

THE MEANING OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LATINO/A PARENTS AS THEY  
RELATE TO SCHOOL COUNSELORS

by

MALTI SARA TUTTLE

(Under the Direction of Pamela O. Paisley)

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study aimed to identify the essence of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they related to school counselors (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). Previously, limited research had been conducted on the Latino/a parent and school counselor relationships; therefore, this study was conducted through a phenomenological and Relational Cultural Theory lens. Twelve Latino/a parents were interviewed from three Northeastern Georgia counties to share their experiences with school counselors to provide recommendations for practice to the school counseling specialty and school counselors in training.

INDEX WORDS: School counselors, Latino/a parents, Relational Cultural Theory, phenomenological research tradition, social justice change agent, advocacy

THE MEANING OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LATINO/A PARENTS AS THEY  
RELATE TO SCHOOL COUNSELORS

by

MALTI SARA TUTTLE

B.A., Auburn University, 2000

M.Ed., Auburn University, 2003

Ed.S., Lincoln Memorial University, 2008

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015

© 2015

Malti Sara Tuttle

All Rights Reserved

THE MEANING OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LATINO/A PARENTS AS THEY  
RELATE TO SCHOOL COUNSELORS

by

MALTI SARA TUTTLE

Major Professor:	Pamela O. Paisley
Committee:	Anneliese A. Singh
	Natoya H. Haskins
	Paula Mellon

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
December 2015

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all the Marietta Center for Advanced Academics (MCAA) Latino/a students and families. You have graced me with the opportunity to learn more about the Latino/a culture and become a social justice advocate. I hope this dissertation provides continuous school counseling initiatives to strengthen the school counselor and Latino/a family relationships. I have learned invaluable lessons from you while building life long memories. Muchas gracias por su apoyo y amistad.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Conducting a dissertation research study is not an easy task to take on without the support of family and friends. As I endlessly worked to ensure the voices of the Latino/a parent participants were justly heard, I recognized the importance of family, friends, and community. Not only through the voices from the participants as they shared about their bonds with loved ones but as my personal family and friends rallied around me as I persevered through the rigorous process of writing a dissertation. I thank you all for providing the support I needed throughout the last few years as I worked towards completing my PhD degree. You will never know how much you mean to me.

**Seth.** Thank you for your never ending support and patience throughout this process. You encouraged and kept me going at all times, especially when times were tough. Your humor, love, and laughter was definitely a source of strength for me. I can't wait to see what the path has in store for us!

**Family.** Daddy, Mama, Mala, Matt, Meena, Leela, Mr. and Mrs. Tuttle, Jenny, Jackie, and Caroline- I appreciate your understanding when my time was occupied and consumed while I was working on my dissertation. Your constant checking on me, rallying behind me, and praying for my success finally has paid off! Amen!

**Dr. Paisley.** Your continuous guidance and encouragement with a kind heart always kept me motivated and allowed me to persevere. I have learned so much from you and my desire of becoming a counselor educator has grown because of you. It has been an honor to have you

as my chair and I will always cherish our time together. You have been an inspiration to me. I will always be proud to have had the opportunity to have worked with you.

**Dr. Singh.** You have made a social justice impact in my heart and profession. Because of you, I am a stronger advocate for the counseling profession and marginalized communities. Thank you for your constant support and encouragement.

**Dr. Haskins.** I appreciate how you pushed me to recognize and achieve my fullest potential. You constructively challenged me throughout the process and I have learned so much from you about being a supervisor, counselor educator, and practitioner.

**Dr. Mellom.** I am thankful for the opportunity you provided me to participate in the Costa Rica study abroad program. This experience not only increased my worldview of the Costa Rican community, but enriched my understanding of culture, language, gender roles, and overall identity of a social justice advocate. These are lessons that I will always carry with me. ¡Pura Vida!

**Jennifer Hernandez.** Your leadership and friendship has allowed me to further improve my skills as a professional, leader, and counselor. You have made an impact on me that has shaped me into the professional I am and strive to become.

**Annette Berthelot my work spouse and friend.** Thank you for being my friend and advocate. I have learned so much from you and will always be in awe of your professionalism, tenacity, and grace. From you I have witnessed and learned what it means to be a strong and compassionate woman.

**Cohort,** Bob, Bre, Chris, Christy, Erik, Jennifer, Kim, Nathan, and Nicole we are doing good things! Each of you have many gifts and have gifted me with life lessons. Thank you for sharing your wisdom and being on this journey with me.

**Margarita.** Thank you for your friendship and constant encouragement. You have always been such a joy to be around and a continuous cheerleader for my work with Latino/a families. When I think of a true advocate for Latino/a families and students, you come to my mind. I envy your zest, energy, and dedication. I hope to be like you when I grow up!

**Betsy.** You are an amazing school counselor with an amazing story to tell. I thank you for your help with translating my documents, especially when you barely knew me. Thank you for believing in my study. Keep doing the work you do in supporting Latino/a students!

**Monica.** Thank you for donating your time to assist me with translation for my research documents. I am so glad we were paired together during our graduate programs. I know your students are lucky to have you as their school counselor.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	6
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Research Question .....	7
Methodology .....	7
Role of the Researcher .....	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
Summary.....	12
2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	13
Research Tradition and Theoretical Orientation.....	14
ACA Advocacy and Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies	15
Gaps in the Literature.....	19
Latino/as in Schools in the United States .....	20
Role of the School Counselor .....	30
School Counselor Advocacy.....	34
Conclusion .....	35
3 METHODOLOGY .....	37

Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry .....	37
Rationale for Phenomenological Research Tradition and Theoretical Framework .....	38
Research Question .....	46
Site Access .....	50
Regional Demographics .....	55
Ethical Considerations .....	56
Development of Interview Protocol.....	57
Data Management .....	58
Data Collection .....	59
Data Analysis .....	62
Researcher as Analyst.....	66
Summary.....	67
4 FINDINGS .....	69
Relational Cultural Theory .....	69
Themes .....	70
Synthesis of Experiences .....	90
Summary Case .....	91
5 DISCUSSION.....	93
Researcher Connection to the Study .....	93
Theoretical Framework.....	94
Summary of the Study .....	94
Relation to the Literature Review.....	96

Implications for Practice .....	98
Limitations of the Study.....	99
Recommendations for Future Research .....	101
Researcher Reflection .....	103
Conclusion .....	103
REFERENCES .....	105
APPENDICES	
A BRACKETING.....	117
B IRB APPROVAL.....	118
C RECRUITMENT FLIER .....	119
D CONSENT FORM.....	122
E SCREENING SURVEY .....	128
F SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .....	131
G CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT.....	135
H PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS .....	136
I CONTACT SUMMARY SHEET.....	139

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“You should go see a counselor because they really help you, or they help the children too,” Ana recalled saying to a friend about the school counselor role. Her words emphasized the importance of parental trust and the support of the school counselor role in the lives of students. Ana, a Latina mother, recognized the critical active role school counselors play in supporting all students and families based on the experiences she had with her child’s school counselor. Her experience and interaction with the school counselor resulted in a partner relationship based on trust. Therefore, it is important for the school counseling specialty and school counselors in training to understand the perceptions and recommendations desired by all parents in order to begin the foundation for a partnership built on trust. Understanding the perspectives of Latino/a parents based on experiences with school counselors provides the platform for these trusting relationships to occur.

This study on the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they relate to school counselors is particularly close to my heart because it is the story I live and experience. As I reflect on my role as a school counselor, I think about the honor and privilege that have been bestowed upon me to be part of many people’s lives. My life as a school counselor has provided me with opportunities and experiences to know people, their life stories, accomplishments, and struggles, which have made me a better person in understanding humankind. Additionally, as a school counselor, I identified individuals and communities to

partner with to provide school counseling programs, services, and advocacy. One community which embraced my desire to partner in my school setting was the Latino/a community.

As a social justice advocate who recognized barriers to access and services, I partnered with my principal to provide better support to the Latino/a families in our school setting (Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007). When my principal and I discussed how to support the Latino/a families in our school, I was the only Spanish-speaking professional in the building. Therefore, the times I reached out to the Latino/a parents were regarding school counseling services or providing translation for teachers and parents to communicate. Through these interactions, I formed relationships with the families by earning their trust. The trust built resulted in the parents feeling connected to the school, reaching out to me to share their life stories, and seeing me as a member of their school family. Therefore, this research topic on the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they related to school counselors is very dear to my heart because it is a story that I live.

The current statistics alone indicated and validated the need for school counselors to build partnerships with Latino/a parents for the purpose of supporting students and further proved the need for school counseling support. The number of Latino/a students in United States (U.S.) schools have significantly increased, making up one student in five within the school setting, marking Latino/as the largest ethnic group (Marx & Larson, 2012). This increase in Latino/a student enrollment in U.S. schools resulted in a corresponding increase in the diversity in the needs of students. Even though the high school dropout rate for Latino/a high school students has reduced, disparities still exist such as still having the highest high school dropout rate compared to any other ethnic group in the country (Fry & Taylor, 2013; Smith-Adcock, Daniels, Lee, Villalba, & Indelicato, 2006) and scoring lower on standardized tests than students

who were White (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008). The rates of high-risk behaviors for Latino/a youth, such as attempting suicide, using cocaine, and participating in sexual activity without protection were higher than their “Black and White youth” counterparts (Reyes & Elias, 2011, p. 723; Center for Disease Control, 2007). Therefore, these statistics regarding Latino/a youth led the primary researcher to question if the school counselor was someone Latino/a parents considered as a resource in the school setting for support with their child’s education and well-being.

This research study aimed to examine the experiences of Latino/a parents as they relate to school counselors since previous research indicated parental involvement with school personnel supported student success and well-being (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011). The Southeastern region of the United States was selected for this study due to the significant increase in the Latino/a population, this region being their primary destination, and limited awareness and experience with the educational system (Cox, 2009). The primary researcher desired to investigate, specifically, the experiences Latino/a parents had with school counselors since school counseling programs and services are supposed to provide support in the areas of academic, career planning, and social-emotional well-being for all students (ASCA, 2012). School counselors should recognize the importance of working to support students and advocating on their behalf, especially Latino/a students and parents. Additionally, the role of the school counselor includes leadership, advocacy, systemic change, and collaboration through the use of the comprehensive school counseling program, which provides support to all students in the K-12 school settings and lends itself well for the school counselor to implement specific programs and services targeting Latino/a student success (ASCA, 2012).

However this has not always been the case. The specialty area of the school counselor role has evolved throughout the years to ensure school counseling services are adequately and justly provided to every student (Paisley & Borders, 1996). The Education Trust and DeWitt Wallace Fund collaborated in the 1990's to revamp the school counseling role by creating the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014; Perkins, Oescher, & Ballard, 2010; The Education Trust, 2009). The Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) involved the following post-secondary institutes in the restructuring of school counseling graduate programs,- "California State University at Northridge, Indiana State University, Ohio State University, State University of West Georgia, University of Georgia, and University of North Florida" (The Education Trust, 2009).

During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the direction of the school counselor role became more focused towards being advocates and change agents (ASCA, 2012). Today, the role of the school counselor is to provide a comprehensive school counseling program to every student with the goal to enhance the achievement of all students (ASCA, 2012). Therefore, the American School Counselor Association's framework for school counseling programs includes standards to guide interventions to promote academic achievement, career readiness, and social-emotional development (ASCA, 2004). Furthermore, the Transforming School Counselor Initiative (TSCI) revolutionized the school counselor role to change agents by promoting social justice through leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change and advocating for historically marginalized groups in the public school setting, such as low socio-economic status and race (ASCA, 2012; The Education Trust, 2009). ASCA's "Equity for All Students" position statement reinforced the call for school counselors as social justice change agents in the support of all students including Latino/a students with the statement, "Professional school counselors

recognize and distinguish individual and group differences and strive to value all students and groups equally. School counselors advocate for the equitable treatment of all students in school and in the community.” (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014; www.schoolcounselor.org, 2012).

As social justice advocates, school counselors are in the position to provide school counseling interventions and programs to Latino/a students, parents, and families to address student needs (ASCA, 2012; Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007). The role of the school counselor, as a social justice change agent, lends itself to building relationships with Latino/a students, their families, and the community to advocate for systemic change (ASCA, 2012; Bemak & Chung, 2008). In order to build these trusting relationships with Latino/a students, families, and parents; school counselors must be aware and understand the meaning and significance of the term familismo. Familismo defines the family structure in the Latino culture, which incorporates both the immediate family and extended family’s beliefs and values (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner, 2012). Familismo may also be a factor in understanding Latino/a students’ emotionality based upon family expectations and family structure. Therefore, school counselors must be aware of this concept in order to comprehend the culture and to avoid cultural bias (Arredondo et. al, 2014). This concept of familismo, as well as the current statistics regarding Latino/a youth, led the primary researcher of this study to examine the experiences of Latino/a parents with school counselors and to provide recommendations to the school counseling specialty.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Limited research has been found on the subject of Latino/a parents and their experiences with school counselors. Therefore, this study sought to provide implications for the school counseling specialty and school counselors in training for the purpose of building relationships with Latino/a parents and school counselors in order to provide support for Latino/a student success. The primary researcher of this research study sought to understand the phenomenon based on the lived experiences of Latino/a parents with school counselors. Additionally, the primary researcher recognized the struggles many Latino/a students faced, evidenced by having the highest high school dropout rate compared to any other ethnic group in the country (Smith-Adcock, Daniels, Lee, Villalba, & Indelicato, 2006) and scoring lower on standardized tests than students who were White (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008). The rates of high-risk behaviors for Latino/a youth, such as attempting suicide, using cocaine, and participating in sexual activity without protection were higher than their “Black and White youth” counterparts (Reyes & Elias, 2011, p. 723; Center for Disease Control, 2007). These facts provided the impetus for the primary researcher to conduct this study in the role of a social justice change agent to seek systemic change and advocate on the behalf of Latino/a students who were recognized as a historically marginalized group (ASCA, 2012; Bemak & Chung, 2008).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to identify the essence of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they relate to school counselors through the parents’ personal stories and perceptions (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). The goal of the study was to function in the capacity of a social justice call to action by providing the platform for Latino/a parents to share insight on how their experiences impacted their relationships with school

counselors (Mertens, 2007). Furthermore, the primary researcher recognized this study as an opportunity to provide recommendations for further research as well as best practices for the school counseling specialty and school counselors in training (Mertens, 2007).

### **Research Question**

This phenomenological study was directed by the research question: “What is the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they relate to school counselors?” The research question provided a path to understanding and uncovering the phenomenon of these lived experiences described by Latino/a parents from their perspective (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). The primary researcher continuously referred to the research question throughout the process to ensure the study consistently mirrored the phenomenological research tradition (Creswell, 2014; Singh, 2012).

### **Methodology**

The phenomenological research tradition and Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) Framework guided the study by providing a direction and roadmap to uncover the essence of these experiences for the purpose of informing the school counseling specialty, school counselors in training, and future studies to best support Latino/a students and parents (Comstock, Hammer, Strentzsch, Cannon, Parsons, & Salazar, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Hays & Singh, 2012; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). This research study was conducted as a phenomenological study for the purpose of understanding the essence of “what” and “how” Latino/a parents' experienced interactions with their child(ren)'s school counselor and the types of connections formed (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012; Miller & Stiver, 1997). Additionally, this research study reflected a constructivist framework that incorporated the experiences of the participants for the purpose of providing findings for the

school counseling specialty and school counselors in training regarding the relationships between school counselors and Latino/a parents, as well as providing recommendations for future research studies (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). This research study was conducted as a social justice call to action to provide a voice to Latino/a parents in order to provide appropriate school counseling programs, services, and partnerships (Mertens, 2007).

The primary researcher for this study was interested in investigating the types of experiences Latino/a parents had with school counselors, their understanding of the role of the school counselor, and their knowledge of the services school counselors provided to all children and families. This study was conducted in three geographically diverse counties (e.g. rural, urban, and suburban). The rationale for selecting three different counties was to be inclusive of the essence of the lived experiences with school counselors across geographical locations. The purposeful sample for this study included Latino/a parents who had immigrated to the U.S., attended school in their country of origin, and had children who attend a school in the K-12 setting in the U.S. (Hays & Singh, 2012). The research study mainly focused on the lived experiences regarding how Latino/a parents perceived their interactions with the school counselor, understood the role of school counselors, and accessed their services. Additionally, the research study highlighted several issues related to role, accessibility, and potential barriers, which were deemed important for the school counseling specialty to recognize in working with Latino/a parents and preparing future school counselors.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the primary researcher involved immersion in the study through rigorous research methods (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). Throughout the study, the primary researcher engaged herself by making connections with gatekeepers, participants, her research

team, an external auditor, and a supportive colleague (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). These connections mirrored trust building of RCT through growth-fostering relationships (Miller & Stiver, 1997). Additionally, remaining engaged in the process of the study allowed the primary researcher to practice ethical research methods, reflexivity, and create an opportunity for checks and balances to ensure integrity of the phenomenological research tradition (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012).

### **Definition of Terms**

This section of the dissertation incorporates terms infused throughout the study. The terms have been defined so the meaning may provide context and understanding throughout the study.

#### **Educational Attainment**

The term educational attainment, for the purpose of this study, is defined as the “highest level of education achieved” (Aud et al., 2013, p. 2). Throughout the study, the term educational attainment is referenced due to Latino/a students facing issues in education. School counselors are in a position to provide support through counseling services and advocacy to assist Latino/a students and parents navigate the school systems.

#### **Familismo**

The term familismo, for the purpose of this study, is defined as the meaning of the family structure in the Latino culture, which incorporates the immediate family and extended family’s beliefs and values of family (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner, 2012). School counselors who are aware of the term familismo are at an advantage by having the knowledge and skills to build relationships, advocate, and support Latino/a students.

**Latino/a**

The term Latino/a, for the purpose of this study, is defined as “Hispanic or Latino: A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (Aud et al., 2013, p. vii; Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Alpert, 2011, p. 2; Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014). Many individuals and groups are encompassed under the term Latino/a, therefore, to specifically keep the term in context, the researcher of this study sought participants whose countries of origins are from these geographical regions. Furthermore, school counselors should familiarize themselves with this term in order to be cognizant of individuals and groups.

**Latino/a Parent**

The term Latino/a parent, for the purpose of this study, is defined as the primary care taker of the child(ren) in the role of the guardian who is “of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (Aud, et al, 2013, p. vii; Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Alpert, 2011, p. 2; Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014). Many individuals and groups are encompassed under the term Latino/a, therefore, to specifically keep the term in context, the researcher of this study sought participants whose countries of origins are from these geographical regions. Furthermore, school counselors should familiarize themselves with this term in order to be cognizant of individuals and groups.

**Social Justice Advocacy**

The term social justice advocacy, for the purpose of this study, is defined as “to right injustices, increase access, and improve educational outcomes for all students” (Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007, p. 90). School counselors are in the role as advocates, therefore, the term social

justice advocacy is utilized within this study for Latino/a advocacy. It is imperative school counselors be familiar with the term and its practice.

### **Social Justice Call to Action**

The term social justice call to action, for the purpose of this study, is defined by asking the school counseling specialty field to respond to the identified need, issue, and injustice (Mertens, 2007).

### **Social Justice Change Agent**

The term social justice change agent, for the purpose of this study, is defined as a school counselor who recognizes challenges, inequities, and injustices by seeking opportunities for students who have been marginalized (Bemak & Chung, 2008). School counselors who follow the ASCA Model are cognizant of their leadership skills and advocate for change and support (ASCA, 2012, Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014). The CAFÉ Model suggests the school counselors' professional identity should transcend prior to the implementation of the components from the comprehensive school program in order to “generate equity-focused school counseling programs” (Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014, p. 2).

### **White**

The term White, for the purpose of this study, is defined as “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa” (Aud et al., 2013, p. 2). The researcher of this study discussed the disparities of Latino/a students in comparison to White students within the three domains of academics, career, and social-emotional (ASCA, 2012). Therefore, it is critical school counselors recognize how specific groups compare to others in order to provide school counseling supports.

## Summary

School counselors are advocates and change agents in K-12 school settings for all students and parents. As the Latino/a population continues to increase, it is imperative Latino/a parents and students recognize the role of the school counselor and school counseling services as resources, allies, and advocates. Therefore school counselors must first leverage the concept of familismo in order to build trust with Latino/a families, students, and parents for the purpose of providing academic, career planning, and social-emotional supports (ASCA, 2012; Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner, 2012). Additionally, school counselors who are aware of the challenges and struggles Latino/a students and parents face will be better prepared as practitioners by understanding their perception of and reception to the worldview (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). Thus, prior to attempting to address the needs and issues of Latino/a students and parents, the school counseling specialty would benefit from thoroughly understanding the meaning of the lived experiences Latino/a parents are currently having in their interactions with school counselors.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This phenomenological study aimed to identify the essence of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they relate to school counselors and provide best practices to the school counseling specialty, school counselors in training, and social justice advocates for the Latino/a community (ASCA, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh; Moustakas, 1994; Ratts, DeKryuf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007). The research question “What is the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they relate to school counselors?” guided the research study. The primary researcher believed this study was necessary in order for the school counseling field to understand the importance and benefits of Latino/a parent and school counselor relationships. Therefore, in order to appropriately conduct this study, the primary researcher intentionally sought the findings and implications from previous research studies. The first step identified was to consult literature pertaining to this topic, since the use of a grounded foundation in the literature was deemed valuable by consulting various published articles, journals, and texts (Hays & Singh, 2012; Machi & McEvoy, 2012). Additionally, the primary researcher acknowledged the possibility of encountering limited literature and research pertaining to this phenomenological study since the basis of the study relied on experiences which may not have previously been researched (Hays & Singh, 2012). The main guiding forces selected to drive this phenomenological study in addition to the literature reviewed were the research tradition and Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) (Comstock et al., 2008; Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012;

Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Phenomenology and RCT best fit this study due to the intersectionality of the experiences and the types of connections formed between Latino/a parents and school counselors.

