Nice to Meet You?: Exploring the Development of Parent-School Connections in Low-Income
Latino Communities

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Sociology)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2014

Date of final oral examination: 07/28/14

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Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to the members of my dissertation committee—the ever wise Adam Gamoran, Ruth López Turley (forever my first graduate school advisor), Geoffrey Borman, Eric Grodsky, and Carmen Valdez—for their direct role in shaping, supervising, and reading my dissertation (all the way through, oh so patiently). In addition, I am grateful for the support of various other faculty, student, and staff affiliates of Wisconsin's Interdisciplinary Training Program and the Department of Sociology. Thank you also to the generous and inspiring faculty of Wisconsin's Educational Psychology quantitative methods program for facilitating my methodological development—with special thanks to David Kaplan and Jee-Seon Kim, for their timely guidance on this project.

This research would not have been possible without the participants of the Children, Families, and Schools (CFS) project, nor the collective efforts of the members of the research team. Thank you to the study's principal investigators, Adam Gamoran, Ruth Turley, and Carmen Valdez, for the conception, funds, and leadership that made the CFS possible; to the school liaisons and the local partnering agencies, for their conscientious and ongoing efforts to

Abstract

While the persistent educational disadvantage of U.S.-based Latinos is clear, its underlying mechanisms remain hazy. This study considers one potentially important factor: the dearth of strong family-school connections in predominantly low-income minority communities, where the nation's Latino families disproportionately reside.

Socioeconomic and racial/ethnic differences in family-school ties are well documented, but we know less about how they are generated, particularly when children are young. This dissertation explores the development of family-school connections during early elementary school. Using a multi-method approach, I conduct three complementary analyses using data on more than 2,500 families of first-grade students attending predominantly Latino schools in high immigrant-receiving communities.

First, using multilevel piecewise linear regression and parent questionnaire data, I examine how parent-staff relationships change over the first years of formal schooling. At the start of first grade, I find evidence of ethnic and linguistic disparities in school ties which persist through third grade. The results reveal heterogeneity within the Latino population, suggesting that, for Spanish-dominant parents, feelings of trust and respect toward staff may be insufficient for facilitating many ties to the school.

Second, I explore how supportive parent-staff relationships develop (and fail to develop), drawing on 50 in-depth interviews with parents from 30 Latino families. I find that parents evaluate their school ties through an ongoing process of information-gathering and discernment, conditioned by their prior beliefs, organizational characteristics of the school, and status relations between parents and staff. The findings reveal barriers to strong family-school ties in historically

marginalized communities, while also illuminating how individual and organizational efforts can overcome them to establish supportive connections in the school community.

Finally, drawing on a cluster-randomized design, I assess how and for whom a family engagement program impacts parent-staff relationships in these communities. I estimate both intent-to-treat and treatment-on-the-treated effects, finding positive returns for families who fully participate in the program, but little overall impact from simply offering the program in the school community. Moreover, the program may inadvertently exacerbate social inequality, as estimated returns to participation were weakest for Latino families who tend to start out the least socially integrated in the school.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Latinos are among the largest and most educationally disadvantaged population subgroups in the United States, yet we lack a clear understanding of what mechanisms drive patterns of disadvantage among the nation's Latino community.[1] To identify potential points of intervention into observed inequalities, we need to gain insight into the stratifying processes that produce them. Understanding processes that occur early in the educational career may be particularly important, as achievement gaps between Latinos and Whites surface early (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010) and may set the stage for later schooling experiences. Drawing on prior literature documenting the dearth of strong family-school connections in Latino communities, I contend that unequal access to potentially resourceful social ties to school personnel contributes to patterns of educational inequality in the U.S. (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Illuminating the patterns and processes by which social connections develop (or fail to develop) between Latino parents and school staff may provide insight into key stratifying processes driving Latino educational disadvantage. In this dissertation, I explore the development of parent-staff relationships among families of young children attending schools in high-immigrant and predominantly low-income Latino communities.

In three stand-alone papers (chapters 3-5), I use diverse methodological approaches to address complementary questions. I analyze data from parent interviews and written questionnaires collected from participants of the Children, Families, and Schools (CFS) study, a

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[1] In this dissertation, I use the pan-ethnic label "Latino" to indicate Latin American or Spanish descent. However, it should be noted that the social meaning of this term is both contextually specific and continually negotiated. At least among those of Latin American descent, immigrants most often self-identify according to national origin. The degree to which pan-ethnic labels such as "Latino" or "Hispanic" are adopted increases in successive generations, but it still remains fairly uncommon (applying to only about 25% of second-generation Latin American immigrants) (Rumbaut, 2006).

cluster-randomized controlled trial of a family engagement program (see chapter 2 for an overview of the study, data, and method). In the first empirical paper (chapter 3: Social divergence in early elementary school), I investigate ethnic and linguistic variation in the development of parent-staff relationships during early elementary school. I focus on the extent of differences by family background under the typical operation of schools. In the second empirical paper (chapter 4: Nice to meet you?), I explore the processes by which trust, respect, and shared expectations develop or stagnate between Latino parents and school personnel. The third and final empirical paper (chapter 5: An intervention approach) considers how to intervene on processes of parent-staff relationship development, by assessing how and for whom a particular after-school program impacts parent-staff connections. Again, I consider patterns in family-school ties by ethnic and linguistic background.

Study Aims and Motivation

A longstanding tradition in education research and practice argues that social connections between families and schools is a key mechanism for student success (e.g., Becker & Epstein, 1982; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). In recent years, the U.S. federal government has followed suit, emphasizing parental involvement as a main strategy for addressing educational inequality.[2] The idea that family-school connections matter for children's educational outcomes is rooted in theoretical perspectives from social psychology, child development, organizational theory, and social network theory. In chapter 3, I draw on these literatures to motivate the theoretical framework I employ in this dissertation: a network perspective that considers both the quality and quantity of the relationships comprising social

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[2] As an example, see the discussion of parental involvement efforts in the official guidelines for Title I funds (U.S. Dept. Ed., 2004).

networks that bridge the family and school spheres. Specifically, I focus on the number of social ties connecting a parent to their child's school (i.e., the quantity of family-school relational ties), and the degree of trust, respect, and shared expectations—what I call *supportiveness*—in parent-staff relationships (i.e., the quality of family-school relational ties).

Working-class, poor, and racial/ethnic minority families may be systematically disadvantaged in establishing social ties to institutional agents of the U.S. education system (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2011). Past research suggests that feelings of social isolation, discomfort, and distrust toward school personnel are pervasive among low-income, Latino, and immigrant families (for a review, see chapter 3, section on 'family-school connections in low-income Latino communities'). Yet, we know little about how family-school connections develop over time, let alone how patterns of development may differ by family background. The first empirical paper (chapter 3) seeks to address this gap, by examining ethnic and linguistic patterns in the development of parent-staff relationships during early elementary school, and when schools operate business as usual. Specifically, I explore how parent-staff networks differ on average for Spanish-dominant Latino families, English-dominant Latino families, and non-Latino White families, as children move from first to third grade.

The first empirical paper (chapter 3) adds to previous research in two ways. First, it explores patterns of inequality as relationships develop over time, whereas past quantitative studies of racial/ethnic variation in family-school relationships tend to be cross-sectional. These studies are useful for ascertaining broad patterns of inequality at a fixed point in time, but they do not help us understand dynamic inequality-generating patterns that unfold over time. Second, the analysis considers heterogeneity within the Latino population by family language dominance. Although a number of quantitative studies of parent-school networks have examined variation

between Latino and non-Latino White families, few have incorporated measures of language proficiency. Among those that do, the studies typically examine parental involvement behaviors rather than characteristics of the social ties connecting families and schools (e.g., Kao & Taggart-Rutherford, 2007). This oversight ignores the ways in which English language proficiency and linguistic acculturation impact how parents interact with their children's schools, check or help with homework, and access information about available programs and resources. Latino educational disadvantage relative to non-Latino Whites is more pronounced for those from homes where Spanish is the primary language spoken (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006). If social connections between parents and elementary schools are implicated in educational inequality, then differences by family background in the development of those social ties may mirror patterns in educational outcomes. On the other hand, immigrant families may be able to access unique resources via ethnic enclaves, such as cultural values and norms, which facilitate educational achievement. Chapter 3 enhances our understanding of family-school connections for families of diverse origins, by summarizing general patterns in parent-staff social ties over the first years of formal schooling. However, this regression-based analysis provides little insight into the processes by which these patterns emerge.

I take up this question in the second empirical paper (chapter 4), by exploring how Latino parents define and evaluate trust, respect, and shared expectations with school personnel, and the factors that condition those processes in the context of historically disadvantaged communities. Prior ethnographic studies of predominantly minority communities demonstrate how characteristics of Latino teens—such as a low help-seeking orientation—and the schools they attend—such as a "subtractive" institutional culture—undermine their ability to establish supportive relationships with school agents (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). However,

such research largely has focused on relationships between school staff and adolescents themselves. While this work provides insight into mechanisms producing academic disengagement and blocking access to institutional resources for Latino adolescents, it is unclear what precedes these experiences. In these communities, why do Latino students enter high school with a sense of distance toward school authorities, and how do family-school relationships operate when children are younger? Do Latino parents have similar experiences in their children's schools, particularly earlier in the educational career when they tend to take a more active role in the school?

Drawing on research literatures that address trust, social exchange, social norms, and organizations, I develop a theoretical framework for understanding the social-psychological processes and conditioning factors implicated in the development of trust, respect, and shared expectations between individuals (see chapter 4, section on 'building supportive relationships in school communities'). By analyzing parent responses from in-depth interviews, I situate these processes and conditioning factors within the context of schools serving high proportions of low-income, Latino, and immigrant families. Chapter 4 takes a first step toward addressing barriers to building family-school connections in predominantly minority communities, by opening the black box to explore the processes and conditions by which supportiveness emerges, or stagnates, between parents and school staff.

The final empirical paper (chapter 5) takes the next step, by considering whether a particular family engagement intervention can overcome barriers and facilitate family-school relationship development in low-income Latino communities. I assess both how offering the program affects family-school networks in the school community, and how actually attending the program affects a parent's ties to school personnel. I also explore whether any program impacts

differ for families of varying ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, again considering differences across Spanish-dominant Latino, English-dominant Latino, and non-Latino White families. This paper moves beyond simply illuminating the nature and extent of the problem to consider a possible solution: in this case, an after-school program known as Families and Schools Together (FAST).

The FAST intervention is a multi-family after-school program designed to promote healthy child development by empowering parents, increasing parental involvement in the school and community, and reducing stress, social isolation, and family conflict (McDonald, 2008) (for additional description of the program, see chapter 2 [Overview of data and method] and chapter 3, section on 'an intervention approach to building family-school connections'). While a number of prior evaluations indicate that FAST engages marginalized families with other families in the school and improves academic performance for participating children, this paper focuses on how the program affects social ties between parents and the school staff.

Together, these three empirical papers take a holistic approach to better understand the development of family-school connections in predominantly low-income Latino communities. Relationships between parents and elementary schools are a potential source of educational stratification (for a review, see chapter 5, section on 'family-school connections and student outcomes') and may have cumulative effects as students move across their educational careers. Early parent-school connections may directly impact children's outcomes by supporting healthy child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Coleman, 1988). Social ties between parents and school staff also may act as avenues of exchange by which students can access organizational and institutional resources (Stanton-Salazar 1997). When children are young, such resources are more likely accessed through school ties by parents, rather than by students themselves. In

addition, early parent-staff connections may indirectly impact later student outcomes via an effect on children's sense of connection to school. For example, a distrustful or pessimistic orientation toward school, observed in prior research among Latino teens, may originate in part from observing (and making sense of) uncomfortable or even disrespectful interactions between their parents and the staff at their elementary schools.

In short, understanding how family-school connections develop when children are young, and how this differs for Latino and non-Latino White families, may clarify stratifying processes that take hold early in the educational career and persist over time. This dissertation provides insight into the extent of ethnic and linguistic inequalities in family-school ties within predominantly low-income Latino communities (chapter 3), the processes and conditions that may generate these inequalities (chapter 4), and the potential for addressing these inequalities via the FAST family engagement intervention (chapter 5). Drawing on data from a multi-method study of 52 schools, I focus on predominantly low-income and minority communities, where barriers are heightened and Latino families are disproportionately concentrated in the U.S.

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Chapter 2. Overview of Data and Method

In this dissertation, I use a multi-method approach to analyze data on families with children attending elementary school in two predominantly low-income Latino communities in the southwestern United States. The data provide a unique opportunity to explore the development of relationships between parents and school staff early in the educational process, and to explore how this unfolds in the context of historically marginalized communities. In the three empirical papers that comprise the dissertation, I undertake a descriptive quantitative analysis to uncover ethnic and linguistic patterns in parent-staff networks (chapter 3), an inductive qualitative analysis to explore how Latino parents define and evaluate supportiveness from school personnel (chapter 4), and an inferential quantitative analysis to test the causal impact of a particular family engagement program on parent-staff networks.

Data Overview

Children, Families, and Schools (CFS) Study

The data are drawn from the Children, Families, and Schools (CFS) study, a cluster-randomized controlled trial of an after-school family engagement program. The study was implemented in 52 public elementary schools located in Phoenix, Arizona and San Antonio, Texas. It followed 3,086 first graders and their families over three years. The CFS was conducted 2008-2012 by an interdisciplinary research team at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in collaboration with a local social service agency in each targeted city. Prior to the recruitment of families into the study, half of the participating schools in each city were randomly assigned to receive the intervention, while the other half served as controls. Given the large number of schools participating in the study, a staggered implementation approach was necessary. Eligible schools were randomly assigned to one of two study cohorts, beginning the study during the

2008/2009 school year (cohort 1) or the 2009/2010 school year (cohort 2). Within cohorts, schools were also divided among three seasons (fall, winter, and spring).

The study collected longitudinal data on students, families, and schools over three years, beginning when the target students were in first grade and concluding around the end of the school year when most students were in third grade. Data collection efforts included questionnaires administered to parents, teachers, and principals; district administrative records of student-level demographic data and third grade test scores; publically-available data on school characteristics (collected by the National Center for Education Statistics) and residential areas (collected by the U.S. Census Bureau); and focus groups, interviews, and field observations of the family engagement program in treatment schools. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 summarize the CFS study design. Figure 2.1 depicts its staggered longitudinal design, a three-year data collection effort on two successive cohorts of first graders. Figure 2.2 depicts the within-cohort study design and the two-stage recruitment process, first inviting schools to participate in the study (and randomizing them to treatment conditions), then recruiting families to participate in the study, after schools had been recruited and randomized to treatment conditions.

CFS Study Population and Sample

The CFS study targeted families with young children attending public elementary schools in high-immigrant, predominantly low-income Mexican-origin Latino communities. Texas and Arizona are among the six states housing the highest proportions of the nation's Latino population (U.S. Census, 2011), and they house the second and third largest Mexican-origin populations in the country (U.S. Census, 2007).[3] These states are also among just four in the

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[3] In 2010, 18.7% of the nation's Latinos resided in Texas and 3.8% in Arizona. Almost 30% of the Arizona population is Latino, while this is true of nearly 38% of Texans (U.S. Census, 2011). The Latino populations in both

nation where more than 40% of public school students are Latino (U.S. Census, 2007). San Antonio and Phoenix are the nation's fastest-growing cities with populations over one million, and about 60% of students in each community are Latino (Gamoran, Turley, Turner, & Fish, 2012). To be eligible for the study, at least 25% of the school's student body must have qualified for free or reduced-price lunch during the 2007/2008 school year.

All families with a child enrolled in first grade at a participating school during the first year of the study were invited to participate in the study (a target population of more than 5,000 families). Members of the research team and staff from the local social service agencies utilized a variety of efforts to recruit families, including informational events at the school, parent-teacher conferences, flyers, phone calls, and home visits. About 60% of the eligible families consented to participate in the study ($n = 3,086$). CFS participants are predominantly Latino (just over 75%) and low-income (about three-fourths qualified for free or reduced-priced lunch during the first year of the study). About 14% were non-Latino White, with lower representations of other racial/ethnic groups. According to self-reports, approximately 43% of the surveyed parents speak a native language other than English and about 37% were born outside the U.S.

Description of the Study Intervention: Families and Schools Together (FAST)

The CFS utilized the family engagement intervention known as Families and Schools Together (FAST). FAST is an after-school program that brings whole families to the school and engages them in activities designed to support families by empowering parents, enhancing school and community engagement, and reducing family stress, social isolation, and conflict (McDonald, 2008). FAST was developed in Madison, WI in 1988 and has since been

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states include large proportions of immigrants, where over 36% of Latinos in Arizona and about 32% of those in Texas are foreign-born (U.S. Census, 2007).

implemented in approximately 2,000 schools across 48 U.S. states and eight countries (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014).

FAST consists of eight weeks of weekly meetings, known as FAST Nights, each lasting about 2.5 hours and held at the school, followed by two years of monthly parent-led follow-up meetings, known as FASTWORKS. In this dissertation, I focus on the impacts of the initial eight-week program of FAST Nights. Each meeting engages families in twelve structured processes designed to facilitate within-family and between-family bonding and shared positive experiences within the context of the school. Each process is theoretically based in social psychology, drawing on social ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), family therapy and family systems theory (Minuchin, 1977), and family stress theory (Hill, 1958; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Activities are led by a trained team of local community members—culturally representative of the school population—and at least one member of the school staff.

On a typical FAST Night, families arrive at the school around 6:00 pm and are divided into small groups of about ten families each. In areas like the cafeteria or library, these groups can be found sitting at individual tables with their family members. At the first FAST Night, families are given materials to create a *family flag*, which is meant to symbolize the family and is prominently displayed in subsequent weeks. Once they settle in, families take turns introducing themselves to the other families in the room through a designated family spokesperson. Each week, one family also leads the group in a selected song, an activity thought to help families become comfortable and create a more open environment for exchange. After greetings and the song, families share a meal together, and parents ask their children to serve the meal, as coached by members of the implementation team (FAST Team). The FAST Team provides the meal on

the first night, but the meal is then provided by a different family each week. After dinner, families play parent-led games with their children for approximately 30 minutes.

Following the whole-family activities, families split up and children play together in a separate room while parents meet together for an hour of *parent time*. First, parents pair up for 15 minutes of one-on-one discussion and then reconvene for 45 minutes of facilitated group discussion on topics relevant to them. Parent-led discussions are intended to help parents become familiar with each other and share information. Following the parent discussion group, children are reunited with their parents for 15 minutes of *special play*. During this play-therapy-based activity, parents engage in non-directive, responsive play with their child while FAST Team members coach parents as needed to ensure children are encouraged but not taught or directed by the parent.

A typical FAST Night ends with the families in each group coming together and the FAST Team announcing a winning family for that week's *lottery*. The lottery is fixed so that every family wins a gift basket at least once throughout the eight weeks. The FAST Team tries to generate excitement when announcing winners, an effort to create a memorable experience for children, who (unlike parents) do not know that the winner is predetermined. The winning family is then responsible for providing the next week's family meal for their group. The FAST Night concludes with *closing circle*, where the FAST Team and families share announcements (e.g., birthday greetings or other news) and participate in a final group activity known as "rain." This is a non-verbal, turn-taking game where members use hand motions, such as rubbing hands together, to mimic the sound of rain. The closing activity is meant to reinforce the relationships built among families and between families and schools. (For additional description of program components, see chapter 5, Appendix F [Description of FAST core activities].)

Implementation of the FAST Intervention in the CFS Study

Local social service agencies experienced in implementing FAST in San Antonio and Phoenix handled all aspects of program implementation in the CFS study. No changes were made to the normal operating procedures of the program by the research team or the agencies beyond the local adaptations necessary to meet the program standards mandated by FAST National, Incorporated. Due to the large number of first grade families participating in the study at each school, FAST was implemented in multiple family groups, or *hubs*, within each treatment school. This "multi-hub" model is the recommended adaptation for implementing FAST on a larger scale, with more than 8-12 families per school (McDonald, 2008, p. 75).

To evaluate program integrity and implementation fidelity, certified FAST trainers conducted at least three site visits per treatment school during the eight-week implementation of FAST Nights during the first year of the study. Consistent with program guidelines, trainers held debriefing sessions with FAST Teams following each visit to address any implementation issues. Trainers also used the Program Integrity Checklist (PIC) developed by FAST National to quantitatively assess 12 domains of program implementation. Possible scores range from 12, indicating "high integrity" along all dimensions, to 36, indicating "low integrity" on all dimensions. The treatment-school mean score of 13.3 ($n = 24$, with two schools missing PIC data) indicates that FAST was implemented in accordance with FAST National guidelines in the CFS study.

Data Sources

In this dissertation, I draw data from two main sources. For the two quantitative analyses (chapters 3 and 5), I use CFS data from parent questionnaires and school district administrative records. I supplement these with publically available school-level data collected by the National

Center for Education Statistics (NCES). For the qualitative analysis (chapter 4), I use data from in-depth interviews conducted with CFS parents. The mixed-data collection was a nested design, wherein participants for each type of data collection were drawn from the same pool (Small, 2011). The CFS study collected questionnaire, administrative, and publically-available data on all study participants, while a colleague and I conducted interviews with a subset of participating parents.

Questionnaire data. I focus on data from written questionnaires administered to parents four times over the three years of the study. Parents were given the option of completing surveys in Spanish or English, and they were asked to complete items about their relationships with school staff, other parents in the school, and their children. Parents also provided family background information, such as household size, racial/ethnic origins, and country of birth. Of those who consented to participate in the study, virtually all parents completed the pretreatment questionnaire (99.8%), but follow-up response rates were lower, with 66.2%, 40.8%, and 44.8% completing posttest surveys in the spring of the first, second, and third years of data collection.

I derive additional measures of baseline family- and school-level characteristics from two data sources. At the end of the first year of the study, participating school districts provided family-level administrative data, for example on student racial/ethnic background, gender, and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch. In addition, the research team obtained baseline school-level characteristics for each CFS study school—such as the school size, characteristics of the staff and student body, and record of standardized test performance—from the Common Core of Data (CCD), collected by NCES.

In the regression analyses (chapters 3 and 5), my outcome of interest is characteristics of parent-staff networks in the school. I construct two outcome variables from parent responses to

five survey items on the written questionnaires: (1) the number of staff that parents feel comfortable approaching at the school (*number of institutional ties*), and (2) the degree to which parents perceive trust, respect, and shared expectations with school staff (*degree of supportiveness*). The main predictors in these analyses are time and family ethnic and linguistic background.

I estimate the effect of time to explore how parent reports of their relationships with school personnel change across the four time-points, measured as children moved from first to third grade. I measure time in days since the start of first grade, which I define as August of the fall of the first-grade school year (*month*). This variable indicates when in the child's school trajectory each parent provided measures on the outcome variable.

I estimate the effects of family ethnicity and language dominance to explore patterns of inequality by family background. I focus on three categories of family ethnic and linguistic background: Latino families who are English-language dominant, Latino families who are Spanish-language dominant, and non-Latino White families, all of whom are English-language dominant. I assign families to these categories on the basis of measures of student race/ethnicity and parental language dominance. I determine student race/ethnicity from school district administrative records, focusing only on families of children categorized as White or Hispanic/Latino, which the school districts treated as mutually exclusive categories. As an indicator of parental language dominance (Spanish or English), I use the survey language selected by parents when consenting to participate in the study. The quantitative empirical papers include additional details about these and other measures used in each analysis.

Interview Data. The interview data come from a purposively selected sub-sample of CFS participants at the eight schools that began the study during the spring 2010 cycle. Along with

another researcher, I conducted in-depth interviews with 57 parents from 34 families at the time when most target children were in second or third grade. A description of the sampling and recruitment procedures is provided in the method section of chapter 4. Through a semi-structured, adaptive protocol, we asked parents about their relationships with school staff, other parents in the school and wider community, and with members of their own families. We conducted interviews in person (with one exception) and in English or Spanish, according to parent preference. Interviews varied in length (60-150 minutes) but typically lasted about 1.5-2 hours. We audio-recorded then later transcribed the interviews. For the qualitative analysis (chapter 4), the main data source is the interview transcripts, and I focus on the portions covering parent experiences with and reflections about school personnel.

Method Overview

This dissertation combines multiple analytic approaches to examine the development of family-school connections in low-income Latino communities, yielding complementary information unattainable by using just one or another approach (Small, 2011). Through a regression-based hypothesis testing approach, I analyze questionnaire data for evidence of broad patterns in parent-staff networks under typical school operations (chapter 3) and effects of a family engagement intervention (chapter 5). In contrast, I use an inductive qualitative approach to analyze interview data for insights into complex processes that may generate the broader patterns identified in the quantitative analyses. This overview is meant to provide a summary of these approaches, while I leave the description of specific procedures and assumptions inherent to these methods to the empirical papers themselves.

In the first empirical paper (chapter 3), I explore the extent to which family-school networks vary by family background characteristics in the absence of targeted family

engagement efforts. To examine patterns of parent-staff relationship development when schools conduct business as usual, I therefore analyze CFS parent questionnaire data on White and Latino families in control schools only ($N = 26$, $n = 1,493$). Using multilevel piecewise linear growth models (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002), where time-points are nested within families and schools, I model change in the quantity and quality of parents' social ties to school personnel as children move from first to third grade. I also examine initial differences and variation in these patterns of change across non-Latino White, English-dominant Latino, and Spanish-dominant Latino families. I use this approach to answer two research questions: (1) How do parent-school relationships differ for non-Latino White, English-dominant Latino, and Spanish-dominant Latino families at the start of first grade? (2) How do parent-school relationships change as children move from first to third grade, and does this pattern differ for non-Latino White, English-dominant Latino, and Spanish-dominant Latino families?

In the second empirical paper (chapter 4), I analyze parent interview data on 50 parents of 30 Latino children from both treatment and control schools. Through an inductive analysis of parent reports about relationships with school personnel, I explore the processes and conditions by which trust, respect, and shared expectations emerge in parent-staff relationships in the context of predominantly low-income, Latino immigrant communities. Specifically, I address three research questions focusing on parent perspectives: (1) How do Latino parents define trust, respect, and shared expectations—or *supportiveness*—in parent-staff relationships? (2) Through what processes do Latino parents evaluate the supportiveness of school personnel? (3) In the context of historically marginalized communities, how do individual characteristics and structural factors condition these evaluation processes? I answer these questions through inductive cross-case analysis, moving interview-by-interview then family-by-family, proceeding

in three stages: data reduction (first through broad focused coding, then through detailed inductive and focused coding), data display and memo-writing, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In the third empirical chapter (chapter 5), I again analyze parent questionnaire data on White and Latino families, this time in both treatment and control schools ($N = 52$, $n = 2,614$). Here, I draw on the cluster-randomized design of the CFS study to evaluate the consequences of a school-based family engagement program for parent-staff networks. Specifically, I assess how the FAST program impacts the quality and quantity of parent-staff social ties in the school, and whether these effects vary by family ethnic and linguistic background. I compare observed outcomes for families in treatment and control schools to ascertain two types of program impacts: the average family-level returns to a school offering the program (intent-to-treat [ITT] effects) and the average family-level returns to a family fully participating in the program, which I define as attending at least six of the eight total FAST Nights (treatment-on-the-treated [TOT] effects).

The school-randomized design of the CFS study likely eliminates some threat of selection bias in estimating program impacts (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001); however, due to the two-stage recruitment design (recruiting schools then families), family self-selection into FAST participation within treatment schools, and some evidence of family-level baseline differences across treatment conditions in the CFS study (see chapter 5, section on 'baseline equivalence'), I estimate the ITT effects net of controls for observed baseline characteristics, again using three-level piecewise linear growth models. I explore effect heterogeneity across Spanish-dominant Latino, English-dominant Latino, and non-Latino White families using interaction terms between family background indicators and the FAST indicator. To estimate the TOT effects, I combine a

propensity-score weighting method (Morgan & Todd, 2008)—to adjust for non-random selection

of families into program participation within treatment schools—with the 'Bloom' adjustment

for non-compliance (Bloom, 1984)—to adjust for the average rate of family-level non-

compliance within treatment schools (i.e., to control for the fact that only 26.2% of treatment-

school families fully participated in the FAST program).

