2
Fostering Latino Parent Involvement in the Schools: Practices and Partnerships

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Remember the days of class "room mother"? Long before there was research on parent involvement, I was convinced that learning was a family and school partnership. Both of my parents spoke limited English and neither had formal schooling in Mexico. But that didn't stop my mother from showing up with armloads of cupcakes for our classroom on Fridays when she was "room mother". Although she didn't speak much English when we immigrated, she was a strong and visible influence both in my school and home life. It mattered to me that my mother held high expectations for my sisters and me to succeed in school because I knew that I had to try my best. She got involved in whatever way she could and she wanted to hear good reports about me from my teachers.

Later when I became a teacher, the notion of involving parents in the school made even more sense. I met my students in their homes with their families, two weeks before school began. I knew that if I enlisted parental support for the educational program and included them in the classroom as much as possible, the children would understand that the teacher and parents worked together for their benefit.

As a school principal, I made the community coordinator a key person in the school's operation. Our effort was to make the school the center of the community. It was a difficult partnership to build, but as the graffiti and vandalism decreased significantly after only one year, we knew the effort was worth it.

Parent involvement is a rich resource, a tool, much like a book that informs us and moves children forward in their schooling (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004: 15). Educators that work collaboratively with Latino parents find that students perform better academically. Regardless of family size, socioeconomic level, or parental level of education, parents are capable of learning how to participate in their children's education. It is important that schools reach out to Latino parents.

2.1. Latino Presence in the U.S.

For Latinos in the U.S., parent involvement needs to move more to the center of the school curriculum in order to enhance students' educational opportunities. Before we elaborate on effective parent involvement strategies, we need to have a general profile of Latinos in the US. The Latino population represents many nationalities.

The major groups include Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban groups, with those of Mexican heritage comprising 67% (U.S. Census, 2004). The next largest subgroup is Puerto Ricans, followed by Cubans, immigrants from Central America, South America, Dominican Republic, and Spain. In 2004, Latinos comprised 39.9 million, or over 13%, of the total population of the United States (U.S. Census, 2004). Contrary to the public perception that all Latinos are immigrants or undocumented workers, fewer than 10% fit into that category. Furthermore, the total Latino population is projected to increase to nearly 67 million by the year 2050 (U.S. Census, 2004).

Geographically, Latinos reside in every state across the country, from Florida to Alaska to Hawaii. However, about two-thirds are concentrated in the southwestern US, including Arizona, California, Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado, and in Florida. The US Census Bureau (2004) reports that between 1999 and 2000, the California Latino population increased 37%. In Arkansas, the Latino population grew 196%, Georgia 233% and North Carolina, 274%. Latinos in these states work in the chicken processing, furniture manufacturing, and pig farming industries. Schools face tremendous problems as a result of the increasing Latino population. Many states, including Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and New York also report significant Latino population growth.

2.2. Latinos at Work

Latino workers in the US are well represented in the lower ranks of the labor force, but they also occupy prominent positions in a variety of professions across the US. For example, the number of Hispanic judges, architects, physicians and surgeons, professors, business executives, governors, athletes, university presidents, scientists, attorneys, legislators, and media workers total 120,750 professionals (Pew Hispanic Center, 2003). Latinos are Rhodes Scholars and Nobel laureates, including Adolfo Perez Esquivel (peace prize), Gabriel Garcia Marquez (literature prize), Luis W. Alvarez (physics prize), Octavio Paz (literature prize), Rigoberta Menchu (peace prize), and Mario Molina (chemistry prize).

Although Latinos have their share of Nobel laureates, scholars, professionals, and celebrities, the big picture still looks dismal for the many poor families. In 2003, Latinos, overall, comprised the principal source of new workers to the U.S. economy. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that more than 500,000 Latino workers are employed below their potential level. This is a result of the economic slowdown, a shortfall equivalent to 3.5% of the Latino workforce.

Although Latinos share a strong work ethic, roughly 20% of the Latino population is living in poverty (U.S. Census, 2004). Latinos who immigrate to the US arrive with high hopes of expanding educational opportunities for their children, which can lead to economic betterment. But often, they remain trapped in entry-level jobs without the possibility for advancing. This is where education is pivotal in breaking the cycle of poverty for the younger generation (Lopez, 2002).