### **Research Tradition and Theoretical Orientation**

Due to my professional experiences in working with Latino/a families, I was compelled to investigate the experiences Latino/a parents had with school counselors, how Latino/a parents described their experiences with school counselors, and how the findings from the study would benefit the school counseling specialty and school counselors in training. My experiences as a school counselor working with Latino/a parents and students led me to reflect on the importance of understanding how counseling relationships were perceived by Latino/a parents. I wondered if the Latino/a parents I worked with trusted me because I was the sole Spanish speaker in my work setting or if they just thought I was a kind person who they knew would assist them. Additionally, I wondered if they would have sought me out as the school counselor if I did not speak Spanish. Therefore, the premise of this research study was formed. As I reviewed the literature, it was evident the relationships and positive connections I made with the Latino/a parents in my school setting were formed by the tenets of RCT (Comstock, et al, 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

Relational Cultural Theory was identified as the most appropriate and integral theoretical framework for this study due to the components of mutuality, relationships, and marginalization (Comstock et al., 2008; Creswell, 2013; Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Hays & Singh, 2012; Ruiz, 2005). Furthermore, the RCT framework was selected as the social justice foundation of this research study based on the importance of the Latino/a familial bond from the family unit extending into the community in order to act as a family structure (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper,

Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014). Thus, RCT encompassed this facet of the culture of community and provided an avenue as to how school counselors can build trust and relationships with Latino/a parents (Comstock et al., 2008; Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Ruiz, 2005). More specifically, the primary researcher recognized the correlation between RCT and familismo, where the bonds of family intersect with the community outside of the family unit, which can result in positive connections between Latino/a parents and school counselors (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014; Comstock et al., 2008; Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner, 2012).

The core tenets of RCT were identified by Comstock, Hammer, Strentzsch, Cannon, Parsons, and Salazar (2008) and stated as, “Mutual empathy and mutual empowerment are at the core of growth-fostering relationships, authenticity is necessary for real engagement in growth-fostering relationships, and when people contribute to the development of growth-fostering relationships, they grow as a result of their participation in such relationships” (p. 280). Furthermore, the five good things known as zest, action, knowledge, sense of worth, and desire for more connections to occur provide a foundation for building school counselor and Latino/a parent relationships (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Thus, RCT precisely lent itself as an integral link to school counselor and Latino/a parent partnerships by leveraging these relationships for the purpose of working together to enhance student success under the academic, career, and social-emotional domains (ASCA, 2012).

### **ACA Advocacy and Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies**

The American Counseling Association (ACA) Advocacy and the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (formerly known as the Multicultural Competencies) echoed

the importance of recognizing the role of the school counselor as systemic change agents (ACA, 2003; Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, & Stadler, 1996; ASCA, 2012; Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). Today school counselors operate as leaders to advocate for equity and access for all students through school counseling services and programs (ASCA, 2012). Therefore, it is imperative school counselors recognize they are in the position to understand the concepts of privilege and implement social justice principles of “equity, access, participation, and harmony” in order to function as social justice change agents (ASCA, 2012; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Chen,-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014; Crethar, Torres Rivera, & Nash, 2008, p. 270). Additionally, school counselors, as change agents, are more equipped to utilize and incorporate the ACA Advocacy Competencies, as well as the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, within their practice to advocate and provide support for Latino/a students and parents than ever before.

The critical benefit of the ACA’s Advocacy Competencies is to best guide counselors to advocate with and/or on behalf of the client(s) within the micro, meso, and macro levels, which further assists the school counselor in being a social justice change agent (ACA, 2003; ASCA, 2012; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014; Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003). The six ACA Competency Domains fall under three specific levels. The micro level Client/Student included the two domains Client/Student Empowerment and Client/Student Advocacy. The Client/Student Empowerment domain would allow for the school counselor to work in the role of “Acting With” the student and the Client/Student Advocacy domain would allow for the school counselor to work in the role of “Working on the Behalf” of the student. The meso level School Community included the two domains Community

Collaboration and Systems Advocacy. The school counselor who worked in the Community Collaboration Domain would act with the community to provide support for Latino/a students and parents, whereas the school counselor who worked on the Systems Advocacy domain would work on the behalf of Latino/a students and parents by advocating for systems reform and change. The macro level Public Arena was broader than the micro and meso levels. The two domains under this level were Public Information and Social/Political Advocacy. The Public Information Domain would allow for the school counselor to act with the public arena to inform them of Latino/a marginalization and provide information to gain support for Latino/a students. The Social/Political Advocacy domain would provide the school counselor the opportunity to work on the behalf of systemic change by seeking individuals with power to create change to benefit Latino/a student's in the school setting (ASCA, 2012; ACA, 2003; Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003). The ACA Advocacy Competencies provided a framework for the school counselor to take the steps to be a proactive leader in the role of a social justice change agent (ASCA, 2012; Bemak & Chung; Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014).

The Multicultural Competencies were recently revised to be known as the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). The purpose of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies was to ensure counselors in maintain fidelity and awareness while working with all individuals, especially individuals who are marginalized. The four areas of the competencies included Counselor Self Awareness, Client Worldview, Counseling Relationship, and Counseling and Advocacy Interventions (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). The recent revision added the Counseling Relationship component, which further intersected with the focus of this study through the RCT framework since both advocated for

counselors to build relationships based on the understanding of the client(s) worldview for the purpose of change to occur (Comstock et al., 2008; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015; Ruiz, 2005).

School counselors who incorporated the ACA Advocacy Competencies and the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies in their practice played an important role in advocating for Latino/a students by seeking systemic change (ACA, 2003; Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, & Stadler, 1996; ASCA, 2012; Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015; Villalba, Brunelli, Lewis, & Orfanedes, 2007). School counseling services with Latino/a students in mind to provide support in academic success, career planning, and social-emotional domains would be imperative due to the population increase of Latino/a students in the U.S., the state of Georgia, and in public schools (ASCA, 2012; Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005, Delgado-Romero, Matthews, & Paisley, 2007; Williams & Dawson, 2011). The *Hispanic Population: 2010 Census Brief* reported the Latino/a population grew 15.2 million between the years of 2000 to 2010, indicating a 43% increase in the Latino/a population within the U.S. (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011). The Latino/a population in the U.S. has been deemed the largest group, which has presence in all states and makes up one student in five within the schools (Marx & Larson, 2012). Marx and Larson (2012) further stated Latino/a students' "academic needs as a group continue to be unmet" (p. 260). Therefore, the school counseling specialty can align itself with supporting Latino/a students by providing services and advocacy for Latino/a students and parents (ASCA, 2012; Mertens, 2007).

### **Gaps in the Literature**

Current literature reviewed for this study identified limited research pertaining to school counselors and Latino/a parent partnerships within the K-12 school setting. However, through further examination of the literature, one specific research study, conducted in 2007 by Villalba, Brunelli, Lewis, and Orfanedes, contained implications for advocating for Latino/a students through school counseling services. Villalba, Brunelli, Lewis, and Orfanedes (2007) interviewed Latino/a parents from a rural southeastern region regarding their children's experiences within the school setting, but did not specifically focus on the experiences of the parents regarding school counselors, therefore, providing the impetus for this phenomenological study to be conducted as a social justice call to action (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Mertens, 2007). This study's social justice call to action provided Latino/a parents the opportunity and a platform to voice their experiences and share their stories with school counselors in the field (Mertens, 2007). Additionally, RCT resonated throughout the experiences by identifying whether connections or disconnections resulted based on the interactions between school counselors and Latino/a parents (Miller & Stiver, 1997).

Eckenrod-Green and Culbreth's (2008) qualitative study focused on the perceptions Latino/a high school students had of their school counselors. This study did not focus on parent perceptions or parent experiences with school counselors, however, it did provide insight as to how school counselors are perceived by students. Therefore, the primary researcher was curious whether student perceptions influenced parent perceptions and, if so, in what regards. An article by Cavazos, Cavazos, Hinajosa, and Silva (2009), discussed seven myths about Latino/as, with one myth being Latino/a parents do not view education as important. The authors refuted the myth by stating Latino/a parents desired their child(ren) to be successful and were invested in

their child(ren)'s education. Though parents were not consulted in this article for their voices or experiences, the authors made mention of previous studies to back the debunking of this myth.

The review of the literature aimed to examine and extend the lens of previous studies. Investigating the experiences Latino/a parents had with school counselors will not only inform practitioners but will also raise Latino/a parent awareness of school counseling programs, services, and provide a foundation for systemic change. Not only for the purpose of informing practitioners but to raise Latino/a parent awareness of school counseling programs, services, and to provide a foundation for systemic change (ASCA, 2012). The areas of literature addressed in this chapter included (a) Latino/as in the United States, (b) role of the school counselor, and (c) school counselor advocacy. The literature reviewed contained pertinent insight supporting the importance of advocating for school counselor and Latino/a parent partnerships for the utilization of school counseling programs and services.

### **Latino/as in Schools in the United States**

School counselors acting as social justice change agents recognize challenges, inequities, and injustices by seeking opportunities to support marginalized students by providing school counseling services to support student success (Bemak & Chung, 2008). By understanding the Latino/a culture and heritage, school counselors are able to build positive connections through the RCT framework by forming growth-fostering relationships (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). These growth-fostering relationships lead to positive experiences, which promote further desired interactions to occur with Latino/a parents and school counselors (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Additionally, schools counselors should be invested in learning about their Latino/a students, parents, and backgrounds since the rapid enrollment rate of Latino/a students will impact the school culture and local communities.

School counselors who are invested in their Latino/a students are aware that Latino/as are considered to be one of the fastest growing minorities in the U.S. and statistically represent one out of five students in the school setting (Marx & Larson, 2012; Moreno & Gaytán, 2013). With the increase of Latino/a students in the U.S. schools, it is imperative and pertinent for school counselors to be knowledgeable about the Latino/a community and understand the worldview from their perspective to provide strategic and intentional school counseling services (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). Additionally, school counselors who recognize the vast cultural and ethnic differences within the Latino/a community are better informed and equipped to avoid stereotyping and bias of their students and families. The school counseling specialty would be at an advantage to understand that Latino/as in the U.S. originate from various geographic locations and countries of origin such as the Caribbean, Central America, and 19 other countries which speak Spanish, for the purpose of being aware of their heritage and identities (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014). Arredondo et al. (2014), indicated within the Latino/a group, “a national heritage may still signal a multiracial heritage (mestizo, mulato) because of conquest, slavery, and transnational relocations” (p. 3). Furthermore, Latino/as encompass varied backgrounds related to educational attainment, career aspiration and involvement, and socio-economic levels (Ruiz, 2005). Although Latino/as may have some differences, the value placed on family and community has remained consistent (Ruiz, 2005).

Moreno and Gaytán (2013) addressed the lack of cultural understanding in the K-12 school setting as reasons for low student achievement due to misidentification, academic placement, and low student expectations. Even though school personnel, such as school counselors, are to be mindful in order to avoid stereotyping and bias, it is important to

understand significant cultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices within the Latino/a culture such as familismo and gender roles when working with this particular population. The term familismo and concept of gender roles are integral components to recognizing Latino/a identity development; therefore, school counselors can advocate and support Latino/as through the integration of Multicultural Competencies and the Dimensions of Personal Identity (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014).

### **Educational Issues**

School counselors who are aware of historical background and current research are able to best provide school counseling services and programs to meet the needs of their students and families (ASCA, 2012; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). Cultural and historical awareness leads school counselors to forge growth-fostering relationships with students and parents through the process of mutual empathy and mutual empowerment, which are components of RCT (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Therefore, school counselors as social justice change agents must be aware of the historical background of Latino/a marginalization and oppression that has occurred in the school setting in order to provide systemic change (ASCA, 2012; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014; Comstock et al., 2008; Davila & Aviles de Bradley; Marx & Larson, 2012; Ruiz, 2005; Spring, 2010).

It is imperative to understand the struggles Latino/as have faced relating to the educational system which date as far back as 1848. These struggles provide evidence of the historical marginalization and oppression of Latino/as in the U.S. schools (Comstock et al., 2008; Davila & Aviles de Bradley; Marx & Larson, 2012; Ruiz, 2005). The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, signed in 1848, declared Mexicans as Mexican Americans but did not provide equity

and accessibility to Mexican American students in the school settings (Crethar, Torres Rivera, & Nash, 2008; Moll & Ruiz, 2009, as cited by Marx & Larson, 2012). Spring (2010) indicated even though Mexicans had become Mexican Americans, feelings of bitterness affected the education of the Mexican American students. Educational inequity began to occur at this time by not instituting attendance laws for Latino/a students to attend school (Crethar, Torres Rivera, & Nash, 2008: Spring, 2010). Unfortunately when Latino/a students attended school, they were segregated and could not socialize with or learn from other students who were not Latino/a (Marx & Larson). These historical examples further implicate the institutionalized marginalization and barriers Latino/as have faced throughout generations.

Currently, educational attainment of Latino/as in the U.S. varies from individuals of “low literacy to postgraduate professional education” (Gaitan, 2004, p. 3). Gonzalez (2010) indicated in the Southwest region of the U.S., the graduation rates were low in the areas where the “majority population is Latino” (p. 481). In 2008, the National Center for Education Statistics stated Latino/as had the highest rates for dropping out of school (Sanchez, Plata, Grosso, and Leird, 2010). The Latino/a population within Georgia had been increasing, high school dropout rates of Latino/a students were rising, and the number of Latino/a students attending college continued to be low (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005). Overall, between the years of 2000-2010, Latino/a student enrollment in public schools rose from 7.7 million to 11.4 million and the percentage rate of Latino/a students attending public schools “increased from 16 to 23 percent” (Aud et al., 2013, p. 52). Though it is evident based on the current data indicating an increase of educational attainment and achievement, there is still a need for school counselor support (Aud et al., 2013). Due to the rise of Latino/as in schools, the Southeastern region in particular would

benefit from further studies and supports provided. School counselors are in the position to recognize this as an opportunity to seek programs, initiatives, and partnerships to provide support for Latino/a students.

As previous research indicated, Latino/a students had the highest high school dropout rate compared to any other ethnic group in the country (Smith-Adcock, Daniels, Lee, Villalba, & Indelicato, 2006) and scored lower on standardized tests than students who were White (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008). Fry and Taylor (2013), with The Pew Hispanic Center, reported based on the 2011 statistics, “only 14% of Hispanic 16- to 24-year-olds were high school dropouts, half the level in 2000 (28%)” (p. 4). Although the dropout rate has been reduced, Latino/as still fall behind Whites in several “key higher education measures” (Fry and Taylor, 2013, p. 4) therefore, Latino/a students would benefit from school counseling services to further reduce the potential for dropping out of high school and improving the opportunities for post-secondary education.

Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas’ (2005) identified barriers to Latino/a students attaining educational success as factors, which school counselors could assist in addressing through school counseling programs and services. The barriers identified were “(a) lack of understanding of the U.S. school system, (b) low parental involvement in the schools, (c) lack of residential stability among Latino population, (d) little school support for the needs of Latino students, (e) few incentives for the continuation of Latino education, and (f) barred immigration access to higher education” (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005, p. 43). Additionally, classism and racism have been recognized as barriers to Latino/a academic success (Bohon, Machpherson, & Atilas, 2005). Orozco (2008) discussed how low-income immigrant Latino/a parents expressed interest in their children’s education, wanted to know more about taking care of their children, and find their culture to be an important part of their lives but often schools did not view Latino/a parents as

involved in their child's education. Although these studies are somewhat dated, the reality still exists and continues today, further proving the need for school counselor support. The critical need for providing school counselor support in the forms of programs and interventions is evident based on the statistics and parental desire for their children to be successful. School counselors should be invested and intentional by building relationships with Latino/a parents to partner together to provide school counseling supports under the academic success, career planning, and social-emotional domains (ASCA, 2012).

Latino/a parents are often unaware of the educational system in the U.S., the school culture, the expectations of the school, and how to meet the expectations, which can lead to a difficult adjustment and transition (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005). Further research indicated Latino/a parents were interested in their children and acquiring skills to assist their children in school, but were unaware how to assist their children in being successful academically (Orozco, 2008). According to Villalba, Akos, Keeter, and Ames (2007), the limited amount of communication between the school and Latino/a families built a sense of frustration with all parties involved. These examples intersected with RCT where the experiences with the educational system led to disconnections and continued lack of understanding amongst both parties (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

Furthermore Latino/a parents often faced barriers, i.e. lack of language and work flexibility, which prevented them from attending school events, causing low parental involvement (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). In an unfortunate corollary, individuals who did not experience systemic oppression due to lack of language or economics, did not understand the barriers to parental involvement for Latino/as and perceived the parents as not invested in their child's education (Olivos & Mendoza). Therefore school counselors functioning as leaders and

allies are able to educate the school staff and advocate for Latino/as through systemic change (ASCA, 2012). This potential for education staff provides yet another reason for school counselors to build relationships with Latino/a parents to partner for social justice advocacy and support for their children. Awareness and understanding of this historical background of Latino/a marginalization and oppression in the school setting is critical for the school counseling specialty and a prerequisite for advocating for social change (ASCA, 2012; Comstock et al., 2008; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015; Ruiz, 2005). Contrary to the idea that Latino/a parents were not invested in their child's education, the reality was the family unit had been important to Latino/as and they were invested in their child(ren)'s education, but due to marginalization and barriers, were unable to fully provide the support needed to their children.

Williams and Dawson (2011) discussed the notion of family capital and the value of "familismo," which involved the entire family unit working together for the betterment of the family. Furthermore, Williams and Dawson (2011) stated by planning and working together with the family regarding academics was "likely to be more effective than interventions that solely focus on the child" (p. 96). School counselors can utilize this opportunity to work with Latino/a parents by creating intentional programs and services to increase parental awareness of the educational system since Latino/a families were invested in their children's education and willing to support their child when knowing how to provide support.

Tornatzky, Cutler, and Lee (2002) indicated Latino/a parents support their children by speaking to them regarding what they learned in class, discussing their child's interests, and asking what the child's plans are for after high school. Middle and upper class families generally were able to participate in activities that called for parents to physically appear in the school

setting, whereas, the working and lower class parents found it difficult to participate due to their work schedules, language barriers, and lack of access to transportation or baby sitters (Tornatzky et al., 2002; Mena, 2011). Therefore, Gonzalez, Borders, Hines, Villalba, and Henderson (2013) suggested school counselors extend invitations to Latino/a parents to the school to address the accessibility to school meetings, recognition of previous involvement, role plays on the topics of study skills, and additional skills to support Latino/a parents as they navigate supporting their children.

Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas (2005) indicated the migrant Latino/a population often influenced their children to participate in working to support the household instead of attending school. Additionally, the migrant workers' intention of earning wages was to meet the family needs and return to their country of origin, thus affecting the students' desire to succeed and complete school (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas). Furthermore, transiency created another barrier to Latino/a student academic success due to the frequent changing of schools and appropriate course placement due to the delay of receiving school records (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005). School counselors who are aware of transiency being identified as a barrier to Latino/a student achievement and school success are able to address these issues by partnering with parents, students, and community networks to better provide services to support Latino/a students.

Each school district operates independently from other school districts, therefore, educational services and resources are allocated differently. Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas (2005) indicated certain schools in Georgia provided ESOL classes for migrant students, but not for students who were permanent residents. Therefore, Latino/a students who were unable to receive ESOL classes lacked the opportunity for language acquisition. Additionally, a number of

schools do not have bilingual staff members, signifying another form of support not provided to Latino/a parents, students, and families (Bohon, Macpherson, Atilas, & Bohon, 2005).

The lack of support and incentives to succeed in school has impacted Latino/a students' achievement and graduation rates. Latino/a elementary students have been found to acclimate better to the school culture and learn English quicker than their older counterparts, whereas, Latino/a middle and high school students struggle with acclimation and language acquisition (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005). Middle and high school Latino/a students who are placed in the general education population while having limited English comprehension become overwhelmed and feel defeated, which can lead to dropping out of high school (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005). Additionally, Latino/a students with limited English language skills may feel further defeated while attempting the required graduation writing exams. In these situations, dropping out of school is often due to not achieving success or avoiding failure (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005). Gender roles have also been identified as affecting Latino/a student academic achievement. Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas (2005) discussed Latinas, by the age of 16, generally marry and have families of their own, whereas, males seek jobs where they are able to earn money prior to completing high school.

Latino/a students' enrollment in higher education institutions has been linked to several factors. Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas (2005) found the lack of school counselor preparation regarding Latino/a needs and undocumented status affected the students' path to post-secondary education. School counselors were noted as being incapable of informing and assisting Latino/a students and parents about college opportunities and the application process. Furthermore, undocumented students are ineligible for certain post-secondary institutions and scholarships, such as the HOPE, thus the concept of "The Big Lie" (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005, p.

55) influenced Latino/as to drop out of school because the idea of working hard in school and attending college has now appeared to become intangible (2005). “The Big Lie” (p. 55) reflected the sentiment of Latino/a undocumented students who worked hard academically based upon the premise of receiving scholarships and acceptance into higher education institutions but then realized the payoff did not apply to them based upon their undocumented status, causing Latino/a students to feel betrayed.

### **Latino/a Risk Factors to Social/Emotional Well-Being**

The school counseling specialty and school counselors in training who understand the challenges Latino/a youth face are in the position to provide services like partnering with parents and outside community services. The challenges impacting Latino/a youth’s social-emotional well-being may affect them throughout their lives, therefore, school counselors should seek out what precipitating factors are causing risky behaviors. These risky behaviors that impact Latino/a youths’ social-emotional well-being were identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2007 as “Latino youth have higher rates of attempted suicide, lifetime cocaine use, and unprotected sex than Black and White youth” (Reyes & Elias, 2011, p. 723), higher rates of depression (Andes, Findlay, Geller, Gonzalez-Casanova, Keefe-Oates, Plumlee, & Rios, 2012), and face additional risk factors such as tobacco use and gang involvement (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014). Latino/a students who reside in homes that are affected by factors such as overcrowding, alcoholism, poverty, lack of safety, and support by others, often find school as a place to be safe away from their home environments (Gaitan, 2004). Gaitan (2004) additionally encouraged educators to “design programs that will systematically advocate for children as they attempt to learn under the pressures of their daily lives” (p. 13). The school counseling comprehensive program specifically addresses Gaitan’s

(2004) suggestion since school counselors are “uniquely positioned to be student and systems advocates” (ASCA, 2012, p. 1) and trained to assist families and students by providing support to promote students’ social-emotional wellbeing.