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Figures
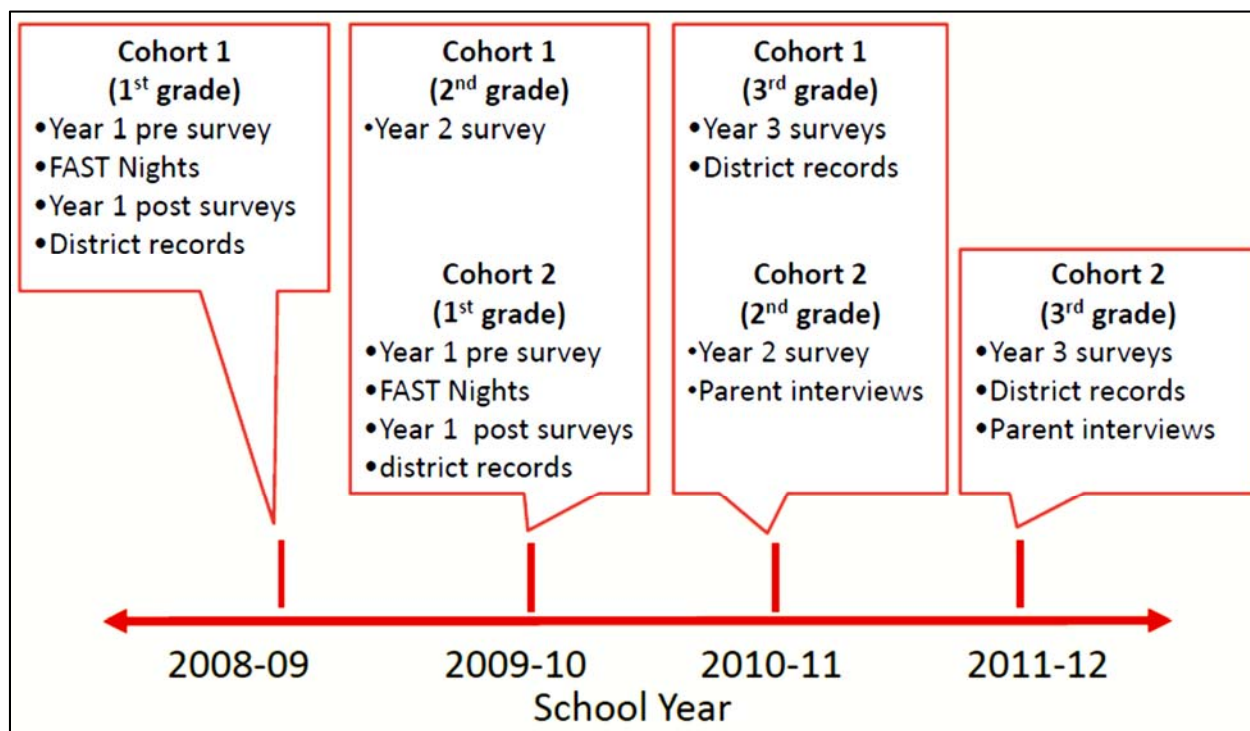
Figure 2.1. Children, Families, and Schools (CFS) Staggered Longitudinal Study Design
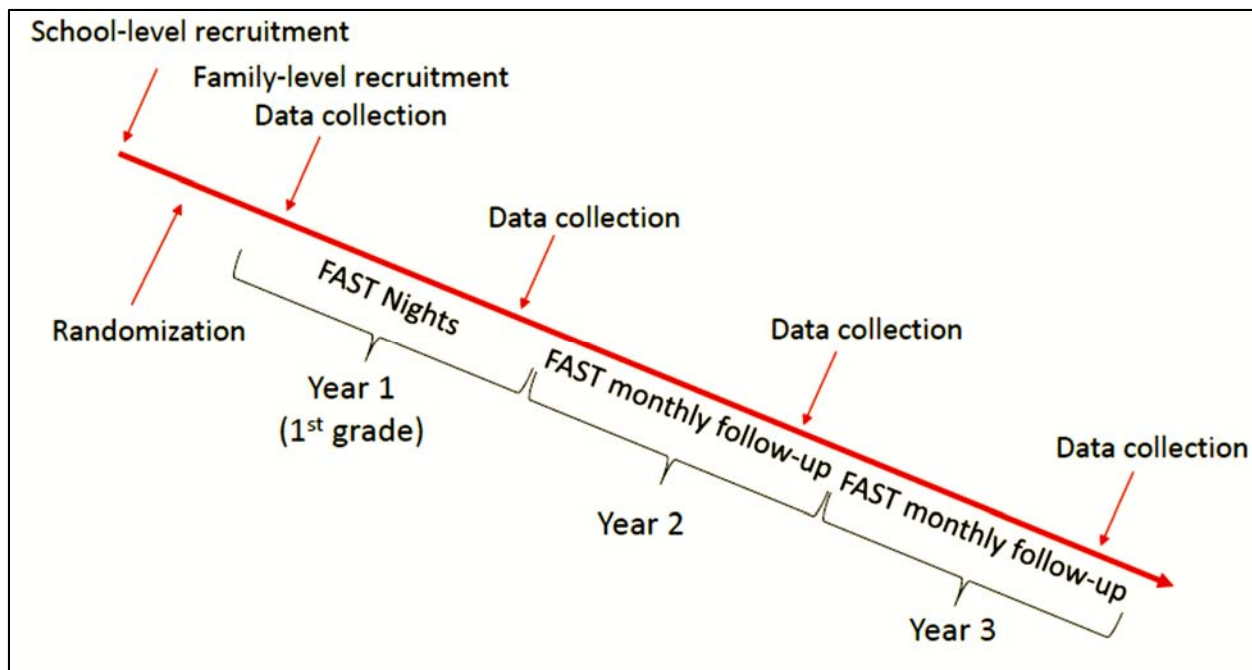
Figure 2.2. Children, Families, and Schools (CFS) Within-Cohort Study Design

Chapter 3. Social Divergence in Early Elementary School: Family Background and the Development of Parent-School Connections

Education research and practice has long promoted the belief that social connections between families and schools are critical for student success (Epstein et al., 2009). Both the quantity and the quality of a family's social ties to a child's school can influence access to educational resources. Compared to those who know fewer school personnel, families with more *institutional ties* have access to additional sources of information and potential advocates who control the distribution of opportunities in the school (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Similarly, trust, respect, and shared expectations—or *supportiveness*—between families and school staff facilitate information sharing, reciprocal exchange, and the mutual enforcement of collective norms across two key partners in the social ecology of children's lives (Coleman, 1988).

Family racial/ethnic and class background have been linked to levels of social connectivity and affiliation between families and schools. Whereas low-income and minority families tend to have stronger extended family networks, middle-class and White families tend to feel more comfortable around school staff and are more likely to have social networks that overlap with school networks (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; Lareau, 2000, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). A growing body of research specifically documents a lack of strong school connections for Latinos residing in the U.S., and this is more pronounced for immigrant, limited English language proficient, and socioeconomically disadvantaged families (Marschall, 2006). Fewer and less supportive ties to the school mean less access to social support, advocacy, and institutional knowledge for low-income and minority students, as compared to their more advantaged counterparts (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Various social, cultural, and structural factors are theorized to put low-income minority families at a disadvantage in building social ties to schools (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). However,

the studies substantiating these processes tend to be narrow in focus, often exploring only the experiences of minority families via ethnographic or case study methods. While more broadly focused, quantitative research has not provided insight into how family-school network inequalities are generated. These studies are largely cross-sectional and rely heavily on measures of parental involvement or family engagement behaviors. Those that directly examine network characteristics may measure the quantity of families' school ties but rarely the quality of their relationships with staff. The longitudinal studies that do exist investigate levels of parental involvement over time, not features of family-school networks. Thus, while we know that parental participation in school activities declines as children move across grade levels (Spera, 2005), it is unclear whether the quantity or quality of family-school relationships change in similar ways, or whether these trends vary by family background characteristics.

To address these gaps in the literature, the present study explores the development of family-school connections in the absence of targeted family engagement efforts. The data are drawn from a school-randomized experimental study, but this analysis focuses on families in the control condition, where schools operated business as usual. Using multilevel piecewise linear growth models, I analyze panel data on White and Latino children attending high-poverty elementary schools in two predominantly Latino cities in immigrant-receiving communities. I model changes in the quantity and quality of parents' institutional ties to the school as children move from first to third grade, and I examine variation in these patterns across non-Latino White, English-dominant Latino, and Spanish-dominant Latino families. I find evidence of ethnic and linguistic disparities in school ties at the start of first grade that persist through third grade, under the typical operation of schools. The results also suggest that, for Spanish-dominant

Latino parents, greater supportiveness may not be enough to facilitate comfort in approaching institutional agents of the school.

Theoretical Framework: A Network Perspective of Family-School Connections

In this paper, I take a network perspective of family-school connections. I focus on two aspects of social networks that bridge families and schools: the quantity of social ties connecting parents to their children's school, and the quality of relationships between parents and the school staff. Various theories of ideal family-school linkages have been offered in education research (Spera, 2005). My conceptualization is rooted in three bodies of work, respectively advancing parental involvement perspectives, ecological models, and social capital theories of family-school connections. In this section, I summarize these three views of family-school ties and explicate how they inform the network perspective I employ.

Parental Involvement Perspectives of Family-School Connections

The earliest writings on family-school connections focus on how parents participate in their children's education. The term 'parental involvement' has no single definition (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005) and is often used as a "catch-call term for many different activities" (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003, p. 12).[4] Writings on parental involvement have been integral to raising awareness among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers about family-school connections as a potential point of intervention into children's educational experiences. When parents engage with children in learning activities at home, it is believed to increase the "educational effectiveness of the time that parents and children spend with one another at home" (Becker &

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[4] Most commonly, these include parental participation in teaching and learning at home and school, communication between parents and school personnel, parental volunteering at school, parents' role in organizational decision-making at the school or district level, selection of the child's school, and parenting practices that support healthy child development (Feuerstein, 2000; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009).

Epstein, 1982, p. 85). In addition, parents' engagement behaviors have been shown to indirectly affect children's achievement, through its impact on their motivation, educational values and expectations, and school attachment (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

My theoretical perspective draws on a key contribution of recent literature on parental involvement, which argues that family-school connections are forged through the efforts of not only families, but also school personnel. Scholars have criticized unidirectional models of parental involvement that focus only on parent behaviors, for ignoring how school staff attitudes and behaviors affect family-school linkages (Eccles & Harold, 1993) and for overemphasizing the goals of the school and encouraging deficit thinking about resource-poor families (Barton, Drake, Perez, Louis, & George,, 2004; Doucet, 2008). In the most influential and lasting models, parental involvement is conceptualized as "an exchange between home and school" rather than simply "something that parents do" (Crosnoe, 2009, p. 1062). This view of parental involvement as more than a laundry list of behaviors is also reflected in new preferences for terms such as parental/family engagement and family-school linkages, connections, or partnerships. I adopt this view of family-school connections as involving ongoing social exchanges rather than simply behaviors exhibited by one party or another. As a result, this paper focuses on the social connections and interactions between families and schools, rather than the specific efforts of parents and schools to co-educate children.

Ecological Models of Family-School Connections

I also draw on insights from ecological models of family-school connections, which originate in broader theories emphasizing how transactions among social contexts shape child development (Crosnoe, 2009). I adopt the perspective that children's cognitive, social, and emotional development is responsive to the degree of interconnectedness among the main

ecological contexts in which they learn and grow (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). Moreover, because the family and school are two of "the most important, proximal, and dynamic influences on young children's emergent competencies" (McWayne, Melzi, Schick, Kennedy, & Mundt, 2013, p. 594), communication, cooperation, and trust between them is crucial for healthy child development, particularly when children are young (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). Family-school connections may facilitate the flow of information between parents and school staff, mutually improve their understanding of children's needs, help parents understand institutional rules of the school, or provide an avenue for parents to advocate for their children and tailor their schooling experiences to meet children's unique needs (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007).

From ecological theory, I also adopt an understanding of strong family-school linkages as meaningful relationships or partnerships.[5] I view the nature of social interactions, specifically the "quality of the interface and ongoing connection between families and schools," as central to family-school connections (Christenson, 2003, p. 456). Ecological theory points to specific qualities of these relationships, namely trust, respect, and reciprocity, as particularly important for promoting child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979; Epstein, 1995; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). In her model of "overlapping spheres of influence," Epstein argues that "complex and essential interpersonal relations" among families, schools, and the wider community are vital to children's development (1995, p. 702). Further, she asserts, the main mechanism is that "a caring community forms around students," which is characterized by trust

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[5] An example is found in the most widely-cited framework of family-school connections, a typology of six "practices of partnership" and "caring" proposed by Joyce Epstein (Barnard, 2004; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). The six practices of partnership include: (1) parent-school communication, (2) parent volunteering at school, (3) parent engagement in children's learning at home, (4) parent involvement in school decision-making, (5) parenting practices (such as efforts to ensure children's physical and emotional health and safety), and (6) parent-school-community collaboration (Epstein, 1995).

and respect and provides children with encouragement and social support (1995, p. 701). In this paper, I consider these relational qualities to be crucial markers of the strength of family-school connections.

Social Capital Theories of Family-School Connections

Finally, my theoretical framework incorporates insights from social capital theories of family-school connections. These theories emphasize the ways in which social ties between families and schools operate as 'capital' for students, in that social relationships serve as avenues for accessing and exchanging "resources for getting ahead in a system" (Crosnoe, 2009, p. 1062). In the context of schools, such resources may include a family's access to institutional knowledge (e.g., explicit and implicit expectations of parents and students), information about how to access particular course placements or special services, and awareness of decision-making processes and student rights (Lareau, 2000, 2003; Lareau & Cox, 2011).

Like ecological models, social capital perspectives argue that resource flow depends on qualities of the social ties that constitute the network, such as the degree of trust and shared expectations among parties (Coleman, 1988). Yet in addition to relationship quality, social capital theory also points to the potential importance of structural characteristics of school networks (McNeal, 1999), such as network size or the density of ties (Burt, 2004; Coleman, 1988). These characteristics of social networks respectively differ in their "bonding" versus "bridging" functions. I incorporate these insights into this paper, considering both the content and structure of social ties between families and schools. Specifically, this literature motivates my focus on two aspects of family-school networks: (1) the number of social ties between parents and school personnel, as an indicator of "bridging social capital" that links the family and school spheres, and (2) the degree of supportiveness in family-school relationships, as an

indicator of "bonding social capital" that enhances solidarity and mutual investment among families and schools (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

Some scholars have used *bridging social capital* as shorthand for 'external ties' (i.e., social ties between groups, such as the family and the school) and *bonding social capital* as shorthand for 'internal ties' (i.e., social ties within groups, such as relationships among family members). In contrast, I use these terms to differentiate two potential mechanisms by which actors may access resources through social ties, regardless of whether they are conceptualized as existing 'within' or 'between' social networks (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Bridging results from "the social network tying a focal actor to other actors" who would otherwise be socially disconnected (p. 20). Bonding occurs through "linkages among individuals or groups within a collectivity and, specifically, those features that give the collectivity cohesiveness and thereby facilitate the pursuit of collective goals" (p. 21). Whether 'within' or 'between' groups (e.g., family and school), relational qualities of ties—such as the degree of supportiveness in relationships—are the source of social bonding among members of the network, or feelings of belonging and responsibility to one another (Coleman, 1988). Structural characteristics of social networks—such as the number of ties connecting families to schools—determine whether and to what extent social ties bridge otherwise isolated individuals (e.g., parent and teacher) or groups of individuals (e.g., families and school staff).

Family-School Connections as Quantity and Quality of Institutional Ties to the School

I take a network perspective of family-school connections, focusing on two aspects of social networks that bridge families and schools: the quantity and the relational quality of a family's institutional ties to the school. I use the term *institutional ties* to refer to social ties to institutional agents, or "high-status, non-kin agents who occupy relatively high positions… and

who are well positioned to provide key forms of social and institutional support" (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1066). In the context of schools, institutional agents include a variety of personnel, including teachers, administrative leaders, counselors and other specialists, and even school secretaries.[6]

Institutional ties to the school can provide educational resources by "bridging" families to institutional gatekeepers, who can become powerful advocates and role models, provide expert guidance, and serve as "funds of knowledge" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 11). Beyond transmitting subject-area knowledge and academic skills (e.g., study techniques), which typically are part of the official role responsibilities of academic staff, school agents also provide access to valuable knowledge about institutionally sanctioned ways of communicating, the bureaucratic organization of the school, and how to effectively build instrumental networks in the school (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). This perspective of institutional ties as providing access to institutional opportunities implies that greater institutional ties to the school increases a family's access to educational resources. Thus, a student's potential educational resources is in part a function of the number of institutional ties that the family has to the school.

Institutional ties to the school can also provide educational resources to families in the form of social support (Stanton-Salazar, 1997), or "information from others that one is loved and cared for, esteemed and valued, and part of a network of communication and mutual obligations" (Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008, p. 518). Students feel supported and cared for by teachers when teachers view them as capable students, have positive expectations about their performance, and

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[6] Although secretarial positions are not typically considered high-status occupations, in the context of schools (particularly at the elementary education level), secretaries are gatekeepers of the social, emotional, and organizational life of the school and sources of "organizational knowledge [which] is composed of the history at the school site, knowledge of the community, procedural knowledge, and the information and personal contacts acquired through the years" (Casanova, 1991, p. 125).

encourage them to do well (Murdock, 1999; Wentzel, 1997). Similarly, parents and school staff are better able to trust and support one another when they share expectations about their respective responsibilities in children's education, when they fulfill those obligations, and when they do it in a respectful and caring way and for what they perceive to be the right reasons (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). This perspective of institutional ties as potential sources of social support implies that greater trust, respect, and shared expectations with school staff increases a family's access to institutional resources. Thus, a student's educational resources is also a function of the degree of supportiveness between the family and school staff.

Considering different possible combinations of the quality and quantity of institutional ties, a range of family-school network profiles are plausible. Some families may have school networks including many institutional ties which are also highly supportive. These trusting and respectful relationships with many school agents could enhance the level of exchange as well as social bonding between the family and school. Other families may have few but highly supportive institutional ties to the school, perhaps having deep relationships with a select number of school staff with whom they most often interact, such as their child's teacher and a member of the office staff. Though not extensive, these families' school networks would still provide social support and thus could improve families' sense of mutual investment and belonging in the school. Still other families may have many institutional ties but none that are supportive, knowing multiple school personnel but without building trust or shared expectations with any of them. These networks may extend and perhaps diversify the flow of information and other resources between families and schools while providing little social support. Finally, some families may have few non-supportive institutional ties, which would neither effectively boost the emotional bond nor the expansiveness of connections between the family and school.

Some empirical studies of family-school connections have measured the number of institutional ties between families and schools (e.g., Carbonaro, 1998; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995), and others have focused on supportiveness between them (e.g., Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009). A fuller exploration of family-school connections will consider both the quantity and quality of institutional ties. I therefore take a network perspective of family-school connections and examine both characteristics of families' institutional ties to the school.

What Do We Know About the Development of Family-School Connections?

While there is no shortage of studies examining links between family-school connections and a variety of educational outcomes (see for example, Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007), we know little about how family-school networks develop over time. Some ethnographic work illuminates how minority students face challenges to building strong ties to school staff in high-poverty, predominantly minority schools. For example, school cultures devaluing minority ethnic identities undermine trust and support between minority students and staff, and they heighten student vulnerability in seeking relationships with staff (Carter, 2003, 2005, 2006; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Yet few quantitative studies have examined how family-school networks develop over time, let alone patterns of change in network inequalities by family ethnic or linguistic background.

Studies of parental involvement suggest that parent interactions with schools change as children age. Analyses of survey reports find that parental participation in school activities declines across elementary-school grade levels (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Griffith, 1998) and in the transitions from elementary to middle school (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007) and middle to high school (Epstein & Lee, 1995), though this effect may be stronger for

boys than for girls (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). These changes in parent-school interactions are thought to result from parental and school staff responses to the changing needs of developing students (e.g., growing need for independence) and their educational contexts (e.g., growing size and departmentalization of the school organization or the increasing difficulty of schoolwork) (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

As children age, these processes where parents and school staff increasingly limit their interactions and the school context becomes more de-personalized, may similarly result in shrinking size and declining supportiveness in parent-staff networks as children move through the educational system. After all, "the age or grade levels of students, the life stage of families, and the experiences of educators are assumed to affect how, when, and why educators, families, and students communicate and interact" (Epstein & Lee, 1995, p. 110). Establishing supportive relationships between parents and schools requires continued and purposeful efforts from both parties (Christenson, 2003). In particular, building trust is a process that unfolds over time, requiring repeated exposure, interaction, observation, and discernment of others' reliability (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Christenson, 2003). These processes may be stunted over time if parents interact less frequently with school staff as children age.

Yet changes in family-school relationship networks may differ from the age trends observed for parent involvement activities, particularly over time periods when children experience relatively less developmental growth. For example, the organizational structure of the school and adult perceptions of children's need for independence are likely to change much less from first- to third-grade than from fifth- to eighth-grade. If parents and school staff do not change their level and style of interaction over time, then family-school relationship networks may become larger and stronger as children advance through school. The longer a child is

enrolled at a school, the more opportunities parents have to interact and deepen relationships with school staff and to develop an emotional attachment to the school (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Positive experiences such as feeling respected and valued by school personnel can also enhance parental motivation to interact with school staff, causing parents to seek out additional future opportunities to further strengthen institutional ties (Mapp, 2003). However, if interacting with school staff proves to be a negative experience for parents, for example because they feel disrespected or rejected, then family-school networks may further deteriorate with additional exposure. This is more likely to be the case in predominantly low-income minority communities, where past research finds that teacher talk often reflects deficit messages about socially marginalized families (Pollack, 2013), and school efforts to involve parents sometimes further alienate low-income, minority, and immigrant parents (Osterling & Garza, 2004).

Another aspect of family-school connections that remains unclear is how the development of the quantity and quality of institutional ties are interrelated, beyond the fact that it is impossible for a family to have supportive institutional ties without at least one social tie to the school. It is possible that the quantity and quality of network ties positively reinforce one another. For example, having many institutional ties may facilitate feelings of trust and shared expectations in the school network, by decreasing feelings of isolation and increasing a sense of belonging to the school. The positive experience of having a supportive institutional tie can also motivate parents and school staff to seek out additional social ties (Mapp, 2003). Alternatively, there may be a tradeoff between the quantity and quality of ties. Having many social ties may make it more difficult to build supportive relationships, because individuals are spread too thinly across the network to put in the time and effort required to deepen social connections. Having

many institutional ties may also decrease a family's sense of dependency on each staff member, but dependency facilitates reciprocity and trust-building processes (Coleman, 1990).

Family-School Connections in Low-Income Latino Communities

Nationally representative data suggest that barriers to building family-school connections may be heightened in low-income Latino communities. As early as kindergarten, parental contact with the school is negatively associated with family poverty (Cooper, 2010). During middle school, levels of school-based parental involvement (e.g., volunteering at school or participating in Parent Teacher Organization) are lower for racial/ethnic minority and immigrant parents than U.S.-born White parents (Kao & Rutherford, 2007). Among families with school-age children, English-speaking parents also report more frequent communication from the school and more opportunities to volunteer or attend school events than Spanish-speaking parents (Enyeart, Diehl, Hampden-Thompson, & Scotchmer, 2006).

Research using a variety of methods, including survey, ethnographic, and case study approaches, corroborates these findings and provides additional insights into how family-school networks differ by social class, race/ethnicity, nativity, and language dominance. For example, studies find that middle-class White families tend to know more professionals, experts, and other parents in their children's schools than lower-income and minority parents, whose social networks are more commonly based on kinship (Cornwell & Cornwell, 2008; Horvat et al., 2003; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Moreover, interactions with the school tend to be more relaxed and consistent with schools' expectations for parents from more advantaged backgrounds, as compared to racial/ethnic minority and working-class or poor parents, who more often experience cultural dissonance and discomfort in the school context (Lareau, 2000, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Osterling & Garza, 2004; Reay, 1999). Such incongruity and unease

may be heightened for immigrant parents, particularly those who are less acculturated (McWayne et al., 2013), due to the "convergence of inequities" associated with not only racial/ethnic and socioeconomic background, but also nativity, linguistic acculturation, and often legal status (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010, p. 346).

These social inequalities in the extent and type of connections between families and their children's schools are well documented. However, we know much less about how these inequalities are generated. Scholars argue that these patterns arise not from differences in the value that parents place on children's education, but from differences in the social, cultural, and material resources available to parents based on their location within the social hierarchy (Lareau, 2000, p. 170; McNeal, 1999, p. 120). For example, socioeconomically disadvantaged families are more likely to have non-traditional work hours or fluctuating work schedules, hold multiple jobs, and have less access to reliable transportation (Griffith, 1998; Lareau, 1987, 2000). Increased time demands and decreased flexibility impact the amount of time and energy parents feel they have to devote to their children's school (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007), and parents report that this restricts their ability to take advantage of opportunities offered by the school (Mapp, 2003; Williams & Sánchez, 2013). Language skills and preferences also structure social interactions in schools. For example, when schools are defined as English-language dominant and 'mainstream' (i.e., non-minority) cultural contexts, Spanish-language dominant families may feel less welcome, comfortable, or even respected in the school community (McWayne et al., 2013; Valenzuela, 1999).

In addition, qualitative research indicates that alignment between parent and school understandings of their respective roles in children's education is a cultural resource from which socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, nativity, and language minority families are systematically

excluded (Doucet, 2008; Lareau, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Recent studies reveal departures in the forms of parental involvement recognized by educators and parents, particularly those from low-income, minority, and immigrant backgrounds (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Lawson, 2003; Mapp, 2003). Educators tend to emphasize "formal" or school-based parental activities which they directly observe, and they often overlook or discount "informal" or home-based efforts, such as engaging in educational activities at home or providing advice about school.

These misunderstandings are common between school staff and Latino parents, whose primary modes of facilitating children's educational development often go unrecognized by schools (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010; Zarate, 2007). Latino parents support their children's education through cultural narratives (*consejos*) about the importance of hard work, education, and respect for others, as well as other socialization efforts that fall outside the narrow definition of parental involvement typically held by school staff (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; McWayne et al., 2013). Latino parents often avoid intervening in school matters or engaging in direct instruction of academic content with their child out of respect (*respeto*) toward teachers and their professional expertise (Walker et al., 2007). Yet culturally unaware school personnel often misinterpret the failure of Latino parents to exhibit the involvement behaviors prioritized by the school as a lack of caring about education and their children's futures (Pollack, 2013; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Moreover, when school operations and staff appear to devalue Spanish language and other minority cultural expressions, such as 'Mexican-ness' (*Mexicanidad*), less acculturated immigrant families and those whose primary language is not English often feel uncomfortable or embarrassed if not belittled, alienated, and disempowered in the school (Carreón et al., 2005; Osterling & Garza, 2004; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Salas, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999).

Latino families with immigrant parents, particularly those whose primary language is Spanish, have unique characteristics that likely distinguish their school relationships from those of U.S.-born Latinos. Yet many studies, particularly quantitative analyses of survey data, do not examine differences within the Latino population by language dominance or nativity status (Marschall, 2006; McWayne et al., 2013). Among those that do, researchers tend to focus on parental involvement behaviors rather than the characteristics of parent-school relationship networks (e.g., Kao & Rutherford, 2007).

It is unclear whether native-born and immigrant Latino parents differ with regard to the quality and quantity of their institutional ties to the school. On the one hand, many immigrant parents initially are pleased with consistent and free access to U.S. schools, particularly if this was unavailable in their home country. This is because immigrant parents use a dual frame of reference to assess their children's schools, comparing their experiences in the U.S. to those in their country of origin (Carreón et al., 2005; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In addition, "As a person comes into prolonged contact with a new culture, their language dominance may shift in order to accommodate new cultural information and social ties… Thus [meaningfully influencing] one's ability to develop and maintain social ties" (Valdez, Mills, Bohlig, & Kaplan, 2013, p. 335). That is, longer length of stay and patterns of cultural adaptation to the host society may influence how immigrant parents develop school ties. On the other hand, "institutional obstacles often overwhelm the positives found in these families, turning into effective barriers, specifically when school districts fail to meaningfully engage Latino immigrant parents into their children's educational process" (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010, p. 342). Many Latino immigrant parents eventually become dissatisfied with various aspects of their children's educational experiences, such as the curriculum, how they are treated by peers, or

levels of communication and contact with school staff (Carreón et al., 2005; Ramirez, 2003). In addition, Latino immigrant families are at greater risk of exclusion from the material and cultural capital that help parents establish strong ties to school staff (López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Olivos & Mendoza, 2010).

Ethnographic studies consistently document a scarcity of institutional ties to schools among families living in high-immigrant, predominantly low-income Latino communities. In these contexts, family-school interactions instead appear to be characterized by racial hostility, devaluation of minority families and culture, and lowered expectations and bureaucratic barriers to success for students (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). These communities include families who are some of the most socially marginalized in schools, experiencing "complex layers of oppression" cutting across social class, race/ethnicity, nativity, and language dominance (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010, p. 348). Yet studies of family-school connections in these contexts tend to focus on ethnic minority and low-income families, so it is unclear how (non-Latino) White or more socioeconomically advantaged families fare when living in these relatively disadvantaged communities. Prior examinations of racial/ethnic differences in school relationships, on the other hand, often employ broad samples in which the White and minority families largely live in separate communities and inhabit disparate social class locations.

Research Questions

This paper explores ethnic and linguistic variation in the development of parent-school relationships during the first years of formal schooling, when schools operate business as usual. I focus on families with children attending schools in high-immigrant, predominantly low-income Latino communities, where prior research finds that family-school connections tend to be weak. Specifically, I address the following research questions:

RQ1: How do parent-school relationships differ for non-Latino White, English-dominant Latino, and Spanish-dominant Latino families at the start of first grade?

RQ2: How do parent-school relationships change as children move from first to third grade, and does this pattern differ for non-Latino White, English-dominant Latino, and Spanish-dominant Latino families?

This analysis builds on the existing literature in two ways. First, it explores patterns of ethnic and linguistic inequality as relationships develop over time, whereas existing quantitative studies of racial/ethnic or linguistic variation in family-school relationships tend to be cross-sectional. These are useful for ascertaining broad patterns of inequality at a fixed point in time, but they do not help us understand dynamic patterns that unfold over time. Second, this analysis considers heterogeneity within the Latino population by language dominance. Although some quantitative studies of the quality of parent-school relationships have examined variation between Latinos and non-Latinos, few have incorporated measures of language proficiency and those that do tend to examine parental involvement behaviors rather than the characteristics of parent-school relationship networks.

Method

Data

The data are drawn from the Children, Families, and Schools (CFS) study, a randomized controlled trial of a school-based family engagement program implemented in 52 elementary schools serving high proportions of low-income and Latino families. With the purpose of ascertaining ethnic and linguistic patterns in family-school networks under the typical operation of schools in such communities, this analysis focuses only on families in the 26 control schools, where the family engagement intervention was *not* offered. Specifically, I analyze data collected

from parent questionnaires and school district administrative records.[7] The data have a three-level hierarchical structure, in which time-points are nested within families and schools. Parents were surveyed four times over three years. Parents were first invited to complete a questionnaire at the time of consent, during the first year of the study when the target children were in first grade. Parents were then invited to complete a questionnaire at the end of the first-, second-, and third-grade school years. Parents were administered questionnaires in Spanish or English, and they indicated their language preference at the time of consent. At the end of the first year of the study, the participating school districts provided the research team access to student administrative records, including data on student race/ethnicity, gender, and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch.

Measures

Dependent variables: parent-school relationships. The outcome of interest in the analysis is parent-school relationships. I measure two aspects of parent relationships with school staff: (1) the number of institutional ties parents have to the school, and (2) the degree of supportiveness in parent-staff relationships. I derived both measures from parent questionnaire responses collected at four time-points: twice in first grade (year 1 pretest and posttest) and once each in the spring of the next two school years (year 2 and year 3 posttests). I create two dependent variables from items adapted from Bryk and Schneider (2002) to ask parents about their relationships with school staff.

The first dependent variable is *number of institutional ties,* a single item asking parents to report the number of school staff they would feel comfortable approaching with a question about their child. There were seven response options, ranging from 0 ("0") to 6 ("6 or more"). The

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[7] For additional description of the study design and population, see chapter 2 (Overview of data and method).

overall sample mean number of institutional ties reported by parents at baseline was 3.90 (*SD* = 1.80). As shown in Figure 3.1, the distribution of responses on this variable indicate possible censoring, as responses are relatively normally distributed across the bottom six categories (0-5) with disproportionately high responses on the top category ("6 or more"). At baseline, about one-third of respondents reported feeling comfortable approaching six or more school staff with a question about their child.

The second dependent variable is *degree of supportiveness,* an additive scale of four items asking parents to indicate how much trust, respect, and shared expectations they perceive in their relationships with school staff (see Table 3.1 for a full description of variables, including the specific survey items comprising this scale). There were four response options, ranging from 0 ("none") to 3 ("a lot"), so the scaled variable ranges from 0 to 12. A scale score of 0 indicates that a parent reported "none" on all four items, while a score of 12 indicates responses of "a lot" on all four items. The overall sample mean score on the supportiveness scale at baseline was 10.50 (*SD* = 2.12), and the scale is internally reliable (Cronbach's α = 0.89). As shown in Figure 3.1, this variable is left-skewed with higher proportions of parents indicating high supportiveness than low supportiveness in their relationships with school staff. At baseline, nearly half the respondents (49%) reported "a lot" of supportiveness on all four items, and over 80% reported at least "some" supportiveness on all items.

Timing of survey observation. To explore how relationships develop, that is, how they change over time, I measure the timing of each survey observation for the two outcome variables across the four survey waves (year 1 pretest, year 1 posttest, year 2, and year 3). For the year 1 pretest, I determined the timing of survey observation from the date provided on the parent consent form that accompanied the pretest survey. For all other survey waves (year 1 posttest,

year 2, and year 3), I determined the timing of survey observation from records kept by the UW Survey Center, which managed the receipt of all parent posttest questionnaires for the study. For posttest questionnaires, the date indicates when the UW Survey Center received a survey; in most cases this was when a survey arrived by mail, but in some cases this was when a survey was administered over the phone by survey center staff or when a survey was returned to the survey center via CFS researchers who administered it in person on a site visit.

