. I think she is bored in the class. What do you have to offer kids who are just really brighter? Are there any other things she can do?” And they really didn't have anything, so that's when we moved her (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

I believe this narrative shows how family involvement manifests itself between Latina mothers and daughters because Margie demonstrated her involvement by advocating for Ana’s educational needs. By having discussions with Ana’s teachers, asking questions, and recognizing her daughter’s strengths, Margie was able to make educational decisions in Ana’s best interest.
Family involvement manifests itself in the Latino culture in many different ways as demonstrated by the women in this study. Help with homework, modeling of cultural behavior, advocating for a child’s educational needs, and instilling cultural values were just a few of the examples of family involvement represented by the Latina mothers and daughters during this study.

Research Question Two

The second research question asked: What is the role of cultural narratives in Latino family involvement practices? Latino parents communicate with their children and express their involvement through cultural narratives (López, 2001). Ana described how her mom used cultural narratives with her:

Story-telling on her part. She’d say, “Ana, you know when I was in college I was working a full-time job and I was doing this and this and this and then I’d crash,” and I think a lot of that experience-relating was important for me (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).

I believe this example demonstrates the role of cultural narratives in Latino family involvement practices because Ana describes the story-telling relationship between her and her mother, and the importance of hearing about her mother’s experiences. Cultural narratives play an important role in Margie’s communication with her children; they help her children learn vicariously through her experiences.

Cultural narratives are a powerful communication strategy for Latino families, allowing parents and children to demonstrate their love and concern for one another by sharing important life experiences with each other (Delgado Gaitan, 1994). Margie discussed the experiences her parents exposed her to as a child:

It wasn't just school. It was the church group, my parents. My dad loved to sing, so he'd volunteer to sing at a few different choirs and I'd be the one he'd always take with him. He knew the rosary, so he went to a lot of funerals. He'd take me with him a lot. And just watching that process – watching moms grieve. It was all educational. In some ways my parents they couldn't talk to us about the politics of whatever was going on in the United States at that time. We got there and a few months later Martin Luther King was shot and they're burning downtown Chicago and it's the late 1960s. They couldn't talk to us about Reagan except they heard he's not a nice guy. So, it wasn't like we were having these deep political discussions, but we were learning anyway just from their experiences and the way that they communicated with us. My parents always talked to us. I think there’s parents who maybe don’t talk. We always had dinner together, so there really is a value
of that. You always have something that you can share with people at that point (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

I believe Margie’s story demonstrates the role of cultural narratives in Latino family involvement practices because Margie learned by being involved in her parents’ activities as well as the discussions they had as a family. This example illustrates the varied types of experiences Latino parents can share with their children and how cultural narratives play a role in teaching life lessons through personal experiences.

Latina mothers use cultural narratives to pass along traditional values, beliefs, and customs in an effort to guide and support their daughters as they grow into young women (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Ana explained how she listens and learns lessons from her mom:

If I show up to some person’s house and they're Latino, there are sort of unwritten rules that they're going to try to feed me or offer me food or take care of me in some way, and that's not something that's ever explained. I mean, sometimes it is. I know my mom would be like, “We have guests coming. We need to make sure the house is clean. I feel so bad because we don't have any food,” or stuff like that. You kind of hear that growing up, but it's not something explicitly said (A. G., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

This explanation demonstrates the role of cultural narratives in Latino family involvement practices because Ana describes how she learned about the cultural practices of Latino families. By observing her mother’s responses to situations in their own home, Ana saw a pattern of behavior that was also consistent in other Latino families. Cultural narratives play a role in helping Latino parents to teach children the appropriate ways to prepare for cultural situations outside of the family home.

Latino parents and other family members utilize stories of challenge and hardship as life lessons for young Latinos, effectively drawing from their cultural capital to support the social-emotional and academic wellbeing of their children (Pérez Carreón et al., 2005). Margie described her approach to parenting her children:

To help them, hopefully, enjoy their kid-hood, the exposure to different things, and I feel like we’ve tried to expose them to different fun things, family things, and issues. We’ve taken them to funerals, to weddings, and have spoken to them about friends who are getting divorced or family members who are getting divorced or their uncle who smokes pot and all that stuff. And then also to help them learn the skills that it will take to be a well-balanced adult. I think most mothers try to do that (M. R., personal communication, April 22, 2012).
I believe this description demonstrates the role of cultural narratives in Latino family involvement practices because Margie exposes her children to a variety of situations and issues, including experiences with hardship. Cultural narratives play a role in helping Latino parents introduce difficult concepts, such as death or divorce, and provide children with a realistic portrayal of life’s experiences.

Many of the women in this study described examples of cultural narratives as common forms of involvement within their families. Mothers shared their life experiences with their daughters as a way of teaching them life lessons. And both mothers and daughters were provided with important life experiences and were taught family values through cultural narratives.

*Research Question Three*

The third research question asked: *How does the mother-daughter relationship affect a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment?* Latina mothers take great pride in teaching their families the values, beliefs, and traditions of the Latino culture (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). On several occasions, Margie discussed how her mother instilled in her the value of school and getting an education. In the example below, she described how her mother prepared her as a five-year-old for the arduous journey to school:

So the first thing is going to first grade at five years old and all I remember was I was really excited because we grew up in this little tiny town with houses really far away. And so walking to school was a long adventure, in fact, my mom had given us a corset if a squirrel ever attacked us along the way because there were a lot of wild squirrels. We were supposed to try to choke it because if it bites you and you just hit it or pull it, it's going to take a chunk with it. I mean she actually had taught us; so if you start choking it, it has to open its mouth to breathe. And then you just keep holding onto it. So anyway, it was sort of an adventure, so she had to prepare us to go and be careful with the river because if the river starts looking like brown water, you could have a flood. So, we had to learn the dangers, like all of the sudden if you start crossing the river and you start seeing changes you need to get out right away because pretty soon a flood is going to come. So here at five years old, I'm learning all this stuff (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

I believe this narrative demonstrates how the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment because Margie relied on her mother’s experience to help her be aware of the dangers on the walk to school. A mother’s relationship with her daughter can be used for instructional purposes to support her daughter’s educational attainment. Without
her mother’s instructions, Margie might not have acquired the skills to get to school and begin the early years of her education.

Through cultural narratives, Latina mothers communicate with their daughters about how to develop educational goals and to strive toward educational attainment (Romo et al., 2006). Margie described her desire for her children to further their education:

As a Latino family, I would have maybe an even harder time if my kids choose not to go to college. Because it's been so hard. My parents worked so hard to get us here and we've made it easier for our kids. There's so much more possibility. It would just be so much more heartbreaking for me if my kids didn't go to school of some kind. Again, I don't need them to be engineers and doctors, but just something where they put themselves through school and have more options in life (M. R., personal communication, April 29, 2012).

This explanation illustrates how the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter's level of educational attainment because Margie discusses how her parents influenced her educational beliefs. Margie recognized her parents’ efforts to better her life and the lives of her siblings; as a result, she places great value on education and educational opportunities for her own children. Because Margie recognizes educational attainment as a way to better one’s life, she is passing this value on to her own children.

Regardless of their own education level, Latina mothers are capable of having profound effects on the educational accomplishments and aspirations of their children (De La Vega, 2007; Espinoza-Herold, 2007; Gándara, 1982). Ana described how her Mom encouraged her learning at an early age:

I’ve always been really good at schoolwork and my Mom was very supportive of that to the point that in second grade, I invented a paper that I had to do. I invented a homework assignment. I just really wanted to do something and I didn’t feel like I was being challenged. So, I invented this assignment and I told my Mom, “Oh, I have to do an essay on…” I think at first, I said sharks and then, I realized it was really hard to find information on sharks, so then I found a National Geographic on tree frogs. I was like, “No, I’m actually doing this assignment on tree frogs. Let’s go.” And she said to me, “Ok, sure, I’ll help you,” and so she looked over my essay, and it was like a four, or like six-page essay or something. To this day I’m not sure if she knows it was a fake assignment. But she was so proud of my “essay” that she showed it off to one of her friends. (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).

This story exemplifies how the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment because Margie supported Ana’s academic interests, despite the additional effort it required. By encouraging Ana’s eagerness to learn, Margie helped to instill a
love for learning in Ana and supported her efforts to challenge herself—two approaches that had positive effects on her level of educational attainment.

Many of the daughters in this study told stories about their moms expressing their enthusiasm for their learning and the positive effects it had on their education. Miriam described how her mom’s enthusiasm keeps her motivated in school:

So, my mom, whenever I learn anything, I’ll call her and I’ll let her know about it, and she’ll sit there and she’ll listen to me, and I think that’s the best thing ever because she’ll just sit there and have conversations with me. Just makes you feel so good that you learned something from class and you can actually apply it to conversation, and she’ll bring in her opinions and what she knows, and we’ll build off of that. I think it’s just amazing that she does that. Cause that just makes me so much more motivated to keep going to class and to keep learning things because I feel like I’m teaching her stuff, but then she’s teaching me stuff too. She’s teaching me her opinion (M. E., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

This narrative demonstrates how the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment because Miriam discusses how her relationship with her mom influences her efforts in the classroom. Miriam is able to have discussions with her mom about topics from class, which makes her motivated to learn and share new information with her mom.

In the Latino culture, education not only includes the ideas of intellectual development and academic learning, but also the idea of personal development (Espinoza-Herold, 2007; Valdés, 1996). Education is a valued expectation that goes beyond academics and excelling in school to include how people behave themselves, how they act with others, and how they support and respect other people (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). Margie discussed her thoughts about education:

For me, education is not just about school. I’ve taken them to plays. I’ve taken them to do volunteer work since they were little. We’ve driven to different states for vacation/learning opportunity. We saved up to take them to Mexico one year and Puerto Rico another year, to get in touch with our family’s roots. We’ve hosted exchange students. Both Ana and Jose have been able to travel, and Rosa will soon too. I really want them to be world citizens (M. R., personal communication, April 29, 2012).