### **Career Development**

The career development domain is an integral component of the school counseling program and can provide interventions in supporting Latino/a students. School counselors are in the position to link the academic and career domains to aide all students in becoming cognizant of how their success in school impacts their career outcomes (Erford, 2011). Therefore, school counselors are qualified to provide career planning as part of their curriculum for K-12 grade levels, especially since barriers to educational success may be due to Latino/a students lack of awareness of career options and pathways (Erford, 2011; Ivers, Milsom, & Newsome, 2012). Furthermore, Zalquett and Baez (2012) indicated Latino/as may not be informed of counseling services such as career counseling and would benefit from these services starting as early as elementary school. Limited literature is available on the topic of Latino/a career development and high school dropout concerns, however, career development may play a positive role in preventing Latino/as from dropping out of high school and promoting school completion (Zalquett & Baez, 2012). Additionally, school counselors are in the role to recognize culture as a potential factor for the types of careers Latino/a students select based upon gender roles, cultural beliefs, and who they view in the work force. This knowledge would allow school counselors to provide opportunities through career exposure and exploration (Zalquett & Baez, 2012).

### **Role of the School Counselor**

Today, the school counselor is adequately positioned to be a social justice change agent in the school setting by providing programs and support to Latino/a students and parents (ASCA,

2012; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014). The school counseling specialty should leverage the fact that the school counseling position has evolved over the years within the profession and anchored itself as a pivotal force for change (ASCA, 2012; Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014; Gysbers, 2010; Paisley & Borders, 1996; Perkins, Oescher, & Ballard, 2010; The Education Trust, 2009). Perhaps the task of systemic change would not have been a possibility had the profession continued as in the past.

Previously, the role of the school counselor appeared unclear and confusing due to being tasked with non-counselor duties such as record keeping, discipline, and working as administrative assistants, which blurred the role (Lieberman, 2004). The DeWitt Wallace Foundation and the Education Trust initiated the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) in 1994, which changed the vision of school counselors from predominantly working with individuals to instead focusing on “removing the systemic barriers to student success for whole groups of students” (Erford, 2011, p. 9). Ultimately, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) developed the National Model, which is based on the work of Gysbers and Henderson (2012), on comprehensive school counseling programs and the new vision themes associated with the TSCI. The National Model, which contained the four salient themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change, provided school counselors the pathway to support and advocate for student success, which allows school counselors to work as social justice change agents (ASCA, 2012; Erford, 2011). Furthermore, the CAFÉ Model (Change Agent for Equity) created by Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, and Mason (2014), applies the role of leadership for school counselors as social justice change agents.

The American School Counselor Association created the comprehensive school counseling model, including student standards among the three domains- academic, career, and

social-emotional (ASCA, 2012). Since the start of this study the standards have been revised as the Mindsets and Behaviors but still encompass the academic, career, and social/emotional domains. The role of the school counselor evolved to “promote student achievement and systemic change that ensures equity and access to rigorous education for every student and leads to closing achievement, opportunity and attainment gaps” (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Martin & House, 2002, as cited in ASCA, 2012, p. 1). School counselors as social justice change agents also recognized the need to advocate and support for students through their academic, social-emotional, and career needs (ASCA, 2012; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Chen-Hayes, Ockerman & Mason, 2014). School counselors are noted as critical players in educational reform and the Latino/a population would be one group who would benefit from school counseling programs (ASCA, 2012). The benefit to school counseling programs for all students in a K-12 setting is that these services are available to students and families as they matriculate through the years.

### **Perception of the School Counselor**

The role of the school counselor often had been unknown to parents; therefore, school counselors were tasked to provide parents with information to educate them on the school counseling specialty (Gillilan, 2006). In a previous study, Gillilan (2006) found that providing parents and students with information about the school counselor’s role assisted in building positive perceptions of the school counselor as a professional within the school setting who helped all students succeed. The knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the professional school counselor’s role reduced the stigma of school counseling services as being not only for individuals and families who were assumed to be dysfunctional, but as programs and services for all students and families.

The literature examined regarding Latino/a students' experiences with school counselors did not depict positive encounters. This statement should be taken seriously by the school counseling specialty and school counselors in training, especially since Latino/a students face several challenges. Latino/a students stated their school counselors were not available and did not respond quickly to their needs (Eckenrod-Green & Culbreth, 2008), did not provide information on higher education (Vela-Gude et al., 2009), and had low expectations of students' abilities (Cavazos, Cavazos, Hinojosa, & Silva, 2009). An interesting correlation through Eckenrod-Green and Culbreth's (2008) research indicated Latino/a high school students who dropped out of high school did not seek school counseling services. The students in the study disclosed the reason for not seeking school counseling services was because they did not think the school counselor would know how to help them since the students had seen the school counselors working in other roles, such as scheduling (Eckenrod-Green & Culbreth, 2008). These unfortunate perceptions of school counselors tell of many missed opportunities school counselors had to assist Latino/a students in the role of social justice change agents and advocates where they could have been providing services and resources instead of engaging in non-counseling tasks (Bemak & Chung, 2008).

The lack of knowledge and understanding of the school counselor's role was recognized as detrimental to student success by the primary researcher of this study. The students from Eckenrod-Green & Culbreth's (2008) research study suggested several ways school counselors could educate students about the role of the school counselor. The students identified a variety of methods such as use of posters to teach what school counseling services are available for students, assistance with transitioning to the school environment, employing a bilingual school counselor, assisting parents with learning about the educational system, and providing student

training on diversity (Eckenrod-Green & Culbreth, 2008). Such suggestions would be beneficial in educating parents about the school counseling role and services. The researcher for this current study found the results from Eckenrod-Green and Culbreth's (2008) research inspiring for conducting further research to understand more about the relationships, experiences, and interactions between school counselors and Latino/a students and parents as a social justice call to action.

### **School Counselor Advocacy**

School counselors especially, along with other adults in the school setting, have the potential ability to encourage and support Latino/a students to persevere throughout their schooling (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). School counselors should consider utilizing the Dimensions of Personality Identity (Stevens, 1973, as cited in Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002) when working with Latino/as to assist in understanding the several layers which make up an individual's personal identity. The application of the Dimensions of Personal Identity allows school counselors to strengthen their understanding of personality development and avoid stereotyping Latino/as by assuming each person has the same background (Santiago-Rivera, et al, 2002). School counselors who consider the notion of not stereotyping nor assuming each person's background as the same should also be cognizant of Latino/a families living in mixed-status households, which consist of several family members who have different immigration status classifications such as citizens, immigrants, documented or undocumented (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010), factors which influence their personal identities.

### **School Counselor Interventions**

School counselors are skilled professionals in the areas of providing support for closing the achievement gap while being "culturally competent social justice advocates and

organizational change agents” (Bemak & Chung, 2008, p. 372). School counseling interventions assist all students, but are especially important for students who are in danger of dropping out of school and potentially failing (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, Holcomb-McCoy, & Mitchell, 2009). It is imperative for school counselors to act as advocates by following the advocacy competencies and providing “direct and indirect interventions” to all students (ASCA, 2012; Chibbaro & Cao, 2008, p. 39). ASCA (2012) stated school counselors should provide at least 80% of their services to students as direct and indirect, defined as “direct services are provided with students, and indirect services are provided for students” (p. 83). Direct services include “school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning and responsive services” whereas indirect services include school counselors providing “leadership, advocacy and collaboration, which enhance student achievement and promote systemic change related to equity and access” (ASCA, 2012, p. 83). School counselors who advocate for their programs and Latino/a student success are able to combat the barriers to learning and achievement.

### **Conclusion**

School counselors are in a position to provide support and advocacy for all students through school counseling programs (ASCA, 2012). The goal of this phenomenological study was to discover the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they related to school counselors and to provide recommendations to inform the school counseling specialty and school counselors in training regarding the importance of advocating and supporting Latino/a students (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). The increasing Latino/a population in the U.S., especially in Georgia, and within public schools, places school counselors in a critical position to provide support for Latino/a student success (Delgado-Romero, Matthews, & Paisley, 2007; Williams & Dawson, 2011). The previous research consulted for this study revealed the need to

investigate school counselor and Latino/a parent experiences for the purpose of understanding what is perceived of the school counselor role and how that impacted potential partnerships. Additionally, the primary researcher not only examined how Latino/a parents described their experiences with school counselors for the purpose of providing research to the school counseling specialty and school counselors in training, but also how further studies conducted on this topic could better support and advocate for Latino/a students.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Relationships between Latino/a parents and school counselors are a key component to Latino/a student success. Unfortunately, limited research is available regarding the experiences Latino/a parents have had with school counselors. Therefore, this study was conducted to provide further research and implications for the school counseling specialty. This phenomenological study, conducted as a social justice call to action, explored the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they related to school counselors (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Mertens, 2007). The primary researcher of this study undertook the charge to seek the voices of Latino/a parents regarding their experiences with school counselors for the purpose of providing advocacy and support for Latino/a student success. The rigor of this research study was consistently demonstrated throughout the methodology through the use of phenomenology, research question, participant selection, researcher bias, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Kline, 2008, Moustakas, 1994).

#### **Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry**

Qualitative inquiry has been known for using stories, narratives, and examining the research topic based on “how or what” questions in order to gather the meaning of the phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2012). The primary researcher recognized the ultimate process to acquire knowledge and details of the experiences Latino/a parents had with school counselors would be through the stories described by them. Therefore, this qualitative study was conducted for the voices and stories of the Latino/a parents to be heard regarding their experiences with

school counselors (Hays & Singh, 2012; Seidman, 2013). Additionally, the primary researcher utilized a qualitative research inquiry as a social justice call to action by advocating for school counseling programs to better serve Latino/as within the K-12 school setting (Mertens, 2007). Qualitative inquiry further lends itself to provide a platform to share the participants' voices, experiences, and recommendations to the field to further guide the work of professionals and "influence policy" so change can be made to benefit marginalized populations (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 4).

### **Rationale for Phenomenological Research Tradition and Theoretical Framework**

The phenomenological research tradition and Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) were selected as the theoretical frameworks for this study. Both phenomenology and RCT provided the opportunity to seek the meanings of the experiences Latino/a parents had with school counselors through their interactions while examining the outcomes and relationships derived from these experiences (Comstock et al., 2008; Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Ruiz, 2005). Furthermore, phenomenology and RCT together provided the research study a social justice approach for the parents to share their stories while collaboratively working with the primary researcher for systemic change.

### **Phenomenological Research Tradition**

Phenomenology was selected for the purpose of delving deep into these experiences to discover the essence and meaning of the phenomenon through their stories and voices (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Vagle (2014) defined phenomena as "the ways in which we find ourselves being in relation to the world through our day-to-day living" therefore the experiences with school counselors for this study were under the scope of the world (p. 20). The phenomenological research tradition allowed for

this research study to examine how the participants described the common phenomenon they experienced (Creswell, 2013). After the data collection and analysis was conducted, significant themes emerged from their stories to inform the practice of school counseling to recognize the need of school counselor and Latino/a parent partnerships (Vagle, 2014). Though the participants or the research sites were not provided monetary exchange for their participation in the study, they were ensured the pay back would be in the form of social justice advocacy and systemic change by using their stories as the catalyst (ASCA, 2012; Ratts, DeKruyf & Chen-Hayes, 2007).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Latino/a culture is not only racially diverse (Aud et al., 2013; Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Alpert, 2011; Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014) but comprised of people from different “countries, races, and historical and political backgrounds” (Ruiz, 2005, p. 34). Additionally, Latino/as vary in socio-economic status, educational attainment, and professional stature as well (Ruiz, 2005). Ruiz (2005) further pointed out that within each country’s historical background, the culture has faced various forms of oppression and marginalization through colonization within their countries of origin resulting in sexism, racism, and classism, which follows immigrants as they come to the United States. Additionally, school counselors would benefit from knowing Latino/as are not only marginalized by race in the U.S., but simultaneously through “language and citizenship,” both of which create a sense of fear and intimidation (Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010, p. 43). The school counseling specialty and school counselors in training should be aware of understanding the historical background for the purpose of viewing the Latino/a community from a RCT lens and incorporating the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies through the process of building relationships and

connections (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015; Ruiz, 2005). These relationships between Latino/a parents and school counselors must be built on the foundation of trust in order for change to occur (Miller & Stiver, 1997). School counselors who advocate for systemic change and social justice advocacy in support of Latino/a students in the K-12 setting must be knowledgeable of how oppression creates barriers to the educational attainment of Latino/a students, especially since the numbers of Latino/as in the K-12 school setting are rapidly growing (Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007).

RCT, a theoretical framework also known as a theoretical force, guided this research study and was utilized as a social justice call to the field for advocating in support of Latino/a students and parents (Comstock et al., 2008; Mertens, 2007; Ratts, 2009; Ratts, D'Andrea, & Arredondo, 2004; Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007; Ruiz, 2005). Relational Cultural Theory provided a particularly appropriate lens through which to examine the questions of interest due to the theory's focus on improving human development and counseling to fully incorporate the experiences of women, as well as other marginalized groups, in order to promote healing through relationships (Comstock et al., 2008; Ruiz, 2005). The majority of the participants in this study were women and all of the participants were considered to be from a marginalized community. Therefore, the intersectionality of school counselor relationships with and advocacy for Latino/a parents and students resonated with the purpose of this phenomenological study (ASCA, 2012; Comstock et al., 2008; Creswell, 2013; Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Hays & Singh, 2012; Ruiz, 2005).

Since Latino/as have been considered a historically marginalized community due to language and oppression in the U.S. as well as sometimes in their countries of origin, the tenets

of RCT significantly influenced the direction of this phenomenological research study (Comstock et al., 2008; Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Hays & Singh, 2012; Ruiz, 2005). Particular tenets from RCT which influenced how the study was approached included: (a) respecting other's experiences and perceptions to initiate change, (b) working alongside others' while recognizing power differences, (c) respecting differences, (d) demonstrating resilience, and (e) working towards making a change through the process (Frey, 2013). Additionally, growth-fostering relationships were considered the cornerstone of RCT, especially when working with the Latino/a community since RCT intersects with Latino/a "cultural values and scripts" known to "value collectivism, *simpatia* (smooth, pleasant relationships), *personalismo* (individualized self-worth), *respeto* (respect), and *familismo* (familialism or familism)" (Ruiz, 2005, p. 37). While growth-fostering relationships were recognized to be pivotal, RCT's foundation is embodied within the "Five Good Things," known as zest, action, knowledge, sense of worth, and desire for more connections (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

These "Five Good Things" are developed through mutual empathy and mutual empowerment during a counselor and client interaction, which allows connections to occur and continue (Miller & Striver, 1997). Mutual empathy and mutual empowerment are based on a two-way exchange where each person listens to the other, responds based on their thoughts and feelings, and through this exchange, the "Five Good Things" arise (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). As mutual empathy and mutual empowerment occur, the feeling of zest transpires, which is sensed in the form of positive energy when the individuals make a positive connection (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). The second "good thing," called "action," occurs when both parties feel empowered based on their positive connection and feel a sense of change within themselves. The third "good thing" involves knowledge, which stems from when each person learns about

the other and themselves through the connection made (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). The fourth includes the sense of worth within each person, which grows as the realization occurs that the other person understands how the other feels and thinks (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). The fifth good thing encompasses the desire for more connections to occur again with either the same person or others (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

It was evident that RCT was highly compatible with this phenomenological research design and the study's focus on Latino/a parents' experiences with school counselors. Therefore, the primary researcher of this study recognized the significant need to integrate RCT within the data collection process. Following the protocol for qualitative research and RCT, a safe and comfortable environment was created for the primary researcher and participants to work collaboratively through the Five Good Things (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). The interview process was approached through an RCT lens by aiming to create positive connections and energy between the primary researcher and the participants to discover findings and implications for the school counseling specialty and school counselors in training to seek systemic change (ASCA, 2012; Comstock et al., 2008; Frey, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

### **Researcher Positionality**

Hays and Singh (2012) recommended researchers involved in a qualitative study recognize and bracket their positionality, also known as reduction (Vagle, 2014). Therefore, I acknowledged my own biases and assumptions in order to conscientiously identify my viewpoint prior to the commencement of the study (Hays & Singh, 2012; Vagle, 2014). This allowed me to

focus on what the participants shared about their own experiences and openly view the perspectives of the participants through their eyes instead of my personal experiences (Finlay, 2008; Hays & Wood, 2011).

The first step I took was to reflect on my initial connection to the Spanish language and culture, as well as why this study was important to me. My connection to the Spanish language began when I was in middle school and joined the Spanish club. I enjoyed learning the language and being able to communicate with others. In junior high school, I registered for Spanish as my foreign language and continued with it up until college, where I majored in Secondary Education with concentration in Spanish and History. Additionally, I enrolled in a course on the history of Mexico to learn more about the culture and past, which sparked my desire to participate in study abroad programs. I participated in two study abroad programs that allowed me to immerse myself in the Latino/a culture and build relationships with the locals, which, in retrospect, were the start of my journey in working with Latino/a students and parents.

I identified my main reason for conducting this study was because of the connection to my own lived experiences with Latino/a parents over the past 12 years. Additionally, the pertinent connection of my own experiences with Latino/a parents specifically aligned with phenomenology since it is important to conduct research on a topic that “reflects the interest, involvement, and personal commitment of the researcher” (Moustakas, 1997, p. 20). During the last 12 years, I have worked in schools with significant Latino/a populations whose primary language was Spanish. My first professional job was teaching Spanish to first and third graders but I also functioned in the role of a translator with the parents. As I interacted with the parents, I built relationships with them as I listened to their stories and demonstrated empathy, which

resonated with RCT (Ruiz, 2005). Through these interactions, I recognized my desire to become a school counselor so I resigned after my first year of teaching and enrolled in a school counseling master's program.

After I graduated with my master's degree, I returned to the elementary school where I taught Spanish as the upper grade school counselor. This elementary school was highly diverse. Many students arrived directly from Mexico and did not speak any English. Therefore, I worked with these students by conducting individual or group sessions in Spanish, depending on the specific need at the time, to gauge their acclimation to the school setting and assist with their transition, as well as provide support in the area of academics and social-emotional well-being (ASCA, 2012). Through my interactions with the students and their parents, I gained knowledge of their home lives and struggles while partnering with the parents to support the family and student needs. The connections and relationships I built with the Latino/a parents and students were based on positive connections through communication, collaboration, and empathy, which were classic components of RCT that promoted growth-fostering relationships and continuous communication amongst the Latino/a parents, students, and me (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). It was evident the Latino/a parents saw my role as a support and recognized me as a resource, which was the foundation for their trust in me as an ally. Their trust led to their children viewing me as a support and an advocate for themselves and their parents.

Based on my own experiences, I came to this study with a set of assumptions that I needed to make explicit. I assumed that Latino/a parents did not have school counselors in their home country, had a lack of awareness regarding school counseling services, and did not immediately contact the school counselor for resources or services. Further biases and

assumptions I recognized were school counselors in general functioned under the premise of RCT, where they proactively utilized intentional outreach to students and families such as seeking opportunities to provide support through the basis of building relationships (Comstock et al., 2008). Additional bracketing information is available in Appendix A.

### **Research Team**

The research team consisted of three females, including the primary researcher of this study. The primary researcher of this study was enrolled in a doctoral program at the time of the study and the other two female members were graduates of the same doctoral program within the counseling field from a university in the southeastern United States. The females on the research team were ethnically diverse as well as diverse in their disciplines. The primary researcher was of Indian Asian descent with a background in school counseling concentrating in grades 3-6. The other two research team members included an African American female professional counselor with a private practice and a White female school counselor, who both had recently accepted assistant professor positions. All members of the research team bracketed their assumptions prior to the study commencing in order to identify their own positionality (Hays & Singh, 2012). This action of bracketing derived from Epoch where the “investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). Additionally Epoch involved the researchers in disengaging from prior beliefs, ideas, and recognizing the participants within the research study as the focal point through the sharing of their lived experiences as the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Across the research team, a number of assumptions were shared regarding Latino/a parents. Team members assumed that Latino/a parents: (a) did not have school counselors in their home country, (b) lacked awareness regarding

school counseling services, (c) did not immediately contact the school counselor for resources or services, (d) wanted their children to succeed in school, (e) lacked understanding of the school culture, (f) were open to support from school personnel, and (g) were intimidated by lack of English language skills.

### **Research Question**

The research question “What is the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they relate to school counselors?” directed this phenomenological study. The primary researcher utilized this research question to uncover the essence and provide meaning of lived experiences with school counselors as described by the Latino/a parents from their perspective. The intent of this research study was to provide comprehensive and meaningful insight from experiences and to extend into best practices for the school counseling specialty and school counselors in training through a RCT and phenomenological lens (Comstock et al., 2008; Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Frey, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Ruiz, 2005). Furthermore, the RCT theoretical framework assisted in the formation of the research question by seeking to understand if these experiences were impacted by the connections formed between the school counselor and parent (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

### **Participants**

The 12 participants for this study were selected through purposeful sampling based upon the specific criteria of the research study, which consisted of Latino/a parents who were born in a Spanish speaking country, attended school in their country of origin, and had children who attended school in the U.S. (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh; 2012). Additionally, the participants’ countries of origin aligned with the term and definition of Latino/a, which was a criteria to participate in the research study-“a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central

American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (Aud et al., 2013, p. vii; Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Alpert, 2011, p. 2; Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014). Furthermore, the participants self-selected whether they met the criteria by identifying themselves as Latino/a, though during the semi-structured interviews, some of them referred to themselves as Hispanic (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The participants’ countries of origin were Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. The majority of the participants’ country of origin was Mexico.