The timing of when a survey was completed varied within waves. In part this was due to school-level variation in the study season to which a school was assigned (i.e., fall, winter, or spring), and in part this was due to family-level variation in when a parent actually completed a survey. Consequently, I measure the timing of survey observations in months since the start of first grade (*month*).[8] I define the start of first grade as August 2007 for cohort 1 and August 2008 for cohort 2. In the statistical models, I examine changes in parent reported relationships with school staff over two sequential time periods: (1) during the first-grade year (i.e., August of the first grade fall semester through the following August) and (2) during the second- and third-grade years (i.e., August of the second grade fall semester through August of the fourth grade fall semester). The variable *Growth Period I* captures the timing of survey observations collected during the first-grade year, measured in months since the start of first grade, while *Growth Period II* captures the timing of survey observations collected during the second- and third-grade years, measured in months since the start of second grade. Following Raudenbush and Bryk

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[8] Study participants in the analytic sample completed the year 1 pretest 0-10 months after the target child started first grade (in August). On average across respondents, the year 1 pretest was completed in early February of the first-grade year (over six months since the start of first grade, i.e., *month* = 6.33). Parents completed the year 1 posttest 5-15 months after the start of first grade, on average around mid-May during the spring of the first-grade year (*month* = 9.51). Parents completed the year 2 posttest 19-23 months after the start of first grade, on average at the end of March during the spring of the second-grade year (*month* = 19.93). Parents completed the year 3 posttest 32-36 months after the start of first grade, on average in early May of the spring of the third-grade year (*month* = 33.13).

(2002), survey observations collected during second and third grade (i.e., 12-36 months since the start of first grade) were coded as the top value for the first growth period (*Growth Period I =* 12), while those collected during first grade (i.e., 0-12 months since the start of first grade) were coded as the bottom category for the second growth period (*Growth Period II* = 0).

Key independent variables: family ethnic and linguistic background. The key predictor in the analysis is family ethnic and linguistic background. I use a measure that captures both family ethnicity and language dominance. As an indicator of family ethnicity, I use the target child's race/ethnicity as reported in school district administrative records. In this study, I focus on children categorized as either "White" or "Hispanic/Latino." Although White race and Hispanic/Latino ethnicity are not mutually exclusive categories,[9] the participating school districts employed definitions in which Hispanic/Latino ethnic origins preclude White race. Thus, in this study, measures of 'White' family background more accurately indicate non-Latino White racial/ethnic background.[10] As an indicator of language dominance, I use the survey language (either English or Spanish) selected by the parent when consenting to the study. CFS data also include measures of parents' first language and degree of Spanish and English language use in reading, writing, and speaking. However, while we know the preferred survey language for every family, about 30% of families are missing observations on these alternative measures of family language dominance which were not collected until the year 1 posttest.

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[9] In fact, about half of the U.S. residents who self-report their ethnic background as 'Hispanic/Latino'—defined as Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race— also self-report their racial background as 'White'—defined as European, Middle Eastern, or North African origins, such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, 'White,' or 'Caucasian.' About 36% of the U.S.-based Hispanic/Latino population identifies their race as something other than White, Black/African American, American Indian, Alaska native, Asian, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (U.S. Census, 2011).

[10] Consequently, I use the terms 'White' and 'non-Latino White' interchangeably in the remainder of this chapter.

Despite the sample size advantage, it is important to consider what construct(s) survey language choice reflects. First, as it is a choice made by parents, it may capture parental language preferences and acculturation. Yet this is a very specific choice, and a parent's decision about completing a written questionnaire may not reflect more general language preferences. At the same time, there is evidence that survey language choice is an indicator of more general language dominance, as measured by parent reports of Spanish- and English-language use in speaking, reading, and writing (see Appendix A, Table A1). However, selecting an English survey, while reflective of language dominance, is not synonymous with English monolingualism. While virtually all parents from Spanish-dominant Latino families self-identified as native Spanish speakers, this was also true of nearly 30% of parents from English-dominant Latino families (see Table A2).

In addition to language dominance, survey language choice is also related to parent-reported nativity. About 93% of parents who chose a Spanish survey also reported being born outside the U.S., compared to just 13% of those who elected to complete the survey in English. Similarly, 96% of U.S.-born parents chose an English survey, compared to just 23% of foreign-born parents. Moreover, foreign-born parents who chose English surveys also reported having been in the U.S. longer on average (around 17 years) than those who chose Spanish surveys (about 10 years). This suggests that, among immigrant parents, survey language choice may reflect linguistic acculturation. To the extent that this is the case, survey language choice also may reflect acculturation more broadly, as prior research links linguistic acculturation to other indicators of acculturation, such as ethnic pride and the ethnic makeup of social networks (Wong

& Hughes, 2006). In short, while I employ survey language choice as an indicator of parental language dominance, it may also capture parental nativity and acculturation.[11]

I derive three categories of family ethnic and linguistic background based on the child's race/ethnicity and parental language dominance: (1) English-dominant Latino families, (2) Spanish-dominant Latino families, and (3) non-Latino White families, all of whom are English dominant. In the analysis, I measure family ethnic and linguistic background using two dummy variables, one each indicating English-dominant Latino (*Eng-Latino*) or Spanish-dominant Latino (*Span-Latino*) background, and where non-Latino, English-dominant White families comprise the reference category (*White*). As compared to non-Latino White families, Latino families and particularly Spanish-dominant Latino families were larger on average, were more likely to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and tended to live in more socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods and attend more disadvantaged and lower performing schools ($p <$ 0.01, see Table A3).

Control variables. The analysis includes a set of standard controls for family and school characteristics. All control variable measures were collected during the first year of the study and come from school district administrative records (student characteristics) or the Common Core of Data (school characteristics). Student-level controls include dummy indicators of student gender, family poverty, English language learner status, and special education status. The variable, *female*, indicates whether the child's gender is 'female' (1) or 'male' (0). The variable,

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[11] Parent questionnaire reports (not shown) reveal that U.S.-born parents who chose a Spanish survey and foreign-born parents who chose an English survey had similar mean scores on Spanish and English language use (reading, writing, and speaking). These groups appear more bilingual (i.e., approximately equal levels of English and Spanish language use), as compared to native-born parents who chose English surveys (they report higher English-language use and lower Spanish-language use) and foreign-born parents who chose Spanish surveys (they report lower English-language use and higher Spanish-language use).

free/reduced lunch, indicates whether the child qualified for free or reduced-price lunch in first grade (1). The child's English language learner and special education status are respectively indicated by values of 1 ('yes') or 0 ('no') on the variables, *ELL* and *SPED*.

School-level controls include variables measuring the school's location, size, and characteristics that may structure teachers' availability to interact with parents. School location is measured using the dummy variable, *Phoenix*, which indicates whether a school is located in Phoenix (1) or San Antonio (0). This measure helps account for contextual differences across the two cities that may affect parent-school connections, such as local policies or the social climate. I also control for school size because parent-school relationships may be weaker in quality and fewer in quantity in larger schools, where feelings of anonymity or alienation are theorized to be more prevalent among parents (Griffith, 1998). School size is measured using the continuous variable, *1st grade size,* which indicates the number of students enrolled in first grade in the first year of the study. I also control for two school characteristics that may influence the degree of teacher interactions with parents: the proportion of teachers who are full-time educators (*FTE*) and the average class size (*pupil/teacher ratio*). Teachers who are employed part-time and those who are responsible for a greater number of students may have less time to interact with each family, as compared to their counterparts working full-time or with smaller classes.

Missing Data

The analytic sample excludes respondents missing all district administrative data, and therefore missing data on child race/ethnicity (*n* = 48), as well as those without a valid year 1 pretest parent survey (*n* = 2). Among respondents included in the analytic sample, there were no item-level missing data on the student- or school-level control variables used in the analysis.

There were two types of missing data on the analytic sample. First, for some respondents, the timing of one or more survey observations is unknown. The timing of each respondent's year

1 pretest survey was measured using the date provided on the consent form completed by each study participant at the time when the pretest survey was completed. About one percent of respondents ($n = 18$) did not provide a date on the consent form. The timing of survey observation for the posttest surveys was measured as the date when the UW Survey Center received the survey. This date of receipt is missing for some valid survey observations. While this is true of a relatively small proportion of the sample for the year 1 posttest (2%) and year 3 survey (<1%), approximately 55% of respondents are missing a date of receipt for their valid year 2 surveys ($n = 326$). To preserve sample size, I mean-imputed missing data on the timing of a valid survey observation within each survey wave (year 1 pretest, year 1 posttest, year 2, or year 3), study cohort (cohort 1 or 2), and study season (fall, winter, or spring).[12]

A second source of missing data in the analytic sample is that some respondents are missing one or more observations on the outcome variable(s). Each respondent had up to four observations per outcome variable, one for each survey wave (year 1 pretest, year 1 posttest, year 2, year 3). Missing data on dependent variable observations are mainly due to respondents missing an entire survey (i.e., sample attrition across survey waves). While the two respondents missing a pretest survey were excluded from the analytic sample, there was substantial sample attrition in each follow-up survey wave, with 28% of respondents missing a year 1 posttest ($n =$

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[12] The mean survey timing for the year 1 pretest was about 2.5, 6.5, and 9.0 months respectively for the fall, winter, and spring seasons pooled across cohorts. The mean survey timing for the year 1 posttest by season was around 6.5, 10.0, and 12.5 months respectively, across cohorts. For the year 2 and year 3 posttest surveys, the mean survey timings were approximately 20.5 and 33.0 months respectively, across seasons and cohorts. In the analysis and imputation, survey timing was measured in months, rounded to six decimal places. Although I also estimated models including dummy indicators for missing data on survey timing, I present the results for the more parsimonious models (excluding missing data indicators) as there were virtually no differences in the model results. Any differences in the coefficient estimates are no longer visible after rounding to the nearest hundredth of a point, and conclusions about statistical significance are unchanged at an alpha level of 0.10.

359), 54% missing the year 2 survey ($n = 697$), and 52% missing the year 3 survey ($n = 668$). There were multiple patterns of attrition, with some respondents missing one posttest survey but then re-entering the sample at a later wave by completing another posttest survey. As indicated in Table 3.2, almost one-third of the sample completed a survey at all four time-points ($n = 415$), more than half completed three or more surveys ($n = 711$), and nearly 80% completed a survey at least twice ($n = 1,032$). Still, about one-fifth of the sample completed only the year 1 pretest survey ($n = 262$). Among respondents who completed a survey at a given wave, rates of item-level missingness on time-point observations are low across outcome variables (<1%).

Of the total possible 5,176 time-point observations per outcome measure, 34.2% are missing for the *supportiveness* variable, and 34.5% are missing for the *institutional ties* variable. On average, respondents in the analytic sample are missing approximately 1.33 time-point observations per outcome measure. To preserve the family-level sample size, I employ a growth modeling approach which uses all available data on families with at least one time-point observation on the outcome variable. I discuss this analytic approach in more detail below.

Analysis

Analytic Sample

Given my interest in patterns under the typical operation of schools, I restrict the analytic sample to families in control schools. The analytic sample includes all control-school families who had a valid year 1 pretest parent survey and whose target child was categorized as White or Latino in school district administrative records. I constructed the analytic sample by first restricting the sample to families in control schools, dropping treatment-school families ($n = 1,591$) and reducing the number of schools to 26, in order to eliminate any confounding influence of the atypical family engagement intervention which was implemented in treatment schools. I then eliminated the two families missing the baseline survey (one of whom was

missing all parent surveys while the other was missing both year 1 surveys). Finally, I restricted the sample to include only White and Latino students. This eliminated about 13% of the remaining families in the control school sample, including 48 students with missing race/ethnicity, 16 Native American students, 17 Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 117 African American students.

The resulting analytic sample includes 1,294 families in 26 schools and approximately 3,400 time-point observations per outcome variable (3,408 for *institutional ties* and 3,420 for *degree of supportiveness*). Descriptive statistics for the analytic sample are reported in Table 3.3. The sample was predominantly low-income (80.1% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch) and Latino (85.5%). Of the sample families, 14.5% ($n = 187$) were categorized as White, 54.1% ($n = 700$) as English-dominant Latino, and 31.5% ($n = 407$) as Spanish-dominant Latino. About half of the target children were female, about 30% were English language learners, and about 10% were special education students. At the school level, first grade enrollments ranged from 62 to 131 students, with a mean of 94.9 ($SD = 19.3$). The pupil-to-teacher ratio in the sample schools ranged from about 14 to 63 students per teacher, with a mean around 16 ($SD = 1.8$). The mean proportion of full-time educators was 43.8% ($SD = 9.8\%$).

Analytic Approach

The purpose of the analysis was to model how parent-school relationships change as children move from first to third grade, and to assess differences in these patterns for non-Latino White, English-dominant Latino, and Spanish-dominant Latino families. Toward this end, I employed a multilevel piecewise linear growth modeling approach using HLM 7.0 software. In the CFS data, time-point observations are clustered within families, and family-level measures are clustered within schools. Consequently, the data violate the assumption of independent

observations, and approaches such as standard ordinary least squares regression which rely on this assumption will yield biased estimates of the standard errors (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Multilevel models account for the clustering of error variances within higher-level units by estimating separate error variances at each level of analysis.

The growth modeling approach maximizes the sample size by utilizing all available data on respondents with at least one time-point observation on the outcome variable. While this approach avoids dropping respondents missing one, two, or three time-point observations from the analysis, the resultant regression estimates are more reflective of respondents with more time-point observations, and missing observations still reduce statistical power to estimate change over time.[13] I employed piecewise linear growth modeling, in which I estimated linear change over time within two growth periods.[14] The effect of *Growth Period I* captured linear change per month in the outcome variable over the first-grade year, while the effect of *Growth Period II* captured linear change per month over the next two years (second and third grade).

Separately for each outcome measure, I estimated three-level Hierarchical Linear Models (HLMs) where time-points (level 1) were nested within families (level 2) and schools (level 3).[15]

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[13] An additional concern is potential bias introduced by systematic differences in rates of attrition by family characteristics. See Appendix C for a discussion of this potential threat.

[14] As an alternative to this specification, I also estimated a multilevel growth curve model including first and second-order growth factors of time in months since the start of first grade (i.e., *month* and *month_squared* variables). I considered growth curve model specifications in which only the slope for *month* was allowed to vary across family racial/ethnic background indicators, and in which both the slope and acceleration/deceleration of the slope were allowed to vary by family racial/ethnic background (i.e., including *month*Eng-Latino, month*Span-Latino,* as well as *month_squared*Eng-Latino* and *month_squared*Span-Latino* interaction terms). For both outcome measures, the model deviances were slightly larger for these alternative specifications, though not statistically significantly different ($p \geq 0.071$), as compared to the piecewise linear specification. Thus, I elected the piecewise linear growth model on the basis of ease of interpretation. The size and direction of coefficients were similar across model specifications, but with a few minor differences in *p*-value estimates, which are noted in the results section.

[15] I also considered an alternative model specification exploring non-linearity in the outcome measures. Specifically, rather than treating the outcome measures as continuous, I estimated an ordered logit hierarchical generalized linear model, treating the outcomes as ordered categorical variables with three categories (low, medium, and high). For

There was statistically significant variation at each level of analysis in both outcome measures ($p < 0.001$). For each aspect of parent-school relationships, just over half of the variation (51-53%) occurred within families, across time-points (level 1). Around 42-43% of the variance in each outcome was due to differences between families within schools (level 2). Just 6% of the variance in *supportiveness* and 4% of the variance in *institutional ties* was due to differences between schools (level 3).

I employed a stepwise modeling procedure, where I built up from simpler models, adding variables in construct groups. For each outcome, I began by modeling only linear change over time within the two growth periods (model 1), then adding the family ethnic and linguistic background indicators (model 2), and finally adding the set of control variables at the school and student levels (model 3). The full model (model 3) estimated for each outcome, Y, at time, i, for student, j, in school, k, is shown in Equation 1.

Level 1: Time-points **Equation 1**
$$Y_{ijk} = \pi_{0jk} + \pi_{1jk}*(\textit{Growth Period I})_{ijk} + \pi_{2jk}*(\textit{Growth Period II})_{ijk} + e_{ijk}$$

Level 2: Students
$$\pi_{0jk} = \beta_{00k} + \beta_{01k}*(\textit{Eng-Latino})_{jk} + \beta_{02k}*(\textit{Span-Latino})_{jk} + \beta_{0nk}*(X)_{jk} + r_{0jk}$$
$$\pi_{1jk} = \beta_{10k} + \beta_{11k}*(\textit{Eng-Latino})_{jk} + \beta_{12k}*(\textit{Span-Latino})_{jk} + r_{1jk}$$
$$\pi_{2jk} = \beta_{20k} + r_{2jk}$$

Level 3: Schools
$$\beta_{00k} = \gamma_{000} + \gamma_{00n}*(Z)_k + u_{00k}$$
$$\beta_{01k} = \gamma_{010}$$
$$\vdots$$
$$\beta_{20k} = \gamma_{200}$$

both measures, the ordinal logit model results are similar to those for the linear model with one minor exception (see Appendix D for details). Given the overall pattern of similarity across model specifications, I prefer the linear model as it is estimated more efficiently and is more straightforward to interpret.

Within each growth period, I estimated linear change over time in the outcome variable, *Y*, one of the two measures of relationships between parents and school staff (*degree of supportiveness* or *number of institutional ties*). The indicators for family ethnic and linguistic background (*Eng-Latino*, *Span-Latino*) were added to the model in the second stage (model 2), where the reference category was *White*. The final models (model 3) also controlled for student-level covariates (*X*) and school-level covariates (*Z*).[16]

In the full model, the grand mean, γ_{000}, represents the average score on the parent-school relationship outcome measure for Whites (the reference group for the family ethnicity and language background indicators) at the start of first grade, net of student- and school-level controls. The two random effects, r_{0jk} and u_{00k}, respectively represent each student's and school's deviation from the grand mean. These are assumed to be normally distributed around a mean of zero and serve as the basis for estimating variance in parent-school relationships at the student and school levels. Average ethnic and linguistic differences in parent-school relationships at the start of first grade, net of student and school characteristics (in model 3), are represented by the parameters, γ_{010} (which captures the average difference between English-dominant Latinos and Whites) and γ_{011} (which represents the difference between Spanish-dominant Latinos and Whites). Thus, γ_{010} and γ_{011} are the parameters of interest for assessing ethnic/linguistic group variation in parent-school relationships at the start of first grade.

The parameter, γ_{100}, represents the average rate of change per month in the parent-school relationship outcome over the first grade year (i.e., during Growth Period I) for White families

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[16] The student-level vector, *X,* included covariate controls for student gender (*female*), family poverty (*free/reduced lunch*), English language learner status (*ELL*), and special education status (*SPED*). The school-level vector, *Z,* included covariate controls for city (*Phoenix*), first grade enrollment (*1st grade size*), the proportion of educators employed full time (*FTE*), and the pupil-to-teacher ratio (*pupil/teacher ratio*). All control variables were grand-mean centered.

(the reference category), net of student and school characteristics (in the full model). The parameters, γ_{110} and γ_{120}, represent differences in the average rate of change in the outcome over the first grade year, for English-dominant Latinos versus Whites (γ_{110}) and Spanish-dominant Latinos versus Whites (γ_{120}). Thus, γ_{110} and γ_{120} are the parameters of interest for assessing ethnic/linguistic group variation in patterns of change in parent-school relationships. The parameter, γ_{200}, represents the overall average rate of change per month in the outcome over the second and third grade years (i.e., during Growth Period II).[17] The random effects, r_{1jk} and r_{2jk}, respectively represent each student's deviation from the average rates of change during the first grade year (Growth Period I) and over the next two years (Growth Period II). The other γ parameters are regression coefficients for the student- and school-level control variables, in the scale of the outcome variable.

Results

Descriptive Patterns

Figure 3.2 presents plots of the family-level observed sample mean for each outcome variable on the sample of control-school families. The plots show mean ratings on each outcome across survey waves (year 1 pretest, year 1 posttest, year 2, year 3), by family ethnic and linguistic background. The figure suggests that, when schools conduct business as usual, parent reports of relationships with school staff are fairly positive in both the quantity and quality of social ties during the early elementary school grades. For most groups, the mean ratings of relationship quality and quantity appears to decline slightly over the first-grade school year,

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[17] I also explored alternative model specifications which added the cross-level interaction terms, *Growth Period II*Eng-Latino* and *Growth Period II*Span-Latino*, to explore ethnic and linguistic variation in changes in parent-school relationships during the second growth period. However, these effects were non-significant in all models ($p > 0.185$), and though the model deviances were slightly lower, there was no statistically significant improvement in model fit as compared to the simpler model ($p > 0.500$). Therefore, these terms were omitted from the final models.

between the year 1 pretest and the year 1 posttest, but remain relatively stable over the next two years.

The left panel of Figure 3.2 plots the mean parent-reported *number of institutional ties*, the number school staff parents reported feeling comfortable approaching with a question about their child, over the four survey waves by ethnic and linguistic background. In the overall control-school sample, parents reported an average of about four institutional ties when they completed the year 1 pretest. On average, English-dominant Latinos and Whites reported feeling comfortable approaching similar numbers of school staff at this time ($\bar{Y}_{Eng-Lat} = 4.15$, $\bar{Y}_{White} = 4.28$). However, on average, Spanish-dominant Latino parents reported feeling comfortable approaching about one fewer school personnel, a raw difference of more than a half-standard-deviation in size ($\bar{Y}_{Span-Lat} = 3.27$). Whereas the observed mean *number of institutional ties* declines slightly across survey waves for English-dominant Latino and White families, for Spanish-dominant Latinos, it increases slightly across the first three waves but drops off again on the year 3 posttest. However, for all groups, the overall amount of change in the mean number of institutional ties from the first to the last survey wave is small (6-12% of a standard deviation).

The right panel of Figure 3.2 plots the mean *degree of supportiveness* in relationships with school staff reported by parents over the four survey waves by ethnic and linguistic background. In the overall control-school sample, parents rated the level of supportiveness in relationships with school staff at about ten out of 12 at the year 1 pretest. At this time, the mean ratings reported by parents from Spanish- and English-dominant Latino families ($\bar{Y}_{Span-Lat} = 10.66$, $\bar{Y}_{Eng-Lat} = 10.58$) were higher than the mean rating among White families ($\bar{Y}_{White} = 9.85$), by about 80% of a point, or one-third of a standard deviation. Looking across the groups,

there again appears to be a pattern of decline across survey waves, with a total change of 8-34% of a standard deviation between the first and last survey waves.

Taken together, the two plots shown in Figure 3.2 suggest that, under typical school operations, parent views of their relationships with school staff may differ by ethnic/linguistic background in these communities during early elementary school. Interestingly, the pattern is flipped across the two aspects of parent-school relationships examined here. Early in first grade, Spanish-dominant Latino parents felt comfortable approaching the fewest number of school staff on average, among the three groups. Yet at this time, parents from Spanish- and English-dominant Latino families on average also perceived greater supportiveness in their relationships with staff than parents from White families. To test whether these observed mean differences are statistically significant and robust to potentially confounding student and school characteristics, I next turn to the results from the multilevel regression models.

Regression Model Estimates

Selected coefficient estimates from the statistical models predicting both outcome measures are presented in Table 3.4 (coefficient estimates for control variables and variance components are reported in Appendix B). Estimates are presented in both the original unit of the dependent variable (coefficient: Coeff.) and standard-deviation units (effect size: E.S.). I report results for the *number of institutional ties* measure in the top panel of the table, and for the *degree of supportiveness* measure in the bottom panel. Within each panel, the first block of columns presents results for model 1, which estimated the average change per month in parent-school relationships in the overall control-school sample within the two growth periods: over the first grade year (*Growth Period I, $\hat{\gamma}_{100}$*) and over the next two years (*Growth Period II, $\hat{\gamma}_{200}$*). The second block of columns within each panel presents results for model 2, which examine

ethnic/linguistic differences as well as patterns over time before controlling for other student or school characteristics. Specifically, model 2 estimates differences in parent-school relationships between White families and the two types of Latino families at the start of first grade ($\hat{\gamma}_{010}$ and $\hat{\gamma}_{020}$) and in the rate of change over the first grade year ($\hat{\gamma}_{110}$ and $\hat{\gamma}_{120}$). The third block of columns within each panel presents results for the final model (model 3), which estimates these ethnic/linguistic group differences net of student- and school-level controls.

Average Rate of Change in Parent-School Relationships (Model 1)

The results for model 1 shown in the first block of columns in Table 3.4 reflect average trends over time in the two parent-school relationship outcome measures. The results indicate a pattern of decline over the first-grade year and no change over the next two years, for both the *number of institutional ties* and *degree of supportiveness*. The γ_{100} parameter in model 1 represents the average rate of change per month in the outcome variable for the first growth period. According to the coefficient estimates, the number of school staff parents feel comfortable approaching declines on average by about 3% of a person per month during the first-grade year ($p = 0.003$), and parent perceptions of supportiveness in their relationships with staff decline by about 10% of a point per month over the same period ($p < 0.001$). Over the course of the entire 12-month period, these are equivalent to drops of more than one-fifth of a standard deviation on *number of institutional ties* (-0.231 = -0.019*12) and more than one-half of a standard deviation on *degree of supportiveness* (-0.544 = -0.045*12). The γ_{200} parameter in these models reflects the average rate of change per month during the second growth period, over the second- and third-grade years. The coefficient estimates indicate that, for this period, on average there is no statistically significant change in either *number of institutional ties* ($p = 0.175$) or *degree of supportiveness* ($p = 0.445$).

In model 1, $\hat{\gamma}_{000}$ is the estimate of the overall average parent rating of relationships with school staff at the start of first grade. Taken together, the model 1 results shown in the top panel of Table 3.4 indicate that parents report feeling comfortable approaching about four school staff persons on average when their children start first grade ($\hat{\gamma}_{000}$ = 4.10). Yet, this number drops by more than one-third of a person on average over the first-grade year ($\hat{Y}_{month12}$ = 3.68) then changes little over the next two years ($\hat{Y}_{month36}$ = 3.84). According to the model-1 results shown in the bottom panel of the table, parents overall report high levels of supportiveness in their relationships with school staff ($\hat{\gamma}_{000}$ = 11.04). However, the model predicts that this declines on average by more than one point over the first-grade year ($\hat{Y}_{month=12}$ = 9.70), and again changes little over the next two years ($\hat{Y}_{month=36}$ = 9.84).

Patterns in Parent-School Relationships by Family Ethnicity and Language Dominance (Models 2-3)

The results reported in the second and third blocks of columns in Table 3.4 represent tests of ethnic/linguistic differences in the two parent-school relationship outcome measures, before and after accounting for basic student and school characteristics (models 2 and 3, respectively). The results indicate nontrivial initial ethnic/linguistic differences in both aspects of parent-school relationships at the start of first grade even net of controls, and some small differences across groups in how the number of institutional ties changes over the first grade year.

Initial differences. The γ_{010} and γ_{020} parameters respectively capture differences in parent-school relationships at the start of first grade, for White families compared to English-dominant Latino or Spanish-dominant Latino families. According to the results for models 2 and 3, there were no statistically significant initial differences in the number of institutional ties reported by English-dominant Latino versus White parents ($p > 0.220$). However, the results indicate that Spanish-dominant Latino parents tend to feel comfortable approaching significantly fewer school

staff than Whites at the start of first grade ($p < 0.001$). Even net of controls (model 3), this difference is more than one staff person in size, or about 70% of a standard deviation ($\hat{\gamma}_{020} = -1.286$, *E.S.* = -0.721). While English-dominant Latino parents reported higher average supportiveness than Whites at the start of first grade, this difference was not statistically significant at conventional levels, even after controlling for student and school characteristics ($\hat{\gamma}_{010} = 0.571$, *E.S.* = 0.232, $p = 0.101$).[18] For Spanish-dominant Latinos, initial parent reports of supportiveness were significantly higher on average than those of Whites, even net of controls by nearly one point, or more than one-third a standard deviation ($\hat{\gamma}_{020} = 0.965$, *E.S.* = 0.392, $p = 0.025$).

Differences in rate of change over Growth Period I. The γ_{110} and γ_{120} parameters represent tests of whether the rate of change in parent-school relationships during the first growth period differs on average for White families (reference category) as compared to English-dominant Latino or Spanish-dominant Latino families, respectively. There was no evidence that family ethnic and linguistic background is associated with the rate of change in parent-reported supportiveness in staff relationships, given the small size and lack of statistical significance of the effect estimates across models 2 and 3 ($p > 0.160$).[19] Similarly, over the first-grade year, the

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[18] In the growth curve model specification (i.e., the model including *month* and *month_squared* terms rather than the growth-period terms) in which I estimated interactions between racial/ethnic background and *month* but not *month_squared*, the initial difference in supportiveness between English-dominant Latinos and Whites was significant at conventional levels ($\hat{\gamma}_{010} = 0.529$, *E.S.* = 0.231, $p = 0.022$). However, in the growth curve model in which I estimated interactions between racial/ethnic background and both the *month* and *month_squared* terms, there were no significant interactions between racial/ethnic background and *month_squared* ($p > 0.180$), and the *p*-value estimate for the initial difference between English-dominant Latinos and Whites was not significant ($\hat{\gamma}_{010} = 0.363$, *E.S.* = 0.360, $p = 0.314$).

[19] The results for the growth curve model specification in which I allowed the *month* but not the *month_squared* term to differ by family racial/ethnic background provide limited evidence that change in *supportiveness* over time may differ by family ethnicity and language dominance. However, the *p*-value estimates were small only in this one model specification and only significant for the difference in *month* effect between Whites and Spanish-dominant Latinos ($\hat{\gamma}_{120} = -0.021$, $p = 0.047$) but not English-dominant Latinos ($\hat{\gamma}_{110} = -0.015$, $p = 0.101$). Moreover, while the

rate of change in the number of institutional ties did not differ significantly for Whites and English-dominant Latinos ($p > 0.500$). However, the coefficient for the interaction between Spanish-dominant Latino background and the rate of change in institutional ties during the first growth period was positive and significant in models 2 and 3 ($p \leq 0.010$).[20] Taken together, the estimates from model 2 indicate that while institutional ties increase slightly for Spanish-dominant Latino families during the first-grade year, though by only about 2% of a standard deviation over the entire 12-month period ($0.021 = 12*-0.038+12*0.010$), the number decreases for White families, by about 45% of a standard deviation over that same period ($-0.455 = 12*-0.038$). Although this pattern of differential change over the first-grade year does reduce the White versus Spanish-dominant Latino gap in institutional ties, on average Spanish-dominant Latino parents still have fewer ties at the end of the first-grade year, by about 30% of a standard deviation ($-0.301 = -0.777+ 12*0.040$). Controlling for student and school characteristics in model 3 yields similar results, where the average number of institutional ties is still lower for Spanish-dominant Latino parents than otherwise comparable White parents at the end of both first and third grade, by over one-fifth of standard deviation ($-0.232 = -0.721+12*0.041$).

