LATINO-AMERICAN YOUTHS’ PERCEPTION OF
NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY AND PARENTAL ACADEMIC SUPPORT
ON EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCY

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ABSTRACT

This present study examined a sample of 620 Latino students. The participants ranged in age from 13-20 years old. This purpose of this study was to explore neighborhood variables and parenting variables in relation to Latino adolescents’ academic outcomes. Five hypotheses were examined: (1) Neighborhood structural qualities will be positively and significantly related to youth perceptions of neighborhood qualities, and hence, indirectly related to teacher reports of adolescents’ grades through youth perceptions of neighborhood qualities, (2) Neighborhood structural qualities will be positively and significantly related to youth perceptions of parental involvement (3) Adolescent reports of mothers’ and fathers’ educational attainment levels will be positively and significantly related to youth perceptions of parental involvement, (4) Latino adolescent perceptions of parental involvement will be positively and significantly related to teacher reports of adolescents’ grades, and (5) Neighborhood and parental qualities related to grades will vary based on immigrant status. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression equations indicated that neighborhood structural qualities, measured with census data at the block group were significantly related to Latino youths’ reports of perceived neighborhood qualities. The second hypothesis regarding neighborhood structural qualities and youth perceptions of parental involvement was not supported. However both
hypotheses three and four (adolescent reports of mothers’ and fathers’ educational attainment levels will be positively and significantly related to youth perceptions of parental involvement and Latino adolescent perceptions of parental involvement will be positively and significantly related to teacher reports of adolescents’ grades) were both supported by hierarchical multiple regression equations. To test for possible differences between first and second generation Latino adolescents, the analyses were conducted separately for first generation youth and second generation youth. Neighborhood structural qualities were significant and positively related to perceived neighborhood assets. Also, neighborhood assets were significantly and positively related to GPA. Neighborhood structural qualities were significant and positively related to perceived neighborhood assets. Also, neighborhood assets were significantly and positively related to GPA. Implications, findings and limitations of the study are discussed.
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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980’s, the populations in the schools across the United States have changed due to the influx of immigrants. The schools have become more ethnically diverse (Schmid, 2001). With this diversity comes a need to evaluate, assess, and elucidate the academic success and risk experienced in different ethnic populations of children. Studying immigrants and children of immigrants elucidates new information on education, revealing the changes from one generation to another. Latinos have the lowest graduation rates (Swanson, 2005), and now with Latinos being the second largest and the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005), it is imperative that we identify factors that impact their educational success. Essential information on theoretical issues can be revealed, and the role of culture, school, family expectations, and family status can be determined in academic outcomes. Academic success is often utilized to predict future success, and Latino youth have been found to be “at-risk” of academic underachievement (Swanson).

Relatively little research has looked at neighborhood variables related to Latino academics, and this could be a key variable since they often live in low-income high risk areas. Latinos value family highly (Halgunseth, Ipsa, & Rudy, 2006), and so it makes sense that parenting variables may impact academics. Hence, the purposes of this study
are to help educators and others interested in Latino success, by identifying variables that may be related.

This dissertation will explore neighborhood variables and parenting variables in relation to Latino adolescents’ academic outcomes. Usually the term “at-risk” is presented as a concrete variable, however risk stems from a combination of subjective and objective factors, such as neighborhoods, which matter greatly to the development of youth (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Risk is therefore context dependent. The human ecological perspective takes into consideration how various contexts (e.g., family and neighborhood) influences Latino youth development.

*Latinos in the United States*

In 2002, there were 37.4 million Latinos in the civilian population of the United States, and of this population 66.9 percent were of Mexican origin (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2003). By 2004, the Latin population in the United States increased to 41.3 million (http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/005164.html). Approximately 40.2 percent of the entire Latin population in the United States was foreign born, with the majority immigrating to the U.S. between 1990 and 2002 (Ramirez & de la Cruz). California had the largest Hispanic population in July 2004 (12.4 million), and the largest numerical increase (351,000) since July 2003.

Latino youth comprise one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States and therefore are more likely to experience poverty with all of its associated factors (Prelow & Loukas, 2003). One of the most important factors is the school dropout
rate for Latinos. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) explain that although many youth are at-risk, Latino youth are often identified as at-risk of academic underachievement.

*Immigrant Communities and Youth Academics*

Enclave communities act as magnets for additional immigrants because they offer family support, community support, access to jobs, and living arrangements (White & White & Sassler, 2000). The new immigrants who settle in these predominantly minority neighborhoods will have little to no direct connection with middle-class, white Americans. According to White and Sassler, residence is a very important variable in the multi-dimensional process of immigrant groups who are adapting into the dominant culture. It has also been suggested that the degree of ethnic heterogeneity of a neighborhood increases the severance of external social networks (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997). However, according to McLoyd and Wilson (1991) it is the homogeneity of a community and the accompanying social isolation that contributes in part to the continuation of poverty.

These new immigrants will be segregated by economic capital that affects residential, academic, and social networks, as well as employment opportunities (White & Sassler, 2000). The assimilation of immigrants has been traditionally measured through language skills, educational skills, and place of residence. Geographic segregation also brings up the issue of linguistic concentration that is increasingly becoming more of an aspect of segregation for the Latino community. Some believe that with the geographic segregation of the immigrant, Spanish-speaking community, there
will be less of an incentive to learn English (Jasso & Rosenzweig, 1990). However, data have also demonstrated that new immigrants care deeply about learning English (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Massey et al. (1995) states that immigrants generally shift towards English as their children grow up in the United States as fluent English speakers. Present day immigrants vary greatly in educational attainment, income, and intent on assimilating. According to Massey, the folklore of the immigrant individual and family includes the struggle to overcome poverty, achievement of fiscal mobility through individual exertion and effort, group solidarity to overcome prejudice and bigotry, and the eventual assimilation. While Weber (1978) stated that social class corresponds to a faction of people who rank closely with each other in regard to wealth, power, and prestige.

*Poverty and Youth Academics*

Low socioeconomic status seems to be the root of many problems for new and incoming immigrants because there are more female-headed households with more children (White & Sassler, 2000). This suggests that one of the underlying issues is that there are fewer adults in the household contributing to the income of the family. This is important because regardless of their personal traits, people in environments of concentrated poverty and racial isolation are more likely to “become teenage mothers, drop out of school, achieve only low levels of education, and earn lower adult incomes” (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 131).

Gephart (1997) suggests that the contextual effects of neighborhoods have been neglected in the literature and need more attention. Gephart also states that the
educational attainment of neighbors may also have an effect on children’s educational outcome. According to Gephart (p. 3): “Thus, minorities disproportionately experience the effects of concentrated poverty and its clustering with other forms of disadvantage. As a result, many minority children and adolescents face daily challenges, dangers, and obstacles that their white counterparts rarely experience.”

The traditional implication has been that the children of families with lower socioeconomic statuses (e.g., Hispanic and African-American families) will have fewer educational resources; while children growing up in middle-class neighborhoods will have more access to educational resources, therefore having better academic outcomes. According to Duncan (1991) the average middle-class (being measured by occupational and educational attainment of the parent) child is more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and have a higher paying and higher status job than a child from a family in low socioeconomic status grouping. According to Brooks-Gunn et al. (1997), one of the most important neighborhood characteristics related to child development is the neighborhood socioeconomic status. Neighborhood socioeconomic status is often an indicator of family income.

Possible reasons why middle-class neighborhoods are beneficial to children’s outcomes are positive role models, shared values of peers and their families, high educational aspirations of peers and their families, quantity and quality of neighborhood organizations, the higher quality of schools, the number and high quality of playgrounds, recreational facilities and libraries, or other organizations that provide supervised youth activities (Gephart, 1997). There can be no doubt that poverty affects a child’s outcome.
Low income and racial-ethnic minority children do not have the same educational opportunities as their middle-income, Caucasian counterparts (Desimone, 1999; Ogbu, 1981). Immigrants are aware that education for their children is of the utmost importance. The unfortunate situation is that in these low economic areas schools are generally under-funded, classes are overcrowded, and teachers are often unprepared, underpaid, and overworked.

Parenting and Youth Academic Outcomes

Educational outcomes cannot be predicted exclusively by socioeconomic status and ethnicity. According to Desimone (1999), family dynamics and parental variables need to be considered in conjunction with neighborhood influences. Because of work schedules to support their families, many low-income immigrants are unable to adequately monitor their adolescents as much as may be needed. In fact, there may be a role reversal where the immigrant child has the responsibility of assisting the parents (i.e., communication and facilitating interactions for the parents; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Parental influences are crucial in many ways to academic outcomes because they provide both psychological as well as financial resources and are key players in socialization (Kao & Tienda, 1998). According to Goldenberg and Galimore (1995), Latino parents desire academic success for their children so that they can qualify for jobs that pay well in order to have social and economic mobility. The prevailing assumption is that many immigrants come to America to find better job opportunities and for their children to obtain a higher education; that is, to secure a better life for their progeny.
“estudia y sea alguien” or “study and be somebody” (Ibañez, G. E., Kuperminc, G. P., Jurkovic, G., & Perilla, J. ñez et al., 2004).

Definitions

1. Academic motivation refers to one who wants to learn, likes learning-related activates, and believes school is important; having a feeling of interest or enthusiasm with learning-related activities (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003).

2. Adolescence generally refers to the stage of development that begins with the onset of puberty and includes the process of growing to maturity (The Random House Dictionary, 2nd ed.).

3. Generation status refers to a specified number stage in the sequence of generations born or living in a country into which a family came as immigrants (Encarta World English Dictionary).
   a. First generation youth represents Latinos who migrated to the United States (Halgunseth, 2004).
   b. Second-generation youth – youth who are born in the United States and their parents migrated to the US (Marin & Gamba, 1996).