A specific age criteria was not set due to the biological capability of individuals to become parents at various ages. However the participants’ ages ranged from 30 to 57 years old, with a median age of 39 years old. The majority of the parents were in their thirties. One participant was a foster mother, which did not exclude her from the study since biological relationships were not listed as a qualifying criterion. Additionally, the participants had children who attended school in the K-12 school setting and had experiences with school counselors. They resided in three different counties within the state of Georgia. Four participants resided within County #1 with a suburban demographic population, four participants resided within County #2 with an urban demographic population, and four participants resided within County #3 with a rural demographic population. Table 3.1 further details the demographics and descriptions of each participant.

Table 3.1

*Participant Demographics*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Age/Gender</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Number of Children Attending School</b>
Marta	1	39/F	Colombia	4
Sabrina	1	32/F	Mexico	2
Patricia	1	43/F	Brazil	2

Leticia	1	37/F	Mexico	1
Judy Elizabeth	2	57/F	Dominican Republic	4
Ruby Corazon	2	40/F	Mexico	1
Lucy	2	n/a	Mexico	3
Lili	2	40/F	Mexico	2
Daniel	2	48/M	Mexico	2
Ana	3	31/F	Mexico	4
John Wayne	3	34/M	Mexico	4
Maria	3	30/F	Mexico	4

**Marta.** Marta was a 39 year old female whose country of origin was Colombia. She was married to man who was also from Colombia and, together, they had four sons. Two of the sons attended high school, one attended middle school, and the other was in elementary school. She was bilingual and came from an affluent family. Marta was college educated and received a degree in engineering in Colombia. Additionally, she worked as an engineer in the United States and had been in the U.S. for 17 years at the time of the study. After giving birth, she and her husband decided she would be a stay at home mom until three years ago. At the time of this research study, she was working in a middle school setting as a parent liaison.

**Sabrina.** Sabrina was a 32 year old married female whose country of origin was Mexico. She came to the U.S. 15 years ago and had two children attending school. Her son was in Kindergarten and her daughter was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Patricia.** Patricia was a 43 year old female whose country of origin was Brazil. She was married and had a daughter in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. She worked in a spa and spoke three languages - English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Additionally, she had experiences with three school counselors.

**Leticia.** Leticia was a 37 year old female whose country of origin was Mexico. She was a victim of domestic violence and left her husband for a better life. She had an 11 year old son.

At the time of the research study, she cleaned homes and did construction work to earn money. From her description of her interaction with the school counselor, it was uncertain if the school counselor provided counseling services or served as a translator during the conference with the teacher, school counselor, and parent.

**Judy Elizabeth.** Judy Elizabeth was a 57 year old woman whose country of origin, based on birth, was the Dominican Republic. She moved to Puerto Rico when she was 10 years old and had lived in New York and Georgia since that time. She had three foster children living with her due to their mother being deported. She was bilingual.

**Ruby Corazon.** Ruby Corazon was a 40 year old female whose country of origin was Mexico. She had been in the U.S. for 13 years and her husband lived with her until he was deported. She had a nine year old daughter and a three year old son.

**Lucy.** Lucy and her husband had three children who attended school and were four, nine, and 10 years old. Her country of origin was Mexico, and she had been in the U.S. for 15 years at the time of the study. Her age was not documented during data collection.

**Lili.** Lili was a 40 year old female whose country of origin was Mexico. She had been in the U.S. for 20 years and had two sons who were 20 and 15 years old.

**Daniel.** Daniel was a 48 year old male whose country of origin was Mexico and indicated his heritage was of Indian/indigenous descent. He came to the U.S. in 1985 and moved to Georgia in 1992. At the time of the semi-structured interview, he had been in the U.S. for 29 years. He had three children who were three, nine, and 13 years old. During the interview, he stated he met with his child's school counselor to seek help in academics, specifically math, and wanted school counselors to speak to students and parents about getting ready for college. He was bilingual.

**Ana.** Ana was a 31 year old female whose country of origin was Mexico. She arrived to the U.S. in 2005. Her children were four, seven, nine and 13 years old.

**John Wayne.** John Wayne was a 34 year old male whose country of origin was Mexico. He had a blended family, but had two biological children- an eight year old son and an 11 year old daughter. He was bilingual.

**Maria.** Maria was a 30 year old female whose country of origin was Mexico. She had a blended family, but had two biological daughters who were eight and 11 years old. She was bilingual.

### **Site Access**

Three Georgia counties with significant Latino/a populations were selected for this research study. The three counties also represented differences regarding suburban, urban, and rural regions. The process of gaining access into these three research sites was similar to a roller coaster ride. There were highs and lows. My first attempt included making contact with sites through consulting with individuals who knew names of Latino/a churches as well as emailing churches I found through internet sites. When it seemed I was finally making progress, there ended up being a roadblock. I would either receive initial responses from ministers or administrative assistants but, in time, I would not hear back from them. At times, I would not receive a response from anyone. I was extremely frustrated and questioned whether the research study would be possible or if I needed to select a different study.

After several denied attempts to gain entry into the three counties, I relied heavily on networking by asking individuals who had connections with these areas for assistance. It was evident there was a significant stronghold with gatekeeping and many churches were not easily trusting of an unknown outsider conducting a study with this particular population (Creswell,

2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). Though trust was a significant factor, it was not the only factor that prevented me from gaining access. One minister in County #2 explained his rationale for not desiring the study to be conducted at his church due to an ongoing longitudinal comprehensive program evaluation which was currently surveying all of the members in the congregation. He felt it would be exhaustive to add an additional research component on to the members. I recognized his respect and concern for his members by not wanting to overwhelm them and their time.

Therefore, I acknowledged and leveraged the importance of personal connections and trust, which once again echoed the foundation of RCT in this study (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Networking involved contacting individuals who functioned in the roles of gatekeepers, stakeholders, and key informants (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). These individuals assisted me by utilizing their relationships to speak with ministers in these counties to inform them about the study, providing contact information for ministers they knew in the selected counties, and speaking to individuals who attended church in these counties on my behalf (Hays & Singh, 2012). This course of action successfully allowed entry into the sites and for the research study to officially commence. The process of gaining entry and conducting interviews took approximately six months, but provided further evidence of a living example of RCT in action as I witnessed the gatekeepers trust in me based on the prior positive connections formed with the individuals who recommended my study and me (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

Entry into the suburban county was forged once I reached out to a colleague who attended a Latino/a church. My colleague discussed the study with the minister of the church, who then granted support and permission for the study to be conducted. Next, I gained access to

a church in an urban county after receiving names and contact information of ministers through a personal connection with a minister who knew other ministers in the county. Due to the personal contacts of the minister, I was able to gain trust and permission to conduct my study.

Additionally, the minister from the urban county volunteered to assist me with additional contacts for a rural county if I was unable to receive permission to conduct the study there. I was humbled by and appreciative of the willingness of the minister to take his time and offer his services to assist me with acquiring a site. The notion of him putting his name and reputation out there for my study and for a person who he did not know well, other than my genuine desire to improve Latino/a parent and school counselor relationships, was astounding. This again echoed RCT in action because I was able to broach the importance of this study and implications for practice to best support Latino/a parents and school counselor relationships. My goal to provide support for the Latino/a community gained the trust of the minister and the participants, which created a positive connection and sense of zeal that led them to desire success for my research study and my own sentiment of feeling accepted (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

The connection and entry in the rural county was facilitated through a Latino/a success center housed at the university I attended. The center supported and advocated for Latino/a achievement through research and programs for Latino/a students in the educational setting with the purpose of supporting academic success. The center staff had several connections in the community. Due to the positive reputation and previous working relationships with the church and the Latino/a success department, the priest trusted the recommendation and request for the study to be accepted and conducted at his church. The priest invited me to breakfast to speak to him and his assistant about the study prior to the start of mass. Additionally, he shared

information about the congregation such as demographics and culture, which I deemed as a valuable resource in gaining perspective and understanding more about the worldview of the community (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). I gained perspective from our conversation that due to privilege and class, some Latino/as did not want to receive materials in Spanish because historically, the educated class would speak and send written materials to the poor in higher grammatical Spanish than they could understand. Therefore, I was glad the research materials I provided were in English on one side and Spanish on the other so the participants could decide which language they preferred to use during their participation in the study. He also stated many of the Latino/as were working hard to be “Americans” and desired to receive written correspondence in English. Furthermore, the priest shared the demographics of the county as approximately 1,000-1,500 Latino families originating from Mexico, Guatemala, and Puerto Rico. Many of the Latino/a adults worked at the local chicken farms, which was what brought them to this area.

All of the sites openly welcomed me and received me warmly once the study began, which was a drastic contrast from my attempt to gain access at the beginning of the process. I recognized that once I gained access, that signified I was trusted and considered to be “in,” which meant the churches and participants wanted to support me as much as they could. People wanted to support my study and wanted to learn either how to help me or wanted to learn more about the school counselor role.

Again, RCT resonated throughout the process of gaining entry, building trust, and building a relationship with the gatekeepers. Ruiz (2005) described the Latino/a community as one that built strong relationships within their community and, therefore, once I connected positively with the community, they were willing to assist me with the study. Additionally, I

remained cognizant in displaying the personality traits of *simpatia*, *personalismo*, and *respeto*, which connected to RCT for the purpose of building growth-fostering relationships throughout the research process (Ruiz, 2005). Each site demonstrated trust and acceptance of my study and me. For example, in County #1, the minister did not meet with me to discuss my study but instead granted me permission and wished me the best in my endeavor through my connection, who brought the study to the minister's attention. The minister from County #2 included me in the Bible study while I waited for the participants to arrive, and the members of the Bible study were glad I joined them two times for the duration of my study. Additionally, the priest from County #3 demonstrated his trust when he told me that he was leaving for the day and, when I finished the interviews in his office, to lock up by closing the door behind me. Evidently at the end, it was only a participant and me in the church and no one else. Another example of demonstrating genuine interest to support the Latino/a community was a woman who signed up to meet with me, but as we began speaking, she relayed she had not had any experience with the school counselor but wanted to learn what a school counselor does and how one becomes a school counselor. Through our discussion, she appeared excited about the programs, services, and support school counselors provide to all students. From that one moment and exchange, my hope was that she moved forward to seek positive experiences with school counselors. The start of this study process was, unfortunately, deflating, but in the process I gained resiliency and empowerment as a researcher as well as created positive connections which the Latino/a community in hopes of opportunities for growth-fostering relationships to occur with their child(ren)'s school counselors (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

## **Regional Demographics**

The counties throughout this study were identified as County #1 representing the suburban region, County #2 representing the urban region, and County #3 representing the rural region. The demographic statistics from 2010 collected by the Census Bureau listed County #1's population as 688, 078 and estimated the population change by 2014 to be 730, 981. The Latino/a population in County #1 was 12.6% in 2013. County #2's population was listed as 805, 321 and the statistics estimated the population change by 2014 to be 877, 922 and the estimated Latino/a population would be 20.4% in 2013. Finally, County #3's population was listed as 43, 041 and estimated the population change by 2014 to be 43, 752 and the Latino/a estimated population would be 13.6% in 2013 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The choices of each location allowed the findings to represent the voices of Latino/a parents from the range of demographic characteristics of urban, suburban, and rural areas.

### **Interview Sites**

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in three churches in three different counties within Northeast Georgia. The participants in this research study attended the churches on a regular basis and viewed the church as their family. Therefore, the churches were intentionally selected as the interview sites for the purpose of ensuring the environment as a trustworthy location for the participants and primary researcher to meet, as well as to increase participants' comfort level. Furthermore, each semi-structured interview took place in a confidentially secured site in the church setting, such as a gathering room (Counties #1 and #2) or the priest's office (County #3).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The primary researcher anticipated the possibility of ethical issues, which could arise based upon the participants' self-disclosure during the semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2013; Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). Additionally, the primary researcher took into consideration the sensitive nature of what may be disclosed during the data collection, and informed the participants about the potential of confidentiality being breached during the qualitative interviews if the participant disclosed harm to themselves or others (Hays & Singh, 2012). Furthermore, the participants were informed of the specifics for "duty to warn and protect" and provided the rationale for breach of confidentiality for the purpose of safety of the participant and child(ren) (Hays & Singh, 2012, p.86). However, the primary researcher also was cognizant of the participants' extra need to maintain confidentiality regarding their documented and/or undocumented status, therefore, the participants were informed they would not be asked questions regarding their legal status. This was due to the importance of protecting the individuals from marginalized groups in order to shield them from backlash and/or retaliation (Mertens, 2010).

Two additional measures, the use of initials and pseudonyms, were implemented to maintain confidentiality. The participants were asked to initial their informed consent instead of signing their first and last name in order to protect their identity. This extra measure to protect the participants was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) due to the nature of the individuals who were involved in the study (Creswell, 2014). The IRB approval letter available in Appendix B. Secondly, the primary researcher ensured strict confidentiality was maintained by requesting participants to create pseudonyms for themselves. Only the primary researcher and translator (when utilized) knew the identity of the participants and agreed to not disclose this

information after the semi-structured interviews were completed (Hays & Singh, 2012; Mertens, 2010). The primary researcher for this study utilized translation services of a minister from County #2 for one interview. All other interviews in Spanish were conducted by the primary researcher. Furthermore, to ensure confidentiality, the primary researcher and minister from County #2 discussed the confidentiality agreement and acknowledged the information disclosed during the interviews would remain confidential and not be shared with individuals outside the realm of the study (Hays & Singh, 2012; Mertens, 2010). The minister apprised the primary researcher that, due to the nature of his occupation, he adhered to strict confidentiality. A signed confidentiality agreement was not enacted, but rather a verbal agreement reached.

### **Development of Interview Protocol**

Dana Gillilan's (2006) Action Research Study titled "Parental Perceptions of Elementary School Counselors in a Suburban Atlanta School" guided the primary researcher's approach to developing the interview protocol. The study sought the perceptions and knowledge parents had of the school counselor role but did not indicate if Latino/a parents were included. Therefore, the primary researcher chose to focus specifically on Latino/a parents' experiences with school counselors and approached the study from a phenomenological stance in order to determine the types of experiences Latino/a parents encountered with school counselors (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). Additionally, the RCT framework and phenomenological research tradition guided the interview protocol construction (Comstock et al., 2008; Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). The interview protocol contained questions derived from the RCT framework to incorporate an opportunity to implement change within the school counseling specialty (Comstock et al., 2008; Frey, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Ruiz, 2005). The goal was to strategically enhance the validity of the data collection by eliciting

feedback from participants to gain insight to the meaning of the lived experiences as they related to school counselors and to extract the essence of these experiences of Latino/a parents with school counselors (Comstock et al., 2008; Frey, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Ruiz, 2005).

The questions were constructed based on phenomenology's premise of starting with "two broad, general questions" about the participant's experiences followed by other questions (Creswell, 2013, p. 81; Moustakas, 1994). The primary researcher utilized the survey from Gillilan's (2006) study as a guide and transformed the questions to reflect the RCT framework and phenomenological research tradition by asking questions based on the premise of school counselor and Latino/a parent connections and interactions (Comstock et al., 2008; Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Ruiz, 2005). The interview protocol began with the first question: "What experience have you had with your child's school counselor?" which was strategically created to be broad for the purpose of providing the participants with flexibility in answering the question based on their own experience. Based on the participant's response, the primary researcher followed up by asking additional clarifying questions and proceeding through the interview protocol. The complete interview protocol is available in both English and Spanish languages in Appendix F.

### **Data Management**

The semi-structured interviews conducted by the primary researcher were digitally recorded on a Mac Computer through the QuickTime Player software. Each participant utilized a pseudonym in order for his/her identity to remain confidential and protected (Hays & Singh, 2012). Additionally, to ensure further confidentiality and security, access to the use of the Mac Computer and software was locked through a passcode. The data recorded on paper, when not in use, remained secure in a lockbox in the primary researcher's home. Furthermore, based on the

IRB agreement, the data transcripts in electronic form were housed on a thumb drive during the study, stored in the lockbox, and once the study had been deemed completed, the data would be retained for three years and then destroyed.

### **Data Collection**

The primary researcher, in her role as a research instrument, utilized two forms of data collection for this study: (a) screening survey to collect demographic data as well as experiences and (b) a semi-structured interview to collect the participants' accounts of their experiences with school counselors (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Seidman, 2013). As the research instrument, the primary researcher observed the participants' demeanor, body language, and voice inflections while the participants filled out the screening survey and spoke during the semi-structured interview (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, the primary researcher interviewed the participants only once due to distance, time, and monetary constraints and adhered to Creswell's (2013) recommendation which indicated either one or more interviews could be conducted as long as the process incorporated "a streamlined form of data collection," (p. 82) which was followed in a precise manner. The Latino/a parents who participated in this research study were solicited through their community churches or individuals who recommended participation by word-of-mouth to the participants. Prior to data collection, the primary researcher emailed the recruitment flyer to a contact person from each of the churches. The contact person for County #1 was a church attender who forwarded the flyer to the minister. The contact person for County #2 was the minister who then reached out to his congregation to recruit participants. Lastly, the contact person for County #3 was the priest's administrative assistant who copied and passed out the recruitment flyers to the entire congregation during mass. The recruitment flyer may be found in Appendix C. Once the primary researcher received a date to arrive at the church sites in

Counties #2 and #3, she conducted a brief presentation (in Spanish in County #3) about the purpose and significance of this research study. At the church site where the primary researcher did not present, the contact person had previously spoken with the church attendees and obtained contact information for any individuals interested in taking part in the study. When the primary researcher met with potential participants, she provided informed consent outlining the parameters of the study as well as their rights. She provided informed consent in writing and verbally to ensure proper understanding (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). The informed consent document is available in Appendix D. This was done on an individual basis, and each person had a scheduled time to meet with the primary researcher. Furthermore, the individuals who agreed to participate in the study initialed the informed consent document and submitted it to the primary researcher. The initials were utilized in lieu of a formal signature in order to ensure confidentiality and to address ethical considerations, a variation in process approved by the IRB. After agreeing to the conditions of the informed consent, the individuals became known as participants. The sample size for this phenomenological study was based upon the recommended average size of three to ten individuals (Creswell, 2014) and five to twenty-five (Polkinghorne, 1989). Twelve Latino/a parents participated in a semi-structured interview. The sample included four participants for each of the three counties and was comprised of mothers, fathers, and one foster parent.

**Screening survey.** The first step of the study involved the participants completing the screening survey, which occurred after being provided the informed consent. Each participant received the screening survey individually when they met with the primary researcher. The screening survey collected information regarding the experiences of the Latino/a parents with school counselors, demographic data, and willingness to be interviewed for additional data

collection through the semi-structured interview process. Additionally, it provided the primary researcher with an opportunity to ask specific questions regarding the participant based on his/her responses and build rapport prior to the semi-structured interview (Hays & Singh, 2012). The screening survey is available in Appendix E.

**Semi-structured interviews.** After completion and analysis of the screening survey to ensure the individuals matched the criteria for the study, the primary researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews, which were digitally recorded, with the individuals who were interested in sharing their stories about their experiences with school counselors. The semi-structured interviews were conducted on site in a private location, which was the participants' home church. Prior to the start of the semi-structured interviews, the participants were reminded of the informed consent and their right to stop the interview or not respond to the questions if they felt uncomfortable (Hays & Singh, 2012). The primary researcher, along with a translator (used one time), digitally recorded the sessions after the participants agreed to the terms of the informed consent.

The protocol for the semi-structured individual interviews contained approximately 10 questions, and the interviews lasted for a duration of 30-45 minutes. The choice of phenomenology as the methodology provided flexibility to the researcher since each semi-structured interview did not need to be identical to the other interviews due to the central objective of gleaning as much real world information as possible about the experiences from the participants (Vagle, 2014). Therefore, the interview protocol contained several combinations of interview questions focused on feelings, experiences, and background. Probing questions were used as follow-up in order to gain more understanding and meaning from the voices of the participants (Hays & Singh, 2012). Additionally, data was collected through digital recording

and the researcher began the recording process a few minutes prior to the interview to assist the participant in becoming comfortable with and aware of the interview process (Hays & Singh, 2012). As the participants described their experiences with school counselors, the primary researcher also made notes on the interview protocol to supplement the digital recording for the purpose of collecting observational information (Creswell, 2013).

Following the semi-structured individual interviews, the primary researcher completed a contact summary sheet to record reflections, observations, and impressions to assist in the data analysis process (Hays & Singh, 2012). The contact summary sheet is included in Appendix I. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Spanish and English depending on the language preference of the participant, therefore, the contact summary sheet was deemed necessary to complete in order to ensure authenticity and accuracy of the data collection. Additionally, in order to maintain authenticity and accuracy of the data collected, the researcher hired a Spanish-speaking transcriptionist to translate and transcribe the interview. By hiring a professional transcriptionist and translator, the data was accurately portrayed since the transcripts needed to note any pauses and/or voice inflections (Hays & Singh, 2012).

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis provided significant rigor in order to accurately portray the essence and meaning of the lived experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012). The data analysis began with “preparing and organizing the data” by having the transcripts professionally transcribed, examining the transcripts while listening to the recordings to gauge emotion and voice inflections, and reviewing the reflexive journal and notes taken during the data collection (Creswell, 2013, p. 180). The primary researcher recognized the importance of listening to the recordings prior to starting the data analysis phase for the purpose of reconnecting with the

voices, sentiments, and experiences of the participants. Next the primary researcher utilized Moustakas's (1994) "Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data" for data analysis which incorporated four detailed steps (p. 121). The first step involved the primary researcher utilizing the phenomenological research tradition by describing her experiences relating to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The second step included reviewing the transcripts rigorously by identifying non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements to create themes and for researcher reflection of the textural and structural descriptions (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). The third step involved repeating the second step with all the remaining transcripts and finally the fourth step involved the primary researcher to utilize the textural and structural descriptions to identify the essence of the experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994).