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the tests of whether change over time in *supportiveness* differs for English- or Spanish-dominant Latino families as compared to White families yielded negative coefficient estimates in all model specifications, these were consistently small in size. For example, according to the coefficient estimate for the model in which the *month_squared* effect is fixed across racial/ethnic groups, perceptions of *supportiveness* decline on average by only about 10% of a standard deviation more over the first-grade year for Spanish-dominant Latino families than White families.

[20] In the growth curve model specifications, the coefficient testing whether change in *institutional ties* differs for Spanish-dominant Latino and White families (i.e., coefficient for the *month*Span-Latino* interaction term) was positive but not significant at conventional levels ($p = 0.054$, for the model allowing both *month* and *month_squared* to vary by family ethnic and linguistic background; $p = 0.105$, for the model fixing the *month_squared* effect across family ethnicity and language dominance).

Discussion

This study examined patterns in the development of parent-school relationships, by family ethnic and linguistic background, during early elementary school. I focused on a population of students disproportionately exposed to educational risk factors, drawing my data from a study of families with children attending low-income schools in two predominantly Latino, high-immigrant communities in the southwestern United States. I analyzed repeated measures of parent-reported relationships with school staff, collected at four time-points as children moved from first to third grade. I assessed variation among White, English-dominant Latino, and Spanish-dominant Latino families on two aspects of family-school relationship networks: (1) the number of institutional ties parents have to the school, and (2) the degree of supportiveness in relationships between parents and school staff.

The study yielded two surprising findings in light of past research on family-school connections. First, past research indicates that parent-school connections tend to be weak in low-income and minority communities like those targeted in this study. Yet in this sample, few parents reported being socially isolated from staff, with only 11% having one or fewer institutional ties. Study participants similarly tended to report high levels of trust, respect, and shared expectations in their relationships with school personnel, with nearly half reporting "a lot" of supportiveness and less than 3% reporting "none" or "a little." While the results also indicate that both the quantity and quality of institutional ties decline over time, at least during the first-grade year, these changes are relatively small in size.

The second surprising result is the observed patterns in family-school connections by ethnicity and language dominance. Past research suggests that (non-Latino) White families tend to have stronger school ties than minority and immigrant or limited English language proficient

families. Thus, we may have expected to see greater quantity and quality of ties to the school among White families than English- and Spanish-dominant Latino families. Yet the findings from this study indicate that the patterns differ depending on which aspect of relationships is considered. Of the three types of families, Spanish-dominant Latino parents on average felt comfortable approaching the fewest number of school staff with a question about their child, but they also rated their relationships as the most supportive. This implies that, at least in these communities and during the early years of elementary school, Spanish-dominant Latino families are the most advantaged on perceived supportiveness with school staff but least advantaged in terms of quantity of ties to the school.

Below, I discuss possible interpretations for the study findings about declining perceptions of parent-school relationships over time, fewer institutional ties among Spanish-dominant Latino families than other families, and higher average ratings of supportiveness among Spanish-dominant Latino families as compared to White families.

Trends over Time: Parent-School Relationships in Development

The findings indicate that, although parent perceptions of their relationships with school staff are fairly positive when children begin formal schooling, these perceptions decline slightly over time. The data indicate that the biggest drop-off occurred over the first grade school year, between the year 1 pretest and the year 1 posttest. On average, these parents of children attending low-income minority schools seemed to view staff favorably at school entry, but by the end of first grade, they felt comfortable approaching fewer staff and perceived less trust, respect, and shared expectations with them.

It is possible that the observed drop-off over the first-grade year in parent reports of relationships with school staff is an artifact of the data or method used in the analysis. For

example, it may reflect a testing effect, as the drop-off occurs between the first and second time-points. Given that there was substantial survey attrition across the first two survey waves, it is important to consider whether the observed drop-off is an artifact of differential attrition. This may be the case if the families dropping out of the sample had more positive perceptions of their school relationships than those who remained in the sample. However, although attrition rates did differ significantly across family background characteristics which are also correlated with the outcome measures, the pattern of differences did not operate in the expected direction. Attrition was more likely among families with less positive perceptions of their school relationships on average, as well as those who qualified for free/reduced-price lunch, lived in more economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, attended more disadvantaged schools, moved schools or school districts between the first and third year of the study, did not attend kindergarten at the school, or had weaker parent networks at the school and a weaker parent-child bond at baseline (for details, see Appendix C). Moreover, when the control-school sample is further restricted only to families with all four time-points (not shown), the patterns in parent-reported relationships with school staff by ethnic/linguistic group and across survey waves are similar to the patterns for the analytic sample shown in Figure 3.2.

The deterioration of parent perceptions over the first grade year, if real, is troubling. Studies of older children and adolescents in similar communities find evidence of weaker family-school connections or less positive perceptions of school staff. Studies also find that interactions with school staff are sometimes uncomfortable and alienating for parents living in low-income minority communities. It may be that, at least for families in these communities, additional exposure to staff undermines positive expectations that parents have at school entry. At the same time, because the first-grade year is the only year in which I had more than one time-point

observation, I cannot conclude whether a pattern of disappointed expectations is unique to first grade or repeats within each year. It is possible, for example, that parent perceptions of relationships with staff follow an undulating pattern in which they begin each school year with high hopes or assuming the best but this wanes over time as the year trudges on. Additional research is needed to further examine this possibility and explore whether parent perceptions are relatively stable after first grade, or whether they change either within or between later school years. In addition, future research should explore whether patterns of development differ across schools and what factors explain any school-level variation. For example, family-school networks may evolve differently across schools depending on the modes and frequency with which staff actively reach out to parents.[21]

Ethnic and Linguistic Patterns in Institutional Ties

In terms of institutional ties, English-dominant Latino parents in sample looked more like Whites than Spanish-dominant Latinos. Among the three types of families, Spanish-dominant Latino families experienced the highest rates of social isolation from school staff, and they were also least likely to be highly socially integrated in the school. While very few parents reported being totally socially isolated, a full 15% of Spanish-dominant Latino parents felt comfortable approaching just one school staff person. In comparison, this was true of only about half that proportion for White and English-dominant Latino families. Parent reports of feeling

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[21] Additional model results (not shown) provide evidence that schools do differ in the degree to which parent-reported quality and quantity of institutional ties decline over the first-grade year. I explored this by estimating change over time in the outcome (model 1) with an alternative specification, in which the average change in the outcome over each growth period is not fixed across schools. When both the first- and second-growth-period slopes are allowed to vary randomly across schools, the school-level variance components are non-zero and significant for both outcomes ($p < 0.05$). When only the first-growth-period slope is freed, the school-level variance component is significant for the *degree of supportiveness* ($p = 0.001$) but not the *institutional ties* variable ($p = 0.091$). Thus, while the quality and quantity of family-school social ties tend to decline over time, this may be less true (or even not at all true) in some schools as compared to others.

comfortable approaching six or more staff were also nearly three times as prevalent among Whites (46%) than among Spanish-dominant Latinos (16%).[22]

Although prior research predicts that Spanish-dominant Latino families will have the weakest institutional ties, it also suggests that even English-dominant Latino families are less socially integrated in schools than White families. The null finding of differences between English-dominant Latinos and Whites may reflect particularities of this sample. This study focuses on White and minority families living in predominantly minority and low-income communities. Although socioeconomic disadvantage was less prevalent among Whites than Latinos in our sample, nearly half the White students in the sample qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (48%), and all families had children attending high-poverty schools. Hence, the White families in this sample are more socioeconomically disadvantaged than the White comparison group in studies of national data. At the same time, many prior studies do not consider heterogeneity within the Latino population by language dominance or nativity. Therefore it is possible that prior findings of differences between Latinos and Whites were driven at least in part by linguistic or nativity-based factors.

Past research raises a number of possible explanations for the finding that Spanish-dominant Latino families tend to have fewer institutional ties than Whites, when schools operate business as usual. One explanation is that language factors prevent or discourage communication between parents and schools. Examples of language factors are the predominance of English in

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[22] According to ANOVA tests of year 1 parent pretest responses, there were statistically significant differences among groups in rates of feeling comfortable approaching one or two school staff ($p < 0.01$) as well as three school personnel ($p < 0.05$). There were no significant group differences in rates of feeling comfortable approaching zero school staff at the year 1 pretest ($p = 0.21$), but overall response rates were low for this response category. There were also statistically significant group differences in rates of feeling comfortable approaching six or more school staff, the top category indicating highly socially integrated families ($p < 0.01$).

the school or the lack of access to Spanish-speakers. This would suggest a need for language assistance and improved communication between parents and school staff. Many schools serving high proportions of families with limited English language proficiency have addressed this challenge by making free translation services available to parents. However, this is an imperfect solution for a number of reasons: parents cannot always locate a translator when they need one, taking advantage of translation services can be uncomfortable for parents (particularly in environments where nativity status and English language proficiency are highly politicized), and communicating indirectly with school staff via a translator is not the same as communicating directly in one's own words. In fact, each of these challenges was raised in interviews with CFS participants, despite the fact that all study schools included Spanish-speaking staff or personnel whose job duties included serving as interpreters for Spanish-speaking families.

In addition to language factors, other factors may inhibit institutional ties for Spanish-dominant Latinos. More than 90% of Spanish-dominant families in the study included a parent who reported being born outside the U.S. On average, these parents had emigrated from their home country about 10 years ago. Immigrant families, and those of Mexican origin in particular, inhabit a disadvantaged location in the U.S. within a social hierarchy based on nativity status. This social structure is institutionalized in a variety of concrete ways that shape the lived experiences of families. In the context of schools, this may include "excessive placement in special education and unjustified discipline referrals, biased assessments, and nonexistent parent or community involvement" for immigrant families (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010, p. 342).

Legal status can be a particularly salient factor influencing immigrant family experiences in U.S. schools. Power dynamics around legal documentation status directly and indirectly structure how immigrant parents interact with school staff. This is highlighted in the following

conclusion, from an ethnographic study of a high-poverty urban community, about how not

having legal status influenced the way a man called Pablo interacted with his children's school.

> [B]eing an undocumented immigrant not only limited his job opportunities and what those opportunities could mean for his family; it also limited his cultural experiences in the United States given that, to avoid deportation, he had to maintain a low profile… [I]mmigration (in the case of an undocumented person) is not a one-time occurrence but a prolonged state of uncertainty that infiltrates every aspect of life—including, in Pablo's case, his practice of school engagement… A paradox of being the undocumented father of four U.S.-born sons is that the involvement the school and society at large expect from Pablo is constrained by the negation of his presence by that same society. (Carreón et al., 2005, p. 485-486)

Although some undocumented Latino immigrants are English-language dominant, they are likely

to be Spanish-language dominant. In part, this is because limits on their "cultural experiences in

the United States" and their often limited educational opportunities prior to migration create

barriers to English language acquisition.

Cultural factors also may discourage immigrant parents from building relationships with

school staff. Consciously or not, key social institutions such as schools tend to devalue non-

native and minority ethnic culture (Carter, 2003; Tyson, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). In particular,

Latino immigrant parents may feel uncomfortable or even alienated by school personnel due to

"school programs that fail to address linguistic and cultural diversity, negatively constructed

teacher's expectations, [and] …unacknowledged strengths of these families" (Olivos &

Mendoza, 2010, p. 342). Moreover, immigrant parents have been found to feel confused,

uncomfortable, and frustrated with the institutional norms of the school (López et al., 2001;

Marschall, 2006; Osterling & Garza, 2004; Ramirez, 2003).

While past research suggests that language, nativity, documentation status, and culture

affect immigrant parents' connections to their children's schools in important ways, the salience

of these issues will vary across local contexts. The patterns observed here could be specific to

characteristics of the study sample and may not apply to other contexts. This sample of Latino

families is predominantly Mexican in origin, and the cultural and linguistic characteristics of Latino families of other origins may differ. However, the observed patterns held even after controlling for location in Phoenix or San Antonio, which differ in terms of how recently arrived the immigrant community is and the degree of socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by immigrants. This provides some evidence that the findings apply to varied social contexts, at least within the category of largely low-income majority-minority communities.

One encouraging finding from this study is that, although Spanish-dominant Latino parents had fewer average institutional ties to the school when their child started first grade, they did not experience the same decline over the first-grade year as English-dominant Latino and non-Latino White families. While these other families tend to have greater institutional ties at school entry, the number of staff they feel comfortable approaching drops by the end of the first-grade year, by about two-fifths of a standard deviation on average, according to the model estimates. While it is concerning that White and English-dominant Latino parents appear to become less comfortable with staff over time, at least Spanish-dominant Latino parents generally do not experience the same drop-off in institutional ties. Although Spanish-dominant Latino families still lag behind non-Latino White families in number of institutional ties to the school at the end of third grade, the results suggest this gap is reduced to less than half its original size by the end of the first-grade year.

Ethnic and Linguistic Patterns in Supportiveness

The results of this study suggest that parents from both Spanish- and English-dominant Latino families tend to have higher quality relationships with school staff than White parents during the early years of elementary school, when schools operate business as usual. As compared to White parents in the study, parent participants from both Spanish- and English-

dominant Latino families less often reported that their relationships with staff were "not at all" or "only a little" supportive ($p < 0.01$), and they were more likely to report "a lot" of trust, respect, and shared expectations in their relationships ($p < 0.10$).[23] According to survey reports in this study, about half of Latino parents, either Spanish- or English-dominant, view their relationships with school staff as highly supportive, while fewer than one-in-twenty perceive no more than "a little" supportiveness from school staff.

The implication that Latino parents experience greater supportiveness in their relationships with school staff than non-Latino White parents is somewhat surprising, given prior research findings. For example, in one study of parents in a predominantly low-income Latino community in California, immigrant Latino parents reported that they did not believe teachers shared their high expectations for children, they felt disrespected by teachers, and they felt teachers were uncaring toward them (Ramirez, 2003). This departure from previous findings, largely based on ethnographic or qualitative case study methods, raises the question of what the survey-based supportiveness measure used in this study is really tapping.

This study is unique in examining parent-school relationship qualities like trust, respect, and shared expectations using quantified measures collected via questionnaires. This is an important contribution to the literature because it offers broader insight into characteristics of family-school networks. However, findings about these measures should be interpreted with caution. Precisely because school-based relationship quality is understudied in survey research, vulnerability to measurement error and threats to construct validity may be heightened in this study. The use of multiple survey items with evidence that the scale is internally reliable

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[23] Reported *p*-values are from ANOVA tests of mean differences across groups in rates of reporting scores of 0-4 on the *supportiveness* scale (i.e., reports of "none" or "a little" supportiveness across the four survey items comprising the scale) and scores of 12 (i.e., reports of "a lot" of supportiveness on all four items).

provides some confidence that measurement error is at least reduced, but the skewness of the *degree of supportiveness* variable could reflect additional measurement error.[24]

It is also possible that this measure taps something other than the levels of social support it was designed to capture. For example, positive reports of school staff from Mexican-origin parents sometimes reflect a dual frame of reference, in which immigrant parents have highly positive perceptions of American schools because, in part, they assess them in comparison to negative experiences with the Mexican educational system. These data are consistent with this theory, as parent reports of the quality of their relationships with school staff were more positive on average for Spanish-dominant than English-dominant Latino families.[25] Another possibility is that high ratings of supportiveness among Spanish-dominant Latino families reflect the Mexican value of *respeto* (respect). This includes high regard for school staff and has been linked to greater deference toward teachers and hesitancy in questioning their decisions or intervening in educational matters (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012). It should be kept in mind, however, that while over 90% of the Spanish-dominant Latino families in the sample included a parent who reported being born outside the U.S., this was also true of about 15% of the English-dominant Latino families. In either case, perceptions of greater supportiveness among Latino families may not translate into more positive educational outcomes among children. This may be especially likely

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[24] As reported in Appendix D, when the outcome is treated as ordered categorical, there are trivial differences in the p-value estimate for the coefficient testing whether supportiveness in family-school ties differs on average between White and Spanish-dominant Latino families ($p = 0.057$, as compared to $p = 0.025$ when the outcomes is assumed to be a continuous variable).

[25] To test this difference, I re-estimated the full model including student- and school-level control variables (model 3) with Spanish-dominant Latino families as the omitted category for family racial/ethnic background. The results indicate that, as compared to parents from English-dominant Latino families, those from Spanish-dominant Latino families report significantly greater supportiveness in their relationships with school staff at the start of first grade ($p = 0.037$), by about 16% of a standard deviation.

in the context of U.S. schools, where scarce resources are distributed unequally, partially as a function of whether parental efforts comply with unwritten and unspoken institutional standards (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In this context, "Many immigrant parents will discover that it is dangerous to put too much trust in an educational system that produces such uneven results" and where maximizing children's learning experiences may require direct or even forceful parental intervention in school matters (p. 151).

A final possible explanation for the observed Latino advantage in relationship quality is my focus on early elementary school. Prior studies of family-school connections in low-income Latino communities often have focused on older children or adolescents. This is particularly true of the ethnographic and case study research that illuminates barriers to supportive ties for Latino families. It is possible that, collectively, the study findings reflect differences in institutional ties across children's educational careers. Latino parents, in particular those of Spanish-dominant origins, may have positive perceptions of staff at school entry, but the pattern of deterioration in perceptions observed in this study may continue as children age. The results provide suggestive but not statistically significant evidence that Spanish-dominant Latino parents may experience greater decline in supportiveness over the first-grade year than White parents ($p = 0.161$).

Conclusion

This study examined patterns in the development of parent-school connections during early elementary school. In the context of low-income and high-immigrant Latino communities, parent perceptions of institutional ties to the school surprisingly were relatively positive at school entry. However, the analysis also uncovered evidence of ethnic and linguistic disparities in school relationships that persist through third grade.

The study findings have a number of implications for our understanding of family-school connections. Importantly, they reveal that the link between ethnic/linguistic background and school-based networks depends on which aspect of institutional ties is considered. This finding bridges two competing narratives in the literature comparing Latino immigrant and non-immigrant families with regard to their school-based social resources. On the one hand, one body of work emphasizes the ways in which immigrant families are advantaged over non-immigrant families with regard to cultural values and norms, ethnic-enclave-specific social resources, and segmented patterns of assimilation. On the other hand, other scholarship stresses how immigrant families are relatively disadvantaged compared to non-immigrant families in building school ties, for example due to differences in neighborhood and school contexts, socioeconomic resources, and linguistic and nativity statuses. These literatures provide context for why Spanish-language dominant Latino families may be advantaged with respect to supportiveness in their relationships with staff but disadvantaged on the number of institutional ties they have to the school.

In addition, the findings suggest that the mechanisms driving the development of parent-school relationships may differ for different aspects of school networks. Developing supportiveness and increasing the number of ties between families and schools may be mutually reinforcing or competing processes. According to this study, for Latino parents who are Spanish language dominant, feelings of trust and respect with school staff do not appear to facilitate extensive networks of institutional agents, or at least comfort with many staff. It remains an open question whether a similar pattern would be observed for more direct measures of parental interaction with school staff and actual use of school-based institutional ties.

The findings also suggest that school networks, and particularly the number of institutional ties a family has, may be implicated in educational inequalities, even in relatively

disadvantaged communities. The idea that family-school connections are essential for children's

learning and development is a widely-held belief promoted in education research, policy, and

practice. Yet despite growing evidence that family ties to schools vary by social class and

racial/ethnic background, we know much less about how these inequalities emerge and how

school networks develop over time. This work begins to address these questions and proposes

directions for future research.

This study explored ethnic and linguistic patterns in school ties within majority Latino,

high-immigrant, and high-poverty communities in the southwestern United States. It is unclear

whether the observed patterns occur in other social contexts. The non-Latino White families in

this sample are atypically socioeconomically disadvantaged compared to White families

nationally. Thus, the communities targeted here may represent a 'best case scenario' for

inequality, because the privileged status (White race) is assigned to a relatively marginalized

group. Yet perhaps characteristics of families matter less than dominant-group cultural norms,

which may be institutionalized in schools regardless of student composition. This context may

even represent a worst case scenario, if scarce community resources increase competition and

fortify stratifying processes.

Finally, this study highlights how having one kind of school network resource doesn't

necessarily translate into other kinds of social resources. So which aspect of family-school

connections should be prioritized in policy interventions? To identify lasting and effective

interventions, we need to understand both the processes through which school ties can be

strengthened, and how different aspects of school networks are linked to educational outcomes.

To achieve this, a number of questions remain to be answered. Do all aspects of school ties have

similar educational returns? Through what mechanisms do these effects operate, and do the

mechanisms differ for quantity and quality of ties? For example, family-school connections may influence parental engagement behaviors, children's attachment to school, or perhaps their ability to later build their own institutional ties. Are some mechanisms more effective than others in boosting academic outcomes? Do different kinds of families use their institutional ties in different ways? Such questions should drive future research on family-school connections.

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Tables and Figures

Table 3.1

Description of Measures

Variable	Description	Response Options
Parent-School Relationship Measures (time-varying parent survey reports)		
Degree of supportiveness **4-item Additive Scale** **Range: 0-12** **Cronbach's α = 0.8893** **Measured at 4 time-points**	(1) How much do you trust school staff to do what is best for your child? (2) How much do you feel respected by school staff at this school? (3) How much do you feel the school staff works to build trusting relationships with parents? (4) How much does the school staff share your expectations for your child?	For each item: 0 = None 1 = A little 2 = Some 3 = A lot
Number of institutional ties **Range: 0-6** **Measured at 4 time-points**	How many of the school staff would you feel comfortable approaching if you had a question about your child?	0, 1, 2, …, 6 or more
Timing of survey observation		
Growth Period I **1st grade year**	Months since start of 1st grade (Aug., Fall), over period Aug., 1st gr. Fall - Aug., 2nd gr. Fall	$0 – 12^{a}$
Growth Period II **2nd-3rd grade years**	Months since start of 2nd grade (Aug., Fall), over period Aug., 2nd gr. Fall - Aug., 4th gr. Fall	$0 – 24^{a}$
Family ethnic and linguistic background		
English-dominant Latino	Child race/ethnicity is Hispanic/Latino and parent prefers English survey	Dummy indicator (1 = yes, 0 = no)
Spanish-dominant Latino	Child race/ethnicity is Hispanic/Latino and parent prefers Spanish survey	Dummy indicator
Non-Latino White **(omitted category)**	Child race/ethnicity is White and parent prefers English survey	Dummy indicator
Child demographic traits		
Female	Child gender is Female	Dummy indicator
Free/reduced lunch	Child is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	Dummy indicator
ELL	Child is English Language Learner (ELL) student	Dummy indicator
SPED	Child is special education (SPED) student	Dummy indicator
School characteristics		
Phoenix	School is located in Phoenix (versus San Antonio)	Dummy indicator
1st grade size	Number of children enrolled in first grade	Count
Pupil/teacher ratio	Ratio of pupils to teachers	Proportion
% FTE	Percentage of full time educator (FTE) teachers	Percentage

a. To enable piecewise linear growth period modeling (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002), survey observations in the first growth period (during the 1st grade year, i.e., 0-12 months since the start of 1st grade) were assigned the bottom value on the second growth period variable (*Growth Period II* = 0). Survey observations in the second growth period (2nd - 3rd grade years, i.e. 12-36 months since the start of 1st grade) received the top value on the first growth period variable (*Growth Period I* = 12).

Table 3.2

Family-Level Response Rates for Analytic Sample, by Number of Surveys Observed

	Percent	Cumulative Percent
4 time-points (*all surveys)*	**32.07%**	**32.07%**
3 time-points	**22.87%**	**54.95%**
y1pre + y1post + y2	9.27%	
y1pre + y1post + y3	11.44%	
y1pre + y2 + y3	2.16%	
2 time-points	**24.81%**	**79.75%**
y1pre + y1post	19.47%	
y1pre + y2	2.63%	
y1pre + y3	2.70%	
1 time-point (*y1pre only*)	**20.25%**	**100.00%**

Note. Response rates calculated for the chapter 3 analytic sample of White and Latino families in control schools, with a valid baseline parent survey (n = 1,294, N = 26).

Table 3.3

Sample Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Level 1 (time-points)					
Number of institutional ties	3408	3.83	1.78	0	6
Degree of supportiveness in relationships with staff	3420	10.09	2.46	0	12
Growth Period I (1st grade year)	3458	9.14	3.13	0.17	12.00
Growth Period II (2nd - 3rd grade years)	3458	5.25	8.05	0.00	24.10
Level 2 (students)					
English-dominant Latino	1294	0.54	0.50	0	1
Spanish-dominant Latino	1294	0.31	0.46	0	1
Non-Latino White	1294	0.14	0.35	0	1
Female	1294	0.50	0.50	0	1
Free/reduced lunch	1294	0.80	0.40	0	1
ELL	1294	0.30	0.46	0	1
SPED	1294	0.10	0.30	0	1
Level 3 (schools)					
Phoenix	26	0.50	0.51	0	1
1st grade size	26	94.88	19.32	62	131
Pupil/teacher ratio	26	16.07	1.75	13.67	20.00
% FTE	26	43.82	9.75	22.00	62.50

Note. Descriptive statistics calculated for the chapter 3 analytic sample of White and Latino families in control schools, with a valid baseline parent survey (n = 1,294, N = 26).

Table 3.4

Selected Estimates: Hierarchical Linear Models Predicting Parent-Staff Relationship Quantity and Quality

	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3[a]			
Y = Number of Institutional Ties	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.
Intercept, $\gamma 000$	4.097	2.297	0.114	<0.001	4.73	2.652	0.248	<0.001	4.691	2.630	0.261	<0.001
Growth Period I (1st gr.), $\gamma 100$	-0.034	-0.019	0.012	0.003	-0.068	-0.038	0.024	0.005	-0.067	-0.038	0.024	0.006
Growth Period II (2nd-3rd gr.), $\gamma 200$	0.007	0.004	0.005	0.175	0.007	0.004	0.005	0.145	0.007	0.004	0.005	0.176
Eng-Latino, $\gamma 010$					-0.348	-0.195	0.287	0.225	-0.342	-0.192	0.308	0.267
Span-Latino, $\gamma 020$					-1.386	-0.777	0.302	<0.001	-1.286	-0.721	0.304	<0.001
Growth Period I*Eng-Latino, $\gamma 110$					0.017	0.010	0.026	0.503	0.017	0.009	0.026	0.514
Growth Period I*Span-Latino, $\gamma 120$					0.071	0.040	0.027	0.010	0.073	0.041	0.027	0.006
Model Deviance	12879.357 (*df* = 11)				12829.905 (*df* = 15)				12817.046 (*df* = 23)			
	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3[a]			
Y = Degree of Supportiveness	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.
Intercept, $\gamma 000$	11.037	4.485	0.168	<0.001	10.455	4.249	0.292	<0.001	10.408	4.230	0.294	<0.001
Growth Period I (1st gr.), $\gamma 100$	-0.111	-0.045	0.020	<0.001	-0.081	-0.033	0.030	0.007	-0.078	-0.032	0.030	0.010
Growth Period II (2nd-3rd gr.), $\gamma 200$	0.006	0.002	0.007	0.445	0.005	0.002	0.007	0.477	0.005	0.002	0.007	0.506
Eng-Latino, $\gamma 010$					0.527	0.214	0.336	0.117	0.571	0.232	0.348	0.101
Span-Latino, $\gamma 020$					0.924	0.375	0.411	0.025	0.965	0.392	0.429	0.025
Growth Period I*Eng-Latino, $\gamma 110$					-0.027	-0.011	0.031	0.386	-0.029	-0.012	0.031	0.355
Growth Period I*Span-Latino, $\gamma 120$					-0.048	-0.020	0.035	0.161	-0.048	-0.020	0.034	0.161
Model Deviance	14886.970 (*df* = 11)				14877.906 (*df* = 15)				14861.712 (*df* = 23)			

a. Model 3 includes controls for student and school characteristics (child gender, poverty, ELL, and SPED status; school city, size, student/teacher ratio, and full-time educators); see Appendix B for omitted results.

Note. Coeff. = Coefficient, E.S. = Effect Size (Coefficient/Standard Deviation$_Y$), SE = Robust Standard Error, p-val. = *p*-value, *df* = degrees of freedom
All models specify a random intercept at the school level, and random intercept, Growth-Period-I slope, and Growth-Period-II slope at the student level. Estimates based on the chapter 3 analytic sample of White and Latino families, in control schools, and with a valid baseline parent survey: 26 level-3 units (schools), 1,294 level-2 units (students), and 3,408 (institutional ties) or 3,420 (supportiveness) level 1 units (time-points).
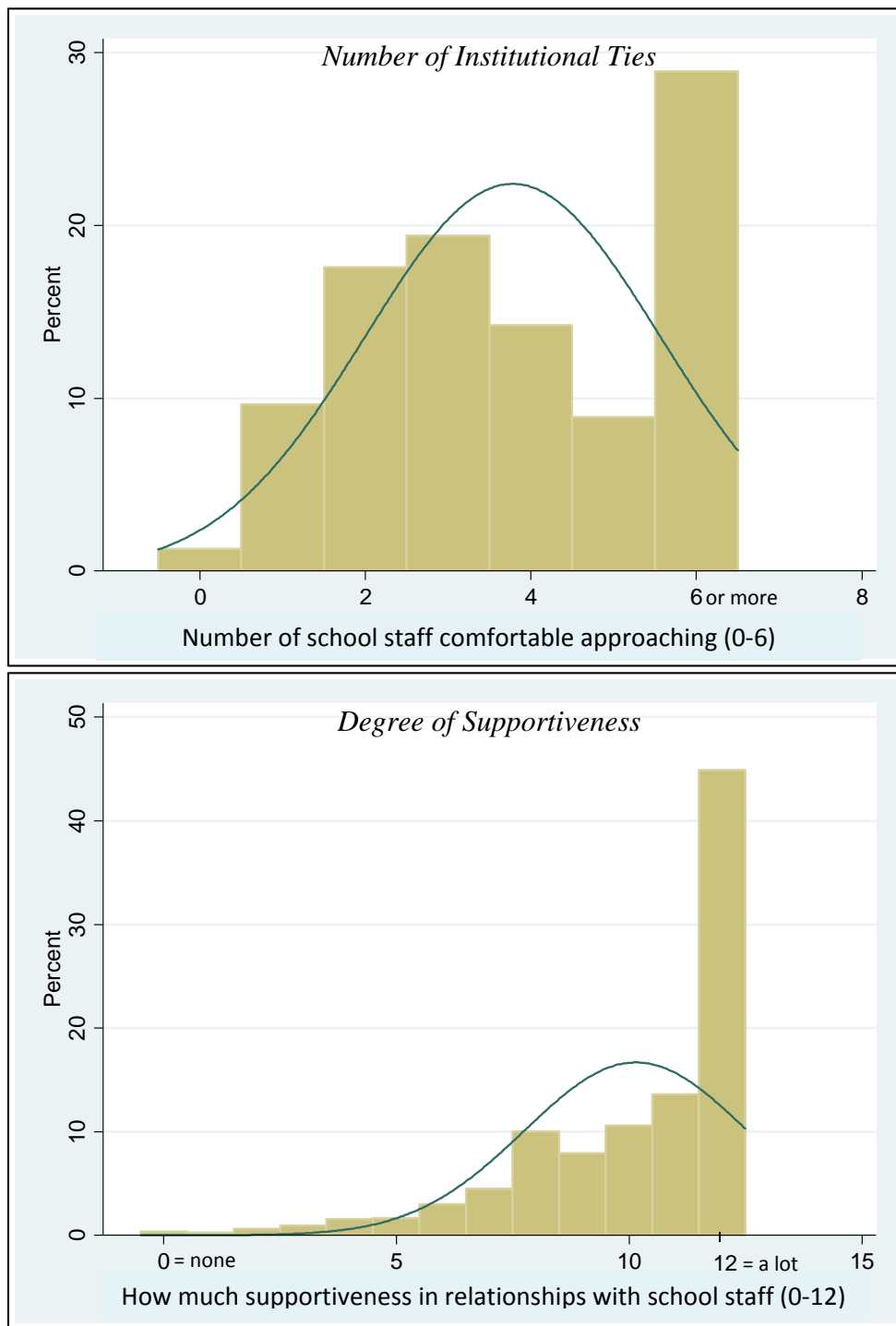
Figure 3.1. Histograms of Dependent Variables (with Normal Curve). *Note.* Histograms shown are based on the chapter 3 analytic sample of White and Latino families in control schools, with a valid baseline parent survey (*n* = 1,294, *N* = 26).