4. Immigrant family is defined as a group of people who share ancestral ties and who move to another country usually for permanent residence (The Random House Dictionary, 2nd ed.).

5. Latino refers to a person a Latin American or Spanish-speaking descent (The Random House Dictionary, 2nd ed.).
6. Neighborhood is defined as the area or region around or near some place or thing (The Random House Dictionary, 2nd ed.).

7. A census tract is a small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county. Census tracts are classified by local census statistical areas committees following Census Bureau guidelines. Census tracts usually have between 2,500 and 8,000 people and, when first identified, were designed to be homogeneous with respect to population characteristics, economic status, and living conditions. (http://www.census.gov/geo/www/cen_tract.html)

8. A Census block group is a cluster of census blocks having the same first digit of their four-digit identifying numbers within a census tract. Block groups generally contain between 600 and 3,000 people, with an optimum size of 1,500 people. Most block groups were delineated by local participants as part of the U.S. Census Bureau's Participant Statistical Areas Program. (http://www.census.gov/geo/www/cob/bg_metadata.html)

9. A neighborhood structural quality refers to the interrelationship of constituent parts of a neighborhood (Encarta World English Dictionary).

10. Parental academic support refers to parent(s) giving active help, encouragement, or money to assist their child(ren) in achieving academic success.

11. Parental involvement includes different behaviors that portray the participation of mothers and fathers in their children’s academic and nonacademic activities (Anguiano 2004).
12. Parental monitoring refers to a set of parenting behaviors involving attention to and tracking of the child’s friendships, whereabouts, activities, behaviors, and adaptations (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

**Hypotheses**

Based on the review of literature in Chapter 2, the following research hypotheses were developed (see Figure 1):

H1: It is hypothesized that neighborhood structural assets will be positively and significantly related to Latino youth reports of neighborhood qualities, and hence, indirectly related to teacher reports of adolescents’ grades through youth reports of neighborhood qualities.

H2: It is hypothesized that neighborhood structural qualities will be positively and significantly related to Latino youth reports of parental involvement.

H3: It is hypothesized that adolescent reports of mothers’ and fathers’ educational attainment levels will be positively and significantly related to Latino youth reports of parental involvement.

H4: It is hypothesized that Latino adolescent perceptions of parental involvement will be positively and significantly related to teacher reports of adolescents’ grades.

H5: It is hypothesized that neighborhood and parental qualities related to grades will vary based on immigrant status.
Assumptions

The research for this dissertation was created based upon certain assumptions as outlined below.

• The Latino participants in the study will answer the questionnaire wholly and truthfully.

• The measures used in the study are appropriate for the Latino youth participants since they have been used in previous studies with Latino adolescents and shown to have good validity and internal consistency reliability (see measurement section in Chapter 3).

• The Latino adolescent participants will be able to read English and understand the items on the questionnaire since they are enrolled in high schools in the United States where the language of instruction is English.

• Participants will participate in the research without pressure from instructors, parents, or researchers. The research assistants were trained not to apply pressure
to participants to participate or complete a questionnaire. Also, the teachers were encouraged not to pressure the students to participate.

- Participants will answer the questionnaires completely and honestly. The verbal instructions provided by the research assistants to the participants encouraged honest answers as well as confidentiality of their responses. In addition, the parental consent and adolescent assent forms assured confidentiality.

- No errors were made in the data coding or entry. All data were double-checked for accuracy in coding and entry. In addition, frequencies were conducted on all the variables in the self-report survey to examine all data as a third check to accuracy.

- No errors were made in the data analyses. All analyses were double-checked by a statistical consultant (i.e., a professor of psychology at California State University Northridge).

Limitations

This thesis will add to the understanding of youth resiliency in the Latin community, however, certain limitations to the study exist.

- The data were collected using self-report questionnaires in a cross-sectional design that only assess youths’ judgment of the independent and dependent variables at one point in time.

- This sample is limited to Latino adolescents from one school in Los Angeles that can limit generalities.
• The use of a cross-sectional, correlational design limits assertions of causality between the independent and dependent variables.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Latinos in the United States

All Latinos are not the same (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2001). Under the large umbrella of the label ‘Latino’ resides very diverse groups with many similarities and differences. In completing the United States Census, people of Latin origin had the option to report their identification as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other. In 2000, the US Census Bureau reported that there were 33,871,648 million Latinos (i.e., 13.3% of the total population) in the United States. Represented within this population were people comprised of different origins, such as Mexican (32.4%), Puerto Rican (0.4%), and Cuban (0.2%). Within the greater populace of Mexican origin, the majority lived in the Western United States (54.6%), and 40.2% (15 million) were foreign born (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2002). In the city of Los Angeles, Latinos (of any race) comprise 46.5% (i.e., 1,719,073) of the total population (US Census Bureau, 2000). The number of Latinos in Los Angeles comprise the second highest population of Latinos in the U.S (US Census Bureau, 2000).

Economic Characteristics of Immigrants

Of the 9,758,886 immigrants in Los Angeles County, 18.6 percent are below the poverty level, and 23 percent of immigrant families with children (i.e., under the age of 18 years) are in poverty (American Community Survey, 2005). Socioeconomic status in
the United States is achieved and determined by education level, occupation, place of residence, and income. Although not all immigrants start at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, there are many who do. Immigrant families often come to the United States to make a better economic way of life for themselves. These immigrants face many adversities as they try to gain access to American culture mainstream. There are structural and cultural barriers that limit them in upward mobility. According to Borjas (1994) recent immigrants were unlikely to catch up with native-born residents when assessed by earning growth.

In 2002, 26.3 percent of Latinos working year-round earned $35,000 or more and 12.4 percent earned $50,000 or more; with Mexicans having the lowest proportion in both wage ranges (Ramirez & de la Cruz 2003). Studies have demonstrated that with increased poverty there is an increase in school dropouts, teen pregnancies, and youth delinquencies (McLanahan, McLanahan, Astone, & Marks, 1991). Other studies exhibit that with increased poverty there is also a change in the quality of parenting due to stressors, such as a lack of access to goods and resources (McLoyd, 1990).

In March 2002, among the Latin population over the age of sixteen years, Mexicans had an unemployment rate of 8.4 percent. However, Puerto Ricans had the highest rate of unemployment at 9.6 percent, while Central Americans, South Americans, and Cubans were all in the six percent range (Ramirez & de la Cruz 2002). Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to live in poverty. In 2002, Hispanics living in poverty represented 21.4 percent of the population; children under the age of eighteen embodied 28 percent. In comparison 7.8 percent of the non-Hispanic White population
lived in poverty and children under the age of eighteen represented 9.5 percent of the population. Hispanic children constituted 17.7 percent of the United States population, however, they represented 30.4 percent of all children in poverty (Ramirez & de la Cruz 2002).

*Latinos At-Risk*

Many researchers have stated that undocumented Latino children are at-risk on numerous negative outcomes, such as increased risk of dropping out of school and increased risk of depression (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). It has been reported that they feel “hunted” and that their activities outside the home are strictly restricted due to fear of detainment. Another factor is the constant anxiety of the undocumented parents being apprehended and reported (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco).

Latinos frequently live in highly segregated, low-income, high-risk neighborhoods (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Vélez-Ibáñez, 1996). Also pertinent is that children who are a product of poverty are at greater risk for negative outcomes in school performance (Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997), health and other developmental issues (Korenman & Miller, 1997), and reduced rates in the completion of high school (Haverman, Wolfe, & Spaulding, 1997; Prelow & Loukas, 2003). According to Ramirez and de la Cruz (2003), many Latinos 25 and older did not graduate from high school. Only about 50% of Mexicans were likely to graduate from high school and other Latinos were more likely to graduate (i.e., 74% of Cubans, 66.8% of Puerto Ricans, 70.8% of Central Americans, and 64.7% of South Americans).
Theoretical Frameworks Applied to Latinos and Academics

Many theories have been utilized to examine and explain Latino academic success and failure. A few of these theories include human ecological model, resiliency theory, and social capital. The following three subsections will briefly describe these three frameworks.

Human Ecological Perspective

On theory used to explain Latino youth development is human ecological theory. Bronfenbrenner (1979), a key contributor to human ecological theory, explained that developmental processes vary depending on the biological disposition of the child and the environmental framework in which the child inhabits. When these forces come together they form the child’s development.

Bronfenbrenner (1990) determined that there are five propositions that describe the process of the development of human competence and character. The foundation of these propositions is the child’s need in all domains (i.e., emotional, physical and social) for interaction with caring adults:

**Proposition 1.** In order to develop--intellectually, emotionally, socially, and morally a child requires participation in progressively more complex reciprocal activity, on a regular basis over an extended period in the child's life, with one or more persons with whom the child develops a strong, mutual, irrational, emotional attachment and who is committed to the child's well-being and development, preferably for life.

**Proposition 2.** The establishment of patterns of progressive interpersonal interaction under conditions of strong mutual attachment enhances the young child's responsiveness to other features of the immediate physical, social, and--in due course--symbolic environment that invite exploration, manipulation, elaboration and imagination. Such activities, in turn, also accelerate the child's psychological growth.
Proposition 3. The establishment and maintenance of patterns of progressively more complex interaction and emotional attachment between caregiver and child depend in substantial degree on the availability and involvement of another adult, a third party who assists, encourages, spells off, gives status to, and expresses admiration and affection for the person caring for and engaging in joint activity with the child.

Proposition 4. The effective functioning of child-rearing processes in the family and other child settings requires establishing ongoing patterns of exchange of information, two-way communication, mutual accommodation, and mutual trust between the principal settings in which children and their parents live their lives. These settings are the home, child-care programs, the school, and the parents' place of work.