2.3. Education Status

The link between educational attainment and employment is clear. On average, someone without a high school degree will earn $18,900 a year, compared with $25,900 for those who complete high school (U.S. Census, 2004). People with a bachelor's degree earn $45,400, and with a master's degree, $54,500. Less than 25% of Latinos are enrolled in a 4-year college and Latinos represent only 5% of graduate students (National Council of La Raza, 2004). Generally, by the time Latino students reach 17 years of age, they have the literacy and math skills of 13-year-old white students. While many complete college and graduate school, a large percentage of Latino students have difficulty completing high school and getting into college. In some communities, as many as 40% of Latino students drop out of school, making parent involvement critical to the educational process throughout the students' academic life (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002).

Latinos have a particular relationship to schooling in the US. Throughout the history of education, Latinos have encountered prejudice and lack of access to educational resources because of their low-income status and linguistic differences. This is especially true for Mexicans in segregated schools where children were punished for speaking Spanish. In the 1960s, those schools were disbanded in response to the Civil Rights movement and the Bilingual Education Act. Today some schools still fail to provide textbooks for students until months after school begins in the fall. Practices like this further set Latino students behind white middle class students. All the while, Latino parents are blamed for the students' underachievement (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004).

For the most part, Latino adults view education as a vehicle to move their children out of the poverty that plagued them. The desire for their children to have a better life accounts for the sacrifices that parents make for their children (Trueba, 1999). Although parents from poor communities value education, they often lack the knowledge on how to access educational resources to support their children's schooling (Lareau, 2003).

Poverty exacerbates stress in the family. Latino children who live in impoverished conditions have fewer resources than those available to families with higher incomes. The lack of financial, social, and political resources also results in health problems caused by poor nutrition and inferior or nonexistent health care. This, in turn, can negatively impact children's school attendance. In extreme

cases, inadequate housing and homelessness interfere with children's schooling because of frequent moving from place to place or insufficient space in the house to make schoolwork a priority (Sleeter, 2003).

Recognizing that poverty by itself does not produce underachievement, we must acknowledge that social conditions can interfere with children's motivation and opportunity to learn. Numerous factors hinder educational attainment of Latino students, including: (1) low societal expectations for Latino youth and children, (2) lack of early childhood education opportunities, (3) lack of resources in schools, (4) poorly trained teachers, and (5) limited parental and community engagement and choices (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2003). The President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans makes numerous recommendations including: (1) setting higher expectations for Latino students, (2) improving teacher preparation teachers to meet the needs of Latino students, (3) challenging post-secondary institutions to graduate 10% more Latino Americans each year, and (4) Increasing accountability and coordination of federal programs. All of these recommendations necessitate strong parent involvement; the schools must connect and communicate with Latino families in an on-going, sustained process.

Reaching out to Latino communities is a matter of building trust as a platform for creating sustained collaborations with parents. Latino families need to know that educators are interested in meeting their needs and are respectful of their language and cultural differences (Aspiazu, Bauer, & Spillett, 1998; Decker & Decker, 2003; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001). Latino parents who have little contact with educators may feel self-conscious and limited in their ability to discuss schooling in terms unfamiliar to them. Therefore, whether the contact is personal in the home, at school, or by phone, educators need to be conscious of the parents' lack of knowledge about the educational system. However, parents do know something about the most important topic at hand: their child. Regardless of culture, educational attainment, and socioeconomic standing, all families have strengths. Thus, educators need to make the parents feel at ease and win their trust in order to engage them in a continuous collaboration. Partnerships that begins the first day of school and lasts until the student graduates from high school, promise academic success for students.

2.4. Preparing for College

Many issues reside under the rubric of parent involvement and family-school partnerships. Getting Latinos to college is one aspect of family-school partnership that deserves close attention. Underemployment and low educational attainment in the Latino community remain high because many Latino students fail to attend college. It is a concern that needs to be addressed long before the application is submitted to the college of choice. How Latinos in professional positions attained college is often a story of hardships and inspiration.

As important as those stories are, they are not the focus of this paper. Instead, the remainder of this chapter will focus on the systematic preparation necessary to get young Latino boys and girls into college, especially as it relates to parent involvement. It's the one part of the story of Latinos in education rarely told. For that reason, I emphasize parent involvement from the perspective of families that participated in a program for socializing young Latina students for college.