Number of Institutional Ties

Degree of Supportiveness

White — English-dominant Latino — Spanish-dominant Latino

*0 = "none" on all 4 items; 12 = "a lot" on all 4 items

Figure 3.2. Observed Mean Parent Reports of Parent-Staff Relationships, by Family Ethnic and Linguistic Background. *Note.* Group means shown are based on the chapter 3 analytic sample of White and Latino families in control schools, with a valid baseline parent survey ($n = 1,294$, $N = 26$). The ranges of the Y-axes are set to approximately one standard deviation on each outcome measure ($SD = 1.78$ for the *institutional ties* variable; $SD = 2.46$ for the *supportiveness* variable).

Appendix A

Description of Survey Language Choice and Ethnic/Linguistic Background Indicators

What does Survey Language Choice Indicate?

Table A1 reports mean differences by survey language choice in levels of Spanish and English language use, the percentage of families with a parent whose native language is Spanish, and the percentage with a parent who reported being born outside the U.S. There is evidence that the survey language (Spanish or English) chosen by a parent is an indicator of both language dominance and nativity status. Reported use of Spanish language in reading, writing, and speaking is higher among those who chose a Spanish survey than those who chose an English survey. The opposite is true of English language use. The language use measures are scaled variables, each based on the mean of three survey items asking parents how much they use the target language (Spanish or English) for reading, writing, and speaking. There were five response categories per survey item, ranging from 0 ("never") to 4 ("always"). Similarly, while over one-fifth of parents who chose an English survey report being native Spanish speakers, this is true of more than 98% of those who chose a Spanish survey. Finally, while more than 10% of families that selected an English survey include a parent who reported being born outside the United States, more than 90% of families that selected a Spanish survey included a self-identified first-generation immigrant parent.

What does Family Ethnic/Linguistic Background Indicate?

Table A2 reports levels of language use and representation of native Spanish-speakers and first-generation immigrant parents for the three family ethnic/linguistic background groups of focus in this paper: non-Latino White families, English-dominant Latino families, and Spanish-dominant Latino families. Similar to the patterns for survey language choice, it appears that family ethnic and linguistic background is an indicator of both language dominance and

nativity status. Average levels of Spanish language use are lowest among non-Latino White families (midway between "never" and "rarely"), moderate among English-dominant Latino families (in between "rarely" and "sometimes"), and highest among Spanish-dominant Latino families (between "often" and "always"). Conversely, average levels of English language use are highest among non-Latino White families (on average reporting that they "always" use English for speaking, reading, and writing), high among English-dominant Latino families (more than "sometimes" but less than "always"), and lowest among Spanish-dominant Latino families (just shy of "sometimes"). Similarly, while only about 2% of non-Latino White families included a parent who reported being a native Spanish-speaker, this was true of more than one-fourth of English-dominant Latino families (about 29%) and nearly all Spanish-dominant Latino families (about 98%). Finally, while more than 92% of parents from Spanish-dominant Latino families and about 15% of those from English-dominant Latino families reported being born outside the U.S., this was true of only about 5% of parents from non-Latino White families.

Family and School Characteristics by Family Ethnic/Linguistic Background Group

Table A3 reports differences in family and school characteristics by family ethnic and linguistic background. All of the characteristics described above (i.e., levels of Spanish and English language use and prevalence of native-Spanish-speaking or foreign-born parent) differed significantly across groups ($p \leq 0.003$). In addition, among parents who were foreign born, those from Spanish-dominant families reported emigrating to the U.S. more recently than those from English-dominant Latino or White families ($p < 0.001$). First-generation immigrant parents from English-dominant Latino families reported having been in the U.S. for 16-20 years on average, whereas those from Spanish-dominant Latino families on average reported residing in the U.S. for less than 10 years. About 10% of families in which the child was identified as having (non-

Latino) White race/ethnicity included a parent who self-identified as Hispanic or Latino. In comparison, most parents from English-dominant Latino families self-identified as Hispanic or Latino (about 83%), and this was overwhelmingly true of parents from Spanish-dominant Latino families (about 97%).

As compared to non-Latino White families, Latino families and particularly Spanish-dominant Latino children were more likely to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, on average came from households with more children, and tended to live in more socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods and attend more disadvantaged and lower performing schools ($p <$ 0.001). All children in the sample attended majority-minority and high-poverty schools; however, there were differences across ethnic/linguistic groups in the degree to which this was true. While children from non-Latino White families on average attended schools that were about 54% Hispanic and where about 60% of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, children from English-dominant and Spanish-dominant Latino families attended schools that were around 80% Hispanic and in which 77-85% of the student body qualified for free/reduced-price lunch. Moreover, while children from non-Latino White and English-dominant Latino families on average attended schools where about 80% of students were proficient in reading, the average school attended by children from Spanish-dominant Latino families had reading proficiency rates of only about 66%.

Table A1

Language Use and Nativity (Mean or Percent) by Survey Language

	English survey	Spanish survey
Language Use		
Spanish lang. use (0-4)	1.2	3.5
English lang. use (0-4)	3.8	1.7
Parent is native Spanish speaker	22.3%	98.2%
Nativity		
Parent born outside the U.S.	12.7%	92.8%

Note. Estimates are group means or percentages for valid observations (from the year 1 posttest parent survey) on White or Latino families with valid parent pretest surveys in the full CFS sample, in both treatment and control schools (*n* = 1,693-1,773, *N* = 52).

Table A2

Language Use and Nativity by Ethnic and Linguistic Background

| | Non-Latino White | Latino | |
	(English-dominant)	English-dominant	Spanish-dominant
Language Use			
Spanish lang. use (0-4)	0.4	1.5	3.5
English lang. use (0-4)	4.0	3.8	1.7
Parent is native Spanish speaker	2.4%	28.7%	98.2%
Nativity			
Parent born outside the U.S.	5.4%	15.1%	92.8%

Note. Estimates are group means or percentages for valid observations (from the year 1 posttest parent survey) on White or Latino families with valid parent pretest surveys in the full CFS sample, in both treatment and control schools (*n* = 1,693-1,773, *N* = 52).

Table A3

Mean Family and School Characteristics by Ethnic and Linguistic Background

	Non-Latino White	English-Latino	Spanish-Latino	ANOVA test p-value
Spanish language use (0-4)	0.350	1.481	3.508	<0.001
English language use (0-4)	3.959	3.782	1.680	<0.001
Parent's native language is Spanish	0.024	0.287	0.982	<0.001
Parent is foreign born	0.054	0.150	0.928	0.003
Years in the US (1-5)	3.529	4.159	2.937	<0.001
Parent identifies as Hispanic/Latino	0.101	0.833	0.969	0.005
Free/reduced-price lunch eligible	0.475	0.815	0.947	<0.001
Number of children in household (0-14)	2.484	2.845	3.029	<0.001
Neighborhood poverty rate	0.087	0.173	0.198	<0.001
School % Hispanic	0.539	0.780	0.813	<0.001
School % free/reduced lunch eligible	0.584	0.771	0.854	<0.001
School reading proficiency rate	0. 802	0 .816	0. 657	<0.001

Note. Estimates are group means or percentages for valid observations on White or Latino families with valid parent pretest surveys in the full CFS sample, in both treatment and control schools (n = 674-2,661, N = 52).

Appendix B

Additional Statistical Model Results

Omitted Results for Hierarchical Linear Models Predicting Parent-Staff Relationship Quantity and Quality, Controlling for Student- and School-Level Characteristics (Model 3)

	Y = Number of Institutional Ties			Y = Degree of Supportiveness		
	Coeff.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	SE	p-val.
Level 2 (student level) controls						
Female, $\gamma 030$	-0.056	0.067	0.400	-0.104	0.096	0.280
Free/reduced lunch, $\gamma 040$	-0.045	0.097	0.640	-0.174	0.189	0.357
ELL, $\gamma 050$	-0.054	0.103	0.599	0.182	0.085	0.034
SPED, $\gamma 060$	0.264	0.124	0.033	0.060	0.193	0.755
Level 3 (school level) controls						
Phoenix, $\gamma 001$	-0.526	0.201	0.016	-0.748	0.346	0.042
1st grade size, $\gamma 002$	-0.003	0.006	0.590	0.001	0.009	0.877
Pupil/teacher ratio, $\gamma 003$	0.061	0.039	0.136	-0.037	0.080	0.645
% FTE, $\gamma 004$	0.001	0.013	0.916	0.010	0.018	0.603
	Variance Component	p-val.		Variance Component	p-val.	
Level 1 (time-point level) variances						
For intercept, e	1.514	---		2.405	---	
Level 2 (student level) variances						
For intercept, $r0$	1.787	<0.001		1.438	0.053	
For Growth-Period-I slope, $r1$	0.010	0.013		0.008	0.094	
For Growth-Period-II slope, $r2$	0.001	0.368		0.005	<0.001	
Level 3 (school level) variances						
For intercept, $u00$	0.055	<0.001		0.224	<0.001	

Note. Coeff. = Coefficient, SE = Robust Standard Error, p-val. = *p*-value. All models specify a random intercept at the school level, and random intercept, Growth-Period-I slope, and Growth-Period-II slope at the student level. Estimates are based on the chapter 3 analytic sample of White and Latino families, in control schools, and with a valid baseline parent survey: 26 level-3 units (schools), 1,294 level-2 units (students), and 3,408 (institutional ties) or 3,420 (supportiveness) level 1 units (time-points).
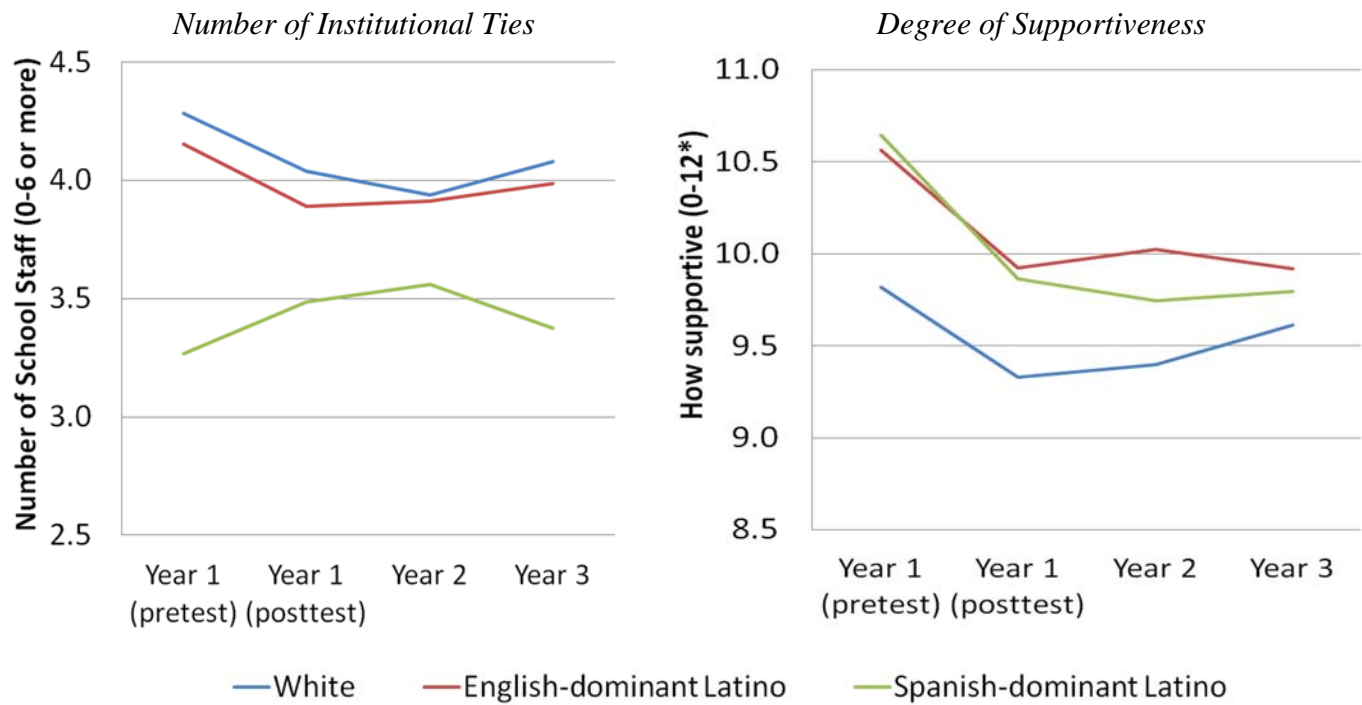
Appendix C

Analysis of Differential Attrition on Parent Surveys

In the full CFS sample of White and Latino families in both treatment and control schools ($n = 2,663$, $N = 52$), overall rates of attrition for parent surveys were 32.3% on the year 1 posttest survey ($n = 859$), 58.3% on the year 2 survey ($n = 1,553$), and 53.7% on the year 3 survey ($n = 1,430$). Below, I summarize patterns of differential attrition across seven construct groups: family ethnic and linguistic background, study randomization blocks, neighborhood characteristics, student demographic traits, family social resources, student academic traits, and student socio-emotional problems. Also see Table C1, for the distribution of families across patterns of attrition. I assessed two aspects of attrition. First, I examined *overall rates of attrition*, defined as missing at least one parent survey across the four waves. Second, I examined *patterns of attrition*, specifically differentiating two patterns of attrition across survey waves for families missing at least one parent survey: (a) those who dropped out of the sample at one survey wave but then re-entered the sample at a later wave, versus (b) families who stayed out of the sample after missing a survey at a prior wave.

Family Ethnic and Linguistic Background

Among those missing a parent survey, there were no ethnic/linguistic differences by pattern of attrition (i.e., dropping out then back into the sample versus dropping out and staying out of the sample), but overall rates of attrition did differ across ethnic groups. Overall rates of attrition on parent surveys were higher among English-dominant and Spanish-dominant Latinos than among non-Latino Whites ($p < 0.01$). Table C2 shows that this pattern is consistent across posttest survey waves and Spanish-dominant Latino response rates were more similar to those of

Whites than English-dominant Latinos, though the ethnic/linguistic differences in response rates were significant only for the year 1 and year 3 posttest surveys ($p < 0.001$).

Study Randomization Blocks

Rates of attrition on parent surveys were higher in Phoenix ($p < 0.001$), but patterns of attrition (i.e., dropping out and staying out of the sample versus dropping out then back in) did not differ across cities. However, among respondents missing parent surveys, dropping out then back into the sample (versus dropping out and staying out) was more likely in the high-poverty San Antonio block than all other study blocks, and in Cohort 2 than in Cohort 1 ($p < 0.01$).

School Characteristics

Attrition rates on parent surveys were higher in more disadvantaged schools: those that were Title I in the first year of the study, had higher student-to-teacher ratios, had fewer full-time educators, lower math or reading achievement, or lower proportions of White students, higher proportions of Black students, or higher proportions of students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch ($p < 0.05$). However, attrition on parent surveys was also more likely for students attending schools where higher proportions of the first grade consented to the study ($p < 0.01$).

Neighborhood Characteristics

Students living in more economically advantaged neighborhoods (residential areas with higher mean household income) had lower rates of attrition on the parent posttest survey and, if missing at least one survey, were more likely to drop back into the sample rather than drop out and stay out of the sample ($p < 0.05$).

Student Demographic Traits

Rates of attrition on parent surveys were higher for students who moved schools or school districts between the first and third year of the study, for low-income students (i.e., those

who qualify for free/reduced-price lunch), and for students who did not attend kindergarten at the school where they were enrolled in first grade during the first year of the study ($p < 0.001$).

Family Social Resources

Rates of attrition on parent surveys were lower for students with stronger family social resources at the start of the study, when the year 1 pretest survey was administered early in the school year, when the target children were enrolled in first grade. Specifically, in comparison to their counterparts, parent survey attrition rates were lower for:

a. Students whose parents reported higher quality of ties with other parents ($p < 0.05$) or knowing more parents of their children's friends at school ($p < 0.0001$) at baseline;

b. Students with lower scores on the parent depression measures (year 1 posttest, $p < 0.05$);

c. Students whose parents reported higher average levels of nurturing relationships with their children at baseline ($p < 0.01$), higher baseline levels of overall relational bond with their children ($p < 0.05$), and higher levels of participation in their children's schools at baseline ($p < 0.0001$)—which also positively predicted dropping out then back into the sample, among families missing at least one parent survey ($p < 0.05$);

d. Students whose teachers reported higher average levels of parent engagement in schooling (year 1 posttest, $p < 0.0001$) but also those whose parents reported *lower* average levels of teacher engagement of parents (year 1 posttest, $p < 0.05$).

Student Academic Traits

Rates of attrition on parent surveys, and the likelihood of staying out of the sample after missing a parent survey, were higher on average for students with more absences from school during first grade ($p < 0.0001$). Rates of attrition on the year 3 parent survey were also higher among students who were retained in first grade ($p < 0.05$).

Student Socio-emotional Problems

Rates of attrition on parent surveys were higher on average for students with more socio-emotional problems at the year 1 posttest. This was true of those with higher teacher reports of problems with conduct, social skills, or hyperactivity and of those with higher parent reports of problems with peers, conduct, hyperactivity, or emotions ($p < 0.05$).

Table C1

Families Missing Surveys, by Number Surveys Missing and Pattern of Attrition

Rates of attrition by number of parent surveys missing (up to four)			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
0	852	27.49	27.49
1	656	21.17	48.66
2	810	26.14	74.80
3	765	24.69	99.48
4	16	0.52	100.00

Rates of attrition by number of parent surveys missing and pattern of attrition, among families missing at least one survey					
	1	2	3	4	Total
Case drops out and stays out	245	597	765	16	1,623
Case drops out then back in	411	213	0	0	624
Total	656	810	765	16	2,247

Prevalence of attrition patterns, among families missing at least one survey	
	Point Estimate (*SD*)
Mean number of parent surveys missing (up to four)	1.50 (*1.15*)
Proportion missing one or more parent survey	72.51%
Proportion missing 1 parent survey	21.17%
Proportion missing 2 parent surveys	26.14%
Proportion missing 3 parent surveys	24.69%
Proportion that drop out then back in	20.14%
Proportion that drop out and stay out	52.37%

Note. Reported attrition rates are calculated for all families that submitted at least some paperwork to the CFS study, including those in treatment and control schools, with non-White or non-Latino racial/ethnic backgrounds, those with zero valid survey observations or incomplete consent forms (*n* = 3,099, *N* = 52).

Table C2

Response and Attrition Rates by Ethnic/Linguistic Background, for Latinos/Whites

Survey	Non-Latino White (n = 408)			English-dominant Latino (n = 1,436)			Spanish-dominant Latino (n = 819)			Group diff test
	Pr(obs)	Pr(miss)	n miss	Pr(obs)	Pr(miss)	n miss	Pr(obs)	Pr(miss)	n miss	p-val.
Parent										
y1 (post)	0.7377	0.2623	107	0.6302	0.3698	531	0.7302	0.2698	221	<0.001
y2	0.4510	0.5490	224	0.4081	0.5919	850	0.4151	0.5849	479	0.299
y3	0.5392	0.4608	188	0.4206	0.5794	832	0.4994	0.5006	410	<0.001

Note. Pr(obs) = proportion families with observed survey; Pr(miss) = proportion families with missing survey; N miss = number of families with missing survey; p-val. = *p*-value for one-way ANOVA test of mean differences across family ethnic and linguistic background groups. Reported response rates and attrition rates are based on White or Latino families in the CFS sample, with a valid parent pretest survey, in both treatment and control schools (*n* = 2,663, *N* = 52).

Appendix D

Sensitivity Analyses

As shown in Figure 1, neither outcome measure is even close to normally distributed. The highest response categories are disproportionately represented on both the *number of institutional ties* and *degree of supportiveness* variables, with a consistent left-skewed pattern across response categories on the supportiveness measure. I conducted supplementary analyses to explore the sensitivity of the model results to non-linearities in the outcome measures. Specifically, I estimated ordered logit models predicting 3-category versions of each outcome measure. For both measures, the ordinal logit model results are similar to those of the linear model, in terms of effect direction and significance with one exception. The nonlinear model suggests that the *degree of supportiveness* at the start of first grade may not differ between non-Latino White and Spanish-dominant Latino families ($p = 0.057$), as was indicated in the linear model ($p = 0.025$). Given the overall pattern of similarity across model specifications, I prefer the linear model as it is estimated more efficiently and is more straightforward to interpret.

Method

I estimated hierarchical generalized linear models via a logit link function, which treat the outcome measures as ordered categorical rather than continuous (linear model). In their original scales, the outcome measures include 7 or 13 response options (ranging 0-6 for *institutional ties*, 0-12 for *degree of supportiveness*). The ordered logit models for the full range of categories on the outcome measures were not estimable in HLM 7.0; therefore, I re-coded each outcome measure into an ordered-categorical variable with three approximately balanced response categories. For *institutional ties*, the new response categories differentiated families with institutional ties to "0-2 staff," "3-5 staff," and "6 or more staff." For *degree of supportiveness*,

the new response categories differentiated families who reported scores of "0-4," "5-8," and "9-12" on the scale.

As with the final linear models presented in the paper (i.e., model 3; see Equation 1 in the main body), the nonlinear models were three-level piecewise growth models, where time-points (level 1) were nested within families (level 2) and schools (level 3). The ordered logit models similarly estimated change in the outcomes over two growth periods (first-grade year, and the second/third-grade years) and controlled for student and school characteristics. Equation D1 reports the model estimated for each 3-category outcome, Y, at time, i, for student, j, in school, k.

Level 1: Time-points **Equation D1**
$$\Pr(Yijk \leq 1) = \Pr(Yijk = 1)$$
$$\Pr(Yijk \leq 2) = \Pr(Yijk = 1) + \Pr(Yijk = 2)$$
$$\Pr(Yijk \leq 3) = \Pr(Yijk = 1) + \Pr(Yijk = 2) + \Pr(Yijk = 3) = 1$$

$$\ln\left(\frac{\Pr(Yijk \leq 1)}{1 - \Pr(Yijk \leq 1)}\right) = \pi_{0jk} + \pi_{1jk}*(Growth\ Period\ I)_{ijk} + \pi_{2jk}*(Growth\ Period\ II)_{ijk}$$
$$\ln\left(\frac{\Pr(Yijk \leq 2)}{1 - \Pr(Yijk \leq 2)}\right) = \pi_{0jk} + \pi_{1jk}*(Growth\ Period\ I)_{ijk} + \pi_{2jk}*(Growth\ Period\ II)_{ijk} + \delta_2$$

Level 2: Students
$$\pi_{0jk} = \beta_{00k} + \beta_{01k}*(Eng\text{-}Latino)_{jk} + \beta_{02k}*(Span\text{-}Latino)_{jk} + \beta_{0nk}*(X)_{jk} + r_{0jk}$$
$$\pi_{1jk} = \beta_{10k} + \beta_{11k}*(Eng\text{-}Latino)_{jk} + \beta_{12k}*(Span\text{-}Latino)_{jk} + r_{1jk}$$
$$\pi_{2jk} = \beta_{20k} + r_{2jk}$$

Level 3: Schools
$$\beta_{00k} = \gamma_{000} + \gamma_{00n}*(Z)_k + u_{00k}$$
$$\beta_{01k} = \gamma_{010}$$
.
.
.
$$\beta_{20k} = \gamma_{200}$$

As in the final linear models presented in the main paper, these models controlled for student-level covariates (X) and school-level covariates (Z). The vector of student-level control variables, X, includes indicators for student gender (*female*), family poverty (*free/reduced lunch*), English language learner status (*ELL*), and special education status (*SPED*). The vector of school-level control variables, Z, includes variables measuring city (*Phoenix*), first grade enrollment (*1st*

grade size), the proportion of educators employed full time (*FTE*), and the pupil-to-teacher ratio (*pupil/teacher ratio*). Again, all control variables were grand-mean centered.

There are a two key differences between this model and the linear model. First, the ordered logit model uses a logit link function. It specifies linear relationships between the covariates and the natural log of the odds (i.e., the logit) of the outcome variable, rather than the outcome variable in its original scale. Thus, coefficients are in the logit scale. Second, the model includes a 'threshold' parameter, δ_2. This allows the grand mean logit of the outcome at time zero to differ for the second category or lower ($\pi_{0jk} + \delta_2$) as compared to the first category (π_{0jk}).

Results

The results for the original linear and ordered logit models are presented in Table D1, predicting *number of institutional ties* (top panel) and *degree of supportiveness* (bottom panel). For both outcome measures, the ordinal logit model results reflect similar patterns of effects as those for the linear models. In both cases, the threshold effect is non-zero ($p < 0.001$), but the *p*-value estimates should be considered only approximate. As in the linear model results, the ordered logit model estimates of γ_{020} indicate that, as compared to non-Latino White families at the start of first grade, Spanish-dominant Latino families on average have lower odds of having greater institutional ties ($p < 0.001$) but higher odds of reporting higher levels of supportiveness in their relationships with school staff, though the latter difference is not significant at conventional levels ($p = 0.057$). The estimates of γ_{010} provide no evidence of significant differences at the start of first grade between English-dominant Latino and non-Latino White families in the number of institutional ties ($p = 0.148$) nor the degree of supportiveness in their relationships with school staff ($p = 0.097$).

In the ordered logit models predicting both outcomes, there is no evidence of statistically significant change in the odds over the second growth period ($p > 0.500$). The ordered logit model results do indicate that the odds of having more institutional ties to the school declines by about 10% per month over the first-grade year for non-Latino White families ($\hat{\gamma}_{100} = -0.101$, *O.R.* $= 0.904$, $p < 0.001$), and this change in odds differs Spanish-dominant Latino families ($p = 0.003$), remaining approximately stable over this time-period. The γ_{100} coefficient estimates similarly suggest that the odds of perceiving greater supportiveness in relationships with school staff may decline over the first-grade year, but this estimate is not significant at conventional levels ($p = 0.057$). There are no differences by family ethnic and linguistic background in the change in odds of perceiving greater supportiveness with staff over the first-grade year ($p > 0.150$).

Table D1

Selected Model Results for Linear versus Ordered Logit Model Specifications

	Linear Model				Ordered Logit Model			
Y = Number of Institutional Ties	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	O.R.	SE	p-val.
Intercept, γ000	4.691	2.630	0.261	<0.001	0.140	1.150	0.291	0.636
Growth Period I (1st gr.), γ100	-0.067	-0.038	0.024	0.006	-0.101	0.904	0.029	<0.001
Growth Period II (2nd-3rd gr.), γ200	0.007	0.004	0.005	0.176	0.003	1.003	0.006	0.583
Eng-Latino, γ010	-0.342	-0.192	0.308	0.267	-0.516	0.597	0.356	0.148
Span-Latino, γ020	-1.286	-0.721	0.304	<0.001	-1.883	0.152	0.388	<0.001
Growth Period I*Eng-Latino, γ110	0.017	0.009	0.026	0.514	0.023	1.028	0.032	0.465
Growth Period I*Span-Latino, γ120	0.073	0.041	0.027	0.006	0.111	1.124	0.037	0.003
Threshold 2 (for ordered logit model)					2.501	12.196	0.071	<0.001[a]
	Linear Model				Ordered Logit Model			
Y = Degree of Supportiveness	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	O.R.	SE	p-val.
Intercept, γ000	10.408	4.230	0.294	<0.001	1.577	4.842	0.319	<0.001
Growth Period I (1st gr.), γ100	-0.078	-0.032	0.030	0.010	-0.064	0.938	0.034	0.057
Growth Period II (2nd-3rd gr.), γ200	0.005	0.002	0.007	0.506	0.003	1.003	0.006	0.628
Eng-Latino, γ010	0.571	0.232	0.348	0.101	0.594	1.812	0.358	0.097
Span-Latino, γ020	0.965	0.392	0.429	0.025	1.068	2.909	0.559	0.057
Growth Period I*Eng-Latino, γ110	-0.029	-0.012	0.031	0.355	-0.032	0.969	0.034	0.349
Growth Period I*Span-Latino, γ120	-0.048	-0.020	0.034	0.161	-0.065	0.937	0.046	0.156
Threshold 2 (for ordered logit model)					2.481	11.947	0.092	<0.001[a]

a. Estimates should be regarded as a rough approximation.
Note. Coeff. = Coefficient, E.S. = Effect Size (Coeff./Standard Deviation$_Y$), SE = Robust Standard Error, p-val. = *p*-value, O.R. = odds ratio. Results for control variables are not shown here, but all models controlled for student and school traits (child gender, poverty, ELL, and SPED status; school city, size, student/teacher ratio, and full-time educators). Models also specify a random intercept at the school level, and random intercept, Growth-Period-I slope, and Growth-Period-II slope at the student level. Estimates are based on the chapter 3 analytic sample of White and Latino families, in control schools, and with a valid baseline parent survey: 26 level-3 units (schools), 1,294 level-2 units (students), and 3,408 (institutional ties) or 3,420 (supportiveness) level 1 units (time-points).

Chapter 4. Nice to Meet You?: How Latino Parents Define and Evaluate School Staff Supportiveness in Low-Income Latino Communities

Research documents a lack of strong family-school connections in Latino communities, and this is exacerbated for foreign-born and more socioeconomically disadvantaged families (Marschall, 2006). As compared to their non-Latino White, middle-class, and native counterparts, families of Latino, working-class and poor, or immigrant backgrounds have fewer and weaker resourceful social ties to the school community, although they often have stronger familial ties (Gamoran, Turley, Turner, & Fish, 2012). Family-school connections are potentially powerful points of access to resources for parents and children (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). This may be particularly true for low-status families, who tend to have a greater need for resources that school-based social contacts can provide, such as institutional knowledge and social support. If socially marginalized families are systematically disadvantaged in establishing such resourceful ties, then the dearth of family-school connections may exacerbate social stratification (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). To devise appropriate and long-lasting interventions to address this disadvantage, we first need to understand the processes and structural conditions that produce it.