Bracketing occurred prior to the data analysis when the researcher and research team met to discuss their biases and assumptions (Hays & Singh, 2012). The research team recognized and created a list of words or sentences found in the transcripts that did not repeat or overlap (Hays & Wood, 2011). Furthermore, the primary researcher and research team facilitated bridling by consistently recognizing their biases and assumptions throughout the study to maintain the integrity of the research study. This was done by allowing the essence of the phenomena to be recognized through the participants' stories and perceptions instead of their own (Vagle, 2014). The textural description during the data analysis aimed to identify the "meaning and depth of the essence of the experience", and the structural description occurred with the research team discovering several or various meanings within the data (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 355). Once the researcher and the research team identified the recurring themes, a codebook was created (Hays & Singh, 2012). Furthermore, triangulation was performed by the

research team, the external auditor, and peer debriefing by a supportive colleague, which enhanced the validity of this study (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). Through the triangulation process, it was apparent additional data collection was not needed after the data analysis, therefore the primary researcher of this study did not solicit additional participants for interviews since saturation was evident (Hays & Singh, 2012; Seidman, 2006).

### **Horizontalization**

Prior to the beginning of data collection and analysis, the primary researcher and research team bracketed their thoughts and experiences with Latino/as in order to begin the study with an open and unbiased mindset (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, the primary researcher listened to the recordings and read the transcripts several times to be immersed in the data in order to stay close to what the participants stated, as well as to avoid losing any of the details and experiences from the interviews (Hays & Singh, 2012). The research team concurrently coded the transcripts while the primary researcher practiced horizontalization by reviewing and coding the transcripts as well as recognizing non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements to identifying quotes, which described the meaning of these experiences (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Wood, 2011; Hays & Singh, 2012). Furthermore, quotes which were repeated and overlapped were deleted, resulting in horizons also known as the textural meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Inductive coding was conducted since the codes were developed while each line of the data was examined. During this process, the primary researcher and research team met and emailed frequently to discuss the transcripts and codes to ensure consistency and agreement. Through discussions, emails, and notes regarding the transcripts and statements, clusters were formed. At first, 134 clusters were identified but, through further analysis and condensing, five themes emerged. Throughout this process the primary researcher heeded the advice of Hays and Singh (2012) to

take a break from the data analysis process in order to remain grounded and to keep focus on the study. The breaks allowed for the primary researcher to look at the research with fresh eyes and mind, as well as utilize the time off by engaging in scholarly discussions with other practitioners in the field and attending conference sessions on Latino/a student advocacy (Hays & Singh, 2012).

### **Trustworthiness of Study**

The primary researcher for this study, along with the research team, followed several measures of trustworthiness to maintain authenticity of the data. After each semi-structured individual interview was conducted, the primary researcher used a reflexive journal to write observations and thoughts to reflect upon the data collection (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Furthermore, member checking occurred by asking questions during the semi-structured individual interviews to clarify the participants' responses and later by sharing the transcripts and themes to ensure the data collected was deemed authentic (Hays & Singh, 2012). Additionally, throughout the study, data analysis occurred concurrently with the data collection since the research team coded the transcripts between each interview site (Hays & Singh, 2012). The primary researcher deemed this practice necessary since each time she collected and analyzed the data, she recognized alternative forms of questions and probes to utilize in order to strengthen the interview process (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Member checking was initiated a second time by emailing the transcripts and themes to the participants (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). The primary researcher emailed the transcripts and themes to the participants instead of personally meeting with them due to distance and time constraints. Out of the 12 participants who were interviewed, two did not have email addresses; therefore only 10 participants received the transcripts via email. The primary

researcher did not have additional contact information for the remaining two participants, thus, follow up was not possible. The participants contacted were asked to provide feedback, changes, or request to be removed from the study if they were not comfortable with the transcripts and themes. Two participants responded to the primary researcher's email. One participant requested an additional statement be included in her transcript, while the other participant was satisfied with the transcript and themes. Additionally, triangulation was utilized to maintain trustworthiness of the study. The methods of triangulation involved the use of the research team, the external auditor who analyzed the work of the research team to ensure they completed the data analysis appropriately, and peer debriefing by a supportive colleague (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). The external auditor was a White male doctoral student and a practicing school counselor who had experience working with Latino/a parents and who had experience with phenomenological research. He examined the transcripts, themes, and implications. The supportive colleague was a White female graduate of a counseling doctoral program and had phenomenological research experience. She provided support, guidance, and research tradition consultation to the primary researcher throughout the study.

### **Researcher as Analyst**

Throughout the study, I frequently reflected on my role as a researcher. The statement from Hays and Singh's (2012) text, "acknowledge your role as a researcher-practitioner and consider the role of your research in social change as you build a research agenda," resonated with me through each step of the research process (p. 30). During the first leg of the journey, I recognized my struggle with balancing my role as a researcher-practitioner and a practicing school counselor, where I wanted to respond to the participants from a school counseling perspective. However, by continuing to focus on the purpose of this research study as a social

justice call to action with the goal of systemic change, I maintained my work as a social justice change agent by collaborating with the participants. Furthermore by listening to the participants' voices and hearing their stories allowed me to transform their experiences with school counselors into implications for best practices for the school counseling specialty.

I adhered to Creswell's (2013) recommendations for the practice of utilizing social justice frameworks such as ensuring I did not bring additional opportunities to marginalize the participants but, instead, demonstrated respect towards the participants and research sites. I remained dedicated to this approach by creating a safe and respectful environment towards the participants and the sites. Throughout the research process, I made it a point to practice reciprocity with the participants by providing them with awareness and knowledge of the school counseling role and remaining cognizant of "power imbalances during all facets of the research process" (Creswell, 2013, p. 34). My goal was to share power with the participants as we were working together as researchers and collaborators.

### **Summary**

This chapter contained the methodological research tradition utilized to conduct this study on the topic of Latino/a parents' lived experiences as they related to school counselors. The primary researcher followed the guidelines for the phenomenological research tradition and the theoretical framework of Relational Cultural Theory for the purpose of discovering the essence of the connections between Latino/a parents and school counselors (Comstock, et al. 2008; Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Ruiz, 2005). The significant connection between the phenomenological research tradition and RCT supported the importance of building rapport, relationships, and an equal field to work together as researchers (Comstock et al., 2008; Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2013; Moustakas, 1994, Ruiz, 2005). Furthermore, this research

study followed the qualitative research guidelines to maintain and ensure authentic data collection transpired through trustworthiness in order to provide significant findings to the school counseling specialty. Together, the primary researcher and participants focused on the experiences with school counselors through the participants' eyes.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

During the data analysis phase data, reduction was conducted, resulting in five overarching themes (Hays & Singh, 2012; Vagle, 2014). These five overarching themes were constructed by utilizing Relational Cultural Theory, the phenomenological research tradition, and collaboration amongst the primary researcher, research team, and two participants from the study. The primary researcher, along with the research team members and an external auditor, rigorously examined the data through a RCT lens to ensure the themes accurately reflected the meaning of these experiences. The five overarching themes, from the primary researcher's perspective, embraced the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they related to school counselors. The identified themes were: (1) Disconnections Between Educational and Cultural Systems, (2) Growth Fostering Relationships Between Latino/a Parents and School Counselors, (3) Sense of Worth Based on Quality of Experiences with School Counselors, (4) Desired Connections Based on Experiences with School Counselors, and (5) Knowledge of the School Counselor Role Built on Mutuality. The findings and themes reflected the tenets and components of RCT, which further enhanced the quality of this research study.

#### **Relational Cultural Theory**

The primary researcher anchored the construction of the interview protocol, data collection, and data analysis around the Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) tenets and components of the "Five Good Things" known as zest, action, knowledge, sense of worth, and desire for other connections to occur (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

RCT was intertwined in all the steps of this study to create growth fostering relationships and positive connections between the gatekeepers, participants, and primary research in order to build trust with the Latino/a community (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Additionally RCT guided the theme construction process during the data analysis phase as the experiences and voices of the participants resonated with the tenets.

## **Themes**

### **Disconnections Between Educational and Cultural Systems**

The majority of participants voiced the cultural shift they experienced while acclimating to their new lives in the U.S. Transitioning from their countries of origin was not only difficult based on language, but also challenging due to the differences in the educational and cultural systems. The RCT lens lends itself to recognizing these disconnections based on the transition from a Latino/a culture, where collectivism is valued, to a new culture that is an individualistic society (Ruiz, 2005). Ana described her transition as different based on the educational system in the United States in comparison to the educational system in Mexico. Though not all the participants' countries of origin were Mexico, the quote by Ana from County #3 captured the essence of the sentiment conveyed. She recalled her educational experiences in Mexican schools involved learning information, such as content, whereas schools in the U.S. provided services of support such as school counseling. It was apparent this significant educational difference was appreciated and embraced, especially the services of the school counselor. During the interview, Ana indicated she did not believe the school counseling profession existed in Mexico.

For me it's different. Different because in Mexico it's not like here. In Mexico you learn, you learn, they give advice, it's fine. And here what you have in the school – they give you support. If you can't guide your kids well, at school they tell you, you know

what, there's a counselor here that can guide you and your children. That's what they have; there's more support here.

Ana expressed the noticeable contrast between the schools in Mexico and U.S. based on the services provided at her child's school and the interaction with the school counselors. Through the RCT lens, it is apparent she appreciated the guidance given to her from the school counselor, which resulted in a positive connection and possible future connections to occur with other school counselors (Miller & Stiver, 1997).

Leticia also recounted the difficulty her son experienced transitioning to school in the U.S. as he heard remarks about his home country of Mexico made by other students in the school setting. Apparently the difficulties in culture and schools were faced not only by parents, but by their children as well. As Leticia spoke about her son's experience transitioning within the school setting and with his peers, it was apparent race, language, and culture played a role in impacting his acclimation. Leticia's son's experience further embraced RCT by exemplifying disconnections faced based on immigration and power differentials (Ruiz, 2005). The pain in her voice was noticeable as she discussed her son's experience. Furthermore, Leticia's story encompassed a descriptive meaning of what Latino/a parents and students faced as they transitioned into schools in the U.S.

Another thing that was difficult for him when we arrived here is the way that people talk about our country, in this case Mexico - that there is a lot of robbery, assaults, drugs, kidnappings. And he would say to me, "Mama, why do people talk about my country that way?" It was painful for him - I saw it in his expression, "Why do they talk that way

about my country?” he would say. Because we aren’t bad, or rather, they generalize that all Mexicans are criminals - that all Mexicans are bad, that everything – no. And he would say to me, “Mama, it hurts me.”

The primary researcher recognized, from Leticia’s and the other participants’ stories, the importance of school counselors being cognizant of these transitional experiences as they forge relationships with Latino/a parents. For example, Leticia discussed not only the impact of change and its effects that she and her son faced but also the challenge of learning a new language and culture in the U.S. while navigating school culture. It is evident from Leticia’s story that transitions significantly impact families and students who arrive to the U.S. from another country. School counselors who recognize transitions as difficult life events for Latino/a parents and students may strategically and proactively reach out to parents as allies and build trust by engaging in growth fostering relationships (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). These growth fostering relationships provide the opportunity for Latino/a parents and school counselors to create positive connections for the purpose of supporting Latino/a student success and leading to potential future desired interactions with school counselors (Miller & Stiver, 1997).

Lili also experienced the U.S. educational and cultural systems as quite different. She indicated the English taught in Mexican schools did not prepare individuals who move to the U.S. to speak English fluently. Thus, her transition to the U.S. had been difficult due to language barriers. The primary researcher reflected on Lili’s statement and how school counselors should take into consideration that individuals who learned English in their country of origin may not have the caliber of instruction or language skills assumed. School counselors should be aware of

such language barriers which may prevent parents and students from communicating with school staff as well as the possible impact on their social-emotional wellbeing.

The English is very hard because in Mexico we no speak English and the height in the middle school they teach us English not too much for come and live here.

Patricia also spoke about her family's assimilation process as a necessary way to transition and function in the U.S. in order to navigate their new environment. After hearing Patricia's story, it was pertinent to realize the cultural shift not only meant gaining a new life in a new country, but also acquiring new cultural identities. School counselors who recognize Latino/a students struggling in their new environments such as school and society should consider the RCT framework as a way to connect.

We come from Brazil, we also love our country but we no longer desire to live there (no nos atrae). Our daughters were raised here, they are used to it - us as well. We get along very well with the culture, the food, the clothing, the way that people live. We have always looked not to isolate ourselves but be part of a Hispanic or Latino community, but also to learn to live in the American community, the American culture – not that we don't like our own. But it is easier for us when we learn to interact with the country's culture.

Though Patricia at first discussed her transition with ease, the primary researcher noticed as Patricia shared in more depth, she opened up by mentioning difficulties faced, such as the change of life and the rationale for moving to the U.S. The change in jobs, life style, and separation from family members in Brazil contributed to the factors which led to assimilation. Even though their immediate family was not nearby, they were able to create a family within their church to assist in navigating the new cultural norms.

The transition was a little bit difficult, but God has always been helping, supporting [us]. Here we are able to get to know more about the life of God by being part of a church group that is like a huge family that helps us, that supports us. We have never gone through anything tragic or for being far away from our family. We have always done well, thank the Lord.

Patricia's experience further reflected the intersectionality of RCT and familismo, where the Latino/a culture's family system extends into its community, therefore providing the impetus for school counselors to leverage this for the purpose of building positive connections with Latino/a parents (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner, 2012)

Throughout the interview process, the primary researcher recognized the importance of understanding how differences between educational and cultural systems impacted Latino/a parents and students either in positive or negative ways leading to disconnections or connections with their new environment. The stories told by the parents indicated various hardships and positive outcomes faced as they navigated learning new societal and cultural norms. Furthermore, the primary researcher identified the need for school counselors to be cognizant of these transitions as Latino/a parents and students enroll into and navigate new schools.

### **Growth Fostering Relationships Between Latino/a Parents and School Counselors**

The primary researcher discovered an intersection between the importance of closeness within relationships amongst the Latino culture, familismo, and Relational Cultural Theory, which provide opportunities for school counselors to reach out to Latino/a parents to building relationships (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero & Zapata, 2014; Comstock et al., 2008; Ruiz, 2005; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez-Turner, 2012). One common theme

identified was that Latino/a parents desired a sense of community and relationships. This connection reflected RCT due to the tenets of respecting other's experiences and perceptions to initiate change, working alongside others' while recognizing power differences, respecting these differences, demonstrating resilience, and working towards making a change through the counseling process (Comstock et al., 2008; Frey, 2013; Ruiz, 2005). School counselors who are aware of these critical factors are able to work as social justice change agents by sharing the power, providing mutual empathy and empowerment by building connections, and seeking support for the Latino/a parents and students (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

Additionally Marta frequently voiced the importance of closeness in relationships and positive connections, which further echoed the relevance of RCT in Latino/a and school counselor relationships (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). The recurring message she conveyed regarding school counselors pertained to the need to have a relationship in order to divulge personal information or to seek a school counselor's assistance. She portrayed her opinion about attending events, such as coffee talks, hosted by the school counselor or get-to-know the school counselor events based on not having a prior connection with the school counselor.

I don't think many people will take advantage of that because as I said it would be one thing that um, that you kind of don't think of why will I need to go meet the counselor if I don't need her until you need her but then I don't know if it's a cultural thing just because, you know, as a Hispanic, you might need that feeling of closeness, I don't know it exactly. Um, if it will work, you know, and if it just a me or a Hispanic or a every parent situation. I do think for me, personally if you were to ask me, would you come and would you be interested? I would love to.

However Marta expressed the desire to be invited and meet the school counselor.

Marta further expounded on her response regarding the importance of having a connection with the school counselor. A connection allowed Marta to feel comfortable and trust her sons' elementary school counselor with personal information regarding her family. Additionally, Marta made it evident that this relationship allowed the school counselor and her to mutually work together in supporting her children, resulting in a growth fostering relationship between both of them as well as continuous connections (Comstock, et al, 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

I feel like I have very close connection to my elementary school counselor just because, you know, she has seen all four of my children. We have known each other and kind of dealt with all their situations so we we have a great relationship. I really feel like I can go to her for anything.

However, Marta did not feel the same connection with the middle and high school counselors based on either no or limited interactions between them. It did not appear disconnections had been formed based on negative experiences, but connections had not been built due to lack of communication resulting in the five good things (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

Um, but I think that, um, the other counselors like I don't see them or at least I don't see a space where I can just go and say "Hey! Hi, I'm, you know, my child's in school, it's nice meeting you" like, um, there are no, you know, like you can meet the principal at the principal coffee or you could meet the, like there are opportunities to meet all these types of people. Um, but I don't think there is really like an advertised opportunity to meet their

counselor unless you need him and then by then if you don't have a relationship, it's just kind of hard to just blurt out all all your business to a stranger even if they're very confidential.

When Marta spoke about her children's experiences and connections with their school counselors, it was apparent the children's experiences mirrored Marta's. The primary researcher reflected upon whether the connection the children felt with their elementary school counselor was a glimpse of familismo, where Marta considered the school counselor to be part of the family due to trust and comfort.

I think that even many years later, she still remembers, you know, so there is a connection. I would say there is a connection there. Um, but I think definitely it's, it's like everything in life, I mean, if you only see a person one time you can't develop a relationship. Um, I feel like the person that has seen us the most, we have the best relationship as a family and you know she is close to my kids. I feel like she is close to my kids, like literally you know, if anything, if at any point, I need it something for them, um, like you know, somebody to talk to or to kind of check on them, I could, I could, she could do that. And as a whole family, my husband, as in we all know her, um from the counselor point of view and then, you know, she has become a close person to us.

The word "comfortable" was consistently mentioned as the participants spoke about their experiences with school counselors. The primary researcher noticed the participants' sense of connection with the school counselor was influenced by their children's connection to and experiences with the school counselor as well. The participants valued the school counselor's role when information about their child(ren) was shared or initiated with them. Lili fondly

mentioned her son's school counselor. Based on her description of her interactions with the school counselor, it appeared she perceived the school counselor as an ally in supporting her son.

I feel more comfortable because he follow the ways and when I say everything is okay he tell me no you need talk to your son because he no go to the school or he's skipping the school, he's skipping the class, so I feel like it. I'm in the school because he know me everything will come to me to school.

Additionally, Ana felt and echoed the sentiment of being connected to her child's school counselor due to her child's connection and positive experiences with the school counselor. It was evident the school counselor's services provided twofold support- to the child and to the mother- as she recounted the story of when her son was dealing with uncertainty about if his unborn sibling was going to be a brother or sister. Ana deemed the experience her son had with the school counselor as reinforcement of what she had been speaking to her son about at home.

And he told me about it; he said, "This is what the counselor told me. One never knows what he is going to have, it's true." But yeah. He tells me about it when he goes to the counselor. I think maybe he talks more to the counselor than to me.

[Laughs]

Marta's response to her children's positive experiences with the school counselor also impacted her relationship and connection with the school counselor.

I think the biggest impact has been for, um, for my children, well for me has been to have somebody that I can talk to and completely trust. I feel like I can trust, um, when my children have had an issue but for them, um, they have felt like important, like somebody cares.

The primary researcher also gleaned the participants' connection with school counselors were influenced by their child(ren)'s value and awareness of the school counselor's role. Lili shared how when she came from Mexico, at first she did not know who to ask for help. Furthermore, she did not know who to contact at the school when she first arrived in the United States. Lili shared, when asked a follow up question, that she eventually figured out who to contact when her son shared with her information about the role of a school counselor.

Because my son has told me that from the counsel help people and one day I say today is the day I'm not waiting for tomorrow and I say and I go and ask I need help and they send me to the counsel.

Additionally, Lili's response to her son's connection with his school counselor further raised her trust level, since the school counselor had worked closely with her son and provided services to help him be successful.

He, my big son he always tell me how today I see the counselor, talked to him and he motivate for finish their high school and he tell me always I am here waiting for you. Always when you need me I'm here for you. And I say, wow.

This theme strongly supported the importance of close relationships with school counselors and Latino/parents. The primary researcher recognized the connection of familismo and RCT as it embraced the notion of trust, nuclear relationships, and mutuality from the participants' recounts of their experiences from their perspective (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014; Comstock et al., 2008; Ruiz, 2005; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner, 2012).

### **Sense of Worth Based on Quality of Experiences with School Counselors**

As the participants voiced the experiences they had with their child(ren)'s school counselors, it was quite apparent some parents experienced the school counselor as an ally and an advocate and some did not, whether due to accessibility or a specific interaction with the school counselor. Additionally, the participants recounted some of their experiences as either positive or negative based on different school counselors' responsiveness. These positive and negative experiences were formed from either connections or disconnections based on the interactions the Latino/a parents had with the school counselors (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Judy Elizabeth had positive and negative experiences with two different school counselors. She described the positive experience she had with the elementary school counselor, who provided assistance when Judy Elizabeth was receiving guardianship as a foster parent, when she commented:

The beginning on elementary school I have very good experience because it was three children together and the counselor was very concerned and it was, they helped me a lot with them. Because they know the situation when they ask me all about the paper that I need to get everything together and for the guardians, it took me like a, I'm [inaudible] and they wait together with the letter that the mom sent me and it was very nice and the elementary school counselor was very good.

Judy Elizabeth's experience with a high school counselor was different. She had gone to the school in the hope of meeting with the school counselor to discuss her son's behavior. She did not have an appointment but was asked to wait in the front office for the school counselor, which prompted a disconnection based on the outcome of her visit, resulting in her feeling angry and disrespected (Miller & Stiver, 1997).

Yeah, waiting for the counselor. And in the end, when it was after two hours, the receptionist told me that she's in the conference meeting and she won't be able to see me, she sent me a card, business card for me to call her.

Judy Elizabeth further described how this experience made her feel by saying:

And I was so, I was mad, she's supposed to call me back because I was there waiting for her and call me back, I don't know what time, when so when it was Thursday, I called Friday, and she did left a message, it was a recorder left a message on Friday, I left her a message on Monday. Tuesday, then my boy had another issue at school.

Judy Elizabeth was frustrated with lack of accessibility to the school counselor as well as the school counselor's response time to her and her son's needs, which reinforced the RCT framework of addressing power imbalances (Ruiz, 2005).

For week. Yeah, for support and I didn't get one. So I was really mad and very sad because I said wow. You know, I told the lady in the front desk what was happening and why I need to talk to her. And for me, if someone called me, come to me and tell me that it's very bad situation that I need to talk with someone, I'll be able to call you at least.