Although both Latino and Latina students are underrepresented in the university system, Latinas fare even worse than Latino males. 71% of Latina girls in some school districts do not graduate from high school. The long journey to college begins in the elementary school years and steadily gains importance through high school. Schools, as well as family life, play a central role in socializing students to college. Family influence is often absent in undereducated Latino families. Latino girls in traditional families are often not encouraged to pursue education because parents have heard that it's costly. Thus, just getting through high school is sometimes the "best" they think they can do (Andrade, 1982; Asher, 1984; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Flemming, 1982; Gonzalez, 1995; Johnston, Markle & Harshbarger, 1986). The problem is that without a high school diploma or college degree, these young people are relegated to low-income employment thereafter.

As dismal as the statistics are for Latino male and female students in gaining admission to college, there is hope. In this chapter, I focus on the socialization process necessary for getting young Latinos into college, with parent involvement as a critical component. I discuss the findings of a 4-year northern California study—a Mother/Daughter Program (M/D). The M/D Program was a proactive and constructive effort addressing the vast challenges and rewards of academic achievement of young Latina girls and their mothers. They learned about attending college and preparing for professional careers.

There is a significant difference between students who just "get by" in school–those who may graduate from high school but not attend college, and students who "get ahead." Students who just "get by" tend to come from families that may be poor and want their children to succeed in school but lack the knowledge to access the educational resources to support their children. Students who "get ahead" tend to come from families who continuously stress high grades, are involved in school activities, and discuss options for colleges and careers (Gonzalez, 1995). The key difference is the "know how", which some parents possess more than others. And it's that cultural knowledge or "know how" that Latino parents gain through participation that develops parent potential and skills.

2.5. The Mother/Daughter Program

The Mother/Daughter Program (M/D) was the context in which I studied 20 girls whose parents were immigrants from Central American countries and Mexico. Before describing the findings of the Mother/Daughter Program, I want to clarify

one point, which I will repeat toward the end of the chapter: the Mother/Daughter Program involved only girls because the funding sources made that specification because of the educational need; that is, statistics show that Latina girls trail the boys in college attendance. But boys, just as much as the girls, can benefit from programs such as the M/D if the program is designed to include boys. Here, I describe the M/D program as it involved the girls and their mothers. Later in the chapter, I present the programmatic features that need to be considered by schools in preparing both Latino girls and boys for college.

The program operated on the premise that mothers exert a powerful influence on their children's decision-making (Andrade, 1982; Gonzalez, 1995) and that getting Latina girls to graduate from high school and enter college requires a systematic partnership between the schools, the families, and the university. The M/D program has been a successful model of such a partnership in four states: Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas (Tomatzky, Cutler & Lee, 2002). The M/D Program has operated on a national level since 1985. It began in El Paso, Texas and subsequently was adapted by Tempe, Arizona, Albuquerque, New Mexico and San Mateo, California. The programs in the various states differ according to the number of participants, duration of program, and specific activities. All of these programs have major goals and general operational practices in common. My study, however, involved only the program in San Mateo County in northern California.

Using the knowledge of educational development and the understanding of traditional Latino family dynamics as a guide, the national M/D model and the M/D Program in San Mateo were designed around three innovative components: (1) to provide the daughters with academic support towards meeting specific academic goals, (2) to educate mothers and daughters about getting the girls to college, and (3) to socialize the mother/daughter teams to college through field trip experience.

The first-year participants in the Texas program illustrate the M/D Program's success. The girls began the program in the 5th grade and were juniors at the time of the study, which showed the following results:

- 98% of the girls were still enrolled in school;
- 62% of the girls were enrolled in advanced college-preparation classes;
- 27% of the girls were enrolled in honors classes;
- 76% of the first year and 62% of the second year girls were above average in their academic achievement;

The M/D Program extended to various cities across the country. Committed administrators and local universities have initiated the Program in local school districts. Interested school districts assess their needs and seek funding to initiate M/D Programs. An administrative system is organized to manage the program in the schools. At a school level, the administrator designates a teacher to work with students in academic tutoring at school and conducts classes for them on study skills.

The San Mateo program began in the 5th grade and added one grade level in each of the four subsequent years through the 8th grade. Teachers submitted names of girls who were in academic peril, who were from low-income families, and whose parents had low educational attainment.