I believe this explanation illustrates how the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment because Margie is a mother who believes in exposing her children to a variety of educational experiences. She has shown her children that there are many ways to attain an education, not just in the traditional sense.
As demonstrated by the Latina participants in this study, Latina mothers play an important role in their children’s lives, particularly in regards to their children’s education. Regardless of their own level of schooling, Latina mothers influence their children’s education by encouraging their children’s learning, expressing enthusiasm for their children’s learning, preparing their children for school and life experiences, and teaching their children that education is more than just academic learning.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question asked: How do cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment? Regardless of the age of their children, Latino families view education as an important value and have high expectations for their children’s educational attainment (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). Parents and other family members send a strong message to Latino children to do well academically and to remain in school, reinforcing these messages often (Romo & Falbo, 1996). Ana described how her father instilled the value of education in her:

Because your priority, and he tells me this all the time, “Your priority is school. Not the clubs you’re in, not the amount of volunteer service hours, your priority is school, so if you can’t do school, the other stuff doesn’t matter. If I need to tell you to drop out of your clubs to do school, then that’s what I’m gonna have to tell you to do.” So, I think that constant reminder of like “That’s my priority. That’s my priority” (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).

This example shows how cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s level of educational attainment because Ana describes how her father raised her to believe that school is a priority. Using cultural narratives in a consistent way throughout a child’s life increases the likelihood that the message parents are trying to convey will get through to their children. In Ana’s case, the cultural narrative of “school is my priority” had a positive effect on her level of educational attainment.

Delgado Bernal (2001) describes pedagogies of the home as strategies of resistance to dispel the negative perceptions people might have about Latina students. Presumed deficits for Latina students—limited English skills, cultural and/or religious traditions, or family-related responsibilities—can actually be viewed as cultural strengths that Latina students bring to their educational experiences. Armed with cultural ways of knowing, Latina students are able to
confront their experiences with sexism, racism, and classism in a powerful and supported way.

Ana discussed how students of color learn to be responsible students:

It's just how a lot of students take that responsibility into his or her own hands because I think if you look at the minority students on this campus, a lot of them are a lot more driven individuals who are balancing more jobs, who are balancing more credit hours. They're worried about their scholarships. So, they're probably not getting in as much trouble and that's definitely because they've seen, from their growing up, that that's what they should be doing, not something that has been told to them, but something that they've learned (A. G., personal communication, April 19, 2012).

I believe this explanation demonstrates how cultural narratives play a role in affecting the educational attainment of students of color. Ana uses minority students as examples of people who take their schooling seriously because of the way they were raised and the lessons they learned from their families.

Cultural narratives shape a young Latina's learning by providing messages and lessons about being a woman, having expectations for yourself, and developing your own ideas (Elenes et al., 2001). Margie described how her parents encouraged her to make her own choices:

My parents never grew up saying you need to be successful in the sense to make lots of money. You need to go to school so you can find something you love to do, not so you can find a great job as a lawyer or as a teacher. It was never about the money it was about having choices (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

This description shows how cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter's level of educational attainment because Margie’s parents used cultural narratives to teach her how education can lead to choices and opportunities in life.

Espinoza-Herold (2007) describes how Latina mothers use cultural narrative discussions to introduce concepts of social justice and equity and to socialize their daughters in ways that help them deal with racism and discrimination (see also De La Vega, 2007). Ana described her parents’ efforts to teach life lessons through storytelling:

They would do that all the time. They'd be like "Look at your cousin or look at your friend. Okay, just think about your friend right now for a second here she didn't do this and she didn't do this and now she's in trouble." So, I think it was like a storytelling type relationship, but I think the top things I learned was self-respect, learning to set boundaries and she didn't do this in the same way, but just achievement and I think achievement for her was mostly her telling me about her own struggles of being from an inner-city school that was having gun fights every day and then going and getting scholarships and stuff. And she has had experiences being told "No, I don't think you're good enough for this because you're Latina or because you speak Spanish," and so, I
think that's why she was like, “No, you're always good enough” (A. G., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

I believe this story shows how cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter's level of educational attainment because Ana's parents used cultural narratives to help her understand what might happen if she did not assert herself academically. Margie, in particular, used personal stories to motivate Ana to achieve and to instill a sense of confidence in her.

As Latino children progress through school, Latino parents and family members play crucial roles in their children's educational attainment by providing emotional support, offering encouragement to help children achieve their educational goals, and serving as valuable resources when children choose academic and career paths (Rivera & Gallimore, 2006). Ana explained how her mom used cultural narratives to provide emotional support:

> When things did start getting hard, especially like in college, she was there to be like, “Okay, yeah I know, I remember feeling super dumb because you know all of these kids, their grandparents had doctorates or whatever and they were talking about Freud and I didn’t know who that was,” so her being like, “Yeah, I’ve been there. It's okay” (A. G., personal communication, April 19, 2012).

This quote demonstrates how cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter's level of educational attainment because Margie used stories about her own personal struggles to help Ana get through difficult situations in school. Using cultural narratives, Margie showed Ana that she can still be successful in school despite the struggles she may encounter.

The Latina mothers and daughters in this study gave several examples of how cultural narratives were used to influence their education in positive ways. They told stories of their mothers providing emotional support and how cultural narratives were told to them to help them deal with difficult life situations. Latina mothers and daughters also explained how their parents taught them to value education and how that value was reinforced often, by way of cultural narratives. Cultural narratives also led many Latinas to make good choices for themselves academically and personally.

**Research Question Five**

The fifth research question asked: *How does the mother-daughter relationship affect a Latina daughter's sense of resiliency?* The mother-daughter relationship is an important
mechanism in identity development for Latina girls (Espín, 1999). For the Latina daughters in this study, their relationships with their mothers often led to positive identity development. Ana discussed how important it was for her mother to believe in her:

But I think it was my mom trying to have faith, like "maybe Ana knows what she's doing. Maybe she does." And I think that like combination of extreme support but also like extreme trust made a huge difference (A. G., personal communication, April 19, 2012).

I believe this example demonstrates that the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency because Margie’s faith in Ana helped to make a powerful difference in her life. The level of faith and trust in their relationship has been a source of strength throughout Ana’s life.

Especially when life becomes challenging, Latina daughters look to their mothers for unconditional support and role models of resiliency. Ana explained how her mom supported her through a difficult time in her life: “So it's been like a really long process, but she was always the first person like, ‘Let's talk about your health. Let's talk about your mental health,’ and being accepting of it” (A. G., personal communication, April 22, 2012). Margie’s willingness to accept Ana, even during her emotional struggles, has helped Ana to move forward and overcome many difficulties in her life. Many of the daughters in this study felt their mother’s love and acceptance throughout their lives. Their positive relationships with their mothers helped them to build a strong sense of self and a solid foundation for their identity development.

Although some mothers viewed themselves as role models regarding their daughter’s development, other mothers described themselves as being very purposeful in their discussions with their daughters. A Latina girl’s main source of information about her family’s rules and expectations comes from spoken and unspoken messages from her mother (Molinary, 2007). Margie described her intentional discussions with her children about resiliency:

Things will happen, but please hang in there, please don’t make that be the dropping point where you just like give up because different things are going to happen in your life. So, I think intentionally I talk to them about that and hopefully some of it sinks in somewhere (M. R., personal communication, April 29, 2012).

This example illustrates how the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency because Margie uses purposeful talks with her children to encourage them to have a
positive attitude toward life. Margie’s positive relationship with her children and her ability to communicate effectively with them allows her to have meaningful discussions with her children.

Being resilient is often a component of healthy social-emotional development. Ana discussed how her mother encouraged her emotional development:

My mom’s always tried to make us feel comfortable with handling our emotions appropriately and talking about them appropriately and I’ve never felt that there was, like I mean, there’s some stuff you can’t tell your mom, but in terms of trauma, my mother has always been very open to talking about it (A. G., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

This story shows how the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency because Ana describes her mother’s ability to talk about emotions and deal with trauma in a supportive and understanding way. Ana’s relationship with her mother and the conversations they share have positively affected her outlook on life.

Young Latinas receive the message that Latina women are powerful and strong in their character, purpose, and spirit (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Margie described how she encourages her daughter to face life challenges:

So I feel like I have to say things about some tough things may happen and I hope that you do your best to move forward. Maybe survive them first of all, and then second, move forward with or without what happened (M. R., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

This quote shows how the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency because Margie has an honest and realistic approach to helping Ana deal with life’s difficulties. Honesty is an important aspect of mother-daughter relationships, and Margie recognizes it as an essential part of her relationship with Ana.

Although each finds her own path, Latinas collectively face life’s challenges with an honor and dignity that highlights their commitment to their family, community, ethnicity, spirituality, and culture (Molinary, 2007). Ana described how her family deals with difficult life situations:

My family really knew how to come together and how to get over a situation. It was okay to cry, it was okay to do whatever happened, like whatever emotions you experienced was fine, but we are all here together and we are still gonna get over it. My family just showed a lot of support and we just had different unfortunate things happen and we just had to get over it. You just have to do it and it’s okay however you do just as long as you’re with your family on it, and I think that that’s helped us because it was a very family effort (A. G., personal communication, April 19, 2012).
This story demonstrates how the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency because Ana describes how her family supports each other during difficult times. Overcoming struggles as a family helps children to value their family members as they practice strategies of resilience together.