Judy Elizabeth later spoke about her daughter's rationale for and opinion of the high school counselors.

That's what she told me that there are dozens of children, they have a lot of work to do and to see them, you need to wait, make an appointments and it's very difficult. She told me like that, they don't seem care. I don't know why.

Additionally, Patricia spoke about responsiveness and intentional proactivity. It was apparent that participants appreciated and felt valued when school counselors responded to their

concerns and followed up with them. These experiences were deemed as positive due to the connection, collaboration, and communication.

Because those two made themselves available – I am here for whatever you need. This evaluation that I did, I – Look for me, here, this is my telephone number, my e-mail address, I am at school from this time until this time, and everything. But the other counselor when the bad experience happened never contacted me, she never gave me any information, nothing.

Patricia explained the type of response she received from one school counselor in comparison to the other.

The information (that I have received) from her is about how my daughters are doing, how they are feeling, and she was giving me some information so that I could work with them at home. The information was always good, only the counselor that dealt with the bullying was not. She didn't give me any information, and we didn't have anything. It was a bad experience, that one.

Sabrina's experience with her daughter's school counselor further echoed the importance of being valued, which led to the feel of zest and positive energy the school counselor gave to Sabrina's concern revolving around her daughter and peer issues with other girls which may lead to further connections with school counselors (Miller & Stiver, 1997).

Yes, she valued (what I had to say). And she gave it importance. Maybe more (importance) than what it really had. I liked that.

Maria experienced the school counselor in a positive manner as well. The school counselor was seen as a resource to Maria and her husband as they pursued resources to support their son, who was struggling with concentration. Not only did the school counselor respond by

meeting with the parents, but she also provided them with strategies and interventions to implement at home. The collaboration and proactive nature of the school counselor created a positive experience for Maria and her husband.

We reached out to her and she gave us an appointment and she showed us. It was pretty neat cause she show us like some rocks and each rock has like a written different feeling, happiness, sad, anger and different things like that and it really met us, at least it make me, uhh, look things different way.

The participants who voiced positive experiences with school counselors identified the school counselor as someone who made them feel valued by listening and responding to them in a timely and proactive manner. This further proved the school counselor and parent relationship as a valuable component for student success. Whether the support lies under the academic, career, or social-emotional domain, this relationship allows the school and home link to provide support for all students (ASCA, 2012).

### **Desired Recommendations Based on Experiences with School Counselors**

Throughout the interview process, participants openly discussed their opinion about school counselors based on their experiences. These experiences evolved into recommendations provided to either other Latino/a parents or to the school counseling specialty. Overall, the majority of the parents expressed they believed the role of the school counselor was important within the school setting despite some of the negative experiences that occurred. Ana advocated for other Latino/a parents to meet with the school counselor based upon the support school counselors provided to students and parents.

Well, I'd say there are many parents that have problems with their children and they don't realize the problems they have. I say one should talk to their kids and if you see

that something's not right or that something is strange, you should go see a counselor because they really help you, or they help the children too. And they also help you; they talk to you, if you're having problems at home, with your husband. Or that something is wrong and you realize, you say, "Oh, this is hurting my child, I didn't realize it." And you realize many things when you talk to a counselor.

Further listening to Ana, it was apparent her experience with her child's school counselor caused in a positive connection, resulting in her advocating to other Latina mothers to meet with school counselors. This exemplifies RCT's importance in Latino/a parent and school counselor relationships where both work together.

I say, I'd tell many mothers that they should go see a counselor whenever they have problems with their kids because hitting them or shouting at them only hurts the child. And really, that's not it, right, one should talk to them and – or as a mother sometimes one thinks, "Is this right what I'm saying or what I'm advising my child?" And when you go to a counselor and you tell them, "I said this to my child," they say, "Yes that's good," or "No, you were mistaken, it should be like this." But yeah, I would tell every mother or every parent who has children that they should see a counselor to get advice. They do help.

The primary researcher followed up by asking Ana if the Latino/a parents she knew sought the support of a school counselor. Ana's response indicated the majority of them did not meet with the school counselor and believed school counselors were for extreme situations only. Ana elaborated on this by commenting:

Well, basically nobody. Because they say – when I told an aunt that I was seeing a counselor, she said, "That's for crazy people."

[Laughs]

Like that she said. She said, “And what if the boy isn’t crazy?” I said, “But he’s got problems.”

I told her, “These are problems that can be resolved now because when he’s older, I’ll want to resolve them and it won’t be possible”.

Participants proactively sought the services of the school counselor and used their experiences to advocate for the school counseling specialty within their community. Even though some of their family and friends scoffed at the idea of seeing the school counselor for support, the participants continued to make contact with the school counselor as well as actively speak about the support they received. Furthermore, some of the participants, at the close of the interview process, shared with the primary researcher their additional thoughts regarding their experiences with school counselors. Daniel indicated he would like more contact to be initiated by the school counselor.

I would like for the counselor to contact me if there’s a problem. The counselor should set up a meeting or something. They work in like a chain. From the teacher to the principal, and from the principal to the counselor, that’s three in the chain of command.

I would like to talk to them more, through the counselor to check how the kids are doing. Additionally, after the interview once the digital recorder was turned off, Daniel further recommended school counselors should provide information to support students academically and prepare them for college.

Other participants also had recommendations for the school counseling specialty. While conducting member checking by reviewing the transcripts and themes via email with Leticia, she

requested that the primary researcher add another statement to the study. Her response suggested more intentional proactive measures for school counselors to undertake to support Latino/a students and families.

You can also add to advertise more programs for children and families that require more support.

Sabrina recognized language as a barrier and oppressor to pertinent resources and support for Latino/a families and students. She stated her observation and reflection of an event hosted by the school counselor, which was conducted solely in English. Her suggestion not only was a suggestion, but a social justice call to action by seeking change in the services provided to create equity and access for all (ASCA, 2012; Crethar, Torres Rivera, & Nash, 2008; Mertens, 2007).

Maybe, as there are people that are Hispanic - I have noticed, one time that they went to an appointment that we had with the counselor to choose classes for our daughter – I noticed that there were a lot of Hispanic mothers that didn't speak English. So, I feel that they should focus more on them. It was more focused on the people that did understand (English). And I, I feel that maybe if there would have been a little more information for the Hispanics, because many don't know that the school has that service for when their children are having problems or going through certain situations. Many Hispanic parents don't know what to do or how to handle it (the situation) because they don't have adequate information, like me, for example, when I wanted to speak with the principal, but I didn't know that the counselor could fix those kinds of problems. So, maybe a little more information or guidance for people that don't speak English.

### **Knowledge of the School Counselor Role Built on Mutuality**

Several of the participants did not have school counselors in their countries of origin. If they did, the person in that role did not function as school counselors function in the U.S. The school counselor was only present in elite schools or was technically someone who assessed students. Therefore, some of the participants were new to understanding the role of the school counselor in the United States as well as the services provided. The types of experiences the participants had with school counselors contributed to their level of understanding the role of the school counselor.

Judy Elizabeth responded regarding her understanding of the school counselor role as someone who is needed to be a social just change agent. Her response may have been related to the school counselor who supported her and her foster children when their biological mother had been deported and Judy Elizabeth was obtaining guardianship.

I think it need to be a person with passion for the future of the nation because the children is now it doesn't matter if it's black, or Hispanic or American. They would be the future because if one person don't make this land a revolution you know one of the children, you'll never know what gonna be in the future. And probably you are the key for them to succeed.

Marta relayed that her understanding of the school counselor role was uncertain prior to interacting with school counselors.

Um, however it was, I mean it was, it was a good experience. I mean I don't have any, anything to complain about the person but it just took me a while. Like I didn't

understand what their role in the school was. But once, I mean every interaction that I have had with, with the counselors has been positive. But now, I now understand better what their, what their job is.

She further explained her new understanding and importance of the school counseling role.

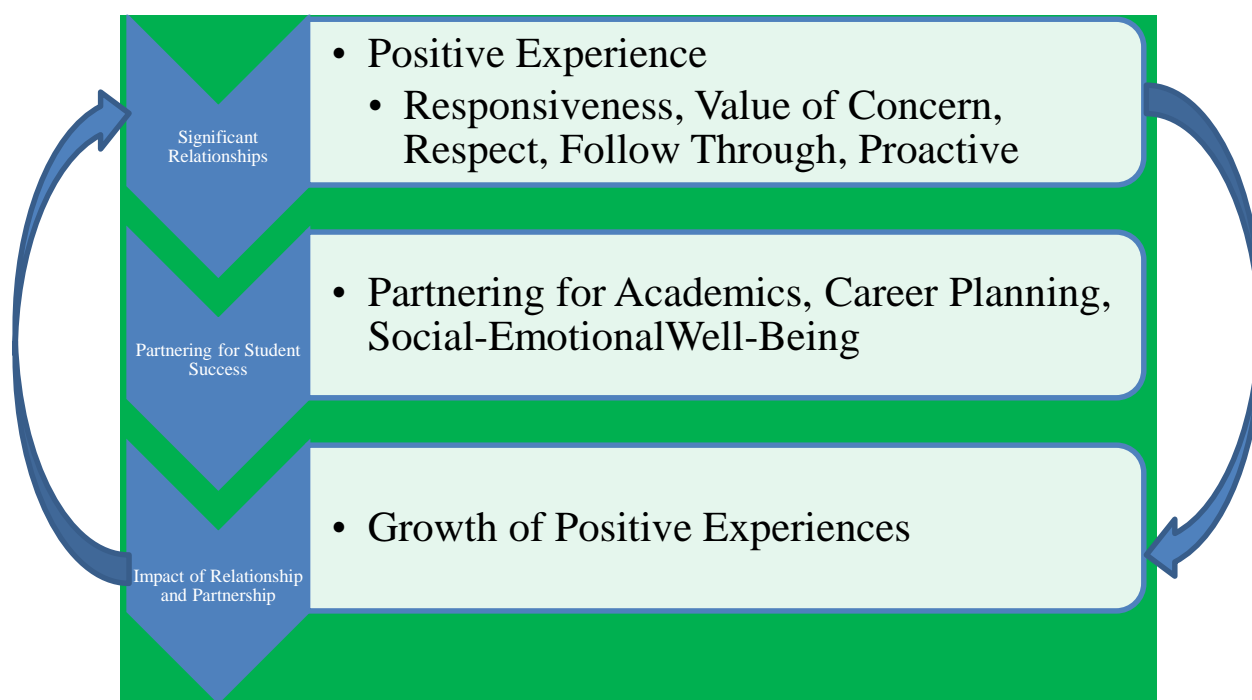
Um, I think it gives students, um, tools on how to handle things in society especially now that I noticed that more and more parents are are doing less of the parenting. So I think that a lot of children are missing skills that um, that are being worked on by the counselors like, um, it makes the society of a school and you know later on life society just better by the way they implement different, um, techniques and you know, kind of guides students through their issues.

Leticia spoke of the school counselor role as someone who supported the teacher by taking away barriers which inhibit the teacher from achieving her duties and tasks. Additionally, Leticia did tap into the idea that school counselors are able to see the bigger picture of what may be happening with the child(ren) and provide support. Though she understood school counselors as professionals who help children social-emotionally and academically, the depth of her understanding was vague.

Well, only that I value his (her) work because as I saw, I believe that it is something that maybe for us as Hispanics or migrants, not only Hispanics, we are migrants in this country. I believe that yes, it depends on a lot (of things). Maybe they see those aspects that the teacher can't see because he has to attend to all the children that they give him, right. But, they (the counselors) are the ones that are in charge of integrating the child within the environment where he is going to develop. As if they would try to lighten the

load of the teacher, right. Firstly, I say, (their role is) maybe to help with them with the language, in their homework, with advice. I believe that that take away from the teacher some of the burden.

The primary researcher later informed Leticia of the role of the school counselor and the services school counselors provide. Figure 1 exemplifies the process of school counselors and Latino/a parents partnering together for the purpose of Latino/a student success. Additionally, Figure 1 demonstrates how Relational Cultural Theory is intertwined through the process of building connections through positive experiences, which result with the school counselor and Latino/a parent partnering together (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Furthermore, this partnership leads to growth fostering relationships and future recurring connections with school counselors (Miller & Stiver, 1997).



*Figure 1.* Visual Representation of School Counselor and Latino/a Parent Partnerships

## **Synthesis of Experiences**

Five over-arching themes were identified through data analysis and provided the primary researcher with detailed information and depth regarding the experiences Latino/a parents had with school counselors. Through further examination of the data, the primary researcher synthesized the data to determine the textural description, also recognized as what the Latino/a parents experienced in their interactions with school counselors and the structural description, which “influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 82; Hays & Singh, 2012). The synthesizing of the data allowed the primary researcher to identify the essence of the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they related to school counselors (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012).

### **Textural Description**

This section focuses on the textural description, which described “what” the participants in the research study experienced (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). Each of the participants arrived to the U.S. for the purpose of seeking a new life full of opportunities for themselves and their families. As they assimilated to adjust to their new environment, they learned to navigate cultural differences such as language, school, and societal norms. It was apparent they desired assistance and advocacy for their child(ren) within the school settings. The school counselor was an individual they interacted with who provided support as they asked for help to better guide, support, and understand their children and the school settings. The primary researcher gleaned from the participants that the overall experiences with school counselors were positive and led to favorable outcomes. The positive experiences were described as ones where the school counselor listened to the participants, was responsive to their concerns, provided support through interventions and/or strategies, and followed up with the parents. The

participants that described their experiences with the school counselor as negative felt the school counselor did not fully pay attention to their concern, did not respond in a timely manner, and did not follow up with them.

### **Structural Description**

The structural description encompassed various forms of the meaning of their experiences with school counselors and “how” the factors contributed to their experiences (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). The participants faced three forms of experiences with school counselors- negative, positive, or both. Some of the participants only faced positive or negative experiences whereas some faced both, depending on the school counselor and their grade level. Factors which contributed to a positive experience and sense of value involved school counselors who demonstrated respect to the participant and the tenets of RCT (Comstock et al., 2008). Furthermore, factors which led to a negative experience caused the participants to feel the school counselor did not value their concern or follow up with the participants in a timely manner.

### **Summary Case**

The textural and structural descriptions showcased the essence of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they related to school counselors. The meaning derived from the essence of the experiences provided the school counseling specialty a framework to implement best practices by recognizing “what” the Latino/a parents experienced and “how” they experienced their positive connections or disconnections with their child(ren)s’ school counselors reflecting the RCT framework (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). The school counseling specialty would best serve Latino/a parents by incorporating the findings

from the textural and structural descriptions as the means to implementing interventions and programs to support Latino/a parents and students in the school setting.

The textural and structural descriptions from the study revealed Latino/a parents from this study who experienced positive connections and outcomes with school counselors credited attributes and factors of respect, active listening, follow through, and overall proactive responsiveness, which mirrors RCT's mutual empathy and mutual empowerment and results in growth fostering relationships between the school counselor and Latino/a parents (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Additionally, Latino/a parents who experienced disconnections with school counselors perceived this as due to the school counselor's lack of attention to the parent or concern, lack of responsiveness, and lack of follow up, which reflects RCT's premise of how relationships become strained (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Based on these findings and descriptions, the school counseling specialty would best be able to provide school counseling services and programs by being mindful of these attributes and factors and exhibiting proactive measures demonstrating respect, concern, understanding, collaboration, and social justice advocacy, which encompass the basis of RCT (Comstock et al., 2008; Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007).

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research study aimed to understand the phenomena of the experiences Latino/a parents' had with school counselors. The research question: "What is the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they relate to school counselors?" strongly guided the study. The phenomenological research tradition was utilized to investigate the essence of these experiences in order to provide implications for the school counseling specialty (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). Relational Cultural Theory played a vital role in the study by further examining and analyzing the phenomena within these experiences (Comstock et al., 2008; Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). This chapter discusses the primary researcher's connection to the study, the study's relation to the literature review, implications for practice, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

#### **Researcher Connection to the Study**

My experiences as a school counselor who worked with Latino/a parents, and as the primary Spanish speaking professional in my school setting, provided the impetus for this study to be conducted. Throughout my school counseling career, I provided resources and services to Latino/a parents by recognizing the need when engaging in translation services or through proactively reaching out to the parents. Since I was the only one who spoke Spanish in the school setting, I was able to share my role of the school counselor with them while implementing intentional proactive school counseling services and interventions. Therefore, my research

reflected on these experiences and I believe it imperative for the school counseling specialty to be aware of how the role of the school counselor was perceived by Latino/a parents, as well as how to educate Latino/a parents about the school counseling profession.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Relational Culture Theory (RCT) influenced this research study throughout the entire process by providing a platform for Latino/a parents to voice the experiences they had with school counselors (Comstock et al., 2008, Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). The individuals in the study were not seen as only participants but also as a valuable component of the research study. RCT best aligned with this study since the theory was conceptualized to improve human development and counseling to fully incorporate the experiences of women, as well as people of disadvantaged and marginalized groups in order to promote healing through relationships (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Furthermore, Ruiz (2005) justified the rationale of RCT by stating Latino/a's "value *collectivism*, *simpatia* (smooth, pleasant relationships), *personalismo* (individualized self-worth), *respeto* (respect), and *familismo* (familialism or familism)" and that counselors should recognize these cultural differences in order to prevent misunderstanding and misdiagnosing (p. 37).

### **Summary of the Study**

This phenomenological research study aimed to discover and understand the essence of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they related to school counselors (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2014). The research question "What is the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they related to school counselors?" guided this study every step of the way. The primary researcher and research team rigorously followed the research methods to accurately and authentically provide results to reflect participants' stories as well as inform the

school counseling specialty with the findings as a social justice call to action for the purpose of initiating systemic change (ASCA, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Mertens, 2007). Twelve participants from three diverse Georgia counties were interviewed at their church sites and four participants from each county participated in the study. The participants were comprised of nine mothers, two fathers, and one foster mother. Throughout the interviews, each participant openly shared about their personal life and experiences with their child(ren)'s school counselor. From these semi-structured interviews, the primary researcher gleaned valuable information, not only for the research study, but also for her own professional growth as a practitioner.

The primary researcher and research team worked together to code the transcripts and make meaning of the stories shared by the participants. Each time the primary researcher left the research site; she listened to the recordings in the car and then submitted them to a professional transcription company to ensure the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of hiring the transcription company was to ensure authentic representation of the data was available, since many of the semi-structured interviews were conducted in Spanish by the primary researcher (Hays & Singh, 2012). Even though the primary researcher spoke Spanish, she did not have the language skills to accurately transcribe and translate the interviews. Additionally, the transcriptions needed to be translated so the research team could understand the transcriptions for coding purposes and data analysis.

The research team and primary researcher for this study coded all 12 of the semi-structured interviews and engaged in face-to-face meetings (when possible) and consultation through phone calling and emailing, due to distance and time constraints. Additionally, member checking was utilized by emailing the participants the transcripts for their feedback as well as the themes, though only two participants responded (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). Five

overarching themes were identified through the coding process: (1) Disconnections Between Educational and Cultural Systems, (2) Growth Fostering Relationships Between Latino/a Parents and School Counselors, (3) Sense of Worth Based on Quality of Experiences, (4) Desired Connections Based on Expectations, and (5) Knowledge of the School Counselor Role Built on Mutuality. One participant agreed with the themes but did not provide any feedback whereas the other participant agreed and requested an additional statement be included in the study. Her statement requested school counselors "...advertise more programs for children and families that require more support."

These five overarching themes were further synthesized to acquire the textural and structural descriptions for the purpose of discovering the essence of Latino/a parents' experiences with school counselors. The textural description identified "what" the participants experienced and the structural description identified "how" the participants experienced what they did (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). The textural description through the RCT lens identified the majority of the participants' experienced positive connections with the school counselor and the structural description indicated this was due to feeling valued and respected by the school counselors (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). The participants who identified having disconnections with school counselors attributed the disconnections to the school counselor not valuing their concern or not following up with them in a timely manner, which also aligned with the RCT Theoretical Framework (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

### **Relation to the Literature Review**

Several connections to the literature reviewed emerged such as all the participants were diverse based on country of origin, educational level, socio economic status, English language acquisition, as well as being from indigenous heritage (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-

Romero, & Zapata, 2014). It was evident that even though the participants sought the school counselor for the common goal to seek help for their children, each participant had a different story from the others. The participants indicated difficulty navigating the school culture based on language barriers. This correlated with previous research indicating barriers and difficulty for parents to be involved in their children's school and possible low student educational achievement (Aud et al., 2013; Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005; Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). Additionally literature regarding racism was apparent in what a few of the participants stated based on their children's experiences in school. One participant mentioned how her son was hurt by other students in his class who referenced Mexico as being a bad place and stereotyping the people there as "robbers". Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas (2005) previously recognized racism as a factor that impacted Latino/a students in the U.S.

The findings further connected with previous literature based on the role of the school counselor. The primary researcher recognized the role of the school counselor appeared to be unclear to some of the participants. It was apparent some of the participants perceived the school counselor as the person who assisted in interpreting. Often, even through their voice inflections, it seemed they were guessing what the role was while stating what they believed it to be, which connected to Liberman's study in 2004. One of the participants in the study stated her daughter felt the school counselors in her school did not seem to care because they were very busy and there were many students. This sentiment connected to Eckenrod-Green and Culbreth's study (2008). Also, some parents recommended that school counselors should provide parents with resources to better help them assist their children with school and post-secondary resources which linked to school counselors in the role as change agents and proactive school counseling (ASCA, 2012; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason, 2014).

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings from this study provided valuable implications for the school counseling specialty as well as preparation for school counselors in training. The five overarching themes consisted of (1) Disconnections Between Educational and Cultural Systems, (2) Growth Fostering Relationships Between Latino/a Parents and School Counselors, (3) Sense of Worth Based on Quality of Experiences, (4) Desired Recommendations Based on Experiences with School Counselors, and (5) Knowledge of the School Counselor Role Built on Mutuality. These themes illustrated the participants' experiences, which explained in detail the struggles they faced, factors that defined and influenced the experiences as positive and/or negative, recommendations to the school counseling specialty, and the understanding of the school counselor role through the participants' perceptions. Practicing school counselors and school counselors in training would benefit from becoming aware of the findings in order to better provide programs and services to Latino/a parents and students. Conducting a program audit may allow practicing school counselors to identify areas to improve through Latino/a parent relationships (ASCA, 2012; Villalba, Akos, Keeter, & Ames, 2007).