Ethnographic studies such as Angela Valenzuela's *Subtractive Schooling* (1999) and Ricardo Stanton-Salazar's *Manufacturing Hope and Despair* (2001) illustrate the processes by which family-school relationships break down for Latino students during high school. A crucial next step is to understand the development of family-school connections when children are younger, and what hinders the development of trust, shared expectations, and respect in school communities with high proportions of low-income and Latino families. In this chapter, I explore the development of *supportive relationships*—those characterized by trust, respect, and shared expectations—between parents and school staff.

I use a qualitative approach, drawing on data collected via in-depth interviews with parents of Latino children attending schools serving high proportions of low-income, minority, and immigrant families. Through inductive analysis of parent reports on how they navigate relationships with school personnel, I assess: (a) how Latino parents understand supportiveness in parent-staff relationships, (b) the processes by which supportiveness develops (or fails to develop) in their relationships with staff, and (c) the individual characteristics and structural factors that condition those processes. The findings suggest that trust is the most salient characteristic of supportive relationships, where respect and shared expectations, along with staff competence, investment in children and the job, and care for parents, constitute five criteria upon which parents judge staff trustworthiness. I also find evidence that the interactional processes by which parents evaluate staff trustworthiness are structured by parents' prior experiences and beliefs, organizational characteristics of the school, and parent-staff social status relations; in the context of these communities, these characteristics appear to more often hinder rather than aid the development of supportive relationships between parents and school personnel.

Supportive Relationships in School Communities

In this chapter, I focus on the development of supportive relationships between parents and school staff in predominantly low-income, Latino immigrant communities. By "supportive," I mean relationships that provide social support, or "information from others that one is loved and cared for, esteemed and valued, and part of a network of communication and mutual obligations" (Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008, p. 518). Supportive relationships are characterized by expressive or instrumental resources such as attentiveness, caring, trust, solidarity, and reciprocal exchange (Uehara, 1990; Woolley & Bowen, 2007). Such relationships provide access to concrete resources, such as information or assistance, and emotional resources, such as

affection or sympathy, which serve as protective factors in stressful events (Cobb, 1976; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Wentzel, 1999). Social bonding among students, school personnel, and parents is vital to the functioning of schools because "an interrelated set of mutual dependencies among all key actors" is embedded in its routine tasks, and this "create[s] feelings of vulnerability for the individuals involved" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 16).

I focus on three characteristics of supportive relationships: trust, respect, and shared expectations. I define *trust* as the feeling of being able to rely on, believe, be supported by, or put confidence in another party (e.g., a person, group, or organization), as opposed to feeling suspicion toward, questioning, or doubting the other (i.e., distrust). This definition highlights how "trust comes into play when there is risk" (Cook, 2005, p. 9). Trust reduces people's feelings of vulnerability and the perceived risk that others will hinder, harm, or otherwise cause detriment to them in future action (Kramer, 1999). As stated in the definition, the target of one's trust (i.e., the *trustee*) may take various forms, including a specific person (e.g., a colleague or romantic partner), a group of people (e.g., a social clique, family, or ethnic group), an organization (e.g., a particular company or political party), or even an institution (e.g., religion or science). Here, I focus on trust between individuals and groups, specifically between parent(s) and school personnel, collectively or individually.

Given my focus, I am interested in trust as a property of a social relationship between two people (e.g., a parent and a teacher) or a network of social relationships among more than two people (e.g., relationships among parents and various school personnel). This type of trust is known as *relational trust* because it is "grounded in ongoing relationships," meaning that the motivation to "behave in a trustworthy manner" comes from our desire to preserve a social relationship (Cook, 2005, p. 6). In contrast, other conceptions of trust focus on trust as a property

of individuals. An example is 'dispositional' or 'generalized' trust, which is "a 'default' belief in the benign nature of humans in general or as some kind of optimism about the trustworthiness of others, implying that one is likely to risk cooperation with another unless that person is proved unreliable" (Cook, 2005, p. 9; Kramer, 1999).

I define *respect* as acknowledging, honoring, or deferring to another's power or authority, owing to a belief that the other has something worthwhile to offer, as opposed to ignoring, discounting, or subjugating another as inferior (i.e., disrespect). There are two important dimensions of respect. First, respect entails viewing the other party as having value or worth. Second, respect involves bestowing the other party with power in some way, for example through deference toward or consideration of their preferences or opinions. Power, or the ability to control or influence another's actions regardless of their will (Weber, 2004), is inherently relational, and thus so is respect. In the context of school communities, respect involves the "recognition of the important role each person plays in a child's education and the mutual dependencies that exist among various parties involved in this activity" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 23).

I define *shared expectations* as two parties having the same, similar, or logically consistent beliefs about what appropriate behavior, attitudes, goals, beliefs, values, opinions, or norms entail. Shared expectations is an inherently relational concept, because it implies that two or more parties are engaged in the social interaction of sharing something (in this case, expectations). The focus and content of expectations may vary widely across individuals and contexts. For example, one person may expect students to be docile and deferential while another may prefer that students be energetic and inquisitive. Similarly, different expectations may become more or less salient in different contexts depending on their relevance. For example,

expectations about students' behavior, school staff member's operations, and appropriate

learning goals are likely to be most salient in educational contexts, while expectations about

privacy or appropriate doctor and patient roles may be more salient in health care contexts.

Shared expectations—particularly in the form of communal norms about appropriate behavior—

promote trust by mitigating risk and vulnerability (Cook, 2005). The existence of agreed upon

rules about appropriate behavior serves as a guarantee on future behavior, so that "[w]hen

reciprocal confidence in members' socialization into and continued adherence to a normative

system is high, mutual trust can acquire a taken-for-granted quality" (Kramer, 1999, p. 580).

Building Supportive Relationships in School Communities

Though few studies explicitly examine how supportive relationships develop (or fail to

develop) between families and schools, theoretical and empirical research on trust, social

exchange, and social norms in a variety of contexts suggest that two key elements may shape the

emergence of trust, respect, and mutual expectations in school communities. According to recent

theories of social organization, the level of resourceful social ties in a community is shaped both

by structural features of the community—for example, the distance between homes in a

neighborhood, or the number of required group meetings at a company—and social processes—

such as direct communication or face-to-face interactions among individuals (Mancini et al.,

2005; Small, 2002, 2009). Similarly, the development of effective community norms is thought

to be a "prototypical micro-to-macro transition," a process occurring "under certain conditions"

and through "purposive actions at the micro level" (Coleman, 1990, p. 244).

A rich literature on the establishment and maintenance of relational trust contributes

further insights into the development of supportive social ties. People trust others when they

perceive them to be trustworthy (i.e., deserving of their trust) (Cook, 2005) because they meet

certain criteria, for example being reliable, dependable, believable, credible, honorable, or responsible. People discern the trustworthiness of others by collecting relevant information and evaluating whether they meet the criteria for trustworthiness (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). These "are largely history-dependent processes," so that "trust between two or more interdependent actors thickens or thins as a function of their cumulative interaction" (Kramer, 1999, p. 575). The ongoing evaluation of others' trustworthiness involves a complex array of interrelated cognitive processes, conditioned not only by 'macro-level' structural factors but also by individual orientations (Kramer, 1999).

Hence, the key contribution of this literature is that it proposes a third element, individual orientations, which shapes the development of relational trust (i.e., mutual judgments of trustworthiness between two or more people) in addition to social processes and structural features of communities. Individual orientations structure the process of discerning trustworthiness because:

> One cannot simply start trusting people as of tomorrow… When I meet someone new with whom I wish or have to deal, I may start with considerable skepticism. But my skepticism will not primarily be directed at the new person in particular. I may not yet know enough about her to judge her trustworthiness… I make my skeptical judgment largely by generalization from past encounters with other people… My prior experiences with trust may have been so charmed that I optimistically trust this new person. Or they may have been so disastrous that I pessimistically distrust her… Experience molds the psychology of trust… My [psychological] capacity is constrained by the weight of past experience with all of the Bayesian reassessment and updating that this experience has stimulated. (Hardin, 1992, p. 157)

People may base their *a priori* optimism or pessimism about another's trustworthiness on prior experiences specific to that individual (e.g., prior interactions with the person), prior beliefs or experiences with others who inhabit the same categories or roles as this person (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, or profession), or generalized beliefs about people or the social world (e.g., characteristics of 'humankind') (Kramer, 1999).

An important structural feature highlighted in the trust literature is the "specific context or domain over which trust is conferred," in that trustworthiness is defined and identified in different ways across different contexts (Kramer, 1999, p. 574). For example, even for the same individual, the basis for and method of determining whether a politician or salesperson is trustworthy may be different than those for determining the trustworthiness of a romantic partner or friend. In the context of schools, beliefs about whether others will meet their *role obligations* are particularly important for establishing trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Role obligations are the behaviors, characteristics, or outcomes associated with a particular role (e.g., teacher, principal, counselor, or parent) and upon which those filling the role can be held accountable, or by which others judge the adequacy of their role performance.

Taken together, these literatures suggest that the development of trust, respect, and shared expectations in school communities includes three elements: interactional processes among individuals, individual characteristics, and structural characteristics. Whereas interactional processes serve as the source of information about other parties, individual and structural characteristics condition those processes, by shaping how people operate within social interactions and interpret the information they gather in interactions. These elements roughly correspond to three levels at which relationships are built in schools: the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational levels (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

At the intrapersonal level (i.e., within individuals), people engage in the "complex cognitive activity of discerning intentions of others," on the basis of both prior beliefs and observed behavior (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 22). Individual characteristics of the evaluator and the evaluee affect this process. The motives and other traits of evaluees (e.g., material self-interests or ethical priorities) will influence their behaviors which become the basis for

evaluating their intentions, and individual traits of the evaluator (e.g., prior experiences, sense of self-worth, or sensitivity to others) shape their prior beliefs and interpretations of others' intentions. For example, role-based trust, in which people "adopt a sort of presumptive trust based upon knowledge of role relations, even in the absence of personalized knowledge or history of prior interaction" (Kramer, 1999, p. 578), may shape processes of discerning trust in the context of schools. If parents believe that those who choose, and are hired, to serve on the school staff tend to be capable (e.g., well-educated and professionally trained) and well intentioned (e.g., they want to help children learn), they may assume school personnel are trustworthy even before directly interacting with them.

A grounded-theoretical analysis of case-study data on public schools revealed that parents and school personnel feel respected when they perceive "a genuine sense of listening to what each person has to say" and efforts to "in some fashion take others' perspectives into account in future action" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 23). Moreover, perceived respect facilitates feeling positively regarded by others, and that feeling of being personally valued in turn fosters feelings of solidarity and trust among actors. In particular, parents interpret instances of staff 'going the extra mile' as a sign of genuine caring, which increases their confidence that staff are trustworthy (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). By promoting feelings of self-worth and mitigating feelings of uncertainty in social exchange, expressions of personal regard also foster reciprocation between actors (Blau, 2002). In turn, repeated and reciprocated social exchanges encourage mutual expectations and obligations among individuals (Molm, 2010; Portes, 1998). In short, trust, respect, and shared expectations appear to be closely interrelated in the context of school communities. Parents and school personnel are better able to trust and support one another when they fulfill their respective obligations to children, and when they do so in a

respectful and caring way and for what they perceive to be the right reasons (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).[26]

At the interpersonal level (i.e., between individuals), individuals engage in interactional processes, or courses of "action, functions, operations, and methods of working" among members of formal and informal networks (Mancini, Bowen, & Martin, 2005, p. 573). Structural and individual factors shape these social interactions through which individuals collect information for evaluating the motives of others (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In the context of schools, structural factors include role relations (e.g., parent-teacher or teacher-principal), formal and informal role definitions (e.g., the authority and responsibilities associated with particular roles), and features of social organization (e.g., mutual dependence between teachers and parents in the goal of educating children). Examples of individual factors include personal reputations (e.g., who are the good and bad teachers) or cultural understandings (e.g., the values and norms held by persons of a particular ethnic background). For example, teachers may be less likely to communicate with parents in respectful and caring ways if they do not view parents as their equals (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001), or parents may be less likely to engage in responsive communication with teachers if they feel intimidated (Osterling & Garza, 2004). Actions indicating supportive intentions also may be more meaningful in contexts of heightened vulnerability, for example due to power imbalances or when individuals' past experiences intensify their fear of rejection.

At the organizational level (i.e., between individuals and organizations, or among organizations), actions and interactions are shaped by structural conditions—that is, the

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[26] Bryk and Schneider (2002) summarize these as respect, personal regard for others, professional role competence, and integrity, the four criteria upon which actors judge the trustworthiness of others in the school community.

"interconnecting parts, framework, organization, configuration, and composition" (Mancini et al., 2005, p. 573)—of the organizational contexts in which they occur. Social relations are fundamentally *organizationally embedded* in that organizational characteristics impact the amount, quality, and consequences of social ties (Small, 2009). Relevant structural conditions may originate in both formal organizations (e.g., a particular school or school district), and informal social organizations, such as the communities and institutions that make up the larger social context of the school (e.g., surrounding neighborhoods or state or national policy context) (Sampson, 1999; Small, 2009). At the local level, the school's size, institutional reputation, modes of bureaucratic control and coordination, and characteristics of the student population may influence intrapersonal as well as interpersonal processes of relationship development. For example, parents are more likely to participate in school activities when they perceive the school environment to be safe (Griffith, 1998). Often, the ways that organizations structure actions and interactions within them are unintended byproducts of their routine operations (Small, 2009). For example, a school may coordinate pick-up and drop-off times with the explicit goal of enhancing efficiency and ensuring child safety, but their decisions also may influence the degree to which parents come together at the same time in the same place.

More macro-level organizations similarly shape intrapersonal and interpersonal processes of relationship formation. For example, difficult or unrealistic standards or accountability policies set by the school district or state department of education could lessen the degree to which teachers communicate with parents in respectful and caring ways if they feel stressed, over-worked, or undervalued in their jobs, and such feelings may be heightened in under-resourced and urban schools (Abel & Sewell, 1999). Macro-level organizational contexts, such as government agencies or the wider political context, are particularly influential in shaping

power relations within more local contexts. For example, a general awareness of racism in society has been found to discourage minority parents from participating in schools (McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn, 2003). In context of increased enforcement of immigration laws, parents without legal documentation also sometimes avoid visiting the school or providing personal information about themselves in an attempt to protect their families (Capps, Castaneda, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007; Olivos, 2009).

Building Supportive Relationships in Low-Income Latino School Communities

As reviewed in the previous chapter, a diverse body of empirical work finds evidence of inequalities by socioeconomic class, race/ethnicity, nativity, and linguistic acculturation, in the quantity and quality of social ties to school personnel (see review of literature on 'family-school connections in low-income Latino communities'). In his network-analytic framework, Stanton-Salazar (1997, 2011) attributes these differences to the fact that "the development of supportive relationships with eligible institutional agents, and access to key forms of institutional support, are systematically complex and problematic" for low-income and minority youth in U.S. schools (2011, p. 1075). Specifically, he argues that "social antagonisms and divisions existing in wider society" and institutionalized in the social and cultural organization of schools create an "unequal distribution of opportunities," based on social background, for youth to develop such relationships (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, pp. 3-4).

Five key social patterns in schools and wider society likely interactively constrain low-status youth in building supportive relationships with school agents (Stanton-Salazar, 1997): (1) whether consciously or unconsciously, people tend to evaluate others, at least in part, based on social statuses (e.g., social class, ethnicity, and gender); (2) minority youth tend to be unfamiliar and uncomfortable (perhaps even "terribly" so) in the cultural context of schools, which is

typically aligned with dominant statuses (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 7); (3) school personnel tend to evaluate minority youth based on how well they embrace dominant-group values, preferences, and ways of being; (4) schools tend to institutionalize (and therefore promote) social roles and identities for minority youth that impede supportive ties to staff; and (5) schools discourage help-seeking and help-giving behaviors between minority youth and school staff, through various "socialization agendas" oriented toward reproducing the social order, expressed in "the preeminence of *values and ideology, organizational rules, behavioral norms, enforced rituals, forms of consciousness, and identities* which unquestioningly adhere to the *status quo*" and, at worst, can "create a culture of widespread and aggressive forms of enforcement and repression" (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, pp. 1088-1089, emphasis original).

A number of ethnographic studies provide empirical support for this theoretical standpoint. They find that the culture which is institutionalized in school prioritizes White and middle-class values and 'ways of being in the world' and devalues minority cultural expressions, such as clothing styles, ways of speaking and interacting, tastes in music or food, and ethical priorities (Carter, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Moreover, these cultural values directly shape or even dictate how teachers evaluate and interact with students and their families and form relationships with them (Carter, 2005; Lareau, 2000, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Recent ethnographic evidence illuminates how teacher responses to class-based cultural patterns of help-seeking in elementary school, unwittingly or not, contribute to the reproduction of class inequalities in educational outcomes (Calarco, 2011). In another study, Black and Latino youth reported that teachers reward passivity over assertiveness in their classroom behavior and pay less attention to them when they "did not conform to the dominant expectation of clothing and deportment that teachers associate with intelligence and diligence" (Carter, 2003, p. 148).

According to studies of predominantly low-income and high-immigrant communities, Latino adolescents are less likely to pursue relationships with school personnel when they have prior experiences in which they felt marginalized or rejected by staff, even when this is not the intention of school personnel (Carter, 2006; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999).

These ethnographies, focusing on schools with high concentrations of low-income, minority, and immigrant families, highlight mechanisms producing academic disengagement and blocking access to institutional resources for Latino teens, but they do not reveal what precedes these experiences. It is unclear, for example, why Latino students enter high school feeling detached from school authorities. When children are young, the social interactions and relationships that their parents establish with school personnel may influence their sense of belonging and connection to the school. The distrustful and pessimistic orientations observed among Latino adolescents toward school staff may originate in part from observing (and perhaps internalizing) their parents' interactions within their elementary schools, for instance if they sensed discomfort, frustration, or alienation in them.

Our understanding of the mechanisms driving Latino disadvantage in establishing school connections comes largely from studies of high school students, focusing on social ties between school staff and students themselves. In contrast, we know little about the processes through which supportive family-school relationships (d)evolve when children are younger, a time when parents play a more active role in mediating social connections to the school. Do Latino parents establish and maintain relationships with school staff through the same processes as students? Do they face similar barriers to building supportive relationships in schools? In this chapter, I begin to address such questions by exploring the development of relationships between parents and members of the staff at their children's elementary schools. I focus on the experiences of

immigrant and U.S.-born Latino families residing in predominantly low-income and minority urban communities in the southwestern United States.

The degree to which Latino parents have similar experiences as students in their children's schools is unclear. On the one hand, intrapersonal characteristics that condition processes of relationship development (e.g., prior experiences and beliefs) are likely to differ substantially between parents and children, particularly if parents and children grow up in different countries. Moreover, parent-staff interactions are moderated by different role expectations than student-staff interactions. On the other hand, some relational processes may be universal, for example always involving information-gathering and evaluation. In addition, parents and students likely face similar status relations vis-à-vis staff (due to the intergenerational transmission of social status) and organizational contexts (due to shared or persistent characteristics of schools and wider society). As with low-status students, social interactions between parents and school staff are embedded within a social order that privileges the knowledge and expertise of school personnel over that of families, particularly for those from disadvantaged social backgrounds (Salas, 2004; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001).

Research Questions

In this chapter, I explore the development of supportive qualities—that is, trust, respect, and shared expectations—in parent-staff relationships. I analyze parent responses from one-time in-depth interviews with Latino families of young children. Thus, I focus on parent-reported perceptions of the supportiveness of school personnel. Specifically, I address the following research questions, as they apply to parents of Latino children attending elementary schools with high proportions of low-income and minority families:

RQ1: In these contexts, what do supportive parent-staff relationships look like to parents from Latino families—that is, how do Latino parents define or identify trust, respect, and shared expectations with school personnel?

RQ2: In these contexts, through what processes do Latino parents evaluate the supportiveness of school staff—that is, how do they discern whether school personnel are trustworthy, respectful, and share their expectations?

RQ3: In these contexts, how do intrapersonal and structural factors condition the processes by which Latino parents evaluate staff supportiveness—that is, what features specific to parents, their interpersonal interactions, and organizational or other social contexts facilitate, impede, or otherwise change their evaluations of school personnel?

Method

Data

This analysis focuses on data collected through in-depth interviews with parents participating in the Children, Families, and Schools (CFS) study.[27] The interview participants had a child enrolled in first grade at one of the eight schools that began the CFS study during the spring 2010 cycle. Along with a Mexican-American male researcher, I conducted interviews with approximately four families from each school during their second or third year of the study, when most target children were in second or third grade. We recruited interview participants through cold-calling from lists of eligible study participants. We used purposive convenience sampling, calling families until we yielded four cases per school and with the aim of maintaining balance across parental language dominance (Spanish or English) and participation in the FAST program (where we defined 'low attendance' as attending 0-2 weekly sessions, and 'high

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[27] For additional details on the study design and population, see chapter 2 (Overview of data and method).

attendance' as attending 6-8 sessions).[28] In total, we made 268 recruitment phone calls, 28% of

which resulted in actually speaking to a parent (there was no answer on 35%, and we discovered

out-of-date phone numbers on 37% of calls). We informed parents that the purpose of the

interview was to learn about their relationships within their families, their child's school, and the

wider community. Of those with whom we spoke, 32% of parents were willing but unable to

participate (usually due to scheduling conflicts), 23% refused for some other reason (e.g.,

uninterested or occasionally due to special circumstances such as a serious family illness), and

the remaining 45% agreed to participate. In total, we interviewed 57 parents from 34 families.

We conducted the interviews over the course of approximately one year, between March

2011 and May 2012. The vast majority (96.5%) occurred in person at the family's place of

residence on a weekday evening.[29] We chose the interview location to enhance participant

comfort and convenience, such as avoiding potential problems with childcare or transportation.

In addition, it provided us the opportunity to observe the contexts in which families live and how

family members interacted in their home environments. We began by sharing a take-out meal

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[28] In control schools, where FAST was not offered, we predicted each family's level of attendance as a function of observed pretreatment family and school characteristics. We first fit an ordered logistic regression model with maximum likelihood estimation to the year 1 pretest questionnaire data for treatment schools ($n = 1,611$, $N = 26$), where the outcome was an ordinal measure of family attendance at FAST weekly sessions (low = 0-2 sessions, moderate = 3-5 sessions, high = 6-8 sessions). We then used the fitted model to predict would-be FAST attendance for families in control schools, based on their observed characteristics as reported on the year 1 parent pretest survey ($n = 1,295$, $N = 26$). The model included pretreatment measures of student demographic characteristics (child age, gender, race/ethnicity, free/reduced-price lunch eligibility, English Language Learner status, special education status, and days attended school); family-level measures of parents' relationships with school personnel, with other parents in the school, and with their children; city of residence; study cohort; and school characteristics based on statistics for the year prior to the study (number students enrolled, racial/ethnic composition, percent free lunch eligible, percent limited English proficient, and mean third grade test scores in math and English/language arts).

[29] On two occasions the interviews took place elsewhere: once by telephone and once in person at a hotel. In the former case, the parent was only interested in participating via telephone due to her busy work schedule (she did not return home from work until around 8:00 pm). In the latter case, an unexpected problem at the family's home on the day of our interview required us to change plans and meet at the hotel where the researchers were staying.

with the whole family and getting to know each other, typically for 30-60 minutes.[30] We then

conducted the parent interviews separately and simultaneously, where I interviewed the female

parent in one room, while the male researcher interviewed the male parent in a separate

location.[31] Interviews lasted 60-150 minutes and were conducted in English or Spanish,

according to parent preference.[32] Both researchers are non-native but proficient Spanish-

speakers. The interviews were semi-structured to elicit narratives, feelings, and explanation

about parents' relationships with school personnel, other parents in the school or wider

community, and within their own family. The interviews were audio-recorded with digital

recorders. At the end of each interview, we paid each parent $15 per hour of interview and asked

them to select pseudonyms for their family members. We often stayed for a while chatting with

participants, sometimes for another half hour or so. Typically we spent three or four hours in

total at each family's home.

After each interview, the interviewers independently wrote or audio-recorded field notes

then jointly engaged in audio-recorded debriefing sessions lasting 30-120 minutes. We discussed

impressions of the family, main themes that emerged in each interview, how these fit into our

emerging theories about relationship development, and questions that remained or were raised by

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[30] We purchased and brought the meal to the interview, but parents chose the restaurant and menu in advance.

[31] We explained that the location could be anywhere so long as the audio-recorders would not pick up the other interview. Usually, the mother and I would stay wherever we had eaten dinner (e.g., at the kitchen table), while the men went elsewhere, sometimes another room in the house (e.g., a bedroom or an office) but often outside on a patio or in the backyard. In one instance, the male researcher interviewed the mother, and I interviewed the father. When only one parent was present, we jointly conducted the interview. In these cases, the dinner and interview portions of data collection were less clearly distinguished.

[32] Interview length was determined by the researchers based on participant fatigue—which we judged qualitatively based on signs such as shortened responses, glassy eyes, yawning, or body language indicating weariness—and children's needs—as indicated by increasing interruptions from children or the hour approaching bedtime. After conducting some 2.5-hour interviews, we decided to set a maximum interview length of two hours, in an effort to be respectful of participants' time and to reduce participant burden.

the content of the interview. Before the next interview, we identified topics or questions that emerged through the debriefing process as either new or particularly important to explore and discussed how to work them into the interview protocol for the next interview. Audio recordings from interviews and field notes were later orthographically transcribed.

Analysis

Analytic Sample

Of the 34 families represented in the full interview sample, I restricted the analytic sample to families of students categorized as "Hispanic/Latino" in school district administrative records. This yielded a sample of 50 interviewed parents from 30 families, across four treatment schools and four control schools. More than three-fourths of the families ($N = 23$) were dual-headed households, only five of which included at least one guardian who was not a biological parent. In most families ($N = 25$), both parents were of Latino origin, according to their discussion of ethnic background during interviews. Of the five families in which just one parent was Latino, we interviewed both parents in three families but only the non-Latino parent in the remaining two families. In a slight majority of families ($N = 17$), both parents were English language proficient. Of the remaining 13 families, at least one adult in the family spoke English proficiently in five families, while no parent did in the other eight families. Forty percent of the individual interviews were conducted in Spanish ($n = 20$). The sample includes approximately even numbers of families and parents in each city, but 60% of the families had children enrolled in control schools ($N = 18$, $n = 32$). As previously noted, the family-level sampling procedures were designed to facilitate comparisons across treatment and control conditions, as well as high and low participation rates in the FAST program (see details reported in footnote 28). However, I do not refer to these comparisons in the present analysis because parents' descriptions of family-

school tie formation did not reveal salient differences across treatment conditions or FAST

participation rates.

Analytic Approach

I began the analysis by preparing and reviewing the interview transcripts. The other

interviewer or I independently reviewed each interview transcript while listening to the audio

file. We checked the transcripts for accuracy (e.g., adding missing words or correcting mistaken

words, spelling errors, and grammatical problems) and added annotations of contextual details,

such as interruptions, background noise, vocal patterns that may express meaning (e.g., changes

in pace, volume, tone, or emphasis), and other auditory emotional expressions (e.g., sighs,

laughter, or crying). At this stage, my collaborator and I also generated *preliminary jottings*,

which allow researchers to "start coding as you collect and format your data" (Saldaña, 2009, p.

17). We summarized the main topics and analytical themes or ideas covered in each interview, as

well as any initial thoughts or reflections of our own. After preparing and reviewing the

transcripts, the analysis proceeded in three stages: data reduction (first through broad focused

coding, then through detailed inductive and focused coding), data display and memo-writing, and

conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data reduction through broad focused coding. The first stage of analysis was *data

reduction*, or "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the

data" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). I began by conducting broad focused coding at two

levels: between and within interviews. To perform the coding, I imported the transcript data into

the NVIVO qualitative software program (QSR International Pty Ltd, Version 8.0, 2006). The

purpose of the first data-reduction stage was to identify the "most salient portions of the corpus

[that] merit examination… for [later] intensive data analysis" (Saldaña, 2009, p.15). To achieve

this, I used two pre-determined codes: (1) *high quality reporting* and (2) *parent-school staff (global)*. I first coded at the interview level for *high quality reporting,* which I defined as interviews with thematic coverage of parent interactions or relationships with school personnel, detailed accounts of relevant experiences, feelings, or opinions, and little or no evidence of unreliable reporting. Of the 50 individual interviews in the sample, I subjectively judged about three-fourths ($n = 38$) to have ideal thematic coverage, depth, and reliability for further examination. Within these interviews, I then coded for data on *parent-school staff (global),* which I defined as any reference to interactions, relationships, feelings, or opinions between parents and school personnel. Through this process, I identified the relevant portions of interviews to be further analyzed, thus reducing the amount of text to intensively examine, summarize, and categorize using more detailed codes in the next stage of analysis.

    Data reduction through detailed inductive and focused coding. In the second data-reduction process, I used more fine-grained codes to summarize relevant data, first through inductive coding (i.e., open coding), then through focused coding (i.e., coding for predetermined themes) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The purpose of this stage of analysis was to "summarize or condense data, not simply reduce it" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 4). I began with an inductive approach, in which I conducted detailed open coding on a subset of selected interviews to further summarize the portions I had previously labeled with the *parent-school staff (global)* code.

    Working interview by interview, I coded narrative-to-narrative within interviews.[33] Narratives took various forms, including: the retelling of a particular event, occurrence, or

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[33] This approach is an adaptation of *incident-to-incident* coding, which is a "close cousin" to line-by-line coding that is appropriate for data in which "concrete, behavioristic descriptions of people's mundane actions" are revealed in the description of an entire incident rather than a particular line (Charmaz, 2006, p. 53). In this case, because I collected data via interviews, the 'incidents' were the various narratives provided by any given parent.

incident (e.g., a particular visit to the school, an interaction with a staff person, or a child's birthday party); a single description of a person (e.g., what the teacher is like), action (e.g., what homework-help entails), or role (e.g., what it means to be a teacher); and an explanation of an opinion or feeling (e.g., why I like the school). I used *simultaneous coding,* meaning that I applied multiple codes to a single datum (i.e., narrative), which is appropriate for cases such as this, when one or more codes is "an embedded or interconnected part of the larger social scheme that composes [other codes]" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 5). As I coded, I adjusted the emergent coding scheme through a *constant comparative method,* examining similarities and differences, by comparing data to other data, for example by comparing "interview statements and incidents" within interviews, across interview respondents, or across time or place (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54).

I used this inductive approach to apply detailed codes to one-third of the individual interviews I previously identified as containing *high quality reporting* (n = 13). I selected these interviews through purposive sampling, choosing those I subjectively judged as providing the 'richest' data (i.e., the highest quality reporting, as indicated by the level of detail, depth, and reliability in reporting on parent-staff interactions and relationships). In total, the open coding yielded 117 descriptive and interpretive codes, where *descriptive codes* group text into descriptive categories that closely reflect participants' own words while *interpretive codes* are more inferential (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For example, I used descriptive codes to categorize types of interactions between parents and school staff (e.g., *communicating, decision-making or problem-solving, meeting face-to-face,* or *interacting outside school*), whereas I used interpretive codes to categorize parents' feelings and emotions in their interactions with staff or in the school (e.g., *feeling [un]comfortable, feeling [dis]trustful or doubting/believing, feeling [dis]empowered, feeling self-confident/self-doubting,* or *feeling hopeful/hopeless*).