In the Latino culture, families have a significant influence on a Latina girl’s ideas about herself and her potential in the future (Ginorio & Huston, 2001). Margie discussed her changing role as a mother and how she encourages her daughter’s independence:

So my role, I think is to still be very supportive because she’s at a difficult time, and it should be supportive forever, I guess, more or less, but now it’s trying to figure out how to best help her, how to best encourage her, but at the same time not do for her because people can get used to that too. You know, not just do it for her. I don’t feel that I’m giving too much, but I am at a point where I feel like sometimes I need to let her do more. She’s able to. She should be able to (M. R., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

I believe this quote demonstrates how the mother-daughter relationship affects a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency because Margie supports her daughter, yet also encourages her to become self-sufficient. With her mother’s encouragement, Ana has developed a strong sense of self because she has been allowed to build resiliency as she works through her difficulties. Many of the Latina mothers in this study demonstrated that resiliency could be taught through discussion and experience-sharing as well as acting as role models for their daughters.

**Research Question Six**

The sixth research question asked: How do cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency? Cultural narratives can be viewed as a collection of resilience strategies that Latino family members use to strengthen bonds and offer support to each other as they encounter problems and perform the daily responsibilities in their lives (Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

Ana explained how her parents, and mother in particular, help her make decisions:

They were really good at helping me find my own answers. Maybe they don’t necessarily want to do it, but I know if I call her and say, “I’m stressed out, I don’t know what to do.” Like if I have a decision to make and I don’t know what’s the right choice, I can talk it out with her and maybe she’ll give me an answer, but a lot of times she just says, “Well, here are the facts, you make your own decision.” I think that giving me the freedom to experiment was a big part of her letting me learn life lessons because obviously if I messed up or something, we’d talk about it later, not like some big discussion, but just like “Okay, Ana that didn’t work out, why do you think it didn’t work out?” (A. G., personal communication, April 19, 2012).
I believe this example demonstrates how cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency because Ana describes how her parents guide her through a decision-making process rather than telling her what to do. Ana also discusses how her mother uses cultural narrative discussions to help her learn from her mistakes and make better choices for herself in the future.

Cultural narratives allow Latina women to view their families as role models of resiliency, hard work, and determination (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Margie described her mother as her positive role model:

She just was a very positive person who just took care of what was needed today. She wasn’t too worried about tomorrow. I don’t know if she was always a positive person, but she was just not a negative person. I never heard her say negative things about anything. “We’ll figure this out. We’ll get through this.” That was just the kind of person she was. And maybe that was her own survival coming out of the country, growing up with twenty-one brothers and sisters. You just kind of do what you can do today and that’s it. We’ll figure it out (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

This story shows how cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency because Margie reflects on the reasons why her mother developed a positive approach to life. By remembering the cultural narratives her mother shared with her, Margie reasoned that her mother developed her resilient qualities as a result of her experiences as a child.

Despite the difficulties that many Latinos face as a result of their life challenges, the strengths of the Latino culture help to foster a sense of resilience among Latinos (Fernández, 2002). Margie described both of her parents as positive role models:

I don’t know if it’s because of the support my parents gave me, but I always feel like I’m a glass half-full person. What’s positive here? What can be rescued here? And that’s what I try to instill in them. Some people just tend to have a more positive outlook and I don’t know why. That might be my parents’ thing because I’m glad that I have that, but I don’t think that I purchased it somewhere. So, either people are born like that or hopefully maybe my parents were like that and maybe I’m passing that on to my kids too (M. R., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

I believe this explanation demonstrates how cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency because Margie believes that her parents used cultural narratives to pass on their positive attitude to her, and she, in turn, is trying to pass on her positive attitude to her children.

Just as Latino adults can benefit from cultural narratives as a form of resiliency, young Latinas can also benefit from this strategy, particularly when their parents and families use
Margie described how she uses her personal experiences to teach her children resiliency:

To share with your kids your experiences and I think I share it because things are going to happen in their life. First of all, I share it because I needed to share it. So maybe that was for me. But things are going to happen in their lives and that’s why I talk to Ana about really difficult things may happen at different points (M. R., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

This quote demonstrates how cultural narratives affect a Latina daughter’s sense of resiliency because Margie talks to her children about her experiences as a way to heal herself and also to model for her children how to heal themselves. The experiences of many of the Latina women in this study demonstrated how cultural narratives are used as a common strategy to develop a sense of resiliency in Latino children.

Implications for Latino Families and Schools

This section will discuss the implications of this study and how Latino families and schools that work with Latino communities can improve their approaches to Latino family involvement. In particular, it will describe the ways in which schools and communities can utilize a strengths-based approach to Latino family involvement, including the ways in which schools can empower Latino families, utilize the strengths of the Latino culture, and respect Latino beliefs and values. As schools develop family involvement programs, they have the choice to focus their involvement efforts on the strengths of families rather than focusing on the deficits or perceived disadvantages of families (Moles, 1993). According to Delgado Gaitan (2004), schools need to recognize Latino families’ cultural strengths and incorporate these strengths into their involvement approaches. Using a strengths-based approach can help schools identify their educational needs, resources, and goals, and plan how to best serve the Latino students and families in their communities. After listening to the experiences of the Latina mothers and daughters in this study, it is clear that these women have a lot of strengths to offer their communities and schools.

Empowering Latino Families

Delgado Gaitan (1991) defines empowerment as a deliberate process that focuses on mutual respect, caring, reflection, and group involvement. Through this process, people determine their own choices and develop their own goals by (1) gaining better access and control
People’s potential is revealed through their actions as they become increasingly more comfortable taking steps on their own behalf. Also embedded in the idea of empowerment is the recognition of people’s responsibility for their own behavior and their willingness to take action to shape their own behaviors.

As Delgado Gaitan (1991) discusses, the empowerment process does not guarantee quick or easy solutions for Latino families and schools; rather, it is a process that provides a forum to make discussions possible. The fundamental premise underlying the empowerment process assumes that families affected by the schools’ programs and policies are the most capable of making choices and decisions toward the resolution of problems. When Latino parents feel empowered, their hopefulness, secure sense of themselves, and goal-driven actions can serve as powerful responses to the negative circumstances and problems they may encounter in their children’s schools (Pérez Carreón et al., 2005).

When schools fail to recognize the cultural knowledge and strengths of their families and students, schools retain their power and families and students become disempowered (Valdés, 1996). As explained by Cartledge and Lo (2006), the role of the school is to empower parents to become active and engaged partners in their children’s schooling. Collaborative relationships between parents and teachers help parents feel empowered and enhance their feelings of self-worth. Not surprisingly, parents who feel empowered are more likely to cooperate with schools and teachers regarding the education of their children. According to Delgado Gaitan (1991), Latino parents can become empowered by being active in their children’s schooling. They can partner with schools to work toward a common goal to educate their children. By maintaining their own power separately from schools and also understanding when to share power with schools, Latino parents can demonstrate their commitment to their children’s education. Through the empowerment process, Latino parents can work with other parents to look beyond their perceived disadvantages and learn to exceed their expectations of themselves. In an effort to work toward parent empowerment, schools can develop policies that support home-school partnerships;
through these partnerships, teachers and Latino parents can work together to be positive influences on children's learning at home and school.

The findings from this study suggest a new approach to empowerment with Latina mothers and daughters. The Latina daughters who felt empowered were self-confident and high achievers. They were also more likely to have cultural pride and a strong Latina identity. Many of the daughters already felt a sense of empowerment before the study began, but many of the Latina mothers became empowered while participating in the study. During the focus group, the mothers answered questions about their daughters, reflecting on their daughters' accomplishments and the role they played in helping them to succeed. As these women listened to each other's stories, many of them developed a newfound sense of confidence and camaraderie. Honored by each other for the positive effects they had on their daughters' lives, many of the Latina mothers became empowered as a result of this supportive group process. Although many of the Latina daughters developed their sense of empowerment from their successful academic experiences (solitary activity), the Latina mothers developed a feeling of empowerment by sharing their experiences with others (group activity). As young women, Latinas are capable of empowering themselves through their own experiences; however, as Latina women get older, it appears that they need other people to help them become empowered and to maintain their sense of empowerment.

With an understanding of strengths-based approaches, school psychologists can help Latina mothers and daughters to feel more empowered in the school setting. School psychologists can include Latina students on teacher-student committees, depending on their age and maturity level, to offer them a voice and help build their advocacy skills. They can also create student leadership groups for Latina students. To help Latina mothers become empowered in the school setting, school psychologists can invite them to be on school committees, in which mothers can showcase their talents and offer their expertise. They can help Latina mothers to feel more confident helping their children do homework and advocating for them at school, including having discussions with Latina mothers about parents being their children's first teachers. Latina
mothers can also be included in parent leadership committees, offering them a voice in school decisions and policy-making procedures.

Encouraging Cultural Narratives

According to Delgado Gaitan (1994), Latino parents utilize cultural narratives as the main method for connecting their families and motivating their children’s educational efforts. Cultural narratives are a powerful communication strategy for Latino families, allowing parents and children to demonstrate their love and concern for one another by sharing important life experiences with each other. Through cultural narratives, Latino parents weave elements of critical thinking and independence into their stories to teach Latino children how to think for themselves. Cultural narratives allow Latino parents to show personal strength, power and commitment to their children's education. They also become valuable advocacy tools for instructing their children in school issues. Through cultural narratives, Latino parents can demonstrate to their children a positive way to use their voice.

The results from this study offer a different perspective about the use of cultural narratives with Latino families, and specifically between Latina mothers and daughters. Many Latina mothers use cultural narratives to have purposeful and meaningful discussions with their daughters. These discussions have positive effects on the long-term educational attainment of Latina daughters. When Latina mothers share their experiences with their daughters, they are also helping to build their daughter’s sense of resiliency. Latina daughters are able to learn from their mothers’ experiences and apply those lessons in their own lives. Latina daughters also learn valuable lessons about how to parent their future children by listening to their mothers use cultural narratives. Although Latina mothers and daughters have different types of relationships and levels of closeness, the majority of mothers use some type of cultural narrative in their discussions with their daughters. Cultural narratives are a powerful way for Latina mothers to teach their children values and life lessons. The use of cultural narratives with Latina daughters is beneficial for their educational attainment and sense of resiliency. Because many Latina mothers already use cultural narratives in their discussions with their children, it is important to encourage this type of communication between Latino parents and children and to acknowledge their efforts.
to improve the lives of their children. With the knowledge obtained from this study, those who work with Latino families will find value in encouraging the use of cultural narratives within Latino families.