### **Practice**

School counselors as social justice change agents should intentionally practice through a RCT lens by forging connections with Latino/a parents with the premise of building trust (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). School counselors should be cognizant that the language, culture, people, and school are different compared to what the families are accustomed and, therefore, should assist the families with navigating the school culture and expectations. Strategic school counseling supports could be put in place by intentionally providing an opportunity for Latino/a parents to discuss their experiences and

perceptions of the culture transition. RCT would play a significant role as school counselors reach out as allies providing mutual empathy and empowerment while also working with Latino/a parents (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

The school counseling specialty should also consider addressing the participants' requests of needing supports provided in Spanish. Specific programs and interventions that address the academic, career, and social-emotional domains should be conducted in Spanish such as Career Nights, Senior Nights, and PTSA Meetings. Additionally, Latino/a parents consistently voiced their desire to be valued, listened to, and assisted, therefore school counselors who recognize these needs may utilize their approach through the RCT lens by building relationships on the five good things, mutual empathy and empowerment, and continuous growth fostering relationships (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005).

### **Limitations of the Study**

Though the primary researcher conducted this phenomenological study in a conscientious and ethical manner, limitations of the study still existed (Hays & Singh, 2012; Mertens, 2010). All participants in the study were selected through purposeful sampling from three churches located in three diverse Georgia counties (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). The participants were connected to a familial organization such as church, which was recognized as part of the family unit (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner, 2012). Perhaps the findings would have reflected differently had the data collection occurred within the county outside of the church setting, since the number of parents who had experiences with school counselors were despairingly small. For example, the Minister from County #2 consulted with the primary researcher prior to the data collection stating he had spoken with several parents but many had not met with their

child(ren)'s school counselor. He was quite dismayed but still advocated and continued to promote the research study. The primary researcher also noticed when she presented to the congregation in County #3 only a limited number of parents claimed to have met with their child(ren)'s school counselor. Even Daniel from County #3 recognized many parents did not have experiences with the school counselor and responded by stating, "Parents should be more involved. Like the Father that asked if anybody had had an experience with a, what do you call them, School counselors. I noticed that a lot of people hadn't." Therefore a larger sample size may have been available through another means of participant recruitment.

Furthermore, this study examined the experiences of Latino/a parents with school counselors from combined school levels such as elementary and secondary. Therefore, the study did not examine the experiences specifically from only one level. The primary researcher suggests further studies to be conducted specifically focusing on each level of education in order to identify specific resources and counseling services. This would be beneficial in regards to better providing school counseling services for each grade level.

The majority of the participants in this study consisted of mothers. The gender of the participants may have also contributed to the experiences, perceptions, and expectations the participants had with their child(ren)'s school counselors. Further studies based on the parent's gender may be beneficial to examine the perceptions, attitudes, expectations, and experiences related to school counselors. Additional research studies involving fathers, grandparents, and other types of guardians raising children in the school setting would provide another lens for identifying experiences with school counselors and types of feedback shared by future participants.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The participants' experiences with school counselors resulted in recommendations to the school counseling specialty for the purpose of providing best practices in working with Latino/a parents for the purpose of supporting student success. The primary researcher recognized RCT as a significant component for building relationships through positive connections with Latino/a parents and providing school counseling services (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Ruiz, 2005). Therefore, further research would be beneficial in examining relationships involving collaboration and communication between the school counselor and Latino/a parents. This section covers additional possible opportunities for further research to be conducted.

The majority of the participants interacted with school counselors who solely spoke English. Therefore, the participants utilized a translator, when needed, to assist in communicating with the school counselor. This study did not investigate the experiences regarding bilingual school counselors, which may be beneficial to the school counseling specialty. Furthermore, the participants did not indicate frustration with not having a bilingual school counselor available, but further studies may provide findings to better support interventions and practices in partnering with Latino/a parents.

Additionally this phenomenological research study included experiences with K-12 school counselors. All of the participants shared their experiences across grade levels, which also provided a description of these experiences. The findings indicated the majority of the participants experienced positive experiences with elementary level school counselors. This study did not focus on specific grade level experiences; therefore additional research studies pertaining to specific grade levels would be insightful to the school counseling specialty. School counselors for each level would benefit from understanding types of supports needed by Latino/a

parents, factors which contribute to positive and negative experiences leading to connections and/or disconnections, and how to proactively build relationships with Latino/a parents to collaboratively support student success through academic, career, and social emotional interventions and programs (ASCA, 2012; Miller & Stiver, 1997).

Navigating school culture and expectations proved to be daunting for the participants in this study. Whether the disconnect or lack of understanding pertained to language, accessibility, experiences, awareness of support and role of specific school personnel, or navigating post-secondary opportunities, further research studies could be conducted on each of these components. Perhaps further research may be able to provide potential findings to understand additional factors which inhibit Latino/a parents from feeling comfortable in the school settings. Furthermore, research studies on the topic of awareness of the school counseling role may provide further implications for the school counseling specialty and preparation for school counselors in training to better inform Latino/a parents on the school counseling role, services, and programs.

Though the research sample was purposive, the participants in this study were diverse due to their countries of origin - Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Mexico (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012). Furthermore, they were diverse based on differing levels of education, socio-economic status, occupations, and English language skills. Based on these demographics, multiple research studies could be conducted such as focusing on Latino/as from a particular country, educational attainment, and/or socio-economic status (Aud et al., 2013). Even though the participants matched the criterion for this study, each Latino/a participant is uniquely diverse (Aud et al., 2013, p. vii; Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Alpert, 2011, p. 2; Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014).

### **Researcher Reflection**

This phenomenological study thoroughly immersed me in every aspect of being a researcher (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). The process was more than just being a researcher where I met with the participants, asked questions, and then left. Instead, each step of the process from gaining entry, making connections with the gatekeepers, interacting with the community, building relationships and rapport with the participants, and conducting the interviews was very meaningful, not only for the purpose of the study, but also to me (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). I was able to become connected with the community and participants for a moment and be impacted by the trust, kindness, and desire to assist even though they did not know me. Their compassion and dedication in supporting my study and the school counseling specialty further inspired me to tell their stories. Additionally, what amazed me the most was living and seeing RCT embedded in the research design (Comstock et al., 2008; Ruiz, 2005). I am deeply humbled and appreciative of this endeavor which provided me this opportunity.

### **Conclusion**

This research study has been a journey. It has not only been a research journey but a personal journey in regards to me reflecting on my own school counseling program, professional identity, and advocacy for Latino/a parents and students. Both my professional practice and dissertation process have intersected in the hopes of providing meaningful school counselor relationships with Latino/a parents by supporting student success through collaboration and mutuality (ASCA, 2012; Comstock et al., 2008). The purpose of this study was to discover the meaning of the lived experiences Latino/a parents had as they related to school counselors which was successfully completed. Additionally, this study was conducted as a social justice call to

action by utilizing the findings to inform practicing school counselors and school counselors in training as how to best support the Latino/a community within the K-12 school setting (Mertens, 2007). Thank you to all the gatekeepers who opened their doors and embraced me to conduct this research study and to all the participants who collaboratively worked with me to make a positive impact for Latino/a parents and school counselor partnerships (ASCA, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012).

## REFERENCES

- American Counseling Association Advocacy Competencies. (2003). Advocacy competency domains. Retrieved from [http://www.counseling.org/Resources/Competencies/Advocacy\\_Competencies.pdf](http://www.counseling.org/Resources/Competencies/Advocacy_Competencies.pdf)
- American School Counselor Association. (2004). ASCA National Standards for Students. Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved from [http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/ASCA\\_National\\_Standards\\_for\\_Students.pdf](http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/ASCA_National_Standards_for_Students.pdf)
- American School Counselor Association. (2012). *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*, Third Edition. Alexandria, VA.
- American School Counselor Association. (2012). *The professional school counselor and equity for all students*. Retrieved from: [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org)
- Andes, K. L., Findlay, T. P., Geller, A. L., Gonzalez-Casanova, I., Keefe-Oates, B.S., Plumlee, C. A., & Rios, V. (2012). Georgia Latino health report. *Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia. Healthcare Georgia Foundation*, Emory University: Rollins School of Public Health.
- Arredondo, P., Gallardo-Cooper, M., Delgado-Romero, E. A., & Zapata, A. L. (2014). *Culturally responsive counseling with Latinas/os*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

- Arredondo, P., Toporek, M. S., Brown, S., Jones, J., Locke, D. C., Sanchez, J. & Stadler, H. (1996) Operationalization of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies. AMCD: Alexandria, VA. Retrieved from [http://www.counseling.org/docs/competencies/multicultural\\_competencies.pdf?sfvrsn=3](http://www.counseling.org/docs/competencies/multicultural_competencies.pdf?sfvrsn=3)
- Aud, S., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Kristapovich, P., Rathbun, A., Wang, X., & Zhang, J. (2013). *The condition of education*. (NCES 2013-037) Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013037.pdf>
- Bemak, F. & Chung, R.C.Y (2008). New professional roles and advocacy strategies for school counselors: A multicultural/social justice perspective to move beyond the nice counselor syndrome. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 28, 372-381.
- Bohon, S. A., Macpherson, H. & Atilas, J. H. (2005). Educational Barriers for New Latinos in Georgia. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 4(1), 43-58.
- Bryan, J., Moore-Thomas, C., Day-Vines, N. L, Holcomb-McCoy, C., & Mitchell, N. (2009). Characteristics of students who receive school counseling services: Implications for practice and research. *Journal of School Counseling*, 7(21), 1-29.
- Canales, G. (2013). Transformative, mixed methods checklist for psychological research with Mexican Americans. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 7(1), 6-21.
- Cavazos, J., Cavazos, A. G., Hinojosa, M. G., & Silva, M. (2009). Dispelling seven myths concerning Latino/a students: A call to action for school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling*, 7(8), 1-26.
- Chen-Hayes, S. F., Ockerman, M. S., & Mason, E. C. M. (2014). *101 Solutions for school counselors and leaders in challenging times*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

- Chibbaro, J. S., & Cao, L. (2008). Exploring perceptions of advocacy of professional school counselors and school-counselors-in training. *Georgia School Counselor Journal, 1*(1), 38-45.
- Cholewa, B., & West-Olatunji, C. (2008). Exploring the relationship among cultural discontinuity, psychological distress, and academic outcomes with low-income, culturally diverse students. *Professional School Counseling, 12*(1), 54-61.
- Comstock, D. L., Hammer, T. R., Strentzsch, J., Cannon, K., Parsons, J., & Salazar, G. (2008). Relational-Cultural Theory: A framework for bridging relational, multicultural, and social justice competencies. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 86*, 279-287.
- Cox, A. K. (2009). Latino immigrant students in Southern schools: What we know and still need to learn. *Theory Into Practice, 48*, 312-318. DOI: 10.1080/00405840903192912
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W.E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: selection and implementation. *The Counseling Psychologist, 35*(2), 236-264. DOI: 10.1177/0011000006287390
- Crethar, H., Torres Rivera, E., & Nash, S. (2008). In search of common threads: Linking multicultural, feminist, and social justice paradigms. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 86*, 269-278.
- Dahir, C. A. & Stone, C. B. (2009). School counselor accountability: The path to social justice and systemic change. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 87*(1), 12-20.

- D'Alonso, K. T. (2011). Evaluation and revision of questionnaires for use among low-literacy immigrant Latinos. *Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem*, 19(5), 1255-1264.
- Davila, E. R. & Aviles de Bradley, A. (2010). Examining education for Latino/as in Chicago: A CRT/LatCrit Approach. *Educational Foundations*, 24(1-2), 39-58.
- Davison Aviles, R. M., Guerrero, M. P., Howarth, H. B., & Thomas, G. (Fall 1999). Perceptions of Chicano/Latino students who have dropped out of school. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 77(4), 465-473.
- Delgado-Romero, E. A., Matthews, P. H., & Paisley, P.O. (2007). A school counseling conference focused on the emerging Latino/a population. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 6(3), 209-221.
- Eckenrod-Green, W., & Culbreth, J. R. (2008). Latino high school students' perceptions and preferred characteristics of high school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling*, 6(17), 1-25. Retrieved from [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=EJ894788&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=EJ894788](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ894788&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ894788)
- Ennis, S.R., Rios-Vargas, M., & Albert, N.G. (2011). The Hispanic population: 2010. 2010 Census briefs. *Census Bureau*. Retrieved from: <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf>
- Erford, B. (2011). *Transforming the school counseling profession*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

- Finlay, L. (2008). A dance between the reduction and reflexivity: Explicating the “phenomenological psychological attitude”. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 39, 1-32.
- Frey, L. L. (2013). Relational-Cultural Therapy: Theory, research, and application to counseling competencies. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 44(3), 77-185. DOI: 10.1037/a0033121
- Fry, R. (2003). Hispanic youth dropping out of U.S. schools: Measuring the challenge. Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from: <http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED477379.pdf>
- Fry, R., & Taylor, P. (2013). *High school drop-out rate at record low: Hispanic high school graduates pass whites in rate of college enrollment*. Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/05/09/hispanic-high-school-graduates-pass-whites-in-rate-of-college-enrollment/>
- Gaitan, C. D. (2004). *Involving Latino families in schools: Raising student achievement through home-school partnerships*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Gandara, P. & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino education crisis: The consequences of failed social policies*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Garcia, M. T. (2014). *The Latino generation: Voices of the new America*. The University of Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina Press.
- Gillilan, D. C. (2006). Parental perceptions of elementary school counselors in a suburban atlanta school. *Georgia School Counselors Association Journal*, 13, 41-53.

- Gonzalez, L. M., Borders, L.D., Hines, E.M, Villalba, J.A., & Henderson, A. (2013). Parental involvement in children's education: Considerations for school counselors working with Latino immigrant families. *Professional School Counseling, 16*(3), 185-193.  
doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2013-16.183
- Gonzalez, M. L. (2010). The critical role of all educators in the school success of Latino children. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 9*, 479-494.
- Gysbers, N. C. (2010). *School counseling principles: Remembering the past, shaping the future. A history of school counseling*. Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.
- Hays, D. G. & Singh, A. A. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Hays, D. G. & Wood, C. (2011). Infusing qualitative traditions in counseling research designs. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 89*, 288-295.
- Huber, L. P., Huidor, O., Malagon, M. C., Sanchez, G., Solorzano, D. G. (2006). Galling though the cracks: Critical transition in the Latina/o educational pipeline. *Latina/o Education Summit Report, 7*, 2-14.
- Hughes, J. & Kwok, Oi-man. (2007). Influence of student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships on lower achieving readers' engagement and achievement in primary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 99*(1), 39-51.
- Hylton, K. (2012). Talk the talk, walk the walk: defining Critical Race Theory in research. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 15*(1), 23-41.

- Iverson, N. N., Milsom, A., & Newsome, D. W. (2012). Using Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise to improve Latino students' school success. *The Career Development Quarterly, 60*, 231-242.
- Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. (2012). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and Mixed approaches*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Jordan, J. V. (2000). The role of mutual empathy in relational-cultural therapy. *Psychotherapy in Practice, 55*, 1005-1016.
- Kline, W. B. (2008). Developing and submitting credible qualitative manuscripts. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 47*, 210-217.
- Lee, J. W., Jones, P. S., Mineyama, Y., & Zang, X. E. (2002). Cultural differences in responses to a likert scale. *Research in Nursing & Health, 25*, 295-306.
- Lewis, J. A., Arnold, M. S., House, R. & Toporek, R. L. (2003). ACA Advocacy Competencies. Retrieved January 15, 2014, from [http://www.counseling.org/docs/defaultsource/competencies/advocacy\\_competencies.pdf?sfvrsn=9](http://www.counseling.org/docs/defaultsource/competencies/advocacy_competencies.pdf?sfvrsn=9)
- Lieberman, A. (2004). Confusion regarding school counselor functions: school leadership impacts role clarity. *Education, 124*(3), 552-558.
- Machi, L. A. & McEvoy, B. T. (2012). *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Marx, S. & Larson, L. L. (2012). Taking off the color-blind glasses: Recognizing and supporting Latina/o students in a predominantly white school. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*(2), 259-303. doi: 10.1177/0013161X11421923

- Meena, J.A. (2011). Latino parent home-based practices that bolster student academic persistence. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 33, 490-506.  
doi:10.1177/0739986311422897
- Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Mertens, D. M. (2012). Transformative mixed methods: Addressing inequities. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 56(6), 802-813. DOI: 10.1177/0002764211433797
- Mertens, D. M. (2007). Transformative paradigm: Mixed methods and social justice. *Journal of mixed methods research*. 1(3), 212-225. DOI: 10.1177/1558689807302811
- Miller, J. B. & Stiver, I. P. (1997). *The healing connection: How women form relationships in therapy and in life*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Moreno, G. & Gaytán, F. X. (2013). Focus of Latino learners: Developing a foundational understanding of Latino cultures to cultivate student success. *Preventing School Failure*, 57(1), 7-16. DOI: 10.1080/1045988X.2013.731271
- Orozco, G. L. (2008). Understanding the culture of low-income immigrant Latino parents: Key to involvement. *The School Community Journal*. 18(1), 21-37.
- Olivos, E.M., & Mendoza, M. (2010). Immigration and educational inequity: Examining Latino immigrant parents' engagement in U.S. public schools. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 8, 339-357. doi: 10.1080/15562948.2010.501301
- Paisley, P.O., & Borders, L.D. (1995). School counseling: An evolving specialty. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 74, 150 -153.

- Parker, L., Deyhle, D., Villenas, S., Crosland Nebeker, K. (1998). Guest editors' introduction: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 5-6.
- Perkins, G., Oescher, J., Ballard, M. B. (2010). The evolving identity of school counselors as defined by the stakeholders. *Journal of School Counseling, 9*(31), 1-28.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W.E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: selection and implementation. *The Counseling Psychologist, 35*(2), 236-264.  
DOI: 10.1177/0011000006287390; In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology (pp. 41-60)*. New York, NY: Plenum.
- Ratts, M. J. (2009). Social justice counseling: Toward the development of a fifth force among counseling paradigms. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development, 48*, 160-172.
- Ratts, M., D'Andrea, M., & Arredondo, P (2004, July). Social justice counseling: 'Fifth force' in field. *Counseling Today*, pp. 28-30.
- Ratts, M. J., DeKruyf, L., & Chen-Hays, S. (2007). The ACA Advocacy Competencies: A social justice advocacy framework for professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 11*, 90-97.
- Ratts, M. J., Singh, A. A., Nassar-McMillan, S., Butler, S. K., & McCullough, J. R. (2015). *Multicultural and social justice counseling competencies*. Retrieved from [http://www.multiculturalcounseling.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=205:amcd-](http://www.multiculturalcounseling.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=205:amcd-)

- Reyes, J. A., & Elias, M. J. (2011). Fostering social-emotional resilience among Latino youth. *Psychology in the schools, 48*(7), 723-737.
- Ruiz, E. (2005). Hispanic culture and Relational Cultural Theory. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 1*(1), 33-55.
- Sanchez, C., Plata, V., Grosso, L., & Leird, B. (2010). Encouraging Spanish-speaking families' involvement through dichos. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 9*(3), 239-248.
- Santiago-Rivera, A.L, Arredondo, P., & Gallardo-Cooper, M. (2002). *Counseling Latinos and la familia: A practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education & The Social Science*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Smith-Morris, C., Morales-Campos, D., Alvarez, E.A.C., & Turner, M. (2013). An anthropology of "Familismo": On narratives and description of Mexican/Immigrants. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 35*(1), 35-60.
- Smith-Adcock, S., Daniels, M. H., Less, S. M., Villalba, J.A., Indelicato, N. A. (2006). Culturally responsive school counseling for Hispanic/Latino students and families: The need for bilingual school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 10*(1), 92-101.
- Spring, J. (2010). *Deculturalization and the struggle for equality: A brief history of the education of dominated cultures in the United States* (5th ed.). In Marx, S. & Larson, L. L. (2012), Taking off the color-blind glasses: Recognizing and supporting Latina/o students in a predominantly white school. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*(2), 259-303.
- Sweetman, D., Badiee, M., & Creswell, J. W. (2010). Use of the transformative framework in mixed methods studies. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(6), 441-454. doi: 10.1177/1077800410364610

- Tatum, B. D. (2003). *“Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?” and other conversations about race* (2nd ed.). In Marx, S. & Larson, L. L. (2012). Taking off the color-blind glasses: Recognizing and supporting Latina/o students in a predominantly white school. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(2), 259-303.
- The Education Trust (2009). *History of TSCI*. Retrieved from: <http://www.edtrust.org/node/139>
- Tornatzky, L.G., Cutler, R., & Lee, J. (2002). College knowledge: What Latino parents need to know and why they don't know it. *The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute*, 1-26.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2015, May 28). *State & county Quickfacts: GA*. Retrieved June 15, 2015, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov>.
- Vagle, M. D. (2014). *Crafting Phenomenological Research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press Inc.
- Vela-Gude, L., Cavazos, J., Johnson, M. B., Fielding, C., Cavazos, A. G, Campos, L., & Rodriguez, I. (2009). “My counselors were never there”: Perceptions from Latino college students. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(4), 272-279.
- Villalba, J. A., Akos, P., Keeter, K., & Ames, A. (2007). Promoting Latino student achievement and development through the ASCA National Model. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(5), 464-474.
- Villalba, J. A., Brunelli, M. , Lewis, L. , & Orfanedes, D. (2007). Experiences of Latino children attending rural elementary schools in the Southeastern U.S.: Perspectives from Latino parents in burgeoning Latino communities. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(5), 506-509.