Proposition 5. The effective functioning of child-rearing processes in the family and other child settings requires public policies and practices that provide place, time, stability, status, recognition, belief systems, customs, and actions in support of child-rearing activities not only on the part of parents, caregivers, teachers, and other professional personnel, but also relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, communities, and the major economic, social, and political institutions of the entire society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp. 27–38).

The framework Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes has five levels of nested systems: micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono. The microsystem includes the roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the individual on a daily or frequent basis (e.g., family, school, peer group). According to Bronfenbrenner, the people in the microsystem have the most direct effect on the child and the relationships are bi-directional. The family or “familismo” in the Latin culture encompasses attitudes, behaviors, and family structures within the microsystem and is believed to be the most vital influence (Vélez-Pastrana, González-Rodríguez, & Borges-Hernández, 2005). As an adolescent, the microsystem also includes the school because the youth spends much of the day there. Bronfenbrenner determined that within the microsystem the necessary conditions for human development are that one or more adults must love the child unconditionally and
encourage the child by spending time doing joint activities with the child. Hence, a time constraint may be determined by the adults’ ability to make the time to spend with the child. Parental variables that include a lack of supervision and of monitoring, few parent-child interactions, and inconsistencies can predict lower academic achievement (Hinshaw, 1992; Jimerson et al., 1999; Patterson et al., 1989) and behavior problems (Bradley et al., 1988; Forehand et al., 1986). Another constraint of adult-child interaction may be within the school system where there are larger classrooms and high child to teacher ratios.

The mesosystem provides the links and processes between two or more of the individual’s immediate settings (e.g., relationship between home and school, between peer group and family) (Eamon 2002; Smith et al., 1997; Hao, 1995). The importance of the mesosystem lies with the quality and quantity of connections. The more positive connections within the youth’s immediate surroundings help to determine and foster development.

The exosystem is the interaction of occurrences that influence the individual but do not include the individual (e.g., parent in adult education classes, parents’ workplace) (Eamon, 2002; Smith et al., 1997; Hao, 1995). Even though the exosystem interaction does not cross the individual’s path directly, there may still be a huge affect on development. This may be witnessed in the inflexibility of the parents’ work schedule, or the salary that the parent is paid. Necessary time spent at work may take away from time spent with the child. Researchers have stated that the economic situation of the parents has a direct effect on the academic achievement of the children. The physical home
environment, cognitive materials, experiences, and activities all are related to the children’s academic performance outcomes (Eamon, 2002; Smith et al., 1997; Hao, 1995).

The macrosystem is constituted by the characteristics and holistic view of the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem (e.g., culture, language, laws, and norms) and is in essence the blueprint of behavior in a social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eamon 2002).

Time and dimension, as the events of the past and present, are included in the chronosystem (Eamon, 2002). Chronological changes in the youths’ environment affect development. These changes may be intrinsic (i.e., youths can select, modify, and create their own settings) or extrinsically imposed. Everything from death of a family member, a change in family structure, a parent losing a job, a beloved teacher’s retirement can all change the trajectory of the youth’s development.

Within the ecological framework, it is evident that culture, language, neighborhoods, parent-child relationships, parent-school relationships, economic viability, and parents’ education are included (Eamon, 2002). This study addresses variables in various levels of the ecosystem (i.e., neighborhood, family, and immigrant status) and takes into consideration that the perception of one’s environment (e.g., perceptions of neighborhoods) should be considered along with objective qualities (e.g., structural qualities of neighborhoods).
Resiliency Theory

Key resiliency scholars have worked to clarify the concept of resiliency (Garmezy, 1991, 1993; Rutter, 1985, 1987; Rutter et al., 1979; Werner, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1986, 1992). Resilience used to be referred to as invulnerability, but it has since been changed because many children and adolescents who are vulnerable to distress face it without hindrances (Werner & Smith, 1992). Resiliency identifies certain protective factors when environmental conditions, individual factors, and developmental tasks work together to lessen or avoid negative outcomes (Rutter, 1987). Resilience is how certain people acclimatize or rise above adversity when it occurs (Garmezy & Masten, 1991; Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994), and it is influenced by many factors in an individual’s environment (Sharkey et al., 2008).

Resilience is not a construct that, once achieved, will always be maintained; it is not a fixed characteristic. Resilience is context dependent (Garmezy & Masten, 1991). Due to the changes in environmental and individual factors, resiliency changes with each event. When a youth is at-risk, there is generally the possibility of the youth experiencing more than one risk at a time. For example, poverty may be the umbrella risk that includes co-occurring factors of unsafe neighborhoods, single-parent households, and other associated financial strains. It is of the utmost importance that scholars interested in Latino youth understand the individual and environmental variables that contribute to the success of the youth.

It is not enough to only know the risk factors, but equally of importance is the identification of the protective factors of this population. Protective factors, or resource
factors, contribute to positive adolescent development and resilience (Prelow & Loukas, 2003). For adolescents in school, external assets (e.g., parent-teacher relationships) and internal assets (e.g., perceived parental support) may be possible protective factors (Sharkey et al., 2008) that increase the potential of academic achievement. This dissertation will examine various protective processes that impact youth development. Specifically, positive qualities of one’s objective and perceived neighborhoods and parental involvement can be protective processes that enhance youth academic achievement.

Social Capital

Closely related to the idea of protective processes is the concept of social capital, which is explained as the intersection between families and neighborhoods (Furstenburg & Hughes, 1997). Social capital is very important because any assumption of neighborhood influence presumes some level of social relations among members of the neighborhood. (Furstenburg & Hughes). According to Schmid (2001), the progress of the second-generation correlates with the human and financial capital that the first-generation brought with them and how they were able to employ these assets to their benefit in the United States. The concept of social capital includes several factors: “interpersonal ties and reciprocity, norms and sanctions, information, stability, opportunity, and quality of life” (Furstenburg & Hughes, p. 291). Along with the mentioned factors, socioeconomic status, culture, family expectations, language ability all are included in playing a role in school achievement (Schmid).
The importance of social capital is derived from the relationships individuals have with each other, and from these relationships they have the potential to draw institutional resources and support. Measurement of social capital or social cohesion is contingent on how people rate their involvement in community activities (e.g., church, school, clubs, etc.) (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997; Seidman E, Yoshikawa H, Roberts A, Chesir-Teran D, Allen L, Friedman JL, et al., 1995; Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz, 1986) and informal networks with neighbors (e.g., sharing advice, parties, monitoring neighborhood homes, and sharing school information) (Brooks-Gunn et al.). Social organization mirrors the amount of social interfacing within the community along with their shared values (Kornhauser, 1978; Sampson & Groves, 1989).

Social disorganization in a community is characterized by rates of crime and delinquency (Kornhauser, 1978; Sampson & Groves 1989). According to Brooks-Gunn et al., another aspect of social capital is contingent on how likely it is that residents are willing to protect their neighborhood with intervention (e.g., if a child is left home alone during the evening, if someone is selling drugs) and/or if they notice information postings of community activities (e.g., signs or notices of local programs or community meetings). When all of these factors are taken into consideration, the combination of social relationships in the community, along with the content and consensus of values, then we are presented with the multifaceted construct of community social capital (Coleman, 1988).

When neighbors form social relationships, the aptitude for community is intensified because neighbors are more apt to engage in protective behavior against
victimization (e.g., neighborhood watch). Furthermore, with more social networks within a community there should be an increase of agreement regarding norms and values that then leads to limitations on deviant behavior (Aber, J. L., Gephart, M. A., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Connell, J. P., 1997). Gephart (1997) concurs that through social and cultural processes (e.g., neighborhood observation, community ties, group participation and value agreement) child outcomes are influenced. Coleman (1988) elucidated that social capital was a “productive process” with family background being separated into three components: financial capital, human capital, and social capital. He also determined that social capital included the time and energy that family members gave to other family members aside from human and monetary capital. This is supported by the concept of extended family and fictive kin as support networks (Hirschman & Wong, 1986; Kawamoto & Cheshire, 1997; Sanchez, 1997). This support extends beyond the family members as they assist each other in external systems such as medical, government, economic, and educational (Anguiano, 2004).

Neighborhood Qualities and Latino Academics

Structural Qualities of a Neighborhood

Researchers have to be clear about what geographic area they are studying when measuring neighborhood variables, because if the geographic range is restricted in anyway then the true effects of the neighborhood may be understated (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997). Studies have found a connection between environmental characteristics and students’ educational outcome (Pittman & Haughwout, 1987). Lehman and Smeeding (1997) concluded that there are two very important neighborhood-effect models
identified by Jencks and Mayer (1990): (a) child development is shaped by peer behavior (i.e., contagion theories) and (b) child development is structured by adult role modeling and monitoring (i.e., collective socialization theories). Furstenberg and Hughes (1997) state that very few studies have concentrated on the effects of neighborhoods on the outcome of children, and the research that has been done shows that the characteristic which influence children’s academic and behavioral outcomes is the presence of affluent or middle-class neighbors.

A level of influence that a community may have on a child would be determined by variables such as the amount of time and exposure to the community, the ages at which the child spent time in the community, and the communities with which the child was affiliated before and after (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1997). It has also been determined that if neighborhoods are an important dynamic in children’s development, then different courses of growth should be evident in different frameworks (Furstenberg & Hughes). This would be dependent on each child’s uniqueness and experiences within their environment.