2.6. Mother/Daughter Program Activities

Through the M/D Program, parents participated in well-designed activities to acquire the necessary skills and expertise to exercise parental commitment in their children's education. This is the expected outcome in effective parent involvement processes. The Mother/Daughter Program organized activities for the girls and their mothers around four broad themes: (1) building girls' self-esteem; (2) orienting the girls to higher education and professional careers; (3) improving the quality of preparation for higher education; and (4) increasing Latino parental commitment. The knowledge shared collectively among participants in the M/D Program not only empowered the mother and daughter participants, but school personnel also recognized the fruits of their work as Latino parents became informed. As a consequence, Latino students also became better informed and more independent learners and more interested in their schooling in general.

School activities focused on developing the girls' academic readiness by introducing them to computers. And through presentations, the schools helped the girls and their mothers to focus on their personal identities as individuals, members of Latino families, and members of American society. The M/D Program provided ongoing counseling and mentoring through high school and college. Girls were encouraged and supported academically to complete high school and apply for college. Program activities were also designed to acquaint mothers with careers, especially non-traditional careers, for women in math and science.

The Leadership Conference was an important component of the Mother-Daughter Program. The girls developed a wide variety of service projects for their community. For example, one or more students, in order to improve schools attendance, might organize a school attendance campaign involving students, parents, faculty, staff, and community members. The M/D Program's Leadership Conference provided participants the opportunity to develop leadership skills in planning, budgeting, organizing, negotiating, and risk taking. In the process, the girls gained confidence and increased self-esteem.

On Career Day, outstanding Latino professional women from the community went to the university campus and spoke to the Mother-Daughter participants about the importance of education and strategies for educational success. "Career Day" activities involved development of Latino students' knowledge and choices of careers. Students and parents received information about the educational track to follow for their desired career. Mothers became more effective role models for their daughters. They increased their awareness and use of community resources

to develop positive self-esteem and confidence. They learned about the possible postsecondary options available to their daughters.

Tutoring in math and reading was an on-going academic activity provided by college student volunteers who came from the local community and state colleges. They were role models and mentors who inspired learning and retention in school, teaching the girls to budget time, obtain resources, and learn to discipline themselves. Computer classes for students and parents increased family interactions.

The significance of programs such as M/S is that they support cultural change in the home and the community. In immigrant families, cultural knowledge about schooling is incomplete due to low schooling of the parents and lack of awareness of available resources for their children's education in the US. Through M/D type programs, change in one family member means change in the family dynamics. The extended effect of the program benefits other family members. Mothers, like Mrs. Segura, describe how her husband and younger children have benefited from participation in the M/D Program.

Before I began participating in the Mother/Daughter program, my husband wouldn't let me leave the house for anything having to do with the schools. I had about 10 years of schooling in Mexico before leaving there, but then I got here and got married. Then I had my two daughters and there never seemed to be enough time to get an education here. So, when our children began school and the teachers sent notices about meetings, my husband wouldn't let me attend. He said that it wasn't important, and it was a waste of my time. I wanted to go just to see what it was all about, but I was afraid to go by myself since I didn't know anyone. Then my girls got older and fortunately, they were good students.

Then when our youngest daughter, Monica, was in the 5th grade, I received a notice that she was being selected to participate in the M/D Program. It sounded so interesting and I lied to my husband the first few times that I went to the Saturday meetings to meet with other moms and the director. Well, finally I got the nerve to tell him where I was really going on Saturdays. He still said it was a waste of time. But I didn't object to my attending because I convinced him that it was very important that I be there to learn as much as possible about ways to help Monica. By then, he was beginning to see that this daughter needed more direction and support than our oldest daughter, who was very disciplined. I think that's why he didn't object as much.

As the program continued and Monica entered middle school, I learned more and more at the M/D Program. I learned how to discipline her at home and how to advise her about schoolwork. I got information on how to seek the help she needed in middle school, both academically and in her social adjustment.

Now that she's in high school, her challenges are many. But if I wasn't involved in the M/D Saturday group with other Latina mothers, learning how to advocate for her, she wouldn't be doing as well as she's doing. My husband does not say anything against me attending meetings or school functions anymore. Although he doesn't attend meetings with me, he has seen the positive results with both of our daughters. And his way of supporting is by remaining quiet. [Translated from Spanish.]

Mrs. Segura, like other mothers, learned that when one family member grows, other members also learn. In Latino families, the ties are strong and the woman's role holds a great deal of authority in reference to children's schooling. Men

commonly relegate the responsibility to women. So, in the absence of school programs like the M/D Program, Latina women miss out on social networks with other women and school personnel where they can obtain critical knowledge.