In their efforts to build home-school partnerships with Latino families, school psychologists can encourage the use of cultural narratives within Latino families. School psychologists can work to build relationships with Latino families and ask open-ended questions about the communication patterns between parents and children. Through these relationships, school psychologists can affirm Latino parents’ use of cultural narratives, and acknowledge their existing efforts to help their children. Additionally, school psychologists can invite Latino parents to share their experiences with other parents within the school and create a parent support group, in which Latino parents can have discussions about their children. In their collaborative efforts with teachers, school psychologists can inform teachers of the practice and benefits of using cultural narratives in the Latino community. They can also advocate for the use of cultural narratives in student assignments and during classroom discussions. School psychologists can also work with their administration and school leadership teams to create a family/culture appreciation event, in which all families in the school can share food and make arts/crafts that celebrate their cultural heritage.

**Encouraging Latino Voice**

At the heart of critical race theory is the theme of using one’s own voice to declare one’s own reality (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to Dixson and Rousseau (2005), people of color often share common experiences. Finding their voice and sharing their stories can be empowering for people of color, particularly when they are able to share their experiences with racism. Hearing the stories of people of color can inspire others to act on their behalf and to work toward improving their life experiences. In schools, one way to improve the experiences of students of color is to improve relationships between their families and school staff. According to Pérez Carreón et al. (2005), schools can develop effective ways to encourage positive interactions between Latino families and school staff by listening to the ideas of Latino families. As schools develop family involvement programs, they will have more success if they not only
allow Latino families to voice their ideas, but also include the families’ ideas in their programs. Allowing Latino families to have a voice goes a long way in helping to reduce the level of separation that exists between homes and schools.

Although listening to Latino parents’ voices is important, of equal importance is listening to the voices of Latino students themselves. As discussed by Diaz-Greenberg (2003), Latino students can be considered experts regarding their own life experiences and their voices should be heard and acknowledged in school settings. They want their teachers and other school personnel to view them as knowledgeable contributors to their own schooling; this can be accomplished when teachers and other school staff recognize and encourage Latino students' voices rather than ignoring them. Unfortunately, in many educational settings, the voices of Latino students are often silenced; this silencing can be detrimental to Latino students and their schooling. Ana described her experience as a Latina student:

I set some goals for myself and I don't know exactly when I did, sometime when I came back to school. I think I had felt a sense of losing myself in a lot of ways. Because I was always very verbal and active in things and somehow I sort of let classroom environments make me feel like I couldn't be. And I’d just sit in class very angry, but nobody knew or they'd maybe look at me and be like, “I don't know why she's fisting her little hands, but she's not saying anything.” But, I was extremely angry, and I think I was taking that very personally, so I was adding that to my own personal stress. I think now it just makes me feel better to feel like I can say something and have evidence. As opposed to like, “Oh, geez, racist.” Because I didn't want to be that girl either (A. G., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

Diaz-Greenberg (2003) explains how most Latino students want to share their thoughts and feelings with their teachers, in their classrooms, and with each other. Although Latino students want to voice their ideas, many of them do not believe their teachers are willing to listen or are capable of understanding their ideas. For fear of losing control and power in their classrooms, many teachers do not provide Latino students with opportunities to share their voices. By hindering student voice, teachers show Latino students that their voices are unimportant and unappreciated (Diaz-Greenberg, 2003), and when Latino students' voices are not heard, their response to their educational settings, including their ability to cope and demonstrate resilience, is also silenced (Fernández, 2002).
According to Diaz-Greenberg (2003), voice can be described as a person's effort to express his/her innermost thoughts and feelings. It is an essential component in the development of a person's identity and self-esteem. When Latino students are allowed to share their voices in classrooms and other school settings, they begin to experience greater feelings of self-worth, happiness, and confidence, leading to more positive feelings about themselves overall. After being able to share his voice in the classroom, one Latino student from Diaz-Greenberg's study shared his feelings: “I feel that I am important and worth something” (p. 60). Another Latina student from that study shared her recommendations to teachers:

I would recommend to teachers that they make an effort to get to know their students and to allow them to speak about their cultures and those topics that are important to their lives. When a teacher tries to get to know her students and to help them, the students grow emotionally and spiritually and the class, as a group, becomes more united (p. 88).

As discussed by Diaz-Greenberg (2003), when the voices of Latino students are encouraged in classrooms, strong connections are made between fellow Latino students, and also between Latino students and their teachers. Classroom communities are built where norms of listening and nurturing of people's voices are common and highly regarded, and beliefs in Latino students' ability to create meaning and develop knowledge from their own life experiences are accepted and encouraged. Ana described how she learned to embrace her culture:

Once you embrace your culture enough, and say to yourself “This is how I'm going to go about things,” then you no longer feel like that brown person in the room who's being singled out or treated differently. You just take that as, “This is just the lens I'm going to go through my life with,” and so, for me, I think it's been a lot about going back to my roots for a lot of things (A. G., personal communication, April 19, 2012).

Latino students, such as Ana, can learn to embrace their culture in positive ways and use their cultural strengths to enhance their education.

The findings from this study present new ideas about encouraging Latina voice. All of the Latina mothers in this study had important experiences to share and were willing to share them with a person they trusted in a safe, comfortable setting. Although their daughters are in college, many of the Latina mothers still want to have a contact person at the school with whom they feel comfortable talking to about their daughter’s wellbeing or their concerns about the school and its policies. Having this type of contact person was equally important during their daughter’s earlier
stages of schooling. For Latina daughters, sharing their voices as students provides an important perspective in classes where there is little cultural diversity among the students. Many Latina students described being the only one or one of few students of Latino heritage in their college classes. Having a voice of cultural pride and a strong Latina identity helped them to navigate through their educational experiences. By sharing their voice, these Latina students are helping others to gain a better understanding of their experiences. For example, many of the Latina students described feeling stereotyped in their classes because of their name and/or appearance. In light of this information, it is important for professors to pay attention to Latina students (and other students of color) who might feel different among their classmates and encourage them to share their voice. Some positive words from a professor will go a long way to help Latina students feel confident and comfortable enough to share their experiences. Their perspective offers important insight in the classroom and will also help other Latina students feel strong enough to use their voice in the future. Based on the information gathered during this study, people who work with Latino families will find benefit from ensuring that Latino voice is heard.

Because school psychologists communicate with many people in the schools, they can play an important role in helping Latino families find their voice within the school setting. They can work with school administration and leadership teams to offer parent forums, in which Latino parents can have a voice about school issues and decisions. These forums would be conducted in the language of the parents’ choice. School psychologists can also organize parent focus groups, in which Latino parents can come together to talk about relevant school and family topics. These focus groups could be separated into mother and father focus groups, depending on the preference of the families, and occur at times that are convenient for family schedules. To encourage Latina student voice, school psychologists can teach Latina students how to communicate and express themselves using effective communication strategies, such as active listening, rephrasing, summarizing, and asking questions. They can also teach Latina students how to approach difficult issues/topics in respectful, problem-solving ways—life skills that will benefit them in the future. Additionally, Latina students can be invited to participate in adult meetings, in which it would be appropriate to have student voice and representation.
Supporting Latino Family Networks

As discussed by Sheldon (2002), parents’ social networks are significant predictors of parent involvement in schools. As participants in social groups and social networks, parents are often influenced by their interactions and relationships with other parents and adults. Parents who are able to stay connected to other parents can utilize them as resources of information and advice. The connections parents make through their social networks have a strong influence on their involvement in their children’s schooling; whereas, parents without strong ties to social networks are forced to utilize their own educational experience or school-provided information to make educational decisions about their children’s schooling. Parents’ social connections can also be viewed as social capital—an asset believed to enhance children’s education. This type of educational asset has been known to affect children’s education due to its influence on family involvement. Families who have access to this type of social capital are much more likely to be involved in their children’s schooling.

According to Sheldon (2002), schools that want stronger connections with their families should consider connecting isolated parents with involved parents as a way to increase parent involvement at home and school. Many parent involvement programs focus on the relationships between parents and school staff rather than encouraging parent-to-parent communication/contact. A variety of parent involvement approaches, such as creating classroom phone trees, can be utilized to provide important information to families and also to encourage interactions among parents. These approaches lay the foundation for parent networks to develop as parents coordinate their efforts to support their children and their children’s schools. Families who are able to establish social networks with other families and school staff can use these interactions to have a positive influence on their children’s experiences at school (Lareau, 2000).

Involved families are often the best resource for reaching out to uninvolved families in the educational setting. According to Delgado Gaitan (1991), Latino families who are more skillful at navigating the school system can assist less skillful Latino families with becoming more knowledgeable about educational policies and programs. In this way, Latino families can learn from each other’s experiences, and become a support system for each other. When Latino
families share their experiences with each other, educational conditions can improve for all Latino children. As explained by Delgado Gaitan (1992), Latino parents who have established themselves as parent leaders in their children's schools can reach out to less involved parents, especially those who tend to be isolated in the educational setting. Although some Latino parents feel powerless or isolated in their children's schools, they can empower themselves by joining other parents to offer support to each other, to their families, and to improve their communication efforts with schools. By uniting with other parents, Latino parents can work to effect change in their children's schools, not only for their own children and families, but also for themselves.