The community influences on children’s development and welfare are of interest to social scientists and policy makers addressing disparity (Jencks & Peterson 1991; Lynn & McGeeary 1990). Elements of exposure to a neighborhood include social interaction as individuals are influenced by and learn from other members of their community (Sampson & Wilson, 1994; Wilson, 1991). According to Brooks-Gunn et al. (1997) the relationship between community effects and the individuals in the community is bi-directional.
Although risks and challenges may be identifiable in all socioeconomic groups, living in an impecunious neighborhood is believed to significantly increase the risk of academic failure (Chapman, 2003). Prelow and Loukas (2003) state that it has been determined by many researchers that children who live in low socioeconomic situation are at greater risk for developmental problems and negative academic outcomes. Duncan et al. (1997) believe that it is of concern that there may be unmeasured neighborhood variables that have restraint effects on child and adolescent outcomes. It has been suggested that children’s development, in particular IQ, is associated with the neighborhood characteristic of socioeconomic status therefore neighborhood effects often compete with family effects (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993). The continual increase of unemployment, thus the increase of poverty is associated with the increase of teenage parents and crime (Wilson, 1991). Structural factors such as population/housing density, high residential mobility, and resource deprivation also contribute to social disorganization or hinder community level social organization (Gephart, 1997). Gephart also determined that low socioeconomic density in the neighborhood correlated with the decreased likelihood of adolescents not attending college. In addition, Clark (1988) found that the probability of dropping out of high school rose with the increase of low-income neighbor density and with the lack of professional or managerial workers (i.e., 5 percent and less).

Neighborhoods with a high density of people in poverty, single-parent families, unemployed males, and a lack of educated professionals and white-collar workers, will have difficulty garnering the resources that are essential to attract high-quality institutions
and organizations and even worse, the institutions that are already in the community are 
overtaxed (Aber et al., 1997). Wilson (1991) demonstrated the importance of people in 
the neighborhood having an effect on the development of children who were not their 
own. The absence of middle-class professionals in a community has been the focus of 
neighborhood studies for many researchers (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993). Unemployed 
males in terms of the neighborhood and within the fold of the family also impact the 
development of the children (Wilson, 1991). Jobless males, sixteen to thirty-five years 
old, were found positively associated with tract-level poverty (Massey, 1995). This 
information is important when added to the concentration of poor single-parent (female) 
households being an important factor on the outcome of children (Hogan & Kitigawa, 
1985). While Crane found that with professional or managerial workers making up less 
that five percent of the neighborhood, both black and white children were less likely to 
complete high school. Clark (1992) determined that with a rise in low-income neighbors, 
there was an increase in children dropping out of school. This is especially true for male 
children whose level of risk decreases with the increase in percentage of residents in 
professional jobs (Ensminger et al., 1996). Brooks and Gunn et al. concur that with or 
without the inclusion of family variables, a high density of poor neighbors with a deficit 
of affluent neighbors significantly predicted high school dropouts.

Wilson’s theory on neighborhoods and cities determines that there is an increased 
aggregation of social disadvantages in neighborhoods with a low economic influx and 
segregation from middle class neighborhoods (Wilson, 1991, 1991b). A high level of 
ethnic heterogeneity in a community also is associated with the breaking down of social
networks (Sampson, 1992). Wilson argues that it is social isolation of minorities that contribute to poverty. Aber et al. (1997), agree that “neighborhood-level concentrations of social and economic disadvantage, together with ethnic heterogeneity, residential instability, household density, and age structure, may adversely affect the development of youth and families” (p. 52).

Other research elucidates the importance of the neighborhood by stating that in middle class neighborhoods there is more access to resources and an increase in education due to the managerial positions of residents and their amount of education (Duncan, 1991). Ensminger et al. (1996) determined that for males there was an advantage of living in a neighborhood that had a higher percentage of professional or managerial occupants. Duncan also determined that the presence or lack of neighbors who were relatively affluent was a significant predictor of high school completion for all groups other than black males. These results all support Jane Addam’s notion that role models are very important to the success of the neighborhood. If a neighborhood has residents who work highly skilled jobs, have education, and are available to the youth of the neighborhood then the youth will more readily understand the socially expected norms and know the boundaries, determined by the community, that exemplify being successful (Gephart, 1997). With this model of success there will be a decrease in school dropouts and teen pregnancies of the resident adolescents. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) agree that shared family values, high educational aspirations, an increased number of playgrounds, recreational facilities, libraries, and supervised youth activities all benefit the individuals in a community. In summarizing poor neighborhoods, Prince
and Howard (2002) determined that in poverty stricken neighborhoods a critical mass is created thereby crime rates, drug abuse, and alcoholism rates rise. With this there is the deterioration of the neighborhood and families breakdown with young children being exposed to chronically stressful situations.

When we know our neighbors and recognize people on the street we are more inclined to learn social norms and behaviors. With access to role models and support systems grade point averages increase and school dropouts decrease. Neighborhood safety will increase the quality of life for families (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) and children will perform better and have more positive outcomes and with access to successful role models, conforming peers, and resources (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1997). When parents have support systems with other adults who assist in monitoring their children parental monitoring is also able to increase. Continuing evidence supports the framework of neighborhood effects on child development (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1997).

Families and children living in poverty face barriers when trying to satisfy their needs (Prince & Howard, 2002). Children of these families often attend school with a developmental deficit (physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively). These issues translate into children who contend with attention problems, violence problems, and low expectations (Hootstein, 1996; Huston et al, 1994). The Plowden Report of 1967 summarized the feelings of many children living in poverty regarding education, “In a neighborhood where the jobs people hold owe little to their education, it is natural for
children, as they grow older, to regard school as a brief prelude to work rather than as an avenue to future opportunities” (as cited in Garner & Raudenbush, 1991, p. 252).

Perceived Neighborhood Qualities

Although land can be divided and labeled, and its important factors of geographical and social space can be captured by census tracts, it needs to be understood that the neighborhood is really experienced by its inhabitants (Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz 1986). According to Furstenberg and Hughes (1997), residents of neighborhoods may consider their neighborhood to be something other than what the census captures. Even within the same household, adults and their children usually define their neighborhoods differently (Furstenberg & Hughes). This may be because parents’ neighborhoods would extend beyond children’s neighborhoods due to the ability to travel by car, distance to work, or where they shop. Therefore there could be a reduction in the significance of the geographic neighborhood for parents because their associations reach further than the ascribed neighborhood (Furstenberg & Hughes). However, for youth, neighborhoods may be smaller than a census tract. Many researchers have used data at the census tract, but according to Gephart (1997), census data at the block group level may be a much better unit of analysis for examining the effects of neighborhoods. Since the block group is smaller than a census tract, it probably represents the immediate neighborhood influences more than a much larger geographic region (e.g., census tract).

Regardless of the actual qualities of a neighborhood, an aspect of safety can be measured by if an individual feels threatened or not in their community (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1997). It has been suggested that one of the most destructive elements of a low
socioeconomic neighborhood is the high level of violence (Lehman & Smeeding, 1997). The presence of activities such as fights, murders, burglary, gang activity, loitering, trash littering, drug use, and residential mobility are considered attributes when determining risks and educational outcomes. This is because the degree to which people feel physically threatened alludes to parental strategy and how parents manage their families (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1997). Case and Katz (1991) suggested that when many youth in a neighborhood are involved in criminal activity the likelihood increases for other adolescents in the same neighborhood to also engage in the same activities.

The strongest data is when we not only know the actual qualities of the neighborhood but also include the residents’ perception of their neighborhoods. The measure of the residents’ perceptions—“norms, opportunities, barriers, dangers, models, controls, pressures, and supports”—is vital in determining outcomes (Furstenburg & Hughes, 1997, p. 10). Although some researchers agree that neighborhood variables have an effect on the outcomes of children, some believe that the estimated effects are much smaller than other variables (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997). The reality is that it may be the perception rather than the actual quality of the neighborhood variables that have the true effect on children. Woolley et al. (2006) state that the perception of one’s neighborhood is more important in determining neighborhood satisfaction than the structural components. Furstenburg and Hughes agree that children’s perceptions of the neighborhood are as important as objective measures.
Perception of Neighborhoods as a Mediator of Structural Qualities

Current research proves that there are many neighborhood factors that influence the level of resilience in immigrant children. Aber et al. (1997) believe that by early adolescence children become gradually more involved in their neighborhoods, neighborhood variables will increase in affecting their outcome and children’s perceptions of their home, peer, and school environments will be mediated by this increased contact. According to Lehman and Smeeding (1997) the issue is not if neighborhoods matter, but rather how they matter. Hence, researchers need to understand the mediators (e.g., perception).

This dissertation will examine whether the relationship between neighborhood structural qualities and grades is mediated by Latino adolescents’ reports of their neighborhoods.

Parental Qualities

It is beneficial, when studying neighborhoods and child development, that all levels of children’s environments are included and analyzed. Although the family is a part of the community, the child is directly affected by the family process (Furstenberg, 1993; Sampson, 1992). Regardless of the other variables, the family is the basic element that exerts the most significant emotional foundation for the children. Family-level circumstances impact children’s development and impetus for success (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997). Garmezy (1991) asserts that family factors are protective factors for at-risk youth and can assist them in becoming educationally resilient. Gephart (1997) agrees that
the influence of family and individual characteristics were much more influential than the neighborhood factors.

Parents’ behaviors have been associated with positive student outcomes. These behaviors are: (a) authoritative parenting style (Clark, 1988; Dornbush & Ritter, 1988); (b) high ambitions (Astone & McLanahan, 1991); (c) involvement with the school (i.e., parent-teacher communications, school activity participation and in school-level governing); (d) parent involvement in the home (i.e. assistance with homework, discussions about learning activities) (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Herman & Yeh, 1983); and (e) social networks and social capital (Coleman, 1988). Also associated with adaptation of the immigrant family, children’s achievements and academic outcomes (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Epstein, 1983) are parental education, socioeconomic status and parental involvement.