Volunteering in the community helps develop student awareness of their environment and their place in the community they live in. In the personal identity workshops in San Mateo, students met with counselors to discuss and write about their cultural and gender identity. Students worked with sponsoring teachers, district coordinators, and program staff members to identify, plan, and carry out selected community projects. They presented their projects at the scheduled annual Leadership Conference. Its purpose was the development of leadership skills that come from firsthand involvement in leadership activities in their respective school and community. They are skills that help the girls to become productive members of the community with a responsibility to improve the community's quality of life.

Community activities introduced the participants to the many resources around them. The girls and their mothers visited various community sites, including the medical center, city hall, historic missions, the public library, and the museum of art. They attended theater performances, or participated in a health fair for women, taking place in the community. All of these experiences broadened the participants' development as individuals and community members and as future leaders within their community.

2.7. The University's Role

The San Mateo M/D Program forged a partnership with a Santa Clara University, which sponsored four key on-campus activities during the year: (1) Campus Open House and Tour; (2) Career Day; (3) Leadership Conference; and (4) Summer Camp at the university campus. The Campus Open House Tour was the first visit to a university campus for the mother and daughter participants. Experience with the Latina Mentor Program indicates that the visit to the university is the participants' favorite part of the program. The girls also spent 2 days on campus, giving them a well-rounded view and appreciation of campus life.

2.8. Changing the Vision

Cultural literacy about preparation for college involved parental reflection about their own opportunities for learning. Increasing Latino mothers' confidence and knowledge about their daughters' academic career, meant a journey to the mothers' personal and cultural history. The mothers participated in a personal literacy activity that the Director, Dr. Contreras, called "Mother Stories". This became a significant, empowering, cultural literacy activity for the mothers and daughters.

For three of the four years, in the mothers' story sharing activity, mothers met monthly to discuss topics related to mother-daughter relationships. The literacy process was a three-hour session divided into four-parts: (a) reflecting about a specific topic, decided by the parents and the coordinator; (b) writing; (c) reading their written text to the group; and (d) sharing and discussing. Collectively, the women created a safe environment to think and express themselves. The process was intended to break the cycle of isolation for these mothers, who may feel distant from others when it comes to raising their daughters. Isolation typically breeds fear, intimidation, and non-participation. However, engagement allows for connection with the adults to their own history, culture, family, and others in their community, enabling them to feel more empowered. Initially, specific topics were selected for the mothers, but as the M/D Program moved along, the participants were asked to suggest topics that they believed were relevant to their particular experience.

Mothers met in a local community library and cultural center on Saturdays for 2 hours with the M/D Program coordinator to discuss, write, and share their personal stories on topics. They included: (a) important parts of parents' own childhood relative to school; (b) values, which parents most want to impress on their children; (c) developing their own confidence socially and academically; (d) influencing their children's peer groups; (e) finding their children's life-interest; (f) spending time with their children; and (g) discipline, and setting limits for their children.

Each literacy assignment was designed to have the mothers express their own childhood experience on the topic and their efforts to deal with their own role as mothers. In the literacy activities, mothers increased their awareness of issues and values about which they needed to speak with their daughters as they guided them through schooling. Their stories contained critical elements that are known to be of great influence in shaping young girls' attitudes, awareness, and direction in their schooling and career choices. The personal characteristics present in their stories are intelligence, determination, and faith.

Intelligence is too often confused with attainment of formal schooling. But in reality, intelligence is what we do with the knowledge we have. And the stories that these women told their daughters showed their true intelligence in their ability to interpret the complex society in which they live and raise their families. They manage a household and support a family with fewer financial resources than they need to live comfortably. This requires a great deal of intelligence. The decisions they make on a daily basis are those needed to resolve family problems.

Determination is a quality that ran through many of the personal narratives told to the daughters. The mothers have pushed past what they perceived to be limitations and barriers. They forged ahead against the odds in order to provide their daughters, and family as a whole, the best opportunities for a better life than they experienced in their homeland.

In their stories, *Faith* was transmitted in the way that the women have resorted to a spiritual belief in order to bear the struggles with immigration issues, learning a new culture, and underemployment in a new society.