The results from this study suggest a new approach to supporting Latino family networks. The Latina mothers expressed their wish to have opportunities to get together and talk about their children. They believe it was beneficial to share their experiences with one another. Many of the Latina mothers also had common life experiences and the focus group was able to serve as a one-time support group for the mothers who participated. Regardless of the age or education level of their daughter, the mothers believe it would be helpful to have other mothers to talk to about their parenting experiences. As beneficial as the focus group was for the Latina mothers, the daughters found equal benefit in meeting together as a group. The daughters were able to develop supportive relationships with each other after meeting and listening to their mothers discuss their experiences with the focus group. Both the Latina mothers and daughters were able to build supportive networks from their experiences in the focus groups. For people who work with Latino families, the information gathered from this study can provide them with a valuable strategy for building family networks.

As people in the schools who are trained to build relationships among groups of people, school psychologists can help Latino families establish supportive family networks in the schools. Many Latino parents have strong relationships with school staff and feel connected to the school. By introducing these parents to Latino parents who do not feel as connected to the school, supportive family networks can be created. After Latino parents are introduced to one another, school psychologists can work with the school's administrative team to provide space within the school building for parents to have a communal space to gather. School psychologists can also
match Latino parents with other parents whose children are at different grade levels to help support Latino students at all developmental levels. Another way school psychologists can promote Latino family networks is by connecting parents through student groups. School-based student groups can invite Latino parents to their events and school psychologists can help facilitate parent breakout sessions while students participate in their activities.

Respecting Latino Beliefs and Values

Cultural values, beliefs, and language are deeply ingrained in the Latino culture and are manifested in the daily lives of Latino families (De La Vega, 2007). As discussed by Valdés (1996), although many family involvement programs are developed to benefit Latino students and families, it is often the cultural resources, social networks, and values of Latino families themselves that have the most effect on a Latino child's educational attainment and sense of resiliency. Ana described her ideas about culture:

Your culture is a form – it's like a step-by-step worksheet of how to get things done, of how things work, of how to communicate with people, of how to live your life. Basically, it's kind of like, a how-to guide, and you can choose as a more grown child, maybe a teenager, what parts of the culture that you really value and want to keep, and which parts you don't. I think at least in the beginning, you can start with sort of a handbook on how to handle life and deal with life, and then, it's sort of just the pride of being you, and I think that's really important (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).

Latino parents love and care for their children, and are extremely concerned about their development and future. Despite Latino parents' love, concern, and dedication to their children, many teachers and school staff view Latino parents as failing their children or not understanding how education will better the lives of their children. But, Latino parents often have different beliefs about how their children should better their lives. For many Latino parents, a child's individual achievement at school is not as important as the child developing cultural and family values.

When schools develop family involvement programs that attempt to change the cultural beliefs of Latino families who are already strong and capable, the short-term goal of more family involvement might be attained, but the long-term effects caused by changing family routines and introducing new activities into the Latino family system are often not considered. There are serious consequences to the wellbeing of Latino families and the way they live their lives when schools attempt to change their cultural beliefs and practices. Latino families should not be
persuaded to abandon the cultural traditions and practices they consider appropriate for their children. When Latino families attempt to use American middle-class involvement approaches, it changes the interactions and communication patterns of the entire Latino family, and the meaningful practice of cultural narratives lessens in importance. By encouraging Latino parents to adopt American middle-class parenting strategies, they are asked to forsake their own cultural ideas and beliefs about education and replace them with the educational ideals of American middle-class families. Instead of encouraging Latino families to abandon their cultural beliefs, schools can inquire about and acknowledge the ways Latino families are already involved in their children's education and find ways to include these involvement approaches in the school's family involvement programs (López, 2001). Miriam explained her thoughts about family involvement:

How they portray it in schools is that your parents always have to be there and they always have to help you with homework and stuff, and I think that's like, completely different because my parents both of them didn't graduate from high school. They can't really help me with homework and both of them work a lot. They can't really go to a lot of school things, but I always felt supported by them and it was always them just telling me, "Do whatever makes you happy," and I think that's like the biggest support you can have, and it's not really the parents pushing you to do it. It's them giving you the room for you to explore yourself and have your own life and I think it should change because they put this mindset into kids that your parents have to be there and if they're not there, then they're horrible parents. Because as a younger kid, I always understood my parents have other commitments that they have to do. They have work. They don't know this. They can't really help me. English is their second language. They can't really help me with my homework. I have to find other ways to do it, but they were always there supporting me. They were always there and I feel sort of bad because they would always be like, "I'm sorry, I can't help you with your homework" or "I'm sorry, I can't go," and I don't think they should feel that way at all because they've always supported me (M. E., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

According to Valdés (1996), when family involvement programs are developed with Latino families in mind, they must be implemented with understanding, appreciation, and respect for the values and beliefs of Latino families. Cultural diversity has been an ongoing topic of discussion in schools and the Latino culture's diverse set of beliefs, values, and traditions act as proof that cultural diversity can enrich and strengthen schools. Rather than encouraging Latino families to assimilate to American cultural values, it is arguable that American culture would benefit from changing its beliefs to include the perspectives, values, and practices of other cultures. Ana discussed how she maintains the culture of her family:
You have to make a conscious effort thinking about where you’re coming from because when you’re in the classroom and you’re hearing everybody’s opinions, you can start thinking that way, and then you come home, and your parents are like, “But this is how it really is,” and then, you’re like, refreshed about, “OK, this is where I’m supposed to be standing.” I don’t want to distance myself from my culture. I don’t want to distance myself from my family and I feel that that happens sometimes as kids go to college and hear different things, and then maybe you start creating some distances (A. G., personal communication, April 22, 2012).

For many Latino families, it is possible to participate in American culture without giving up the values, traditions, and strengths of their Latino culture. By keeping the “best of both worlds,” Latino families can adjust to American culture “at their own pace and in their own way” (p. 205). When schools attempt to understand and appreciate the cultural practices of Latino families, they begin the process of developing effective family involvement programs for all Latinos (Ramírez, 2004).

The findings from this study suggest a stronger approach to honoring the strengths and beliefs of Latino families. The Latina mothers and daughters in this study are proof that all Latino families have strengths, values, and beliefs that are important to them. And there is tremendous value in asking how Latina mothers were raised because many Latino values are passed down from one generation to the next. Learning about the lives of Latina women sheds light on their childhood experiences and provides a better understanding of why certain values and beliefs hold such importance to Latino families. For many Latina mothers, teaching their children the Spanish language was considered a vital aspect of passing on the Latino culture. And many of the Latina mothers viewed their main role in their families as the person who teaches their children cultural values and life lessons. Using the knowledge acquired from this study, people who work with Latino families will find great benefit in asking questions about Latino parents’ upbringing.

As people in the schools who recognize the value of family, school psychologists can do a lot to help their schools respect the strengths, values, and beliefs of Latino families. School psychologists can ask Latino parents about their cultural beliefs and values, and encourage them to talk about these beliefs with their children. Latino parents can be invited to come to school and share a cultural tradition in their child’s classroom, such as a cooking demonstration or craft project. If the Spanish language is spoken in their family, school psychologists can ensure Latino
families that it is beneficial to speak multiple languages with their children. They can also ask Latino students about their family traditions and routines, and encourage them to share those experiences with their teachers and classmates. School psychologists can share their own cultural experiences and family traditions, and be role models for students as people who take pride in their culture and feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Even when the beliefs of Latino families conflict with school rules or policies, school psychologists can still find ways to respect their beliefs and be supportive to them in schools.

Schools’ Outreach Efforts

Schools need to reach out differently to Latino families and do whatever it takes to make them partners in the pursuit of Latino student achievement (Delgado Gaitan, 2004). According to Trumbull et al. (2001), Latino parents will partner with school staff when they are approached in a welcoming manner that matches their cultural beliefs. Latino families value personal relationships between people and prefer face-to-face contact when communicating rather than impersonal forms of contact, such as the telephone, email or written notes. Personal forms of contact such as home visits provide parents with opportunities to ask questions about their children’s schooling in a comfortable, familiar setting and give educators a better understanding of a child’s home life, including information about the child’s strengths and interests (Moles, 1993). Margie discussed her ideas about home visits and empowering parents:

So that’s where maybe schools can be more supportive in helping those parents early on getting kids. You know, maybe it’s hard, I know because they try to get parents to school, and it’s hard, but maybe even calling parents at home, or doing home visits saying, “You know, your kid is struggling a little bit, when is he going to sleep? These are important things. You know there is research.” And I think those parents would maybe be more accepting to say, “Oh, I need to try to get my kid in bed at 10:30. Yeah, I tell him to go to sleep, but he doesn’t want to.” Then, well, “Did you know that you’re the parent? It’s okay to say, ‘It’s time to go to bed, period.” (M. R., personal communication, April 29, 2012).

One way schools can support and invest in Latino families is to acknowledge the ways Latino parents are already involved in their children’s education and find ways to include these involvement efforts in their family involvement programs (López, 2001). Margie discussed how schools can reinforce Latino parents’ efforts:

So there could be a lot more support in teaching of parents so that more kids finish school too. So I think, helping parents recognize that, “Did you know that you are being
supportive when you’re making them go to bed early? Did you know you’re being
supportive when you’re saying, ‘No, you got to eat breakfast before you leave the house?
No, you can’t call your friends. Did you know that you’re very involved in it?’ Because
they may not feel that they are involved (M. R., personal communication, April 29, 2012).

Validating Latino parents’ efforts to be involved in their children’s lives will likely have positive
effects on their willingness to increase their involvement and their self-efficacy as parents.

The results from this study offer new ways for school staff to reach out to Latino families
in schools. It is important to recognize the strengths of each Latino family and assume good
intentions on the family’s part unless they demonstrate otherwise. Despite the educational
background or time they have lived in the U.S., Latina mothers have important information to
share about their families. The majority of Latina mothers want to be included and informed about
their child’s education regardless of their own education level. Even when Latina parents cannot
help with their children’s homework or advocate for their children with their teachers, Latina
students want school staff to know that their parents might not be involved in the traditional
sense, but they are involved emotionally and that type of support is often more valuable to them.
With this knowledge, people who work with Latino families can expand their outreach ideas to
include acknowledging what Latino families are already doing to support their children.