**Parental Educational Level**

Researchers state that parental education is a strong predictor of children’s education. According to Eamon (2002) mothers with an education of approximately a ninth grade education were not equipped to assist their children with homework. Parents’ education level is important in being able to assist their children with homework (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2002). Other researchers agree that the parents’ education levels along with monitoring academic assistance and educational support of their children are positively related to academic achievement. One of the ways this can be provided is with parents attaining a higher education level thereby having access to intellectual resources (Miller & Davis, 1997). Furthermore, parents who have a higher
education provide an environment that supports their children in attaining their education (Featherman & Hauser, 1978; Haveman, Wolfe & Spaulding, 1991; Mare, 1979) and knowledge regarding higher education institutions.

The erudition of the process for preparing for college is often taken for granted by college-educated parents. It is advantageous to have the data regarding college-track and non college-track courses in school, how and when to prepare for standardized tests (i.e. PSAT, SAT), the costs of colleges and how to attain financial assistance, how to write a college application essay, and the differences between attending junior colleges as opposed to four-year colleges or universities (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Children rely on their mentors, peer, and parents for guidance as they lack the experience and information regarding job related skills and characteristics, and college (Chin & Kameoka, 2002).

Halper-Flesher et al. (1997) determined that among different subgroups, family income and maternal schooling were highly significant. Socioeconomic status is often measured by income and parental education (Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson, 1987). Children’s academic and occupational potential were predicted by parents’ academic and occupational achievement (Chin & Kameoka, 2002) along with their verbal support and social influence expectations (Cohen, 1987; Cook & Curtin, 1987). Ogbu (1981) asserts and other researchers support that parents’ overt and implied messages are significant to children’s estimation of aptitude and fate for future success.
Parental Monitoring

Parental involvement is often determined by a home environment that encourages cognitive development and parent-child interaction time (Eamon, 2002) and includes different behaviors that portray the participation of parents in their children’s academic and nonacademic activities (Anguiano 2004). This is of the utmost importance when predicting children’s outcomes. For example, monitoring may prevent children from developing hazardous behaviors and help them to understand the importance the family places on academic success (Aber et al., 1997). In early adolescence, parental monitoring is hypothesized to mediate the neighborhoods’ effects on development (Aber et al.), and factors associated with academic achievement are mediated by maternal monitoring of activities and academic work. However, there is limited research in the area of parent involvement regarding Hispanic students (Brofenbrenner, 1979; Flaxman & Inger, 1991).

Parental Academic Support

Parental involvement is determined by school activity involvement, higher grade point averages (Shumow & Miller 2001) and lower absentee rates of the child. Shumow and Miller agree that home-based parental involvement (e.g., homework assistance) is associated with positive child attitudes toward school. However, some researchers state that Latino parents have low levels of involvement because of language barriers or differing cultural values (Delgado-Gaitan 1991). Crawford (1989) argues that for native language development and in order for parents to communicate expectations and academic and emotional support of their children, minority parents need to be involved. Researchers have determined that home-based parental involvement is significantly
effective on the academic achievement of children of low-income parents (Bermudez & Padron, 1988; Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Comer, 1996; Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988). Clark (1988) established that there were several positive parental practices in accordance with principles, values, regulations, customs, and allowances: (a) a range of educational materials during at-home activities, (b) support of teachers, (c) successful academic archetypes, (d) clarity in articulating right and wrong, (e) espousal of the child’s self-worth, and (f) incentive and respect. Mowry (1972) states that regardless of whether the involvement is at school or at home or at what age children start to receive the support, there will be long-term and positive effects. According to Plunkett & Sands (2005) academic support by mothers and father was related to parental warmth, caring, and motivation.

Parental School Involvement

It has been suggested that other barriers immigrant parents confront are: (a) the belief that they should not micromanage their children’s schooling; (b) the belief that teachers should be responsible for school activities, (c) insecurity regarding questioning school authority, (d) inability to attend school activities due to time spent at work, (e) lack of English skills, and (f) the belief that children are succeeding because they attend school consistently without interruptions from warfare or lack of money (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). One of the problems faced is that teachers may construe this lack of involvement as a lack of interest in their children’s academic achievement (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco). This may then create other problems within the school system such as how the teacher and school administration treat the children and
the parents. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) suggest that the parents’ perception of their own abilities and skills should also be included. With these barriers it is not difficult to imagine that there could be accepted differences according to ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

Schools should also be responsible for assisting immigrant families in becoming more familiar with the educational system so that they will have the opportunity to be more involved in their children’s education. It is necessary that the information distributed be culturally sensitive so that the families will be able to execute it without conflict (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). It has also been recommended that guidance counselors should be responsible for the dissemination of information, however their caseloads are large and monetary support is inadequate (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco).

Ibañez et al. (2004) suggest that parental involvement is important for children to develop motivation and achieve. The role of parents in their children’s schools is not construed similarly for everyone. Studies have shown that low-income minority parents believe that they should have less active roles in their children’s school activities than their middle and upper class, non-minority counterparts (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). However, other studies disagree, stating that we are not able to compare the involvement of minority, low-income parental involvement to their middle and upper class, non-minority counterparts in their children’s activities because it is a comparison of apples and oranges: their level of involvement in some areas of their children’s school activities surpasses that of non-minority counterparts (Catsambis &
Garland, 1997). Also, researchers have determined that low-income minority students may respond positively to different types of parental involvement than other students (Coleman; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Powell, 1991).

Dornbusch and Wood (1989) and Entwisle (1990) agree that educational attainment and success are determined by parental support. Some researchers have determined that the interaction of socioeconomic status with the family unit is also of great salience when predicting children’s outcomes, in particular the lack of responsiveness and consistency from parents in poverty (McLoyd, 1990; McLoyd & Wilson, 1991). Lareau (1989) stated that children will show positive academic achievement and have benefits if they are a part of a family unit in a higher socioeconomic status due to increased resources (e.g., disposable income, tutors). He also stated that these children are exposed to the use of correct English in the home and have parents that have the time to meet and interact with teachers. In addition, these children have access to the characteristics valued and encouraged by schools and society thereby having the outcome of education achievement (Bourdieu, 1977; DiMaggio, 1982, Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). However, other researchers state that parents who are deemed of low socioeconomic status often desire being involved and engaged in their children’s education (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; McLaughlin & Shields, 1987). It is true that poverty may pose a challenge for students’ academic achievement, however poverty or low socioeconomic status does not determine that children are destined to fail academically. Flaxman and Inger (1991) stated that regardless of social or economic status, when parents are active in their children’s lives.
(e.g., monitoring, involvement in school) the children will demonstrate academic achievement.

**Neighborhoods and Parenting**

The neighborhood is very important for the success of its adolescent residents. It is in itself like a family; although there are individuals, they overlap psychologically and influence each other (Dunn & Plomin, 1990). Being a part of a socially organized community should in fact increase the probability of parents being in contact with their children’s friends and their families. This should increase the monitoring by parents of all children regardless of each child’s own household environment (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Duncan et al. (1997) agree that neighborhoods affect the children who live in them and the ways or manners in which parents deal with their children are determined by the neighborhood in particular neighborhood resources. In essence, it may not be the actual resources or violence in the neighborhood influence how the parent responds to these environmental factors that in time affect their children’s development (Furstenberg, 1993).

According to Lehman and Smeeding (1997), models that address neighborhood variables are able to demonstrate more variance in the outcomes of children because neighborhood variables may influence parenting behavior or affect the impetus of children (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997). McLanahan et al. (1991) state that neighborhoods of low socioeconomic status, which are in social disorganization, are responsible for undermining parental control and exposing children to factors that are detrimental to their
development. Therefore, neighborhoods and neighbors also affect parents and the way they raise their children (Duncan & Klebanov, 1997).

**Immigrant Status**

The immigrant status of the youth and parent can impact grades, parenting, and selection of neighborhood. Hence, this dissertation will examine separate models for generation statuses of how neighborhoods and parenting relate to grades.

There are many barriers that Latino immigrants need to manage. Besides overcoming poverty, a major barrier to accomplishing objectives successfully is English competency (Ibañez et al., 2004; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). The information collected on language attitudes and behaviors with new immigrants concludes that learning English is significant (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco). It has been well documented that the better the literacy in English the more likely a Latino child will stay in school (Bean & Tienda, 1987; Fligstein & Fernandez, 1985a, 1985b; Rong & Grant, 1992; U.S. Department of Education, 1992).

Non-native born and immigrants who arrived to the United States prior to fourteen years old have a higher risk of dropping out of high school (Bean & Tienda, 1987; Fligstein & Fernandez, 1985a, 1985b; Velez, 1989; Rumberger, 1987). U.S. born Mexicans have higher educational achievement than foreign-born Mexicans. This could be attributed to their knowledge of English and having the educational experience of being raised in the American school system (Bean & Tienda; Fligstein & Fernandez; Velez; Wojtkiewicz & Donato, 1995).
According to Waters and Jiminez (2005), there are 47 million people who speak a language other than English in their homes. According to Bean and Stevens (2003) only 10% of immigrants from non-English speaking countries, did not speak any English at the time of census data collection and there was a positive correlation between the time an immigrant spent in the United States with the ability to speak English well. A common erroneous belief is that native language used at home impedes acquisition of a second language at school. In an assessment of bilingualism and second-language learning sponsored by the National Research Council, language scholars August and Hakuta (1997) conclude that the use of the child’s native language does not impede the acquisition of English. However it is unfortunate that the need for ESL courses surpasses the availability for the students that request them (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). It has been determined that in neighborhoods where there is a high concentration of new immigrants, children’s knowledge of English is nearly universal (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco).