2.9. Personal Power

How young Latinas perceive their personal power has much to do with their relationship with their mothers. The interviews with the girls indicated that they listen to and depend on their mothers for guidance about school and career decisions. Although the girls know that their mothers did not have formal education in the US, or Mexico in some cases, they first go to their mothers for advice before turning to their friends or teachers. Mothers are the ones to direct the girls to find the appropriate resources. Often, this means that through the personal stories, they share with their daughters they make the girls look within for their inner confidence to resolve problems in a new way.

When the girls were asked who they chose as their confidants, they said, "My mom." Specifically, they appreciate the stories they heard about how their mothers managed during hard times. This makes the girls believe that their mothers know quite a bit, even if the mothers did not have a great deal of formal schooling.

I recall one time when things weren't going well for me in my first year of high school. It was all just too stressful and I felt nervous about my grades. My mother had stopped helping me with my homework years before because she didn't know how to do the homework that I had to do. She hadn't finished school in Mexico and her English wasn't the best. Anyway, she noticed that I was feeling pretty down about things. Then, I told her about the stress I had and how I didn't know if I could handle high school especially because I want to go to college, which will be more difficult. And mom was very understanding. She sat me down at the kitchen table, and she shared about going to school in Mexico. It was during a time when her family was very poor and she wasn't sure that she'd be able to stay in school and work to help her family. Mom told me that she was so excited about learning, but her mom needed her to help work the farm when her father died. Gosh, mom was just 10 years old and all of her brothers and sisters were younger.

Anyway, mom told me about how her mother didn't want her to leave school, but she couldn't do everything by herself. So, together her mother and my mom decided that they would divide the work on the farm so that mom did most of her share before school, after school, and on weekends. And her mother would let her stay in school as long as the work got done. My mom felt so glad that she could stay in school that she studied hard and managed to work and go to school. Mom's story made me feel that I could do what I needed to do to make it in school. As long as I loved learning and could get mom to help me work through things just like her mom helped her. At least I don't have to work hard in the fields.

And actually, that's what mom told me. She said, "you don't ever have to feel that you're doing this alone. None of us are alone. Even if I don't know how to help you to do the work that you're required to do, I will help you find the tutors at school or I'll talk

with your counselor to show me what I need to do. So don't ever feel that you can't talk to me." Her comments made me feel so much better. I wasn't as afraid. I felt more confident.

From the mothers' stories, girls learned to trust their own strength and have confidence in themselves and to think about what they must do to go to college and have a better education.

2.10. Proactive School Engagement

From the M/D Program, we learn that educators need to take proactive measures to prevent academic and social crises. They must continuously inform parents in Spanish about their children's academic progress. Effective schools design parent involvement activities that provide various levels of involvement. Three basic levels of influence in students' academic lives include the family, the school, and the community. Not only are basic cultural values and beliefs learned in the family, but also daily practices often speak louder than words. In the Latino family, if parents are inactive in their child's schooling, educators tend to perceive this as indifference toward the school.

However, what may be driving their behavior is fear or lack of understanding of their role in the school system. In the San Mateo M/D Program, the teacher/mother support component involved the teachers working with parents in establishing and sustaining an academically supportive environment in the girls' home. When the parents entered the program, they and the teachers signed a contract to participate actively for the duration of the program. And they did.

2.11. Parents' Continued Learning

For the mothers in the M/D Program, one of the highlights was the sense of personal growth that they experienced. Developing mothers' aspirations for their own personal and professional growth is an important part of the teacher/parent component. The mothers involved in the M/D Programs learned to become leaders. They gained confidence to stand in front of a group and address other women, teach them about ways to advocate for their children in school. In many cases, the mothers of the girls in the program reported feeling so inspired by their daughters' enthusiasm for learning that they returned to school themselves to complete high school. They moved on to community college to improve their English before transferring to a state university for a BA degree, as is the case with Alma Garcia.

Alma Garcia's daughter began the M/D Program in the fifth grade.

Participating with the Mother/Daughter program has taught me what it means to be supportive of my daughter, Marina. Although I felt that I had been supportive before, for Marina it was fine with her to do the very least to get by. But this group taught me how to get my daughter motivated and to go the extra mile for her. Just doing "good"

work isn't enough to get to college and pursue a career. I've had to learn how to get my daughter inspired to do the best that she can. That's why talking constantly with her teachers has been the best support net that my daughter has had. She knows that we're all in this together with her. That extra push for Marina has been the constant contact with the other girls who can commiserate with her about not liking school. But she still gets support to do the best work possible.