- Walker, J. M. T, Ice, C. L., Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., & Sandler, H. M. (2011). Latino parents motivations for involvement in their children's schooling: An exploratory study. *The Elementary School Journal*, 111(3), 409-429.
- Williams, S. A. & Dawson, B. A. (2011). The effects of familial capital on the academic achievement of elementary Latino/a students. *Families in society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 92(1), 91-98.
- Zalaquett, C. & Baez, J. (2012). Career counseling with Hispanic/Latinos/as. *Career Planning & Adult Development Journal*, 28(1), 57-71.

## APPENDIX A

### BRACKETING

My assumptions regarding Latino/a parents as they relate to school counselors is that many of the parents did not have school counselors in their home countries and previously were unaware of the role of the school counselor. The reasons which prompted them to interact with the school counselor was due to the school counselor contacting them due to a concern, the parents coming to the school asking for help and then being referred to the school counselor, or through word of mouth from members of their community. The concerns which would lead the parents to interact with school counselors were on the topics of academics, risky behaviors, impact of immigration, peer relations, resources-food, shelter, financial, and/or medical.

Additionally, my assumptions are many of parents may not have completed formal education in their home countries and are working tough jobs such as housekeeping and hard labor to provide a living for themselves and their children. Majority of the parents do not speak English. The parents do not have a close connection to the school counselors and do not interact with them unless prompted by the school due to a concern. My assumption is if the parents were more knowledgeable of the school counselor's role, they would reach out to the counselor more frequently for collaboration in regards to prevention and intervention. Another assumption is the mothers are more involved in the interactions with the school counselor due to the father working in or out of town and gender roles.

## APPENDIX B

### IRB APPROVAL



Phone 706-542-3199

Office of the Vice President for Research  
Institutional Review Board

Fax 706-542-3660

#### APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL

June 4, 2014

Dear Pamela Paisley:

On 6/4/2014, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	The Meaning of the Lived Experiences of Latino/a Parents as they relate to School Counselors
Investigator:	Pamela Paisley
IRB ID:	STUDY00000948
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None

The IRB approved the protocol from 6/4/2014.

To document consent, use the consent documents that were approved and stamped by the IRB. Go to the Documents tab to download them.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Larry Nackerud, Ph.D.  
University of Georgia  
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

APPENDIX C  
RECRUITMENT FLIER

Please consider participating in a research study conducted by Malti Tuttle who is a graduate student at the University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. Pamela O. Paisley. The name of the study is The Meaning of the Lived Experiences of Latino/a Parents as they Relate to School Counselors

She will be coming to (add location) on (add date when scheduled) at (time) to share about the importance of this study. This is an opportunity to share about the experiences you have had with your child(ren)'s school counselor which will help provide an understanding to the school counseling field for educational purposes.

**About the Study**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to ...

- Complete a survey by answering questions about your experiences with your child(ren)'s school counselor. The survey will last approximately 10 minutes.
- After completing the survey, you will decide if you would like to participate in a face to face interview with the researcher and a translator to discuss the experiences you have had with your child(ren)'s school counselor. The interview will last approximate 30-45 minutes.

**Benefits**

The benefits of the study are to inform the school counseling field about these experiences and advocate for Latino/a parents and school counselor partnerships in support of Latino/a youth, as well provide understanding of the school counseling program to the parents.

### **Volante de Reclutamiento**

Por favor considere participar en un estudio de investigación realizado por Malti Tuttle quien es una estudiante de postgrado en la Universidad de Georgia, que trabaja debajo la dirección de la Dra. Pamela O. Paisley. El título del estudio es El Significado de Las Experiencias Vividas de los Padres Latinos en su Relación con Consejero/as Escolares.

Ella va a venir a \_\_\_\_\_ el día \_\_\_\_\_ a las \_\_\_\_\_ para compartir sobre la importancia de este estudio. Esta es una oportunidad para compartir sobre sus experiencias que Usted había tenido con el consejero/a escolar de sus hijos/hijas y para ayudar a proveer información al sujeto consejería para propósitos educativos.

#### **Información del Estudio**

Si usted acepta participar, se le pedirá que ...

- Complete una encuesta respondiendo preguntas sobre sus experiencias con el/la consejero/a escolar de su hijo/hija. La encuesta tendrá una duración de aproximadamente 10 minutos.
- Después de completar la encuesta, usted decidirá si desea participar en una entrevista cara a cara con la investigadora y el/la traductor/a para hablar sobre sus experiencias con el/la consejero/a escolar de su hijo/hija. La entrevista tendrá una duración aproximada de 30-45 minutos.

#### **Beneficios**

Los beneficios del estudio son para informar el campo de orientación consejero profesión escolar sobre estas experiencias de los latinos / a los padres Latinos y las asociaciones entre los

consejeros escolares y el apoyo de la juventud Latina/o y los conceptos del programa de consejería escolar a los padres.

## APPENDIX D

## CONSENT FORM

**The Meaning of the Lived Experiences of Latino/a Parents as they relate to School Counselors**

**Researcher's Statement**

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

**Principal Investigator:**

*Pamela O. Paisley  
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services  
402 Aderhold Hall  
The University of Georgia  
Athens, GA 30602  
Phone: (706) 542-4142 FAX: (706) 542-4130  
ppaisley@uga.edu*

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is focus on the experiences Latino/a parents have with professional school counselors. The goal of the research study is to inform the school counseling field about these experiences and advocate for Latino/a parents and school counselor partnerships is in support of Latino/a youth, as well provide understanding of the school counseling program to the parents.

**Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to ...

- Complete a survey by answering questions about your experiences with your child(ren)'s school counselor. The survey will last approximately 10 minutes.
- After completing the survey, you will decide if you would like to participate in a face to face interview with the researcher and a translator to discuss the experiences you have had with your child(ren)'s school counselor. The interview will last approximate 30-45 minutes.

**Risks and discomforts**

The primary risk is a breach of confidentiality. The researcher of this study will provide pseudonyms for the participants and will store information received from the participants in a secure location to reduce this risk. To reduce discomfort, the researcher will not ask questions

about immigration status and not record any information that would pertain to immigration status.

### **Benefits**

The benefits of the study are to inform the school counseling field about these experiences and advocate for Latino/a parents and school counselor partnerships in support of Latino/a youth, as well provide understanding of the school counseling program to the parents.

### **Audio/Video Recording**

The interview will be audio recorded utilized by a digital recorder so that the interviews can be translated and transcribed. After the interviews have been transcribed and coded by the research team, the audio interview will be destroyed. The results from this study may be used in publishing future articles in scholarly journals and in presentations, but your identity will remain confidential.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this interview audio recorded or not. You may still participate in this study by only completing the survey if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want to have this interview recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to have this interview recorded.

### **Privacy/Confidentiality**

All participants in this research study will be identified by pseudonyms. Confidentiality will need to be broken if the participant discloses information which identifies concern for safety. The data collected will be stored in a safe environment and will be destroyed after the research study has finished. The researcher will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

### **Taking part is voluntary**

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

### **If you have questions**

The main researcher conducting this study is Malti S. Tuttle under the direction of Dr. Pamela O. Paisley at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Malti Tuttle at [mtuttle@uga.edu](mailto:mtuttle@uga.edu) or at 678-524-6953. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu).

### **Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research**

Verbal consent by the participants will be accepted.

Please keep your copy.

**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**  
**Forma de Consentimiento**

**El significado de las experiencias vividas padres por latinos / a en su relación con  
Consejeros Escolares**

**Declaración del Investigador**

Le estoy pidiendo participar en un estudio de investigación. Antes de decidirse a participar en este estudio, es importante que usted entienda por qué la investigación se está haciendo y lo que implica. Este formulario está diseñado para darle la información sobre el estudio para que pueda decidir si estar en el estudio o no. Por favor, tómese el tiempo para leer cuidadosamente la siguiente información. Por favor, pregunte el investigador si hay algo que no está claro o si necesita más información. Cuando todas sus preguntas han sido contestadas, usted puede decidir si desea participar en el estudio o no. Este proceso se llama "consentimiento informado." Una copia de esta forma se le dará a usted.

**Investigador Principal:** *Pamela O. Paisley*  
*Department of Counseling and Human Development Services*  
*402 Aderhold Hall*  
*The University of Georgia*  
*Athens, GA 30602*  
*Phone: (706) 542-4142 FAX: (706) 542-4130*  
*ppaisley@uga.edu*

**Propósito del Estudio**

El propósito de este estudio es de enterarse de las experiencias que los padres Latinos/as tienen con los consejeros escolares profesionales. El objetivo de este estudio de investigación es informar el campo de orientación consejero profesión escolar sobre estas experiencias y abogar por padres latinos y abogar sobre asociaciones entre los consejeros escolares y la juventud Latina, y también proveer información sobre los conceptos del programa de consejería escolar a los padres.

**Procedimientos del Estudio**

Si usted acepta participar, se le pedirá....

- Completar una encuesta y responder preguntas acerca de sus experiencias con el consejero de la escuela su hijo (s) 's. Esta encuesta durará aproximadamente 10 minutos.
- Después de completar la encuesta, usted decidirá si desea participar en una entrevista cara a cara con el investigador y traductor para hablar de sus experiencias con el consejero de la escuela de su hijo (s) 's. La entrevista tendrá una duración aproximada de 30-45 minutos.

**Riesgos y molestias**

El principal riesgo es una violación de la confidencialidad. El investigador de este estudio proporcionará seudónimos para los participantes y almacenará la información recibida de los participantes en un lugar seguro para reducir este riesgo. Para reducir las molestias, el investigador no le hará preguntas sobre el estatus migratorio y no va a grabar cualquier información que pudiera corresponder a su estatus migratorio.

**Beneficios**

Los beneficios del estudio son para informar el campo de orientación consejero profesión escolar sobre estas experiencias de los latinos / a los padres Latinos y las asociaciones entre los consejeros escolares y el apoyo de la juventud Latina/o y los conceptos del programa de consejería escolar a los padres.

**Audio / Video Grabado**

La entrevista será audio grabada será grabada por un grabador digital de manera que las entrevistas pueden ser traducidas y transcritas. Después que las entrevistas han sido transcritas y codificadas por el equipo de investigación, el audio de la entrevista será destruido. Los resultados de este estudio pueden ser utilizados en la publicación de futuros artículos en revistas especializadas y en las presentaciones, pero su identidad se mantendrá confidencial.

Proporcione sus iniciales a continuación si usted acepta que este audio y entrevista sea grabada o no. Usted todavía puede participar en este estudio y sólo completar la encuesta si usted no está dispuesto a que la entrevista grabada.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yo No quiero tener esta entrevista grabada.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yo Estoy dispuesto a tener esta entrevista grabada

**Privacidad / Confidencialidad**

Todos los participantes en este estudio de investigación serán identificados por seudónimos. La confidencialidad se romperá si el participante revela información que identifica a la preocupación por la seguridad. Los datos recogidos serán almacenados en un entorno seguro y serán destruidos después de que el estudio de investigación ha terminado. El investigador no dará a conocer los resultados identificables del estudio a nadie más que las personas que trabajan en el proyecto sin su consentimiento por escrito a menos que lo requiera la ley.

**La participación es voluntaria**

Su participación en el estudio es voluntaria y usted puede elegir no participar o retirarse en cualquier momento sin sanción o pérdida de beneficios a los que tiene derecho. Si decide retirarse del estudio, la información que puede ser identificado como el suyo se mantendrá como parte del estudio y podrán seguir siendo analizado, a menos que haga una solicitud por escrito para retirar, devolver o destruir la información.

**Si tiene alguna pregunta**

El principal investigador de la realización de este estudio es Malti S. Tuttle bajo la dirección del Dra. Pamela O. Paisley en la Universidad de Georgia. Por favor haga cualquier pregunta que tenga ahora. Si tiene alguna pregunta más adelante, puede comunicarse con Malti Tuttle en [mtuttle@uga.edu](mailto:mtuttle@uga.edu) o al 678-524-6953. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o duda sobre sus derechos como participante de la investigación en este estudio, puede comunicarse con la Junta de Revisión Institucional (IRB) Presidente en 706.542.3199 o [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu).

**Investigación de la asignatura del consentimiento para participar en la investigación**

Se aceptará el consentimiento verbal de los participantes.

Por favor, mantenga su copia

APPENDIX E  
SCREENING SURVEY

1. In my overall experience, I felt intimidated to meet with the school counselor.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

2. In my overall experience, I felt the school counselor respected me for being from another country.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

3. In my overall experience, the school counselor wanted to work with me and my family towards creating change.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

4. In my overall experience, I have had a positive experience with the school counselor.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

5. In my overall experience with the school counselor, he/she seemed to be interested in my family's situation.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

6. In my overall experience, when I met with the school counselor, he/she seemed to understand what I am saying.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

7. In my overall experience, the school counselor collaborates with me.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**Please Mark All that Apply**

The number of children I have who attend school in the United States:

○ 1

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- More than 5 Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:

- Female
- Male

The grade levels in which my children are in school:

- Elementary Age \_\_\_\_\_
- Middle Age \_\_\_\_\_
- High School Age \_\_\_\_\_

I would be interested in participating in an interview with Malti Tuttle. Yes No

### Encuesta Preliminar

1. En mi experiencia en general, me sentí intimidado a reunirse con el/la consejero/a de la escuela.

Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	No estoy seguro/a	No estoy de acuerdo	Totalmente en desacuerdo
-----------------------	------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------------

2. En mi experiencia en general, sentí que el/la consejero/a de la escuela me respetaba por ser de otro país.

Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	No estoy seguro/a	No estoy de acuerdo	Totalmente en desacuerdo
-----------------------	------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------------

3. En mi experiencia en general, el/la consejero/a de la escuela quería trabajar conmigo y mi familia hacia la creación de un cambio.

Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	No estoy seguro/a	No estoy de acuerdo	Totalmente en desacuerdo
-----------------------	------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------------

4. En mi experiencia en general, he tenido una experiencia positiva con el/la consejero/a de la escuela.

Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	No estoy seguro/a	No estoy de acuerdo	Totalmente en desacuerdo
-----------------------	------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------------

5. En mi experiencia en general con el/la consejero/a de la escuela, él / ella parecía estar interesado/a en la situación de mi familia.

Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	No estoy seguro/a	No estoy de acuerdo	Totalmente en desacuerdo
-----------------------	------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------------

6. En mi experiencia en general, cuando me reuní con el/la consejero/a de la escuela, él / ella pareció entender lo que yo dije.

Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	No estoy seguro/a	No estoy de acuerdo	Totalmente en desacuerdo
-----------------------	------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------------

7. En mi experiencia en general, el/la consejero/a de la escuela colabora conmigo.

Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	No estoy seguro/a	No estoy de acuerdo	Totalmente en desacuerdo
-----------------------	------------	-------------------	---------------------	--------------------------

Por favor, marque todas las que correspondan

El número de niños que tengo que asisten a la escuela en los Estados Unidos:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- Más de 5 Número: \_\_\_\_\_

Sexo:

- Femenino/Mujer
- Masculino/Hombre

Los niveles de grado en el que mis hijos están en la escuela:

- Primaria Edad \_\_\_\_\_
- Secundaria Edad \_\_\_\_\_
- Preparatoria Edad \_\_\_\_\_

Yo estaría interesado en participar en una entrevista con Malti Tuttle. Sí No

## APPENDIX F

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Question:	What is the meaning of the lived experiences of Latino/a parents as they relate to professional school counselors?
Purpose Statement:	The purpose of the phenomenological study is to discover the experiences of Latino/a parents with professional school counselors.
Concept Framework:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tradition-Phenomenology</li> <li>2. Theory-Relational Cultural Theory</li> <li>3. Categories of Literature Review-role of the professional school counselor, Latino/as in the United States, and advocacy.</li> </ol>
<p>Interview Questions:</p> <p>Interview protocol was significantly influenced by Dana Gillilan's article: "Parental Perceptions of Elementary School Counselors in a Suburban Atlanta School". <i>Georgia School Counselors Association Journal</i>, 13, 41-53. 2006</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What experience have you had with your child's school counselor?</li> <li>2. In your experience, what information have you received from your school counselor and his/her function in the school?</li> <li>3. Based on your experience with the school counselor, what do you think is the job of a school counselor?</li> <li>4. What do you think school counselors are needed for in the school setting?</li> <li>5. What has your child shared with you about his/her experiences of school counselor's activities at the school?</li> <li>6. Describe to me about a time when it was difficult for you to make contact with the school counselor. Also, tell me about a time when it was helpful for you to make contact with the school counselor.</li> <li>7. How connected do you feel to the school counselor? (RCT)</li> <li>8. How connected do you feel the school counselor is to you and your family? (RCT)</li> <li>9. In your experience with the school counselor, did you feel the school counselor valued or did not value what you had to say? What gave you that idea? (RCT)</li> </ol>

	<p>10. How interested do you think the school counselor is in what you have to say about yourself and your family? (RCT)</p> <p>11. Is there anything you would like to add about your experiences with the school counselor?</p>
--	---

### Protocolo de la Entrevista

Pregunta de investigación:	¿Cuál es el significado de las experiencias vividas de los padres Latinos en lo que respecta a los consejeros escolares profesionales?
Declaración de Propósito	El propósito del estudio fenomenológico es descubrir las experiencias de los padres Latinos con los consejeros escolares profesionales.
Marco Concepto:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tradicionalmente Fenomenología</li> <li>2. Teoría Cultural -Teoría Relacional</li> <li>3. Categorías de Revisión de la Literatura- papel del consejero profesional de la escuela, latinos / as en los Estados Unidos, y la promoción.</li> </ol>
<p>Preguntas de la entrevista:</p> <p>Protocolo de entrevista fue influenciada significativamente por el artículo de Dana Gillilan: "Percepciones de los padres de Consejeros Escolares de primaria en una escuela suburbana de Atlanta". Asociación de Consejeros Escolares de Georgia Journal, 13, 41-53. ¿Qué experiencia de 2006</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cuales han sido sus experiencias con el consejero escolar de su hijo/hija?</li> <li>2. Según su experiencia, ¿qué información ha recibido de su consejero de la escuela y su función en la escuela?</li> <li>3. Basado en su experiencia con el consejero de la escuela, ¿qué cree usted que es el trabajo de un consejero de la escuela?</li> <li>4. ¿Por qué cree usted que se necesitan consejeros escolares en el ámbito escolar?</li> <li>5. ¿Cuál ha sido las experiencias que su hijo/hija a compartido con usted acerca de sus experiencias o de las actividades del consejero de la escuela en la escuela?</li> <li>6. Describame alguna vez sobre un momento en que le fue difícil para usted contactar al consejero de la escuela. También cuénteme acerca de una ocasión en que fue útil para usted contactar el consejero de la escuela.</li> <li>7. ¿Cómo se sientes conectado con el consejero de la escuela? (RCT)</li> <li>8. ¿Cómo se siente conectado con el consejero escolar en relación a usted y su familia? (RCT)</li> <li>9. Según su experiencia con el consejero de la escuela, ¿se sintió que el consejero escolar valora o no valoraba lo que tenía que decir? ¿Qué te hace pensar eso? (RCT)</li> </ol>

	<p>10. ¿Qué tan interesado cree usted que el consejero de la escuela está en lo que tiene que decir acerca de usted y su familia? (RCT)</p> <p>11. ¿Hay algo que le gustaría añadir acerca de sus experiencias con el consejero de la escuela?</p>
--	--

## APPENDIX G

## CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Project title – “The Meaning of the Lived Experiences of Latino/a Parents as they Relate to School Counselors”.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have been hired to provide translation services between the researcher and participants of this study. The researcher and I have discussed and agreed to the fees for the translation services, which are \_\_\_\_\_ for all services provided.

I agree to keep all the research information shared with me during the interviews confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts, conversations) with anyone other than the researcher of the study. I recognize that by being part of the interviews, the information shared by the participants is confidential.

By signing below, I agree to all terms of this agreement.

Translator:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Print Name) (Signature) (Date)

Researcher:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Print Name) (Signature) (Date)

APPENDIX H  
PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS

County #1

Participant Pseudonym	Description
Marta	Female, married, native country is Colombia, been in the United States for 17 years, 4 sons -2 in HS, 1 in MS, 1 in ES, bilingual, college educated, work-engineer, stay at home mom, currently working
Sabrina	Female, 32 years old, married, from Mexico, came to the United States 15 years ago, has two children attending school, a boy and a girl, the boy in in Kindergarten and the girl in 8 <sup>th</sup> grade
Patricia	Female, 43 years old, from Brazil, Has a daughter in school, 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade, works in a spa, speaks 3 Languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese; 3 experiences with school counselors
Leticia	Female, 37 years old, one son in school, 11 years old, domestic violence victim, left Mexico for a a better life, left husband, cleans homes and does construction work

## County #2

Participant Pseudonym	Description
Judy Elizabeth	57 year old woman, born in DR, Moved to Puerto Rico when 10yrs, Then to NY and then Georgia. Has 3 children living with her, whose mother was deported. Bilingual
Lili	From Mexico, has been in the United States for 20 years. 20 year old son and 15 year old son
Ruby Corazon	From Mexico, 40 year old female, has been in the United States for 13 years, 9 year old daughter and 3 year old son, husband has been deported
Lucy	Has 3 children who attend school- ages 4, 9, and 10.

## County #3

Participant Pseudonym	Description
Daniel	48 year old male, came to the USA in 1985, has 3 children-two are school aged-ages 9, 13, and 3. Arrived from Mexico in 1985 and to Georgia in 1992, met with SC to seek help in academics-mentioned math, from Indian/indigenous heritage, wants SC to speak to students about getting ready for college

Ana	31 years old, from Mexico, arrived in 2005, children aged: 4, 7, 9, 13
John Wayne	34 years old, from Mexico, has a Blended family
Maria	30 years old, from Mexico, has a Blended family

## APPENDIX I

## CONTACT SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee:

Contact Date:

Today's Date:

1. What were the main issues or themes that stuck out for me during this contact?
2. What discrepancies, if any, did I note in the interviewee's responses?
3. Anything else that stuck out as salient, interesting, or important in this contact?
4. How does this compare to other data collections?