Children of immigrants are often the advocates for their parents in dealing with medical care, financial dealings, and in other necessary adult circumstances. This may not be in the best interest for the children (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) and can be a contributor to other barriers. Families that have recently immigrated depend on each other more than previous immigrant families (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco). This may be an outcome of lack of knowledge of the dominant language and/or lack of community support. Another challenge is the lack of involvement of newly immigrated Hispanic parents in their children’s schools (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco). Lack of
understanding of the relationship between the home and school system and how the
school system functions, work schedule requirements, negative experiences with school
personnel, and a general lack of compassion and comprehension by the school employees
regarding the particular needs of this population are all barriers to academic achievement
(Bermudez & Marquez, 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco).
METHODOLOGY

Adolescence resilience data were collected for three different sources: Latino adolescent self-report questionnaires, participant’s school records, and the 200 U.S. Census.

 Procedures

Project researchers solicited permission from an administrator and teachers in one multiethnic Los Angeles high school. The school was selected because it was (1) multi-ethnic (including a large number of Latinos and immigrant youth), (2) had a range of learning levels since it has two magnet programs, (3) was in close proximity to the university in which the researchers resided, and (4) relationships with staff at the school had already been established with the researchers. The ethnic composition of the school follows: 4% African American, 13% Asian, 4% Filipino, 61% Latino, and 17% Caucasian. The majority of the students (i.e., 69%) at the school participated in free or reduced price lunch. And the students reside in many geographic regions in Los Angeles since students are bussed to the school from many neighborhoods since there are two magnet programs (i.e., math/sciences, fine arts) at the school.

Having explained the research process, 9th grade teachers in an elective course were sought out to have their students participate. Signed parental consent forms (Spanish and English) were deemed necessary by the teachers. Students who returned
signed parental consent forms and who signed adolescent assent forms were allowed to complete the self-report questionnaires. The response rate was 78%.

Student participants were given the surveys (in English) under the supervision of trained undergraduate and graduate research assistants (most of whom were bilingual or multilingual). Verbal instructions were given by the researcher assistants prior to survey completion, and the research assistants walked around the room during while the surveys were being completed so as to answer questions asked by the student participants. A prearranged activity (i.e., word find and crossword) on how to get into college was given to nonparticipating students. Upon completion of the survey students who participated were also given the prearranged activity. There was no time limitation for the completion of the survey.

A data specialist at the school provided the students’ records which included addresses for each participant and grades. This information was matched to a 3 digit ID# and then entered into a MS Excel worksheet. Afterwards, the school records were shredded and disposed of per university policy.

Trained research assistance gathered the U.S. census data from http://factfinder.census.gov. The addresses for each participant were used.

Trained research assistants coded, entered and verified the self-report, school record, and census data. In addition, frequencies on all the variables were conducted as an additional step to ensure data accuracy.
Sample Characteristics

Although data were collected from 1075 students at one high school in Los Angeles, only Latino youth were included in the study. Participants were a sample of 622 Latino adolescents. The sample was comprised of 59.0 percent girls and 41.0 percent boys.

The participants ranged in age from 13-20 years old ($M = 14.85; \textit{sd} = 1.30$) with 55.6 percent 14 years old and 21.4 percent 15 years old and 9.8 percent 16 years old. The majority of the participants were from ninth grade. Specifically, 77.3 percent were in 9th grade, 9.5 percent were in 10th grade, 8.7 percent were in 11th grade, and 4.2 percent were in 12th grade.

In regards to nativity, 65.9% of the Latino youth participants were born in the U.S., with 21.5 percent born in Mexico, 5.8 percent El Salvador, 3.7 percent Guatemala, and the remaining from eleven other countries (i.e., Argentina, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Bolivia). Of the participants’ mothers, 53.2 percent were born in Mexico, 22 percent in El Salvador, 10.9 percent in Guatemala, and the remaining were from 16 other countries (i.e., Argentina, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Bolivia). The mothers were reported as living in the United States a mean average of 16.18 years (range = 0-47 years). Of the participants’ fathers, 56.3 percent were born in Mexico, 21.9 percent in El Salvador, 9.2 percent in Guatemala, and the remaining were from 17 other countries (i.e., Argentina, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Bolivia). The fathers were reported as living in the United States a mean average of 17.88 years (range = 0-47 years).
The percent of biological fathers and mothers living in the home comprised the majority of relationship of people living in the home with 62.9 percent, biological mother alone, 17.0 percent, biological mother and step father, 12.2 percent, biological father and step mother, 1.9 percent, and biological father alone 2.6 percent. The number of family members living in the home had a mean of 4.93 (sd = 1.8, median = 5.0, range = 1-13) and the number of siblings living in the home had a mean of 1.83 (sd = 1.4, median = 2.0, range = 0-8).

In regards to parents’ education level, mothers’ education level ranged from no education to attainment of a graduate degree. Mothers with no education, .8 percent, some elementary, 10.8 percent, completed elementary, 6.1 percent, some middle/junior high school, 17.2 percent, completed middle/junior high school, 9.0 percent, some high school, 18.5 percent, completed high school or GED, 10.8 percent, completed high school and other training, 8.0 percent, some college, 9.0 percent, completed a college degree, 5.1 percent, some graduate work 1.3 percent, graduate degree, 2.4 percent. Fathers with no education, 1.9 percent, some elementary, 7.4 percent, completed elementary, 5.0 percent, some middle/junior high school, 15.0 percent, completed middle/junior high school, 8.7 percent, some high school, 21.1 percent, completed high school or GED, 12.2 percent, completed high school and other training, 8.5 percent, some college, 6.3 percent, completed a college degree, 4.5 percent, some graduate work 1.3 percent, graduate degree, 3.4 percent.

Participants reported living in their neighborhoods between 0-18 years ($M = 6.02$ years; $sd = 4.46$). Participant resident changes have occurred with a mean of .49 times
(median = 0.0, $sd = .97$, range = 0-8). The participants came from 124 block groups with a mean of 4.7 students (median = 2, mode = 1) in each block group.

As seen in table 1, the data collected show differences when compared to data collected for Los Angeles and California. A reason for the higher poverty rate from the sample data may be due to the lower median household income, lower homeownership rates, higher language other than English spoken in the home. Fewer high school graduates may be due to the higher percentage of foreign-born persons than the Los Angeles and California data, therefore, this dissertation may be more useable when generalizing for immigrant Latinos in Los Angeles and California rather than all Latinos in Los Angeles and California.

Table 1  
Comparison between the ARMCC Participants, Los Angeles Latino population, and California Latino Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ARMCC Data</th>
<th>Los Angeles</th>
<th>California</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons below poverty</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeownership rate</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language other than English spoken at home, pct age 5+</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduates, percent of persons age 25+</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$46,392</td>
<td>$53,494</td>
<td>$59,928</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Los Angeles and California data were collected from US Census (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06037.html)
Measurement

Grade Point Average (GPA)

GPA was determined by teachers’ reports of grades. The grades were provided by the school data specialist at the end of the term that the participants completed the self-report questionnaire. The grades for each of the six classes were coded on a 4.0 scale (i.e., A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0). The grades were then averaged to obtain the overall GPA.

Neighborhood Structural Qualities

Five qualities of neighborhood structural assets were collected from the census data at the block group level. The use of block groups was to provide a small enough area where comparison could be made. Students’ addresses were entered on the US Census webpage (http://factfinder.census.gov) to locate the census tract and block group for each participant. Based on recommendations by neighborhood researchers (e.g., Gephart, 1997; Plunkett et al., 2007), census data at the block group level were used since they are smaller and a better unit of analysis than a census tract when examining neighborhood effects. The five assets follow: (1) median family income (range = $16054-$139284, $M = $33962, $sd = $12450), (2) percent above the poverty level (range = 45.7%-98.6%, $M = 76.2, $sd = 9.8), (3) percent employed (range = 86.5%-98.8%, $M = 94.4, $sd = 2.2), (4) education level of adults above age 25 (range = 4.6-12.2, $M = 7.8, sd = 1.5), and (5) percent who speak English well (range = 35.5%-99.1%, $M = 76.2, sd = 9.0). Since the five assets had different ranges, they were converted to z-scores so they could be averaged into a scale. The Cronbach’s alpha was .90 for the current data.
Adolescent Reports of Neighborhood Qualities.

A 10-item neighborhood risk scale was used to measure the assets perceived in their neighborhoods (Supple et al., 2006). Items in the scale included unemployment, crime, violence, low education, and illegal activity (Supple et al., 2006). Response choices ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The risks were reverse coded so that higher scores indicated fewer risks and greater assets. The Cronbach’s alpha was .83 using the present data.

Adolescent Reports of Parental Involvement

Participants’ perceptions of their mothers’ and fathers’ involvement were ascertained by averaging six subscales: maternal and paternal monitoring (seven items each; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003), maternal and paternal school involvement (six items each), and maternal and paternal academic support (six items each; Sands & Plunkett, 2005). Participants were asked to respond to each item twice – once for mother and once for father. Response choices ranged from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (4). Sample items for each scale follow: (1) “This parent knows who I am going to be with when I go out” (monitoring), (2) “This parent talks to my teachers to see how I am doing” (involvement in school), and (3) “This person has encouraged me to continue my education beyond high school” (academic support). Responses for each scale were averaged to create scale scores. The descriptive data and Crobach alphas for each parenting behavior follow: (1) maternal monitoring range = 1-4.0, $M = 3.05$, $sd = .52$, $\alpha = .78$; (2) paternal monitoring range = 1-4, $M = 2.68$, $sd = .72$, $\alpha = .88$; (3) maternal school involvement range = 1-4, $M = 2.84$, $sd = .61$, $\alpha = .78$; (4) paternal school
involvement range = 1-4, \( M = 2.65, sd = .74, \alpha = .85 \); (5) maternal academic support range = 1-4, \( M = 3.54, sd = .59, \alpha = .92 \); and (6) paternal academic support range = 1-4, \( M = 3.31, sd = .77, \alpha = .94 \). Next, the six subscales were averaged together to create a parental involvement score with an alpha of .82 using the current data.