By the time that my daughter was in her first year of high school, she was so turned on with school that she began pushing me to enroll in college. So, I've done that. I am now enrolled at the state college, working toward a psychology major. What's great is that our getting involved in the Mother/Daughter program helped my daughter and then she inspired me to go to college. We both laugh at the thought of graduating from college together. It may just happen. [Translated from Spanish.]

In addition to school-sponsored M/D Programs, other community programs exist that provide the context to assist Latino students' educational needs. One such organization is College Track. In northern California, this organization is improving communication with teachers, helping high school students stay in school, and supporting high school students to graduate and pursue college. College Track's purpose is to provide intense, comprehensive, individual academic assistance and information to high school students to achieve through high school and college. On the school's end, their responsibility is to inform Latino high school students about local organizations that provide academic, emotional, and financial support toward college. From building leadership among parents to building collaborative relationships between parents and school leaders, College Track effects change in the schools through organizing the grassroots community, one parent at a time. The focus of this community-driven school reform programs such as College Track is that they create the social capital necessary to form equal partnerships between the community and the schools. The community-driven school reform has as its goals to create public policy while obtaining resources and eliminating disparity among groups in the school and in the community.

2.12. Conclusion and Recommendations

Students whose parents are involved in their schooling are twice as likely to excel academically. To Latino parents, "knowing how to navigate the school system" means understanding the school requirements, learning to access resources, and sustaining advocacy for students throughout their schooling. Where parent involvement is concerned, there is no one size fits all. Although no single model exists, effective programs have certain fundamental premises in common: (1) commitment, (2) communication, (3) continuity, and (4) collaboration. Educators and community members build relationships that support Latino families when they build student and parent power. In addition to developing higher academic benefits, students' social adjustment strengthens. Furthermore, when parents are involved, they develop higher self-esteem, which contributes to students' school success.

However, without a systematic partnership program in place, many Latino parents feel rather isolated when they attempt to participate in schools. Yet, every effort on the parents' part matters significantly as was the case in the Delgado-Gaitan household, where our parents encouraged their 5 daughters to study continuously. And in the early years when mom baked armloads of cupcakes for our classroom, her presence bridged the cultural discontinuity between school and home. My mother communicated with the school by using us as translators. Our parents' efforts produced five daughters who are all college graduates in successful careers. In turn, the five daughters' children have also succeeded in school and attended college. Breaking the cycle of poverty and educational neglect begins with the ties closest to us — the family and the school.

Parent involvement partnerships empower Latino families. It promotes high aspirations for students, and builds a solid commitment to life-long learning. Above all, graduating from high school and college and pursuing a professional career, are most likely to be life goals for students whose parents are involved in their education throughout their entire schooling experience. And these practices are most likely to exist where schools and communities commit to making effective partnerships a priority.

2.13. Recommendations for Family-School-Community Partnerships

Although the San Mateo M/D Program efforts to assist Latinas on their journey to college focused on girls and their mothers, the program model lends itself to including boys and fathers. Thus, the entire family benefits from a well-designed program. Executing parent involvement programs to support Latino girls and boys' academic achievement begins at the elementary school level.

Programs such as the M/D Program have taught us that beginning in the fifth grade and continuing through high school, schools need to develop strong academic socialization programs to support Latino students in their preparation toward college. I identified seven major support activities that helped the students to succeed academically in the M/D Program and which are replicable in schools and communities:

1) *Tutoring* students on a regular basis is possible by bringing college students to volunteer in the schools.
2) *Mentoring* students by pairing them with professionals supports not only their academic program but also their socialization and opportunities to learn about multiple career choices.
3) *Study skill classes* in schools or learning centers, teach students how to budget time, obtain resources, and exercise discipline to achieve academic success.
4) *Computer classes* for students and their parents provide the family with technical knowledge to assist students to complete their nightly homework.

5) *Volunteering* in the community helps students to feel a sense of belonging to and being responsible for the community in which they live.
6) *Personal identity* workshops for students and their parents guide students to address personal cultural identity issues with the assistance of counselors. Effective family-school-community efforts include these major components in their paradigm.
7) *Collaboration with community organizations* such as College Track, which assist less represented students to succeed in school and prepare for college.

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