As people with useful knowledge about building relationships in schools, school
psychologists can help to promote positive outreach efforts toward Latino families. They can
model a personal approach to communication with Latino families. Personal phone calls to
parents and discussions before and after school will be more helpful for building relationships with
Latino families rather than notes sent home or messages through email. Positive phone calls, in
which school staff takes the time to let Latino parents know about something positive regarding
their child can also help to establish relationships with Latino families. In cases where school staff
and Latino parents do not speak the same language, school staff can still convey a friendly and
welcoming attitude through their nonverbal communication and gestures. School psychologists
can also participate in home visits to Latino families, in which the emphasis is on building
relationships with families and discussing the parents’ hopes and dreams for their children rather
than focusing solely on academics.
Encouraging Self-Motivation

Despite the difficulties they might encounter, many young Latinas demonstrate strength, determination, a positive outlook on life, and a desire to better their lives (Gallegos-Castillo, 2006). Self-motivation emerged as a prominent theme during the study and many of the Latina daughters viewed it as an essential factor in their educational attainment. Orlinda described her efforts to better her life:

I always kind of felt like the more that I pushed myself, the more that I would gain because I knew at a very young age that the life that I had was not where I wanted to be, and I wanted to be somewhere different and that meant working hard (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012).

Although the support of family members was also important to Latina daughters, their experiences with self-motivation demonstrated the significance of encouraging this trait in Latina students. Miriam described her level of determination and self-motivation: “I think that I’m really self-motivated. If I set my mind to something, I’ll find like, any way to do it. No matter what, I’ll get it done” (M. E., personal communication, March 30, 2012). As discussed by Nesman, Barobs-Gahr, and Medrano (2000), three factors were found to be important for the educational achievement of Latino students: (1) personal motivation to achieve, (2) avoidance of negative peers, and (3) involvement in activities outside of school. Self-motivation served as the primary foundation for a Latino student’s academic success. Self-motivated students showed interest in school, paid attention in their classes, and completed their schoolwork. As part of their motivation, these students desired to make their families proud and believed it was their obligation to succeed academically because of their deep sense of responsibility to their parents and families. Successful Latino students possessed a strong sense of responsibility, self esteem, and pride in their Latino culture. Because of their level of commitment to their families, high-achieving Latino students desired to be positive reflections on their families. If schools can find ways to increase Latina students’ level of self-motivation, there will likely be an equal increase in their level of educational attainment as well.

The findings from this study offer new ideas about building self-motivation in Latina students. All of the Latina students described themselves as being self-motivated and their self-
motivation was an important aspect of their educational attainment. The Latina daughters described having strong relationships with their mothers, which led to increased self-confidence and a desire to better oneself. Although some Latino parents might worry that their children's desire to better themselves will cause them to drift away from their families, most Latino children who are raised with strong cultural and family values recognize that the ability to better oneself is a direct result of their family's support. A strong relationship with their mothers and their mothers' emotional support increased the overall level of self-motivation for the Latina daughters in this study, indicating that a Latina student's level of self-motivation will increase as a result of a positive mother-daughter relationship.

For school psychologists who work with Latina students, there are many ways to help increase their levels of self-motivation at school. School psychologists can provide Latina students with a supportive person they can talk to at school. They can also find opportunities to increase Latina students' self esteem through girls' groups or individual counseling. In the classroom, school psychologists can encourage Latina students to make home-to-school connections by talking to them about their families and culture, and encouraging them to share these experiences in their classrooms. School psychologists can also ask Latina students about their mothers' level of involvement and help them to acknowledge those efforts as supportive of their education. Because self-motivation is highly influenced by a Latina daughter's relationship with her mother, school psychologists can encourage Latina mothers to talk to their daughters, explaining how important their emotional support is to their daughter's educational attainment.

Limitations of the Study

This section will discuss the limitations encountered during the research process and will present ideas for areas of future research with regard to those limitations.

Language

As discussed by Madriz (1998), an important factor in lessening the distance between researchers and participants is the language spoken during research studies. Conducting focus group sessions in the preferred language of the participants can help facilitate interactions among participants and improve the researcher's ability to lead a successful focus group. Several of the
Latina mothers in this study speak Spanish fluently, and for three of the mothers, Spanish is their first language. Although they felt comfortable speaking English during the focus group, I wondered how this study would have been different had I been able to speak Spanish fluently. I commented on this aspect of my study in my field notes:

I think that my lack of Spanish skills has prevented me from getting some good information from students and their mothers. I couldn’t use certain students because their mothers didn’t speak English very well and unfortunately, that’s an aspect of my study that has prevented me from getting some good information. I still think that I will get good information, but I think it would have been even more helpful and beneficial had I not been limited by my language skills (Field notes, 4/5/12).

At the beginning of my study, I knew that my language skills were going to limit me from being able to choose from a variety of Latina mothers and daughters as participants. During the recruitment process, there were several Latina daughters who wanted to participate, but were not able to because they stated that their mothers did not speak English well enough to participate in the focus group. Although I believe this study yielded significant findings with the Latina participants who were involved, it is likely that a study with Spanish-speaking participants would have resulted in a different overall cultural feel and possibly different findings.

**Research Sample**

One of the limitations of this study was the size of the sample and the age of the participants. Although I was able to get five participants for each focus group, it is likely that the focus group discussions would have produced different types of information if more participants were involved in the discussion. Additionally, it would have been interesting to observe the mother-daughter relationship with younger daughter participants. I came to this realization after spending time with Margie and her twelve-year-old daughter and observing the differences between her relationship with Ana and her relationship with her younger daughter. Although including younger participants would have yielded a different type of data, I would have likely needed to do more observations with younger participants in order to acquire accurate data about their interactions and relationships with their mothers. Younger participants might not be as able to think abstractly and reflect on their relationships with their mothers because of their stage of development.
cognitive development; whereas, the Latina daughters who did participate were able to reflect on their relationships with their mothers due to their higher stage of cognitive development.

Mother-Daughter Interactions

Due to the choice of methods used during this study, it was difficult to observe interactions and communication patterns between all of the Latina mothers and daughters. Although I was able to conduct observations with one mother-daughter pair, it was necessary to rely on the remaining participants’ reports of their interactions and communication patterns with each other. Observations of all of the participants would have yielded a different, yet useful type of data about Latina mother-daughter interactions and communication patterns; however, it would also have necessitated prolonged engagement with each mother-daughter pair to ensure that their behaviors were natural and that they felt comfortable in my presence.

Recommendations for Future Research

This section will provide recommendations for areas of future research in light of the findings from this study. Three possible areas for future research regarding Latino family involvement that emerged from this study are (1) father’s involvement, (2) single-parent families, and (3) family perspective.

Father’s Involvement

Latina mothers are often viewed as the central figure in Latino families, but Latino fathers play an important role in their families’ lives as well. Although this study focused on the relationships between Latina mothers and daughters, many of the participants in this study discussed their father’s involvement in their lives as well. Margie described her father’s level of involvement:

So, he was very involved. He’d be the one to get up early, make us breakfast and send us off to school. Every morning, he’d get some French bread, ham and cheese and then, he’d make us little ham and cheese sandwiches and I remember he’d make us hot chocolate (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

Margie also described how her father influenced her level of self-esteem:

My father was very expressive, just always saying we’re the smartest girls in the world. He would tell me and my sister, “Well, I have the smartest kids in the world. I know you’re not just the smartest in Chicago, you’re the smartest in the world.” So, that’s why we
didn’t know that we couldn’t do anything because we were always told we could (M. R., personal communication, April 15, 2012).

Ana described how her father expresses his care and shows his involvement to his family:

I think, obviously, like he said it to us, but there was just expectations whether it was taking care of the household you live, like help your Mom with this or even just, you know he showed that he was really involved and he really cared. When we came out of something, my Dad would give us kind of constructive criticism and positive things to say, like really investing in us as people and helping us to go farther (A. G., personal communication, April 12, 2012).

Future research might consider the relationships between Latina daughters and their fathers, and how the father-daughter bond might affect a Latina daughter’s educational attainment and sense of resiliency. Information from this type of research could lead to more effective involvement approaches that focus on fathers’ involvement.

Single-Parent Families

Latino families include all types of families—extended families, two-parent families, and single-parent families. Some of the Latinas mothers in this study were single parents at some point in their daughter’s lives. During the course of the study, all of the Latina mothers were part of two-parent families and many of the Latina daughters talked about their “parents’ involvement,” not just their mother’s involvement. Future research might consider the differences between two-parent and single-parent families and their varying levels of involvement. It is likely that single-parent families have greater stressors that may affect their level of family involvement. Research with single-parent Latino families could provide information about how to best support these types of families in schools.

Family Perspective

As schools move away from traditional parent involvement approaches, and move toward collaboration efforts and home-school partnerships, all members of the family need to be considered in the schools’ involvement approaches (Lines et al., 2011). Because individual family members have different strengths and needs, family involvement approaches should be varied and culturally appropriate, particularly when working with Latino families. Due to the close bond amongst Latino family members, family interactions and involvement within a Latino family are not limited to isolated incidents between one parent and one child. Although individual parent-
child interactions are common, a large portion of time in Latino families is spent as a whole group. Future research might consider Latino family involvement from the whole family perspective, including both parents, all of the siblings, and extended family members as well. Although this type of research would likely be intensive and time-consuming, the findings could yield significant information about Latino family dynamics and involvement differences based on family members’ developmental levels. This type of research could also shed light on the strengths of Latino families and provide information for schools about utilizing those strengths.