Adolescent Reports of Parental Educational Attainment

Participant perceptions of their mothers’ and fathers’ educational levels were determined with the report of the highest level of education the parents had attained. Responses ranged from “no education” (0) to “Graduate degree, including M.D., M.A., PhD., J.D., etc” (11). The responses about mothers and fathers were averaged together.

Statistical Analyses

First, zero-order correlations using the total sample were conducted to examine the strength and direction of the bivariate relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Because differences were found between 1st and 2nd generation youth on some of the variables, subsequent analyses were conducted for the total sample as well as for each generation status subsample. To ensure appropriate power in the regression equations, Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) recommend the minimum number of subjects should be equal to 50 + 8 times the number of variables (i.e., 82 subjects in this study since there are four independent variables). The total sample was 622, while the subsample of 1st generation youth was 210 and the 2nd generation youth was 410 (two had missing data on generation status). Hence, the total sample and subsamples were more than adequate for appropriate power.
Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was initially contemplated for the statistical analyses. However, approximately half (i.e., 60) of the block groups only had one participant per block group, and only 20 of the 124 block groups had 10 or more participants. Hence, HLM was not conducted.

After the correlations, hierarchical multiple regression analyses (for total sample and two subsamples) were conducted to examine the linear contribution of the independent variables in explaining Latino adolescents’ GPA. In the first step of the regression, neighborhood structural qualities and parent education were entered first. And in the second step, perceived neighborhood assets and parental involvement were entered to determine the contribution to GPA of perceived neighborhood assets and parental involvement beyond actual neighborhood qualities and parental educational attainment.

Next, path analyses were conducted using reduced form equations technique, outlined by Cohen and Cohen (1983) to obtain the detailed partitioning of effects. Specifically, this approach uses hierarchical multiple regression equations that enter the independent variables in order of causal priority (neighborhood structural qualities and parent education first, perceived neighborhood assets and parental involvement second). The total effects are determined from the regression coefficient for each variable when it is first entered into the hierarchical regression analyses. The direct effects are determined from the regression coefficient for each variable in the final equation. The total indirect effect is calculated by subtracting the direct effect from the total effect.

All of the variables were entered into the hierarchical multiple regressions using the default value of .10 as the low level of tolerance. Results of the analyses using this
tolerance level indicated that multicollinearity was not sufficient to be a problem in the models (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). A minimum significance level of $p < .05$ was used to determine significance.
RESULTS

Table 1 shows the ranges, means, and standard deviations for all variables for the total sample as well as the two subsamples (i.e., 1st generation youth, 2nd generation youth).

Table 2
Table 2
Ranges, Means, and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Sample (n = 622)</th>
<th>1st Generation (n = 211)</th>
<th>2nd Generation (n = 406)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>sd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>0-4.0</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td>1.2-4.0</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived</td>
<td>1.3-4.0</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighborhood assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental educational attainment</td>
<td>0-11.0</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood structural assets</td>
<td>-1.7-</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zero-Order Correlations

Zero-order correlations (i.e., Pearson’s bivariate correlations) were conducted to examine the strength and direction between the independent variables and GPA of the Latino adolescents. The results of the correlations are shown in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, Latino adolescents’ reports of parental involvement and perceived neighborhood assets were significantly and positively related to GPA. However, parental educational attainment, neighborhood structural assets, and nativity were not significantly correlated with GPA. Because there were differences between first and second generation on
reported parental involvement and neighborhood structural assets, subsequent analyses were examined for the total sample as well as for each generation status.

Independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether first and second-generation youth significantly differed on their reports of parental involvement. No significant differences were found (t = .46, p = .64)

Table 3
Summary of Zero-Order Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. GPA</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parental involvement</td>
<td>.16***</td>
<td>.42***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perceived neighborhood assets</td>
<td>.19***</td>
<td>.16***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parental educational attainment</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Neighborhood structural assets</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>.17***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nativity1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.10***</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001; 1 = first generation, 2 = second generation

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses

The hierarchical multiple regression tables for the total sample, first generation Latino youth, and second generation Latino youth are shown in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, neither parental educational attainment nor neighborhood structural assets were significantly related to GPA in the total sample or either of the two subsamples. However, in step 2 of the models, perceived parental involvement and neighborhood assets account for significant change in GPA in the total sample and both subsamples. In addition, the beta coefficients were significant and positive for parental involvement in the total sample and the second generation subsample; indicating higher involvement by
parents is related to higher GPA. Also, perceived neighborhood assets were significantly and positively related to GPA in all three samples.

Table 4
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Equations for Parenting and Neighborhood Qualities on GPA of Latino Adolescents, First Generation Latino adolescents, and Second Generation Latino Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Total Sample (n = 622)</th>
<th>1st Generation (n = 210)</th>
<th>2nd Generation (n = 410)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Step 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Educational Attainment</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Structural Assets</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Parental Involvement</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Neighborhood Assets</td>
<td>.16***</td>
<td></td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∆R²</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05***</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Path Analyses Using Reduced Form Equations Technique

The direct effects, total indirect effects, and total effects are presented in Table 4.

The standardized path coefficients were utilized in Table 4, Figure 2 (total sample), Figure 3 (first generation), and Figure 4 (second generation). A minimum significance level of p < .05 was used to determine the significance of the path coefficients.

Total Sample Path Analysis

The direct, indirect, and total effects are shown in Table 4 for the total sample.

The following total effects on Latino adolescents’ GPA reached significance: perceived parental involvement and perceived neighborhood assets showed significant positive total effects on GPA.
Table 5

**Decomposition of Effects of Parenting and Neighborhood Qualities on GPA of Latino Adolescents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Total Effect</th>
<th>Direct Effect</th>
<th>Indirect Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DV: GPA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Parental Involvement</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Neighborhood Assets</td>
<td>.16***</td>
<td>.16***</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Educational Attainment</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Structural Assets</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DV: Perceived Neighborhood Assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Educational Attainment</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Structural Assets</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DV: Perceived Parental Involvement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Educational Attainment</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.17***</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Structural Assets</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1The total effects are determined from the regression coefficient for each variable when it is first entered into the hierarchical regression analyses. 2The direct effects are determined from the regression coefficient for each variable in the final equation. 3The indirect effect is calculated by subtracting the direct effect from the total effect.

As shown in Figure 2 and Table 4, the neighborhood structural qualities showed a direct positive path coefficient to perceived neighborhood assets (Beta = .22; *p* < .001). However, parental educational attainment was not significantly related to perceived neighborhood assets. The two contextual variables accounted for 5% of the variance in perceived neighborhood assets (*F* = 16.05, *p* < .001).

In regards to perceived parental involvement (see Figure 2 and Table 4), parental educational attainment showed a direct positive path coefficient (Beta = .17; *p* < .001). Neighborhood structural qualities were not significantly related to perceived parental involvement. The two contextual variables accounted for 3% of the variance in perceived neighborhood assets (*F* = 7.76, *p* < .001).
Two variables showed significant direct effects to Latinos’ GPA (see Figure 2 and Table 4). Specifically, perceived parental involvement was significantly and positively related to GPA (Beta = .16; p < .01). Also, perceived neighborhood assets were significantly and positively related to GPA (Beta = .13; p < .001). The other two independent variables were not significantly and directly related to GPA. The four independent variables (i.e., perceived neighborhood assets, perceived parental involvement, neighborhood structural qualities, and parental education) accounted for 5% of the variance in GPA (F = 7.73, p < .001).

Separate Models for First and Second-Generation Status

To test for possible differences between first and second-generation Latino adolescents, the analyses were conducted separately for first generation youth (n = 210) and second-generation youth (n = 410). As shown in Figure 3, neighborhood structural qualities were significantly and positively related to perceived neighborhood assets. Also, neighborhood qualities were significantly and positively related to GPA. No other beta
coefficients were significant. The four independent variables accounted for 7% of the change in GPA ($F = 3.65, p < .001$).

![Figure 3. Path Model For First Generation Latino Adolescents (n = 210) of Neighborhood Structural Qualities, Parental Education, Perceived Neighborhood Assets, Perceived Parental Involvement, and Grades](image)

As shown in Figure 4, neighborhood structural qualities were significantly and positively related to perceived neighborhood assets. Also, neighborhood assets were significantly and positively related to GPA. The four independent variables accounted for 5% of the change in GPA ($F = 4.65, p < .001$).

![Figure 4. Path Model For Second Generation Latino Adolescents (n = 410) of Neighborhood Structural Qualities, Parental Education, Perceived Neighborhood Assets, Perceived Parental Involvement, and Grades](image)
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine neighborhood structural qualities, the level of parental education and the perceptions of both the neighborhood structural qualities and parental involvement of first and second-generation Latino adolescents on academic outcome. Census data at the block group level, self-report data and teacher reports were used in the investigation.

The first aspect examined was if there was correlation between structural qualities, youths’ perception of their neighborhood qualities and academic achievement. It was determined that neighborhood structural qualities were positively and significantly related to youth perceptions of neighborhood qualities, and indirectly related to teacher reports of adolescents’ grades through youth perceptions of neighborhood qualities for first and second-generation Latino adolescents.

Many first and second generation Latinos live in more structurally disadvantaged areas and prior investigations have determined that structural adversity in neighborhoods pose a risk factor to academic achievement. However, equally important to the structural qualities of the neighborhood are the perceptions of the adolescents who reside in the neighborhood. The idea that low socioeconomic neighborhoods determine the failure of its’ adolescents is challenged by the results of this research. As Gephart (1997) determined, the context of neighborhood needs to be addressed when discussing
academic achievement. This determination is consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and makes salient the importance of understanding not only the structure of neighborhoods but also the inhabitants’ perceptions. This connection is of great importance in determining academic achievement of Latino youth in immigrant families. Because of the great influx of Latino immigrants into the United States and the plethora of research on low-income families in congruence with the high level of risk for the adolescents, it is important to consider that the changes that need to be made are not only with the structural components of the neighborhood, but also with the way the neighborhoods are perceived. There will always be people living in poverty but it is uplifting to know that the neighborhood structure is not the only determination of success.