Based on the results of the open coding, I then generated a coding scheme which I used to conduct focused coding on the remaining two-thirds of the interviews previously identified as containing *high quality reporting* ($n = 25$). I created the predetermined coding scheme for the focused coding by *linking* (i.e., grouping) codes with other codes "according to similarity and regularity" to generate higher-level categories (Saldaña, 2009, p. 8). For example, I identified the descriptive codes *positioning by citizenship or legal status*, *positioning by linguistic status*, *positioning by nativity or immigrant status*, *positioning by racial/ethnic status*, and *positioning by socioeconomic status* as being nested under a broader category; I named the broader category, *social status positioning*, and defined it as any reference to the positioning or organizing of social traits or characteristics (e.g., gender) within a social hierarchy in which different statuses (e.g., male or female) are associated with systematically different degrees of social power, opportunities, control, authority, and the like. On average, each of the 117 codes was represented in 14 interviews, and I applied each code to 1-316 narratives, where the mean number of references per code was 55.

Data display and memo-writing. In contrast to the first stage of analysis (data reduction), this stage focused on pulling data together again. The goal was to move toward describing or explaining "complicated things," by identifying their "component parts" or generating a theory about pattern(s) of connection among them (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 91). To do this, I used an iterative process of displaying data, reviewing data displays, and writing analytical memos. I engaged in *data display* to move from specific codes to more general and abstract categories, while I used *memo-writing* to move from categories to theory (Saldaña, 2009).

Data display is the process of creating "an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). I

used extended text, thematic conceptual matrices, and thematic causal networks to display data

(Miles & Huberman, 1994). I first generated thematic *extended text* displays, via the 'query'

function in NVIVO. Specifically, I created displays of all references from interview transcripts

which I coded with one or more particular individual codes, or combination of codes. I generated

33 extended text displays for data on various topics, most of which encompassed multiple codes,

for example including *parent or teacher role responsibilities*, *organizational characteristics of

the school*, *staff actions toward children*, and *staff actions toward parents*. Because "extended,

unreduced text alone is a weak and cumbersome form of display" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.

91), I also displayed data in matrices and networks. I created *thematic conceptual matrices* by

organizing data into a chart form, for example plotting parents' satisfaction with their staff

relationships by their satisfaction with their child's academic outcomes (Miles & Huberman,

1994, p. 131). I also created *causal network*s, a type of causal map depicting a preliminary

hypothesis about causal relationships, in this case focusing on the process of parent-school

relationship development (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 151). For example, based on some initial

memo-writing, I generated a causal network of parent and staff actions and interactions, factors

that condition them, and their consequences or outcomes. The data displays helped me to

visualize intersections in the data between two or more concepts or ideas and patterns of

relations among them.

Memo-writing involves "analyz[ing] your ideas about the codes in any- and every-way

that occurs to you during the moment" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). I wrote memos to develop and

define categories, for example on 'trust versus satisfaction in relationships' or 'social status and

power.' I also wrote memos hypothesizing about relationships among categories and developing

explanations, for example on 'how parents define supportiveness from staff' or 'building parent-

staff trust in the context of high-stakes standards.' After generating the extended text displays, I began writing memos. I then worked back and forth between writing memos, reviewing relevant extended text displays, and creating thematic conceptual matrices and causal networks.

Conclusion drawing and verification. The final stage of analysis was *conclusion drawing and verification*, or the process of deciding on and verifying meanings, for example in the form of "regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). Potential researcher bias is a serious concern in qualitative research, particularly when conducted independently by a single researcher. Multiple aspects of my background and interests could introduce bias into data collection and analysis. For example, my statuses as a multi-racial, educated, female undoubtedly influenced interactions between myself and participants. The collaborative data collection helped address this in part, by introducing variation in researcher background along various dimensions. For example, although we were of similar age and educational attainment, my collaborator was male, Latino, and a native of one of our research sites (San Antonio).

Another potential bias is my background in sociology and interest in racial/ethnic and class disparities. I thus entered the field believing that there are both structural and psychological barriers to the development of supportive family-school relationships in low-income Latino communities. [34] Moreover, my interest in social justice issues influenced my emotional responses to families—during data collection—and to the data—during analysis and writing. I often felt sympathy, at times even empathy, for parents and children when hearing about various challenges they faced, for example due to limited socioeconomic resources or experiences

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[34] To minimize the degree to which these beliefs biased the way we conducted interviews, the other interviewer and I openly discussed these issues during our debriefing sessions, held after each interview, and during later research meetings.

associated with immigration. Such feelings are natural, given my personal interests and values as well as the subjective and participatory nature of qualitative data collection; however, they become problematic if they bias the generation or interpretation of data.

I used three verification checks to address potential biases and strengthen the trustworthiness of my findings. First, I conducted an interdisciplinary literature review to confirm theoretical and empirical basis for key categories that emerged. Second, I employed an independent auditor not involved in the data collection or coding to check my final codes against the interview data. The auditor holds a senior faculty position in the Counseling Psychology department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is experienced in conducting qualitative research in Latino communities, and is bilingual in English and Spanish. The auditor did not believe any codes or coding decisions were glaringly inaccurate or missing. Third, I kept an analysis reflection journal, in which I recorded my expectations and potential biases about the research throughout the analysis. I also reviewed the interview field notes and wrote entries on any issues recorded there. To explore how these may have influenced my interpretation of the data, I discussed my journal entries with the independent auditor and the researcher with whom I conducted the interviews.

Findings: Staff Trustworthiness in the Eyes and Words of Parents

Parent responses highlighted trust as the most salient characteristic of supportive relationships with school personnel, where perceived respect and shared expectations appeared to operate as criteria for trust. Parents expressed a need to trust school personnel for two main reasons. First, parents must put their child's wellbeing in someone else's care, which suggests that vulnerability is built into the parent-staff relationship. This inherent vulnerability and need

for trust is implied in the following explanation, provided by one mother, for why she feels that it

is important to build a relationship with staff at her children's schools:

> I feel as if I just can't send them off to strangers. As a parent, you don't ever want to send your kid off to a stranger. You teach them not to go with strangers. And of course, people don't look at teachers as, [*imitating a worried tone*:] "Oh, it's a stranger," but it is [*with emphasis*] because you don't know them. And even though they're licensed to teach, it doesn't mean that you know them any more than the other kid that's coming in, and their parents. You just have to get to know these people, know who's handling your child.

In addition, parents expressed the opinion that mutual trust between parents and staff is

important because both parties are needed to effectively support the child. In the words of this

mother, parents and school staff must work together because "the child needs it all around." She

clarified what the ideal parent-teacher teamwork looks like, saying:

> The teacher [role] is gonna be to enforce it at school, and the parent should enforce it at home. And then together they should talk about how it's going at school, how it's going at home, who needs to adjust what, if any—yeah, I think that you have to work together. It's like a marriage! You meet each other halfway [*said while laughing*]… If we're not working together, it's gonna affect the child.

When asked what happens if the teacher and parent do not work together, she responded, "I think

it's very hard. I think it's a huge challenge [*with emphasis*] because there's no balance. One is

gonna be overwhelmed. One's gonna be exhausted of having to overcompensate for the lack of

the one that's not putting in the effort." This perspective suggests that mutual reliance is also

built into the parent-staff relationship.

For some parents, the vulnerability and mutual reliance fundamental to the parent-staff

relationship appeared connected, synergistically enhancing the need for trust. For example, one

mother expressed feeling the need to trust her child's teacher this way:

> I try to keep the peace and have a good relationship [*with emphasis*], not because I want to… but because my kid is in the middle, and there's nothing I can do. She has him most of the day, so I have to trust her, even if I don't want to, so I have to have a good relationship with [this particular teacher] even though I'm not happy with her.

For another parent, it seemed that the vulnerability and mutual reliance underlying the parent-staff relationship shaped his expectations for teachers. He stated:

> I feel like, "Hey if I'm putting <u>my</u> child in <u>your</u> hands [*with emphasis*] for how-many-ever hours, you should be okay to <u>talk</u> to me and at <u>least</u> try to figure out who I am and what <u>I'm</u> about…" My child is in their hands. Me, as the parent, yes, I'm the one who <u>should</u> be trying to figure out, "This is my child, what's going on?" But at the same time, because I'm not <u>there</u>, you, as the <u>teacher</u>, should be coming to <u>me</u> saying, "Hey, this is what's going on…" <u>Both of us</u> should be coming together. Not <u>one</u> saying one thing or one not listening. We both supposed to come together, 'cause both benefits the child.

His words reflect the opinion that not only parents, but also school staff should endeavor to cooperate with each other, both because the parents must put their children "in the hands" of school staff and because the child benefits from the efforts of both parties.

In the remainder of this section, I first present findings about how parents define and evaluate staff trustworthiness, reviewing evidence of the criteria and processes by which they judge whether staff can be trusted. I then present findings about how three intrapersonal and structural factors condition these evaluation processes: parents' past experiences and beliefs, organizational characteristics of the school, and the relative social statuses of parents and staff.

How Parents Define and Evaluate Staff Trustworthiness

At the root of trusting school staff seemed to be the question of whether parents feel that their child is in good care. Parent interview responses indicated five criteria upon which parents judge the trustworthiness of school personnel: *staff competence*, *shared values and expectations*, *staff investment in children and the job*, *staff respect for parents*, and *staff care for parents*. Parents appeared to discern trustworthiness through an ongoing process of collecting and assessing information to make judgments about whether these criteria apply to school staff. In this section, I present findings about how parents define and evaluate each of the five criteria.

In their interviews, parents focused on three types of information about school personnel: staff performance of their roles, staff attitudes and behaviors toward the child, and staff attitudes

and behaviors toward the parent. They reported collecting this information through direct

interactions with staff and by monitoring staff behaviors. Commonly mentioned forms of

monitoring include directly observing staff (e.g., by observing the classroom, attending school

events, or volunteering at the school), indirectly observing staff (e.g., by soliciting reports from

the child, other parents, or other staff), and inferring staff behaviors via symbols (e.g., child

academic outcomes or progress, child emotional responses, or formalized rules). Direct

interactions with staff occurred both face-to-face (e.g., at formal conferences or meetings, during

school events, or while picking up or dropping off children) and through written or electronic

personal communication (e.g., phone calls, emails, hand-written notes, or text messages).

Staff Competence

     Competence criterion. This criterion refers to the degree to which staff have the

necessary ability (i.e., aptitude, experience, skill, or expertise) to effectively fulfill role

obligations. Staff competence seemed to provide parents some assurance that school personnel

are capable of achieving the goals associated with their roles, and therefore to meet children's

needs. Based on the interviews, for parents, the prime indicators that staff are "doing their job

right" appear to be that children are making adequate academic progress, the classroom or school

is orderly, and staff appropriately handle issues with children and parents. For example, one

father identified children's progress as a sign of teachers doing their job by saying:

> A teacher's work shows through the student. How can you say you're this type of teacher
> and this type of teacher when your students are below what you [*sic*] supposed to be? But
> if you're really teaching your students, your students [*with emphasis*] is [*sic*] gonna show
> that they're being taught…

Among parents who discussed ineffectual or "bad" school staff, many also identified lack of

classroom order (in the case of teachers) or disorganized or poorly regulated schools (in the case

of principals) as reasons for their unfavorable evaluations. As one mother put it, when it comes

to teachers, "it's part of your job to be able to control your classroom." A similar sentiment was communicated by another mother, whose son's teacher handled his behavioral problems by repeatedly asking her to pick him up early from school. She described how she felt about this approach by saying, "I'm not the professional here. You guys are. You guys do your job."

Evaluating staff competence. To evaluate staff competence, parents appeared to assess information about staff role performance and attitudes or behaviors toward the child, mainly collected via direct and indirect observation of staff and monitoring child outcomes. The key assessment for judging competence seemed to be whether school personnel are meeting their role obligations, as defined by parents. In other words, parents appeared to ask themselves: Are staff members doing their jobs? In the interviews, parents discussed various aspects of attitudes and behaviors toward children and role performance by which they judge whether this is the case.

The most commonly cited characteristic for assessing staff competence was whether teachers appear to be producing cognitive gains in children. One mother noted that, besides the teacher genuinely caring about her child, "the most important thing" is to "know that my kids are learning." Interview responses suggested that parents primarily judge whether children are learning based on their progress (e.g., "Because they come home with A's") and symbols of teaching efforts (e.g., "Because of the homework they give them" [original in Spanish]). One father provided the following account of why he doubted whether teachers were doing their job:

> I started going through the books [in my child's backpack], and I saw that there were many unfinished worksheets that were done with the teacher. So I kept it, and I told [the teachers], "So, when my son is in school, don't you make him finish his work while he's in school?" I saw so many blank spaces with unanswered questions… Maybe teachers are going to work, but they are not doing their job. (Original in Spanish)

For many parents, their evaluations of staff competence appeared nuanced or even critical—parents did not necessarily take one piece of evidence at face value. For example, there

was evidence that some parents prioritize 'results' over staff claims about their efforts, as illustrated in the following explanation given by one mother about a particular teacher.

> I don't think [the teacher] is capable of working with a third grade group. Third grade is hard. It is hard for the children because it is a hard grade… [The school staff] told us that they were doing something, but we never saw any result. (Original in Spanish)

Similarly, while many parents cited their child's promotion to the next grade level as evidence of progress, parents also did not seem to blindly accept grade promotion as evidence of children's cognitive development. For example, another mother said:

> There is a child who lives near here. You ask him the numbers, and he can't count from 1 to 20. He doesn't know his letters, meaning his ABC's. He's already in second grade, so, poor child, what's going to happen to him? I think they're only harming the child because the teachers just transfer him. How are the children going to succeed if they're not learning? Exactly. There are many cases like this one. I feel sorry for the children when they grow up; how are they going to survive*?* (Original in Spanish)

These words indicate that, in her discernment of whether children are learning, this mother prioritizes whether they meet concrete benchmarks of cognitive development at the appropriate age rather than grade promotion. The concern implicit in her narrative also put a high priority on learning, as she seems to take children's cognitive gains (or delays) as evidence of whether teachers are helping (or hurting) children.

Parents also regularly identified orderliness and children's safety as evidence of staff competence. They typically discussed whether staff seem to appropriately manage children and school operations in terms of how orderly and well organized they perceived their child's school or classroom to be. For example, in describing an "issue" that arose with one of her child's previous teachers, one mother said:

> [W]henever [my daughter] was off task, her teacher would <u>call me</u> [*with emphasis*] during classroom instruction to tell me, [*imitating an annoyed tone*:] "Can you please talk to [child's name]? Because I cannot get her to stop talking," and I would tell my husband, "Why is this educated first grade teacher <u>constantly calling</u> me to reprimand [our child] on the phone? She can't control a first-grade classroom?"

In comparison, she said of the current teacher, "I've never gotten one call…, so I feel a lot more comfortable, that she knows how to manage her classroom [*laughs*]… I just feel like she really knows her job."

Parents also discussed whether staff seemed to protect children from physical danger and whether they perceive their children to be safe, as evidenced by the physical and social environment of the school, staff responses to threats, and staff efforts to prevent physical danger. For example, one mother explained that her "trust" for the school and its teachers is the "mental peace" she gets from feeling "that my children are safe in there" (original in Spanish). She described liking how the staff "protect," "care for," and "worry about" the children (original in Spanish), for example by breaking up their fights, shielding them from cars, instructing parents to check their bags for dangerous toys, calling the police when a stranger is on campus, and fortifying the school grounds, all of which allow her to "relax more" (original in Spanish).

Shared Values and Expectations for Children

Shared values and expectations criterion. This criterion is the degree of alignment or consistency in the beliefs, attitudes, goals, and expectations for children which are held by the parent as compared to those held by school staff. When school personnel share parents' values and expectations for children, it seems to provide parents some assurance that staff will treat their child in ways that parents prefer. For example, when asked why it is important to get to know her children's teachers, one mother replied:

> [*Scoff*] Because I need to know who's taking care of my child! [*Said while laughing.*] Yeah, I want to meet them, I want to know their personality, I want to know what they're like, I want to know what they expect from my child. I want to know what they expect from me, I want to tell them what I expect from them. I need to talk to them! …I don't think I could not meet them [*with emphasis*]… How do you send [your child to school], and not know this person, at least what they expect from you, and vice versa… They won't know what you expect from your child either, unless they speak to you. I think that's important.

In these interviews, parents focused on two aspects of shared values and expectations for children. First, they discussed whether staff appeared to share their goals for children's academic, social or emotional, and behavioral progress. A number of parents cited the school's academic standards for children in general. One mother's discussion of the focus on standardized testing seemed to signal that school staff shared her high academic standards for her child. After describing her own high standards, she stated:

> [The teachers] also do expect a lot academically. [The students] take all these crazy tests that we never took… They have all these [district and state standardized] testing, and benchmark testing, and so they don't just teach the syllabus anymore. They teach the test taking, and the syllabus, and all that.

Similarly, a new statewide policy linking grade promotion to standardized test performance provided evidence of shared values and expectations for another mother, who explained:

> [B]efore [this policy] they didn't care if [students] learned or not; they transferred them anyway. Now, if they don't pass that exam, they are not going to pass to third grade. They are going to repeat second grade until they pass the exam. Somehow, I agree with that because there are children who pass just because some teachers can't stand them. (Original in Spanish)

Yet, for a third mother, the way that standardized testing seemed to drive the school's academic standards was a source of conflicting values and expectations. While she was careful to say, "It's a very good school [*with emphasis*], don't get me wrong. Their standards are very, very high, which is good," perhaps her main point was revealed in her response to whether there was anything she would like to change about the school's standards:

> I think that they're just concentrating all year on the task that they have for that year, for example in third grade, they concentrate on getting them ready for reading, which is the third grade test. All year [*with emphasis*], when they could have spread [out] the studies more, learn about other things, make it more general, not concentrate on just one thing… They need to have a test, and they need to show that they are there [at level] to go to the other grade [be promoted], but not to make it the priority… because that's what the teachers do. They concentrate on just one thing more—much more—than any other, because that's their standards.

The difference in opinion across these mothers illustrates how the same signal (in this case, staff use of and emphasis on standardized tests) may inspire in some parents a sense of shared values and expectations while communicating to others that school values conflict with their own.

A second aspect of shared values and expectations emphasized by parents was whether staff appeared to share their opinions about the best ways to reach goals for children. Most commonly, parents discussed this in terms of the degree to which they felt the teaching, disciplinary, or management style of school personnel was appropriate or preferable. Parents cited staff operations—most often those influencing their interactions with children—as evidence of their styles. For example, in describing why she had chosen her child's school, one mother said that the main reason, after its exemplary academic record and proximity to their home, was:

> Because they are known to have strict teachers, and with [my daughter], she will push the envelope… My husband and I are both very militant parents. We go to work every day, we have our job. [For the child,] Your job is school. You're not there to jack around… [And the teachers] don't tolerate jacking around; they don't let the kids play. They don't let the kids get off task really… and when they do have an issue, they're picking up the phone and calling.

This is similarly evident in another mother's recounting of a teacher's inappropriate communication with parents and students.

> I think it's unprofessional where the teacher gets too personal, like talks too personal [*sic*] about her personal life [with me]… Like she'll complain, "Oh, I'm so tired. My kids, I have so many kids. This one is always sick." Fine and dandy, but she's the teacher [*taps hand on table*]. You need to take care of the problem or whatever, before you go. Sometimes too, I guess she does tell the kids, 'cause one time [my child] told me, "Oh, the teacher said that she had been up all night with the baby. Her baby was sick and she was up all night, so she was in a bad mood that day." That's not right [*with emphasis*]. She's gotta know how to handle it without taking it out on the kids.

As demonstrated in this quote, some parents seemed to infer staff expectations and values not only from their interactions with children but also from their personalities and styles of interaction with parents.

Evaluating shared values and expectations. To evaluate whether staff share their values and expectations for children, parents again seemed to assess staff role performance and attitudes or behaviors toward the child, mainly collected via direct and indirect observation of staff, monitoring child outcomes and other symbols (e.g., pamphlets or formalized rules), and personal interactions with staff, in which parents or staff explicitly communicated expectations to the other. The following description, of how one mother "gets to know" her children's teachers, illustrates how parents directly and indirectly monitor staff behaviors:

> [D]uring the school year I like to go [to the classroom] as well. But not to see the teacher: to see how she is. And later on, I will ask the kids what the teacher said, how the teacher treats them. I like to ask them different things: if the teacher screams, and how they are treated. I like to ask them questions… I feel it's necessary to speak to [children] in a strong way, but not screaming. I think that if you're going to be educating children, you need to have patience for children. If you don't have patience, why do you have this job? (Original in Spanish*)*

At the heart of shared values and expectations for the child seemed to be the issue of whether school personnel are working toward comparable goals as parents, using comparable methods. For parents, this seemed to provide an answer to the core question: Are we on the same team?

In the interviews, parents identified particular values and expectations as crucial for school staff to share. Above all, they emphasized the importance of staff treating children appropriately and fairly, and for them to appropriately handle children's problems and issues. These concerns are reflected in the following account provided by one mother about how she felt about the way a teacher handled a conflict between her child and another student:

> I don't know if the teacher is racist, because we are White and the boy with whom he had problems is ["dark skinned"] like [the teacher], [so] maybe she doesn't pay us attention… But it shouldn't be like that because [*pause*] that's why they're teachers, so they can pay attention to everyone equally. And if there are problems, the teacher has to resolve it [*with emphasis*], and if she can't, she has to go and ask for help in the principal's office, from the principal and all that. And if she doesn't do it, she isn't doing her job right. (Original in Spanish)

Although parents seemed to view suspected race- or ethnicity-based discrimination as particularly egregious behavior for school personnel, parents also discussed other less politically charged indiscretions. For example, parents reported feeling that teachers have "favorites" (which was deemed, "not <u>fair</u> to <u>anybody</u> [*with emphasis*]") or that they give more attention, or even "special privileges," to some students while others are "ignored" or "losing out."

Parents reported examples of suspected unequal treatment occurring both informally (e.g., because the teacher doesn't like my child) and formally (e.g., according to how administrators assigned children to classes or how teachers assigned them to reading groups). For example, one mother described the within-classroom ability grouping practices of her child's teacher as follows:

> With [this teacher], she did teach—and I hate to say this, too… She would teach, "No offense, but okay, I'm gonna teach you [students] this because this is an A package, but I'm gonna teach you [other students] this because this is a B package, and C and D." She kind of taught that [way]. On the kids that she knew that could be challenged enough to do that A package, she really invested—and not to say that she didn't invest the same amount of time, but she allotted more time: "Okay, you're getting five pages, whereas you're probably only gonna get four, and you're probably only gonna get three. We've all still gotten the same material. We're all still gonna be able to pass the benchmark test, but yours is just more in depth, okay?"

When asked what she thought about that approach, the mother responded, "I think we should challenge the C kids to bring them up to the B kids. Again, I hate to use that terminology, but you all know what I'm talking about. I think she should have tried."

In another example, a mother expressed suspicions that her children's school not only tracked students on the basis of their language background, but that students in the different language tracks then received different types of education. Although she reported that the official purpose of the English language learner class was, "Supposedly that they get that extra help because they go with the pace, I guess, with the children that don't know the language [*meaning,*

English]," she described the real difference between the "regular" classes, as compared to her

children's "second language" classes, by saying:

> I went last year for awards ceremonies. Neither of my kids got one. Not even one. Those ["regular"] classes got either, they mastered math, they got so-and-so in the [state standardized test]. Neither of my kids got any awards, when before it was my children getting at least one award. And I see those classes getting more awards for achieving their [state standardized test benchmarks].

When it comes to her children in particular, this mother reported believing that "they're not even

being challenged," explaining:

> [My son] told me one day, he says, "Mom, I get bored. 'Cause the stuff they teach us, I know it already…" That's what [he] told me. 'Cause [the teachers] say that [the students] get distracted very easily or [my son] just wanders off. Well yeah, if you're gonna be teaching him something that he already knows how to pronounce, yeah. If you're gonna start teaching them, "My name is [first and last name]," you better believe he is gonna get bored pretty soon. After the second sentence, you're gonna lose him.

She summarized the situation as follows:

> I feel horrible because now I feel that my kids are not--. Yeah, they're going to school, but yet they're not learning. That's how I feel… "We're gonna concentrate over here more and leave these children that are in between or later or--." I don't know what are they [*sic*] planning. Do something about it.

It is clear from her words that this mother does not agree with the academic expectations that her

children are being held to, nor the way that they are being taught.

The interviews also suggested that, when parents believe that members of the staff

genuinely care about their child, their care can become the basis for a deep sense of shared

values with staff. This is likely because caring for their children is typically a core value held by

parents, and one which powerfully organizes the lives they lead. How one mother perceived a

teacher's personal investment in her daughter, and her educational progress, is evident in her

description of what happened when the teacher convinced her to attend a ceremony at the school

where her child was being honored. She recounted:

> I was very emotional to see [my daughter] in that ceremony. It's moving to see her because I'm also doing my part to help her progress; [my effort] is for her progress, for her education. And it's also the teacher's accomplishment. So, just imagine that we are working as a team. I was moved, and the teacher was also moved. The teacher was touched. (Original in Spanish)

In addition to demonstrating the mother's own emotional investment in her children, her reflections on the incident suggest that a special moment was created between her and her child's teacher, in which they felt connected over their shared personal investment in the child.

Another dimension of shared values and expectations that seemed important to parents was whether staff approaches to disciplining, teaching, and managing children were consistent with their own expectations or preferences. One way parents appeared to assess this was by evaluating the academic and behavioral goals that staff set for children. For example, one mother said of her son's teacher, "I just love [*with emphasis*] the way that she makes him responsible for his thing. 'You make sure that your mom signs. You make sure that your mom initials the homework. You make sure that she checks your test.'" Another mother recounted how she liked the way that staff manage children's behavior so much that she actually incorporated the "school rules" into her own home.

Finally, some reports suggested that parents interpret staff values and expectations for the child by evaluating the focus and style of their interactions with parents. For example, one mother reported that she prefers her communication with teachers to be "professional" because she likes "to stay more focused" and "to make sure that I know how they're doing, what they need from me, things of that nature." She explained:

> I've heard a lot of parents come in there and, you know, we're having conferences at certain times. They're exiting the room, and I could hear them talking about softball games or "my kid this," or just personal [matters], away from school. I don't really care to get, I guess, into that too much. My main focus is how [my children are] doing, how we can work together, and then we can share. If they want to tell me about their children or whatnot, I'll listen. But I think that's my fear is I don't want to turn the next visit into [*imitating an over-the-top gossipy tone*:] "Oh, so you know!" More of a gossip session.

Another mother similarly expressed:

> I love it [*with emphasis*] because [the teacher will] let me know. She'll put something on the [agenda sent home with the child each day], or I'll put a little note there or whatever. I like it. I like that agenda, that it doesn't have to be so [*pause*] like personal, but still like, "You're watching me and I'm watching you," that constant communication.

Staff Personal Investment in Children and the Job

Personal investment criterion. This criterion is the degree to which school personnel feel concern, emotional attachment, devotion, or a desire or willingness to dedicate supportive resources (e.g., time, energy, effort, or attention) toward children or their job. Staff investment in children and the job seemed to provide parents some assurance that staff will operate with the child's best interest at heart and to the best of their abilities to support children or achieve goals associated with their role on the school staff. For example, in the words of one mother:

> [T]o see someone care about my children, it really comforts me a lot because it makes me feel like there's people out there that do care about them, that don't want to see them fail, that they want to see them succeed. I've heard a lot of experiences from different parents, my family members, of teachers who just are very cold, in a sense, to a child's education. Like, [*imitating an indifferent tone*:] "Well, he didn't do his work. What do you want me to do about it? It is what it is." And they're not very friendly or welcoming or open to the parents.

This comment suggests that staff effort with children springs from their level of personal investment in their education, generally, as well as how much they care about each child specifically.

Parents discussed whether staff seemed to really care about their particular child in terms of the degree to which they seemed to positively regard the child, have genuine concern for the child, or value the child as more than just a student. As one mother put it, "I like the teachers to care about what's really going on with the students: like to hear them, what they're feeling, what they're thinking." An example she discussed was how the staff not only call to let her know that something has happened to her child, "but they also say it in a nice way. [The staff person] gets

concerned, like, 'Oh, I'm calling because his tooth is falling, and I wish I could do something for him.'" The mother goes on to explain that this shows her that, "She cares. She's showing me that she's doing something for him." Another mother expressed care in terms of interest in children's welfare, saying "To me it means a lot because I do like when [teachers] get interested in my children… I like them to care about my children. I care when they care about my children's wellbeing" (original in Spanish). For another mother, caring about children seemed to be about children feeling not only safe but also emotionally supported by staff. Of the impact of having "teachers that really, genuinely care about all three of my kids," she stated:

> [I]t's a better environment for [the children], I think. It just makes them feel that, for one, they're safe, and two, that they have people all around them [*with emphasis*] that love them and that care about them, and they're trying to help them.

As an example of demonstrating genuine caring for her children, this mother recalled how two teachers asked her children to keep in touch with them after the school year ended. In her words:

> That's like an extra step of confirmation that, "Wow [*with emphasis*], they really do care about my child" because once that school year ends, it's like, [*imitating an indifferent tone*:] "Bye. You're someone else's child now. You're on to the next grade, and I've washed my hands of you [*slight chuckle*]."

This example illustrates another indicator of staff personal investment in the child. In their official role as members of the school staff, they are required to treat children as students, but parents discern genuine caring for the child when staff view them more holistically, as having importance to them beyond their official responsibilities. For many parents, genuine care for the child was a high priority among desirable characteristics of staff. One mother reported that she is able to "feel good about the school" when teachers show genuine care for her children. She explains that, "It's very important because I've been worried with all the trust," so important that, "Even though there's other stuff [that I don't like], I just ignore the other stuff, and I'm just going to [focus on] what's very, very important."

Parents discussed whether staff seemed to really care about their jobs in terms of the

degree to which they expressed personal investment in or genuine concern for the job, its key

objectives, or its role obligations. Parents often used the language of whether school personnel

see their jobs as "more than just a paycheck." An example is found in the following explanation

of one father's expectations for teachers:

> What I'm saying is if they're paying them, they should teach. So if they don't care about the children, why are they there? They should leave that chance for another person who wishes to do that. Because if they only go for their paycheck, well they shouldn't. Our children should have a better future. They need to teach them. (Original in Spanish)

For many parents, staff genuinely caring about children was also an indicator that they genuinely

cared about their job. For example, when asked to describe an ideal first impression of school

staff, one mother replied:

> Just always feel like you're happy, not [*imitating a bored voice*:] "Okay, I'm here at work. I'm here to do my job. What can I do to help you?" If you're having a bad day, leave it at home don't bring it to school with you… I mean, most people get into that type of job field because they <u>want</u> it not because they <u>have</u> to do it [*with emphasis*]. You're either going to show that type of attitude, or you're going to do it only because it's your job to do. And there's a difference when you care, and when you don't care and then you're just doing it just for a paycheck… It's got to be the first impression that makes [the parent] feel like you [staff] want your student, your child, in your school. "We're here to serve your student and teach your student." Not, "Oh, there's another child in the door" type of attitude.