Conclusion

During this study, Latina mothers and daughters shared their ideas and experiences regarding the topics of family involvement, cultural narratives, educational attainment, resiliency, and mother-daughter relationships. It is important to take into consideration the ways in which family involvement, educational attainment, and resiliency are defined and understood by Latina mothers and daughters themselves (Ginorio & Huston, 2001). Although some of the Latina mothers in this study were not able to be involved in the traditional sense, such as helping with homework or attending school functions, not one of the Latina daughters ever felt like her mother was not involved. In fact, many daughters felt as if their mothers were involved in more meaningful ways as explained by Orlinda: “She was definitely always there in a different way, and I think in a better way, I would say because within the way that she was there for me, she taught me a lot” (O. R., personal communication, March 30, 2012). All of the Latina mothers showed their involvement in ways that were meaningful to their daughters, and many of them used cultural narratives to teach their daughters family values and life lessons.

School personnel and those who create educational policy need to consider the ways in which Latino families are involved in their children’s lives and recognize those efforts. By acknowledging the involvement efforts of Latino families, relationships can become stronger between Latino families and schools. Once relationships are established, school personnel can offer suggestions as to how Latino families can continue to support their children’s education. As demonstrated by the mothers in this study, Latino parents are not opposed to hearing suggestions about ways to help their children’s learning. When they are treated with respect and
their efforts are acknowledged, Latino families will be far more likely to listen to ideas from school personnel. And as more schools begin the difficult work of building authentic family-school partnerships, strengths-based approaches to family involvement are even more imperative.

Latina mothers and daughters in this study shared their experiences with one another and also discussed strategies to influence family involvement practices in their schools and communities. By listening to the voices of Latina mothers and daughters, we can develop new knowledge, levels of understanding, and approaches to family involvement within the Latino culture that will benefit many Latino students and families as well as the educators who work with them. Latino families have many cultural strengths, and school personnel can utilize these strengths to benefit all students and families in schools.
References


Nesman, T. M., Barobs-Gahr, B., & Medrano, L. (2000). *They are our kids: Findings from the Latino dropout study*. Tampa, FL: The Latino Coalition, University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, and the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County.


Appendix A

Participant Information Form
Participant Information Form

Name: __________________________________________ Date: ________________

Name I prefer to be called: ________________________________________________

Home Address: __________________________________________________________

Work Address: __________________________________________________________

Home phone: __________________________ Work phone: ______________________

Cell phone: __________________________ Work email: _________________________

Email: ____________________________ Work email: _________________________

Best days to contact you: _________________________________________________

Best times to contact you: _________________________________________________

Please do not call on these days: __________________________________________

Please do not call during these times: ______________________________________

I speak English: _______________ I speak Spanish: _________________________

I speak both English and Spanish: ________________________________________

I agree with the following statement:

"I am a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin."

Yes __________________________ No __________________________

Age group: 17 and younger _______ 18-25 _______ 26-35 ____________

36-45 _______ 46-55 _______ 56-65 _______ 66-75 ____________

Level of education completed: Elementary to middle school ____________

High School _______ Community college _______ Vocational school ____________

University or college ____________ Graduate school ____________
Appendix B

Informed Consent Letter – Focus Group
Dear Participant:

My name is Ana Rodriguez and I am a graduate student working toward my doctorate in Child, Family, and School Psychology in the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study involving Latina mothers and daughters titled: “Latino Family Involvement – An Exploratory Study of Latina Mother-Daughter Relationships and their Effects on Educational Attainment and Resiliency.” I am conducting this research to learn about family involvement in the Latino culture, in particular how family involvement is expressed through the relationships between Latina mothers and daughters. This research is also being conducted as part of my degree requirements for graduate school.

This research study will involve focus groups, interviews, and observations with Latina mothers and daughters. You will be invited to participate in one focus group that will last approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours. During the focus group sessions, Latina mothers and daughters will be separated into individual focus groups and you will be asked to discuss your experiences with family involvement, your relationship with your mother/daughter, and your thoughts and feelings about education and resiliency in a group interview setting. You may also be invited to participate in follow-up interviews and direct observations after the completion of the focus groups.

All of the focus group and interview sessions will be tape-recorded and transcribed for data collection purposes, and notes will be taken during the observation sessions. You may be asked to check focus group transcripts as well as my interpretations of the data. If a person other than myself transcribes the audiotapes, this person will be asked to sign a form ensuring confidentiality of the transcribed information. Transcriptions will be coded with a participant number as a way to protect participants’ identities and pseudonyms (fake names) of your choice will be used to represent your responses during this study. Any identifying information about participants will be kept separately from the transcripts. At times, it may be necessary to quote your words directly if it is perceived to add strength to the study, but pseudonyms will still be used for direct quotes. All transcripts, audiotapes, and participant information will remain in my physical possession and be stored in a locked area in my home. Arrangements will be made to ensure that your responses are kept confidential, and only my dissertation chairperson and myself will have access to this information. Although absolute confidentiality cannot be ensured during focus group sessions due to the presence of other participants, a statement will be made at the beginning of each focus group reminding participants to respect each other’s privacy and confidentiality and asking participants not to talk about other participants or to repeat things discussed during focus group sessions. If you are more comfortable using a pseudonym during focus group sessions, you will be allowed to do so.

Because participation in this study will require you to discuss family involvement and relationships between mothers and daughters, there is a possibility that you may feel discomfort or emotionally distressed during or after this study. Steps will be taken to minimize these risks during your participation in this study. If necessary, a list of counseling resources will be made available to you at any point during the study. Although there are potential risks to participating in this study, there are also potential benefits to your participation. As part of a focus group, you might feel a sense of connectedness to other Latina women who may share similar life experiences. You also might develop a better sense of awareness about yourself, your family, and your relationship with your mother/daughter. During this study, you might also feel a sense of contribution to the entire Latino community as you share your personal experiences about family involvement, education, resiliency, and relationships between mothers and daughters.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you have the right to drop out of the study at any time and there will be no negative consequences if you choose to leave the study. You also have the right to request that any information you provide not
be included in the study; therefore, you have the right to review any information you provide and to approve that it be included in the study before the study is finished. You have the right to privacy and the right to request that your identity remain confidential and not be revealed during the study.

Information collected during this study will be used to complete my doctoral dissertation. It may also be used during presentations and future research, including published articles. As a valued participant, you will be compensated for your participation in this study. You will be allowed to choose your form of compensation. Compensation choices include: (1) $20 gift certificates/cards to local stores or restaurants, (2) an educational presentation conducted by myself for your community group or family, or (3) a college visit to the University of Denver for you and your family members. If you do not want to be compensated for your participation, you have the right to refuse compensation. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will be compensated for the time you have participated, but not after you withdraw from the study.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research study or your rights as a research participant, please contact me at (303) 337-2594 or my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Cynthia Hazel at (303) 871-2961. I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this consent letter and for your consideration to be a participant in this study.

Sincerely,

Ana Rodriguez
Doctoral Student – Child, Family and School Psychology, Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver
(303) 337-2594
ARod6r@yahoo.com
I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the research study titled: “Latino Family Involvement – An Exploratory Study of Latina Mother-Daughter Relationships and their Effects on Educational Attainment and Resiliency.” I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form. I understand that there are two exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. If information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena.

________________________________________  _______________________
Signature                                      Date

_____ I agree to be audiotaped.

_____ I do not agree to be audiotaped.

________________________________________  _______________________
Name                                            Date

This study was approved by the University of Denver’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research on 6/14/2011. If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the research sessions, please contact Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at (303) 871-4531, or you may email du-irb@du.edu, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs or call (303) 871-4050 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.
Appendix C

Informed Consent Letter – Interview
Dear Participant:

My name is Ana Rodriguez and I am a graduate student working toward my doctorate in Child, Family, and School Psychology in the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study involving Latina mothers and daughters titled: “Latino Family Involvement – An Exploratory Study of Latina Mother-Daughter Relationships and their Effects on Educational Attainment and Resiliency.” I am conducting this research to learn about family involvement in the Latino culture, in particular how family involvement is expressed through the relationships between Latina mothers and daughters. This research is also being conducted as part of my degree requirements for graduate school.

This research study will involve focus groups, interviews, and observations with Latina mothers and daughters. You will be invited to participate in interviews and direct observations after the completion of the focus groups. The interviewing process will consist of three separate interviews over a three-week time frame. During the first interview, you will be asked to discuss your life history regarding family involvement, education, resiliency, and your relationship with your mother/daughter. For the second interview, you will be asked to describe your current experiences with family involvement, education, resiliency, and your current relationship with your mother/daughter. During the third interview, you will be asked to reflect on the meaning of your experiences with family involvement, education, resiliency, and the meaning of your relationship with your mother/daughter. For the observation process, the Latina mother and daughter who participated in the interviews will be observed together on three individual days for 1½ to 2 hours during family interactions as determined by myself in collaboration with the Latina mother and daughter participants.

All of the focus group and interview sessions will be tape-recorded and transcribed for data collection purposes, and notes will be taken during the observation sessions. You may be asked to check focus group and interview transcripts as well as my interpretations of the data. Arrangements will be made to ensure that your responses are kept confidential, and only my dissertation chairperson and myself will have access to this information. If a person other than myself transcribes the audiotapes, this person will be asked to sign a form ensuring confidentiality of the transcribed information. Transcriptions will be coded with a participant number as a way to protect participants’ identities and pseudonyms (fake names) of your choice will be used to represent your responses during this study. Any identifying information about participants will be kept separately from the transcripts. At times, it may be necessary to quote your words directly if it is perceived to add strength to the study, but pseudonyms will still be used for direct quotes. All transcripts, audiotapes, and participant information will remain in my physical possession and be stored in a locked area in my home.