According to Massey (1995), the folklore of the immigrant includes the struggle to overcome poverty, achievement of fiscal mobility through individual exertion and effort. If academic success is used to predict future success, Swanson (2005) stated that Latino youth have been deemed at-risk. However, risk is a combination of subjective and objective factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) and is context dependent (Suárez-Orozco, 2008). During the early 20th century, many of the same issues dealt with are very similar to the issues being dealt with today (i.e., language barriers, lack of education, poverty). However, there is the added difference (i.e., the wave of immigrants during the early 20th century was of European heritage and the current wave is of Latin descent). This situation has its own set of structural and cultural barriers. In the Latin community upward mobility and academic achievement are encouraged, however, the importance of the
perception of the community has been largely ignored. This study demonstrates that because adolescent perception is important, educated and successful neighbors need reside within the community. The visibility of upwardly mobile neighbors would increase the chance of having a positive perception of the neighborhood. In order to achieve academic success, it is

The results of the study determined that both first and second-generation Latino adolescents show a correlation between structural qualities, youths’ perception of their neighborhood qualities and academic achievement. The reasons for the correlation of each generation may however be different.

First generation Latino adolescents may be coming from situations and neighborhoods that are far more dire than the conditions of where they presently live. The perception may be that the current neighborhood is a higher standard of living than the one in their native country and the possibility of financial success is through academia. Also first-generation immigrants often live in enclave communities that offer family and community support (Sassler, 2000). With this support there may be expectations. Even though the homogeneity of the community may increase the risk of continued poverty it may also determine the academic success of the adolescents by increasing the perception of connection to the community. First-generation adolescents may feel an obligation to succeed because of a connection with neighbors who are in agreement that they immigrated to the US for a successful life and one way of achieving this life is through academic achievement.
Second generation Latino adolescents have the same outcome as first-generation Latinos, however, the reasons for success may have changed. While the first-generation is keenly aware of the sacrifices made, the second-generation still has an obligation to succeed academically, however, different forces may be driving the relationship between perceived neighborhood assets and academic achievement. The second-generation adolescents’ may not feel that their neighborhood circumstances are desperate, because as a group, when comparing lifestyles amongst one’s peers, their standards of living are congruent with each other. This argument is supported by the Social Capital Theory when looking at it from the position of social networks supporting the agreement of norms and values (Aber et al., 1997).

Since social capital is developed from the relationships that people have with each other that translate into the potential for resources and support, the informal networks (i.e. between adolescents, their families, and their neighborhoods) formed would increase the level of social capital. Also second-generation Latino adolescents may be at high risk for failure in academic achievement due to many factors (i.e. poverty, single-parent households) but resilience theory addresses. The adolescents may access factors (i.e., ethnic identity, positive relationships with neighbors) with a positive perception of their neighborhood assets that could serve as both protective factors or buffers to decrease a negative outcome.

Another aspect of this study was to examine if there was a relationship between the level of parental education and the perceptions of parental involvement, of first and second-generation Latino adolescents, with academic achievement. When studying
Latino families, academic achievement cannot be predicted solely by socioeconomic status. According to Desimone (1999), parental variables need to be also examined as one of the contributing factors. Sharkey (2008) agreed that family is one of the most influential factors when reporting on Latino adolescents.

Although parents desire academic success for their children there is a difference with first and second-generation immigrants when determining the importance of parental education and perceived parental involvement. For first-generation Latino youth immigrants, the study did not show any significant relationship between parental variables and academic achievement. However, for second-generation Latino youth immigrants, there was a significant positive relationship between parenting variables and academic achievement.

Although many researchers believe that a parent having a high educational level will have a positive effect on youths’ academic achievement, this still may be contextual. There are many reasons (i.e., language barrier, work requirements) why first generation Latino youth might not have demonstrated a significant relationship between parental variables and their academic success.

Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez (2002) deemed that parents’ education level is important when assessing the ability of parents in helping with homework, however even if the parents have a higher education level they may not be fluent in English, thus language becomes a barrier. According to Kuperminc et al. (2008), in past studies, parents’ limited language proficiency has been deemed a barrier the affects the academic success of Latino adolescents. This supports the findings of previous researchers who
state that second generation immigrants have higher education achievement in the U.S. than first generation Latino immigrants because of language barriers and not being raised in the American school system (Bean & Tienda, 1987; Fligstein & Fernandez, 1985a, 1985b; Velez, 1989; Wojtkiewicz & Donato; 1995).

Language barriers have proven to be a serious challenge for many cultures especially when they live in homogenous situations that support not learning the dominant native language. Children may become responsible for assisting parents and facilitating daily interactions. This may also be a reason why first-generation Latino youth do not demonstrate a significant relationship with parent involvement and academic achievement. If the youth views his/herself as self-sufficient and even as the caretaker of the family, they may not value the parents’ opinions, assistance, monitoring, or involvement. These children who advocate for their parents have in essence experienced a role reversal and are, because of their knowledge of English, taking care of their parents.

Kuperminc et al. (2008) also determined that parental lack of knowledge of school officials’ expectations also pose a barrier to youths’ academic achievement. If parents have not been raised in the U.S. school system, they may not understand or be cognizant of the expectations the school has for families. Other possible barriers that first generation immigrant Latin youth experience include: parents may feel that they should not micromanage their children and advocate for their children being self reliant; believe that teachers and school administrations are solely responsible for school activities; they may be insecure with questioning authority because of lack of knowledge regarding the
system; and may have the inability to attend school activities due to work responsibilities and not understanding that this may cause problems for the child within the school system. Previous studies have determined that Latino parent involvement with schools has been low. Work requirements (i.e., long hours, lack of flexibility) among the working class make it difficult for parents to attend school functions and the belief that the educators know best determines the passive role that parents play in their children’s academic life.

Second-generation Latino youths have an advantage with parents who understand the importance of having a relationship with school officials who understand the U.S. educational system. This knowledge will give the adolescents the opportunity to have someone assist in navigating them through the system effectively. The parents will know how to access resources, who to ask for help, when to intervene, and know the value of participating in the school system (parent-teacher meetings, etc.). Resilience and the Human Ecological Theories support parental involvement when determining that parent-teacher relationships and parental monitoring are possible promotive factors or buffers for Latino adolescents and overall, findings suggest that parental involvement is an integral factor for promoting the academic achievement of Latino students (Kuperminc et al.).

Limitations

A few limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First the data were collected using self-report questionnaires in a cross-sectional design that only assess youths’ judgment of the independent and dependent variables at one point in time. This
limits our ability to consider the relationship of earlier factors and how they determine later academic achievements. Thus, causal impacts of family and neighborhood assets cannot be understood. Future research should incorporate these factors at multiple time points to determine if they change with the development of the youth. A more complete assessment would include reports from parents and teachers with the multidimensional measure of how parents perform involvement and the roles parents play within the school system over time.

All Latinos are not the same and it has to be recognized that there is an important difference between countries of origin and that although the Latinos in the sample were in majority Mexican, there were subgroups represented. Another limitation is that this sample is limited to Latino adolescents from one school in Los Angeles and this can limit generalities. The survey data did not provide a broad representation thus limiting our potential to generalize the results of first and second immigrant Latino youth in other urban or suburban settings.

Implications

Even with the limitations, the results of this study in conjunction with past studies suggest various implications for practice and research.

Implications for Research

Larger studies with more participants in each block group would allow for use of hierarchical linear models to examine perceived neighborhoods and parenting as nested within actual neighborhood qualities (i.e., block groups). Collecting data from more
geographic regions of the USA would allow more generalizability to Latinos since Latinos in Los Angeles are not necessarily representative of all Latinos.

Since neighborhood structural qualities were not directly related grades, but are indirectly related through perceived neighborhood assets, then future studies examining neighborhood qualities may want to include perceived neighborhood assets as a possible mediator. Also, collecting additional data regarding structural qualities (e.g., % of homeowners, % of Latinos in the community) may provide additional insight into the direct and/or indirect relationship from neighborhood structural qualities to grades.

Longitudinal models would allow for more assertions of causality because it is possible that instead of parental involvement predicting grades, adolescents with higher grades may receive and perceive more parental involvement. Future research would also include a longitudinal design to elucidate the transformation of perceived parental involvement from first-generation to second-generation immigrants. Inclusive would be the study of perceived academic competence for both first and second-generations.

Also future research would incorporate gender studies to see if the perceptions of parent involvement were different between gender and also between gender and immigration status.

Implications for Practice

This study provides evidence that neighborhood and parental variables do relate to student academic achievement. However, there can still be changes made within schools and homes to assure even more success.
Since neighborhood structural qualities are indirectly related to grades through perceived neighborhood assets for both first and second-generation Latinos, then community activists and leaders could try to increase social capital (e.g., highlighting neighborhood educational role models).

Parent involvement is an important strategy for promoting the academic achievement of Latino students but the involvement may need to be recognized by school officials, thus adding another positive interaction to the meso-system. Schools could encourage involvement through parenting classes as well as parenting newsletters made readily available to parents in both English and Spanish. Also, teachers could encourage activities or assign homework where the youth has to interview the parents (as one way to increase involvement). And finally, counselors could help students recognize parental attempts at being involved, as something positive. In general, school officials could help parents feel included by acknowledging the differences in culture, communicating acceptance and interest, and collaborating with the parents on how to meet goals.
REFERENCES


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