Because participation in this study will require you to discuss family involvement and relationships between mothers and daughters, there is a possibility that you may feel discomfort or emotionally distressed during or after this study. Steps will be taken to minimize these risks during your participation in this study. If necessary, a list of counseling resources will be made available to you at any point during the study. Although there are potential risks to participating in this study, there are also potential benefits to your participation. As part of a focus group, you might feel a sense of connectedness to other Latina women who may share similar life experiences. You also might develop a better sense of awareness about yourself, your family, and your relationship with your mother/daughter. During this study, you might also feel a sense of contribution to the entire Latino community as you share your personal experiences about family involvement, education, and relationships between mothers and daughters.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you have the right to drop out of the study at any time and there will be no negative consequences if you
choose to leave the study. You also have the right to request that any information you provide not be included in the study; therefore, you have the right to review any information you provide and to approve that it be included in the study before the study is finished. You have the right to privacy and the right to request that your identity remain confidential and not be revealed during the study.

Information collected during this study will be used to complete my doctoral dissertation. It may also be used during presentations and future research, including published articles. As a valued participant, you will be compensated for your participation in this study. You will be allowed to choose your form of compensation. Compensation choices include: (1) $20 gift certificates/cards to local stores or restaurants, (2) an educational presentation conducted by myself for your community group or family, or (3) a college visit to the University of Denver for you and your family members. If you do not want to be compensated for your participation, you have the right to refuse compensation. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will be compensated for the time you have participated, but not after you withdraw from the study.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research study or your rights as a research participant, please contact me at (303) 337-2594 or my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Cynthia Hazel at (303) 871-2961. I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this consent letter and for your consideration to be a participant in this study.

Sincerely,

Ana Rodriguez
Doctoral Student – Child, Family and School Psychology, Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver
(303) 337-2594
ARod6r@yahoo.com
I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the research study titled: “Latino Family Involvement – An Exploratory Study of Latina Mother-Daughter Relationships and their Effects on Educational Attainment and Resiliency.” I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form. I understand that there are two exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. If information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena.

________________________________________       ________________________
Signature                                                                 Date

_____ I agree to be audiotaped.

_____ I do not agree to be audiotaped.

________________________________________       ________________________
Name                                                                 Date

This study was approved by the University of Denver’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research on 6/14/2011. If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the research sessions, please contact Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at (303) 871-4531, or you may email du-irb@du.edu, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs or call (303) 871-4050 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.
Appendix D

Focus Group Questions – Mothers
Focus Group Questions for Latina Mothers

1. Tell us who you are, how many children you have, and something you would like us to know about your daughter—one thing she does that makes you smile.

2. How do you communicate with your daughter as an adult compared to how you communicated with her as a child? What have you found to be the best way to communicate with your daughter?

3. Tell us about your relationship with your daughter. What do you value most about this relationship?

4. Describe what family involvement means to you.

5. Tell us about your ideas about education. How do you show your involvement in your daughter’s education?

6. What are the most important lessons and values you would like your daughter to learn in her life? What was your role and how did/do you teach those lessons and values?

7. What are your hopes and aspirations for your daughter? How did/do you encourage your daughter’s hopes and aspirations?

8. Of all the questions we discussed today, which question is most important to you? Why?

9. How well does that summarize what we talked about today?

10. Is there anything we should have talked about today but didn't?
Appendix E

Focus Group Questions – Daughters
Focus Group Questions for Latina Daughters

1. Tell us who you are, how many people are in your family, and something you would like us to know about your mother—one thing she does that makes you smile.

2. How do you communicate with your mother as an adult compared to how you communicated with her as a child? What have you found to be the best way to communicate with her?

3. Tell us about your relationship with your mother. What do you value most about this relationship?

4. Describe what family involvement means to you.

5. Tell us about your ideas about education. How does your mother show her involvement in your education?

6. What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations for your life? How did your mother encourage your hopes, dreams, and aspirations?

7. What are the most important lessons and values you have learned in your life? What was your mother’s role in teaching you those lessons and values?

8. Of all the topics we discussed today, which question is most important to you? Why?

9. How well does that summarize what we talked about today?

10. Is there anything we should have talked about today but didn't?
In-depth Phenomenological Interview Questions – Latina Mother

**Interview One** (life history):
1. Describe yourself as a child and teenager, including your strengths and positive qualities.
   a. How were these strengths and positive qualities encouraged in you?
   b. What does resiliency mean to you? How have you experienced resiliency in your life?
2. Describe your family experiences as a child and a teenager.
   a. What are your favorite memories of your family when you were a child and teenager?
   b. What did family involvement look like in your family?
3. Describe your cultural experiences as a child and a teenager.
4. Describe your educational experiences starting with your earliest school experience to your highest level of education.
   a. What factors influenced your educational attainment?
5. Describe your relationship with your daughter when she was a child and teenager.
   a. What cultural values and life lessons did you try to teach your daughter when she was young? How did you teach them?

**Interview Two** (current experience):
1. Describe your current experiences and interactions with your family members.
   a. What aspects of your family are important to you?
   b. What aspects of your culture are important to you?
2. Describe your current strengths and positive personal qualities.
   a. How are these strengths and positive qualities manifested in your life?
   b. What are your current life experiences with resiliency? Have your experiences with resiliency influenced your daughter in any way? If so, how?
3. Describe your current relationship with your daughter.
   a. How has your relationship changed now that she is an adult?
   b. Currently, how do you view your role as her mother?
4. Describe your role and involvement in your daughter’s education.
   a. How important is it that your daughter pursues an education?
   b. How do you motivate her to pursue an education?

**Interview Three** (reflection on meaning of experience):
1. What role does family play in a child’s life?
   a. What roles do mothers play in their children’s lives?
   b. How has your family influenced your life?
2. What role does culture play in a child’s life?
   a. How has your culture influenced your life?
3. How have your strengths and positive personal qualities influenced your life?
   a. Based on your own resiliency experiences, how can mothers develop a sense of resiliency in their children?
4. How has your relationship with your daughter affected your life?
   a. What do you value most about this relationship?
5. What is the importance of attaining an education?
   a. How have your educational experiences affected your life?
Appendix G

Interview Questions – Daughters
In-depth Phenomenological Interview Questions – Latina Daughter

Interview One (life history):
1. Describe your favorite memories of your family when you were a child and a teenager.
   a. How did your family demonstrate their involvement to you?
2. Describe your relationship with your mother when you were a child and teenager.
   a. What life lessons did your mother teach you? How did she teach them?
3. Describe your cultural experiences when you were a child and teenager.
   a. How much did your culture play a role in your life as a child and teenager?
   b. What cultural values did your mother teach you? How did she teach them?
4. Describe your most important educational experiences starting with your earliest school experience to your highest level of education.
   a. Why were these experiences considered "your most important" experiences?
   b. What factors influenced your educational attainment?
5. Describe yourself as a child and teenager, including your strengths and positive qualities.
   a. How were these strengths and positive qualities encouraged in you?
   b. What does resiliency mean to you? How have you experienced resiliency in your life?

Interview Two (current experience):
1. Describe your current experiences and interactions with your family members.
   a. What aspects of your family are important to you?
   b. What aspects of your culture are important to you?
2. Describe your current relationship with your mother.
   a. How has your relationship changed now that you are an adult?
3. Describe your current school/educational experiences.
   a. What factors motivate you to continue to pursue your education?
   b. How does your culture intertwine with your educational experiences?
4. Describe your current strengths and positive personal qualities.
   a. Please give examples of how these strengths and positive qualities are manifested in your life.
   b. How do you use your strengths to help you deal with difficulties or hardships?

Interview Three (reflection on meaning of experience):
1. How have your family and culture influenced your life?
   a. How has your culture influenced your life?
   b. What role does family play in a child’s life?
   c. What role does culture play in a child’s life?
2. How has your relationship with your mother affected your life?
   a. What do you value most about this relationship?
   b. What role do mothers play in their children’s lives?
3. How have your educational experiences affected your life?
   a. What is the importance of attaining an education?
4. How have your strengths and positive personal qualities influenced your life?
   a. How do children develop their strengths?
   b. What factors have influenced your sense of resiliency?
Appendix H

Observation Guidelines
Observation Guidelines
(Darlington & Scott, 2002; Ely et al., 1991; Rossman & Rallis, 2003)

Stage 1: Preparation Stage – planning and organizing observations.
1. Determine best place and time for observation of research topics (to be determined after discussions with participants).
2. Identify appropriate length of time for observations (approximately one hour and a half).
3. Identify unobtrusive observation instruments (small tape recorder to record thoughts, feelings, and interpretations, but not in the presence of participants).
4. Develop an organized system for note-taking. Find a way to distinguish what is seen and heard in the observation setting and the thoughts and feelings that occur inside the researcher.
5. Explain the researcher’s observation role and boundaries to participants.

Stage 2: Broad focus stage – observe and write about as much as possible.
1. Start with one task or question at a time.
2. Determine the best place to position yourself to observe what is happening as unobtrusively as possible.
3. Utilize a running record (the data about the research) – document as much detail as possible about the physical setting, and the behaviors, experiences and interactions among the participants in the setting.
   a. Describe participant’s gestures, facial expressions, and non-verbal communication patterns.
4. Include observer comments (the data about the process and yourself as the researcher) – ongoing commentary on the running record, including emotional reactions to events, insights and interpretations, questions about meaning, and thoughts about modification of the design, when necessary.
5. Differentiate between actual observations and assumptions or biases.
6. Differentiate between direct quotes, paraphrasing, and general recollections.
7. Keep a tape recorder on hand, and if necessary, leave the observation setting to find a quiet place to preserve thoughts, feelings, and interpretations on tape.

Stage 3: Writing stage – write field notes as complete field logs for data analysis.
1. Logs should be written as soon as possible after the observations, but no longer than 24 hours after observations are completed because memory weakens as soon as the observation ends.
2. Use line numbering in the log. Line numbering allows researchers to cross-check their data, which is particularly important during data analysis.
3. Include thick descriptions with details, emotions, and social relationship structures.
4. Include tables, checklists, diagrams, and drawings to create data out of what is seen and heard.