Evaluating staff personal investment in children and the job. To evaluate whether staff

are personally invested in children and the job, parents seemed to assess staff role performance

and attitudes and behaviors toward the child, mainly collected via direct and indirect observation

of staff behaviors and monitoring of children's outcomes and emotional responses to staff. The

issue of whether staff genuinely care about children and the job emerged organically in most

interviews. In their responses, parents reported evaluating three key factors to discern staff caring

(or lack of caring) for children and the job. The first, which also seemed to be the main method

for evaluating staff caring for children, was whether school personnel treat children with love

and warmth. For example, one mother said of a favorite teacher, "I saw how the teacher expressed trust to my daughter… She expressed very nice words, 'Look, nothing is going to happen to you here. You'll be fine. Don't be afraid'" (original in Spanish). Another mother told a story of how her daughter cried when she took her to school for the first time, and "her teacher grabbed her and hugged her… and told her that everything was going to be fine and that she shouldn't be afraid… She hugged her and [my daughter] calmed down" (original in Spanish).

The second factor by which parents evaluated staff care for children was their child's emotional reactions to school personnel. In the words of one mother, "[my daughter] just adored her teacher, and her teacher adored her. It just made me feel really good to see that someone really cares about her." Another mother reported having recently moved her son to a different school because she felt that, at his old school, "the teacher didn't pay attention to him" (original in Spanish). She expressed that, while changing schools was not an easy decision, she now feels it was the right choice because "[e]very time I would bring him back from [the old] school, he was sad and crestfallen. Also, he seemed mad. And now when I pick him up from [the new] school, 'How was your day?' 'Good, good'" (original in Spanish).

A final factor that parents seemed to evaluate to discern staff caring for children was the way school personnel communicated with parents. For some parents, this was about the amount of time or attention that staff put into communicating about the child to the parent. For example, when asked how she knows that her children's teachers really care about them, one mother replied, "Because when we care about our children we take our time to talk about it" (original in Spanish). Similarly, while describing a teacher who did not exhibit the type of "special" caring for her child as other teachers, another mother focused on communication:

> [S]he was very, [*imitating a matter-of-fact tone*:] "Okay, well… She's doing great. She's a great student, this and that. Okay, any questions? Alright, thank you," and that was it.

> Outside of those conferences, I didn't really—I mean, she would send notes and stuff like that, but we didn't have that five-minute, everyday kind of a conversation like I did with the other two teachers.

In comparison, she explained how she was able to tell that another teacher really cared about her child in this way:

> Just how she spoke about her… She was always writing little notes about [my child]: "She's a good student…" I'm sure she did it to the other kids, but it made me feel like my child was very special… She would email me and say, "Oh, you know, [your daughter] said the funniest thing." Those little things. I'm like, [*excited voice*:] "Oh that is so cute…" I just felt that there was a relationship being built, and that [my child] was more than just a student to her, that she really did care about her.

This suggests that parents interpret personalized communication about the child, particularly if it suggests staff understand and appreciate the child, as an indication of care.

When it came to evaluating staff's personal investment in their jobs, the main approach emphasized during parent interviews was assessing the amount of effort and attention they give to their work, either through direct or indirect observation of staff behaviors or by monitoring children's outcomes. For example, in describing why he does not approve of a particular teacher, the grandfather and primary caretaker of one child explained:

> Well, the main thing [the teacher] does is that she isn't responsible. She's not responsible with her work like a teacher. Because a person who's a <u>teacher</u> [*with emphasis*] at a school has to be attentive to the students, and she doesn't have <u>that</u>. What she worries about is her own things. Not for her students… Another thing that she also shouldn't do is to punish the children in that manner, because it isn't right. (Original in Spanish)

For this parent, the teacher's lack of attentiveness to the students and irresponsibility in her work seemed to signal that she does not really care about her job.

For many parents, instances of staff going above and beyond their role obligations in their actions or attitudes toward children or their work seemingly provided unequivocal evidence of their personal investment. Parents discussed various instances of staff doing helpful things that they "didn't have to do." In recognizing extra effort in staff work, parents most often noted

teachers who exceeded their official job requirements to meet the learning needs of a particular

child. For example, one mother described teachers at her children's school this way:

> The teachers put in a lot of effort. Like I said, I'm very happy with the teachers that my daughters have had. They work hard. My daughter had a problem with her reading, and she had additional classes for about two or three weeks. So I was, "Wow, they do pay attention to them." She could have said, "That's the parents' responsibility, and I'm done with the children in the afternoon." But no, she is always with the children, tutoring them or helping them in any situation. I love that. (Original in Spanish)

Another mother described a similar instance when her son was struggling academically, and his

teacher offered to provide him extra help before school hours. Particularly because this mother

"knew [the teacher] needed that extra time for herself to prepare," she reported feeling that this

showed that "she's caring" and "acknowledging that sometimes he gets lost in all that crowd."

Another mother, despite saying she received largely negative reports from staff about her child's

behavior and academic progress, explained that she knew they truly cared because they tried to

accommodate his needs, even if they had to bend the rules. She explained herself, saying:

> I loved that they were very open to allowing him to do work that he had late [*sic*], or that was not accepted anymore, and they were gonna accept it. They did [*with emphasis*] bend a lot of it for him, and so I enjoyed that: that they cared for him that much, they were gonna go a little bit over and beyond what they should have.

She also provided a specific example of how the principal made an exception on a disciplinary

action for her son, having recognized that "he's a good kid." For this mother, the fact that school

personnel "were going a little bit above, just to help him out… was a way of showing they care."

In addition to demonstrating extra effort in their work, parents also described specific

ways in which staff showed caring for children through exceptional efforts to attend to their

emotional needs. For example, to illustrate how she knew that a teacher really cared about her

child, a mother recounted what happened one day when her child wouldn't get out of the car to

go to school, after having been bullied the previous day. As she told it:

> Her teacher went outside and looked for her. She talked to her with that tenderness… I felt very satisfied, very thankful. I don't know, happy and everything because she took the time… She took the time to leave her classroom, to walk down the hallway, all the way to my car, for my daughter… She gave her that confidence again, and so my daughter went to school again. (Original in Spanish)

When asked what this meant to her, she said, "That's like, 'Wow.' I don't think anybody else would do that. At best maybe, 'Okay, see you soon.' No, she took the time, and she sat down [with my daughter]" (original in Spanish).

Staff Respect for Parents

Respect criterion. This criterion is the degree to which school personnel value parents as having something to offer in parent-staff interactions or their child's education. One way that parents discussed staff respect was whether school personnel privilege, entitle, or endow parents with authority or power, as opposed to overlooking, discounting, or disempowering them. For example, one mother described an instance when she felt unrecognized by the teacher, saying:

> [W]hen I went to go meet the teacher, she was practically was [*sic*] seeing other people, and I was just standing, "Hello, I'm here." Her helper, she's like, "Oh, I'll help you." And I really did, I got upset because I was like, "Well, I was right after some other lady, and she just ignored me."

Feeling that school personnel respect them seemed to provide parents some assurance that they will inform or otherwise involve parents when necessary. For example, one mother expressed:

> [When the school changes my son to another classroom,] I think it is very important to let me know as much as it is very important for them to change him. It's very important for me to know, too, when kids are fighting [and] to really, really know what's going on for the fact from what I told you about [how sometimes teachers can be wrong about students]. I think it's very important for me to know that, to get into detail.

Experiencing staff respect (or disrespect) also may influence parents' confidence in their role or ability to contribute to their child's education. This is depicted in an instance described by one mother who went to speak to her child's teacher about how she felt the teacher had unfairly punished her son. The teacher's response, however, was to deny that she had done what the child

claimed. When asked how this response made her feel, the mother responded, "I felt like my hands were crossed. My hands were tied. This is my son, too, he's listening to all this. He's in fear." In discussing her dissatisfaction with the conversation, she went on to say that her plan was to start stopping by her child's classroom more often because, "I just want [the teacher] to know that I'm there for my kids." When asked what impact she thought that would have on the teacher, she reflected, "Hopefully, she'll see that I care for my kid, and that I'll support him throughout everything, and if she has some issues with him, he's not by himself. He has his mom that she can talk to, and we can resolve issues together."

Parents also discussed staff respect toward them, specifically, or toward parents in general in terms of the degree to which school personnel show interest in or give consideration to parental perspectives or preferences. For example, when asked how she is able to tell whether teachers "really think about me and listen," one mother responded:

> When [the teacher] asks me questions or she gets into the details with me, like if she's concerned, and the way she's telling the things. She starts asking, she'll keep on telling me over and over, that's when I know that they're concerned, that they wanna know.

Parents also discussed staff respect toward parents in terms of the degree to which staff members positively evaluate their motivations and efforts with the child—that is, whether staff seem to view their motivations as valid and their efforts as contributing to their child's education. For example, one parent described a "good meeting" with the principal was one in which "she was on the same page with me. She understood what my concerns were, and she seemed to have that look of concern on her face as well." Another mother, when describing how she disliked how a particular teacher spoke to her very negatively about her son, expressed how she felt by saying:

> I am a mother, and I feel like it's hurting my feelings, because it's, "Oh, this bad, bad, bad. I help him a lot, a lot. And he don't [*sic*] want to read…" I feel bad because I say, "Well how I can help him if the teacher is not like--?" The only way to help him is being

in contact with the teacher, and together we can help him. Only, the teacher is not open to get help with me or to let me be part [*sic*]. It's like, that way I get frustrated.

This mother went on to say that, by constantly saying negative things about her child to her, the teacher was acting as if "she don't want me there [*sic*]." Another mother expressed similar feelings in describing her experience when the teacher publically recognized the parents of students who met their benchmarks (among whom hers were not included). She stated:

Yeah, so it makes me feel, and my child, horrible because… yeah, I feel great for that family [whose child passed], and [the school staff] talk about how great they are because they work with their children. It makes me feel like I'm not doing nothing [*sic*] with my children. That's how it makes me feel. It's like, "Oh yeah, it made a difference. You guys worked with them. Look at this, look at their score. This kid is above and beyond, and yay!" "I'd celebrate with you guys, but I'm still struggling, and it's not because I'm not doing my part."

This suggests that parents also interpret indirect messages to them from the school staff, which may or may not be intentional on the part of staff members.

Evaluating staff respect for parents. To evaluate whether staff members respect parents, their responses suggested that parents assess staff attitudes and behaviors toward them, mainly ascertained through direct interactions with staff. In particular, the interviews revealed four types of staff behaviors toward parents that they evaluated for evidence of whether as evidence of whether school personnel value parental perspectives and roles in children's education.

First, parents discussed assessing the openness of the school staff toward parents, as evidenced by how welcoming, friendly, talkative, kind, polite, or inviting school personnel are in their interactions with parents. For example, one parent, who had recently moved to the city, seemed to feel unacknowledged by most of the school staff at her child's new school, barring one teacher who made her feel "comfortable." She described the "one teacher [she] got to know" the previous year as a "real friendly" exception, explaining how "she just always goes out of her way to say 'hi,' and I always hear her in a good mood and happy." She also noted that the

teacher's openness did not end once her child graduated from her class, saying, "Even to this

day, I can go in there, and she always has time: 'Oh hi, how are ya'll doing?'" In contrast, she

described the office staff as rude and uncaring, saying:

> I try to avoid [going to the office]. 'Cause it all started there, when I first went in and was going to get [my daughter] enrolled in school, and there was just nothing but blankness [*with emphasis*] and no care, no nothin'. [*Imitating a curt and disinterested monotone:*] "Well, how can we help you?" It's like, [*in a softer, caring tone:*] "Oh, welcome to the school system," and, "I'm Ms. So-and-so, and if there's anything we can do to help ya'll out, feel free to call." And nothing about that, no excitement. It's like, [*returns to curt and disinterested monotone:*] "[*Long pause.*] Oh. Can we help you?" It was just blank. It was just [*pause*] no care. I said, "Man, these [people] seem really rude." Not only are the drivers rude [in this city], but the school system's rude! [*Chuckle.*] That's how I seen [*sic*] it, I hated going in there.

This mother seemed to believe that unfriendly or rude staff behavior communicated something

about how they felt about her, or how they thought she should feel in the school. She posed the

rhetorical question: "If you're going to put that kind of negativity out, what am I suppose[d] to

get out of it, as a person walking in[to] the school building?" For this mother, the answer seemed

to be that she was unwelcome in the school, which appeared to dampen her future engagement.

Other parents reacted differently to instances of feeling ignored by a teacher, or other

discourteous teacher behavior. For example, another mother recounted an incident in which:

> [D]uring the one and only conference [*with emphasis*], when we were having the conference [about a difference of opinion], another parent walked into the classroom and [the teacher] [*speaking slowly and deliberately:*] left me sitting down at the table and went and started talking to this other parent. And I told her, "Excuse me, I made an appointment to speak with you. Are you--? Am I going to continue sitting here at the table by myself?" Because she knew I was waiting, but she was having this conversation with this other parent. And she said, "Well as far as I'm concerned, the conversation's over." So I'm like, "Wow…" So when we were in the parking lot, I was putting [my child] in the car, and she said, "Well, I just want to talk to you about the conference. I mean, it wasn't a very good conference." And I said, "You're right, it wasn't, because you were very rude to me."

Her identification of the teacher's behavior as 'rude' and the incredulity implicit in her retelling

of the incident suggest that this mother was offended. Yet rather than the discouraging effect that

being ignored had in the previous example, it seemed to be more of a stimulus to action for this mother. Feeling that the teacher was saying that she "will not <u>work</u> [*with emphasis*] with us to fix a problem," she reported responding, "I'm not even going to bother with you anymore, I'll just go straight to your principal."

A second way that parents appeared to evaluate staff respect was in terms of how available, accessible, or accommodating school personnel are toward parents. This is illustrated in the words of one mother who had recently moved her child to a new school, where she felt that the staff "pay more attention to you" (original in Spanish). She clarified: "They help you. Right away, they bring someone to help you. If you need anything, you can go to the school at any moment." When it came to the principal, she noted that this one was "accessible to parents." As an example, she explained that the school held a monthly parent meeting with the principal (which they called 'tea time'), commenting: "That's great because I never experienced that at the other school; only when there were big conferences at the school did the principal show up. But here it's not like that. Here it says, 'Tea time with the principal'" (original in Spanish).

A third way parents seemed to assess staff respect for parent perspectives and roles was based on staff effort to engage parents in their children's education, the school in general, or with staff members. Parents discussed the degree to which school personnel initiate communication with parents, offer help to parents, or invite or otherwise encourage parents to participate in their child's education or in the school. Parents most often provided examples of how staff members (dis)engaged parents through their day-to-day interactional styles. For example, one mother described her ideal parent-staff relationship this way:

> From the beginning, make you feel comfortable, make you feel like you want to be a part of the school system, you know? I think that has a lot to do with it, and communication. Have that communication <u>open</u> [*with emphasis*] between not just your teacher, but in general whosever [*sic*] in the school system. Starting with walking in the front door. Your

principal, you have to go and see them in the offices, and they all need to be more [*elongated, like searching for a word*] <u>alive</u> and more involved, make the parents feel involved and important.

Some parents also conveyed how staff members engaged parents—or discouraged their participation—through formal invitations. For example, a parent with children at one school reported, "In the papers the school gives me to fill out, it says that I can visit whenever I desire, so I can visit my children. So, I like to see how their teachers treat them" (original in Spanish). Meanwhile, a parent from another school recounted how, on a day the school organized when parents were invited to "enter a classroom to watch how the teachers run a class," one teacher "told us that [the classroom] was her space and she didn't want anyone to mess it up, and she was within her rights" (original in Spanish). This incident illustrates how individual staff members can undercut rules designed to promote respect and trust.

According to the parents interviewed, a fourth way that parents seemed to assess staff respect for them was based on the degree to which staff members reciprocate or otherwise respond to parent efforts. Parents discussed, for example, whether school personnel responded when parents contacted them, gave consideration to their opinions during communications, or took action in response to their requests. As one parent put it, while reporting her reaction to how the principal had handled an incident with her child, "I was happy with it because obviously she took care of it, so she listened to my concerns." A contrast was provided by another mother, in her description of how she feels during interactions with teachers when "they keep on telling me the same story" and she feels that she "can't do nothing [*sic*] about it." This mother explained:

> Well, I kind of feel like, "Where's my word? Where's my concern?" 'Cause if I'm trying to find out what happened, and then some teachers--. I just get worried 'cause what if something really bigger happens, and it happens like that [where they don't listen to me]. But thank God it didn't happen that big, just small things, but still.

Parents also described staff reciprocation in terms of the degree to which personnel include

parents as a partner in their child's education, for example as evidenced by the level of teamwork

in the relationship or parent-staff cooperation and collaboration. Many parents expressed the

opinion that only by "working together" can parents and staff (usually teachers) help the child

succeed. For example, one mother conveyed that, when the teacher advises her about ways to

work with her son at home, "I feel better because I know how I can help him, and I know [the

teacher] want[s] to help me to help him. For me, it's like the only way to help him: to be

together." Another mother described her ideal parent-teacher relationship as follows:

> When [my children] know that "Mommy knows the teacher, Mommy knows the school, Mommy comes more often, she's here," then they feel more engaged…, like they have a sense of belonging, I guess you can say. Because it kind of reflects the home environment, in the way that you have two people working together for the greater cause, for the children, just like a mom and dad. You have them working together to take care of the children. They see the way we work together to feed them, to provide for them, to shelter them, all those things, and then they take a look at Mommy and teacher… When they see two people that mean a lot to them, that are important to them, working together and it's for their sake, I think that makes them feel like, "Oh, I belong here. This is more than just the place that I come and play. I actually have to learn, and my teacher cares enough for me to talk to my mom, and my mom cares enough to come talk to my teacher."

Staff Care for Parents

   Care criterion. This criterion is the degree to which staff members value, honor, or

positively appraise parents as people, or the degree to which they feel concern, emotional

attachment, or a desire or willingness to dedicate supportive resources to parents. A sense of care

seemed to provide parents some assurance that staff will operate to the best of their abilities to

support the parent. It also may enhance parents' self-esteem or general sense of worth. In

comparing her interactions with two teachers, one mother explained how she didn't "see the care

in there" with one teacher as much as the other by saying, "she answers my questions, but

doesn't just [*sic*] give me that confidence that I'm looking for… [*Chuckle*] it just looks like she's

out there sometimes, like she's got a lot on her mind…" She went on to describe how, in contrast, the other teacher made her feel "comfortable." As she explained it:

> [S]he's the one who convinced me that there's nothing wrong with [my child], maybe because she started a year early and that's maybe why she's struggling, but to give her time and she would get caught up with the rest of the classroom… She would try to encourage me that, "Don't give up on her," and I would say, "I'm not giving up on her yet!" …[She would say,] "I'm not giving up on her, she's a real smart little girl, she's just a little behind." And I said, "A little behind or a lot behind?" And she would touch you and make you feel comfortable. She's not afraid to let you know, [*imitating a soothing voice*:] "No, no, no," and she would hug you—she was a huggable person—and make you feel comfortable with her… I felt just connected with her, you know?

Similarly, another parent explained that she was particularly fond of one teacher in this way:

> She makes me feel like I have a purpose. She tells me that she's proud of my son and having him in class… She make[s] me feel happy that every time knowing that she has him in class makes her be a more better [*sic*] teacher and all. It makes her get up happy. That's what she's doing, and that makes me feel good 'cause not all the teachers do that.

When asked what it means to have a teacher who feels that way and does those things, this mother responded, "Well, like special. I feel special…" Parents primarily discussed staff care for them in these terms, reflecting the degree to which staff members seem to sympathetically or positively interpret parents' values, family situations, or who they are as people.

Evaluating staff care for parents. Evaluating staff care for parents again appeared to involve parents assessing staff attitudes and behaviors toward them, mainly collected via direct interactions with staff members. According to the interview responses, to discern staff care for parents, parents seemed to evaluate whether staff members understand them or are personally invested or committed to them. One way that parents reported doing this was by evaluating how interested staff members seemed in getting to know parents on a personal level. As one father said of the "teachers and secretaries or whoever" at his child's new school:

> They see me up there. They know [*with emphasis*] who I am, but it's kinda standoffish like, "Okay. He's the parent of [child's name]." It's more like a 'hi/bye' situation compared to [the old school] where the teachers and other staff that were there, they see you. They know who you are. And it's part of basically just getting to know you. They'll

come up, "Hey, how you doing Mr. [Last Name]. Coming to get [your kid]?" Stuff like that. They know who's there, and they're willing to talk to you, figure you out, and see if they can help you the best way you can. Here, like I said, it's not a bad school. It's just that the idea of them trying to <u>interact</u> with the parent, I don't think that part is there.

When asked whether he had an opinion about why that was the case, he responded:

At this point I really can't <u>say</u> [*with emphasis*]… It's like, "How you doing?" And it's like, <u>boom</u>, they're off back to work. I <u>guess</u> you wanna say they're more <u>working there</u> than they are trying to deal with the students or the parents. It's just a <u>job</u>. To where it's not like you ain't [*sic*] <u>worried</u> about me. You're just doing your <u>job</u> kinda thing.

A third way that parents seemed to feel cared for by the school staff is when staff

members empathize or sympathize with parents, express appreciation for, or individualize them.

According to one mother, when a principal told parents, "If you have a problem at home, come

and talk to me. I speak Spanish, and I can help your family," she thought to herself, "She

understands me and I feel happy" (original in Spanish). Another mother's description of a

particularly caring teacher illustrates an example of expressing appreciation for parents. She said:

She'd send me little thank you notes every time I would go and volunteer and help out at field trips or anything. I would always get notes sent home with [my child], little cards saying: "Thank you for your time. Your involvement is appreciated," or, "What you're doing now is really helping mold her into the person she is gonna become," and just really nice, sweet things.

When asked how that made her feel, she responded:

It made me feel really good, like, "<u>Wow</u> [*with emphasis*], she's taking notice that I like to be involved." So again, it's that selfishness, that praise, that pat on the back, like [*taking on a proud tone*:] "Oh, someone's noticing me." It made me feel just appreciated.

In contrast, another mother explained why she never felt "comfortable walking in the [school]

building" during the prior year. Although she reported "being active" at the school so that school

personnel had "seen me there quite a bit," she complained, "I still never got no [*sic*]

acknowledgement out of it." She described her experience at the school in these terms:

It was just, "Glad ya'll made it." Never really focused on a certain people [*sic*] unless if they probably knew you or something like that, but I never seen [*sic*] them go out of the

way to try to get to know the parents or let them feel welcome in the school system…
They were just all standing like this [*crosses arms*], you know?

In addition, parents discussed instances of staff members going above and beyond their

role obligations with parents as evidence of a personal investment in them. Many parents felt that

personnel adding a personal touch in interpersonal interactions with parents, while not required,

demonstrated caring for them. For example, one mother said of a favorite teacher of her child's:

> I always tend to go always [*sic*] to her when I want to know a straight answer. [Even now] I'll still run to her. I think she's just a real special teacher. She goes [*pausing while thinking*], she goes <u>beyond</u> being a teacher [*with emphasis*]. She makes you just feel that comfortable [*sic*].

For another mother, evidence of staff members caring seemed to come from their willingness to

work with her in dealing with her son's struggling grades. Not just "that when I called, they

would return my calls," but also how much they accommodated her schedule. As she described:

> The way I know that they care is the fact that they have scheduled a conference with me <u>every week</u> [*with emphasis*]. They are very open to, [*imitating an eager tone*:] "Okay, you want to meet tomorrow? Okay, I have something, but you know what, I'm gonna have to push it because this is very important to me." They express that, [*in a caring tone*:] "Okay, I'll move it."

She went on to describe another sign of staff caring, explaining how, after feeling "frustrated"

and disheartened with the constantly negative reports about her son, she asked her contacts at the

school to "start focusing more on the positive" with her:

> Then, too, [another sign that staff members care is] that they really tried to--. I did mention that I would like them to start focusing more on the positive and do positive reinforcement [with me]. At one point, for a good couple of weeks, they would write in his notebook a positive thing that he did instead of a negative thing. That helped for a little bit because I was like, "[*sigh*]." I knew that along with that one positive, there were like three negatives; they just didn't point them out. So it felt good for a couple of weeks, and then they were like, "Oh! Okay, we have to start sending you the negative stuff again because he's just not on task. He's not finishing work."

Although this mother made it clear that, "if [the negative report is] the truth, I want to hear it,

obviously," she also explained that she appreciated their effort to focus on the positive because,

as she put it, "For a while, I needed that balance, I really did because I heard a lot [*with emphasis*] of negative stuff." Thus, this mother seemed to discern staff care from attempts to accommodate her in their communication, not only logistically, but also emotionally.

At times, examples of staff members showing care through extra effort with the parent took a more extravagant form. For example, one teacher went far beyond her official duties to a particular family of two daughters, one of whom was in her class. As told by the father, the relationship began with the teacher's style of communication with him. He explained that "[this teacher] takes a moment to ask how we are and if we are okay or if we need anything. She is the only one that does that" (original in Spanish). At the time his daughter was in this teacher's class, the family was facing serious financial challenges. The father explained that the teacher knew of their family situation, "because [my daughter] goes to her teacher if she has any problems" (original in Spanish). After learning of the family's economic situation, the teacher arranged for the school district to make a donation of goods and gifts to the family. When asked how he felt about the teacher knowing about their situation and organizing the donation, he responded:

> First of all, when they first gave me the bundle, I was embarrassed, and I felt bad. But afterward, I said, "If they're giving, it's because [the teacher] knows how to love others," and now I don't feel bad anymore. As I'm already over all that [*laughs*]." (Original in Spanish)

This parent concluded our discussion of this teacher with the reflection, "It's very nice to see that someone else worries about your problems, not only about school, but also problems from home" (original in Spanish). These words convey that individualized treatment of parents and efforts beyond the call of duty can convey to parents that school personnel care about them on a personal level.

How Intrapersonal and Structural Factors Condition the Evaluation of Trustworthiness

In addition to the above processes of collecting and assessing information to evaluate staff trustworthiness, the analysis uncovered evidence of how these processes are structured by the particular historical, physical, and social contexts in which they occur. The data highlighted three intrapersonal and structural characteristics that appeared to condition parents' evaluation of staff trustworthiness in the targeted school communities: parents' past experiences and beliefs, organizational characteristics of the school, and social status relations between parents and staff.

Parents' Past Experiences and Beliefs

Parents' past experiences and beliefs appeared to condition their assessments of staff trustworthiness via their influence on parents' propensity to trust others, prior to interactions with staff members. Experiences and beliefs with the social world in general, schools and school staff in general, or the child's specific school and its staff all appeared to influence parental evaluations of staff trustworthiness. The clearest examples came from parents whose beliefs and prior experiences seemed to have created a predisposition toward suspicion, doubt, or distrust of other people in general or of schools and school staff in general.

For some parents, their general beliefs about society seemed to inspire a propensity to distrust others, or at least the absence of a propensity to trust others. These parents tended to view the community as dangerous or threatening to their children. For example, one mother described how she was concerned about potential harm that could come to her children in a dangerous world full of:

> [A]buse, sexual abuse, physical abuse… It just breaks your heart and you're thinking, "It can happen with your own family members [*with emphasis*], you just don't know, so don't expose yourself to what you don't have to. I mean, it happens in the schools, it's happened, so you just have to be careful.

For many parents with this type of generally cynical or fearful stance, their feelings seemed to be a rational response to their own past experiences of abuse, manipulation, or other physical or emotional harm. Given her perception of social dangers, this mother explained how it feels to put her child in someone else's care at school by saying:

> I mean, they're not safe anywhere. Anything can happen, but you trust that you're going to get to know those teachers and hopefully they're going to take care of your children while you're not there because the state says that they have to go to school, so can't keep them at home either… so you just hope for the best every time you let them go.

For parents without generalized feelings of distrust, any initial sense of caution toward staff members is likely to wane as they get to know them, so long as they do not give them any reason to distrust them. Yet, a distrustful worldview seemed to stimulate heightened vigilance in parents such as this mother, including a need to continuously monitor school staff to ensure children's safety, even after getting to know them. For example, this mother reported trusting the staff members whom she knew and never directly observing untrustworthy staff behavior. Yet, she still seemed to feel nervous about sending them to school. Moreover, in addition to getting to know their teachers, she explained that she supervises her children's school experiences by talking with them regularly and personally looking into anything that seems suspicious, even if it makes for some "awkward" interactions with school personnel, who may be offended by her enquiries. After all, she explained, "You can't be too careful with those things [*with emphasis*]."

Other parents seemed to have a propensity to distrust school personnel due to their prior experiences with or beliefs about schools. Often, these feelings originated in parents' own experiences attending school while growing up. For example, when explaining her preferences for interacting with the staff at her child's school, one mother shared the following experience from her own childhood.

> [S]omebody stole the teacher's--, I think she had a little doll, and she blamed it on me. I still remember. I still remember. She called my mom, and my mom was all like,

> "Where's the doll?" I'm like, "I didn't get it." She's like, "They seen [*sic*] you get it."
> And I was like, "Well, where is it? If I got it, where is it? I'd know. I don't have it." And
> I felt so bad because I didn't know how to make her believe that I didn't get it, so I know
> for a fact that some teachers are like that or something, from what happened to me.

She explained that this is the reason she feels that it is very important "to really, really know

what's going on" and "to get into detail" about her child's school experiences. Specifically, she

likes to make sure that staff "investigate" issues because, as her story illustrated, "sometimes the

blame goes to somebody and nobody realizes [whether] it's his fault or not."

Organizational Characteristics of the School

The interviews also indicated that organizational characteristics of the school condition

parental assessments of staff trustworthiness in various ways. One apparent mechanism was how

parents form opinions about the school based on its characteristics, and how those opinions (e.g.,

about how "good" the school is) seemed to influence their inclination to trust school personnel,

even before interacting with them directly. Some parents seemed to interpret material

characteristics (e.g., the physical condition of the building) and non-material characteristics (e.g.,

the school's academic reputation) of the school as symbols of the trustworthiness of the school

and its staff. This then served a vetting function for the trustworthiness of individual staff

members. Some parents appeared to give school personnel the benefit of the doubt because their

children attended schools with nice, clean facilities, brightly decorated hallways, or strong

academic records. For example, parents shared opinions such as, "[I]t's a new school, …it was

barely built, so all the teachers seemed to be great" or, "It's an exemplary school in testing and

stuff so all the teachers seem to be aware, so that's good."

Another way that organizational features of the school appeared to influence assessments

of staff trustworthiness was that certain characteristics influenced parent perceptions of the level

of demand on the school staff. Most often, parents discussed increased demands on staff due to

pressure associated with standardized-test-based achievement benchmarks, characteristics of the

student body or parent population, and class sizes. For example, one mother reported that the

emphasis on testing created "a lot of stress" for teachers. She further explained:

> Those benchmark tests, and that's what it's all about, too. And slowly but surely—and not even so much slowly—but teachers' jobs and teachers' raises are going to be affected primarily on do your kids pass or fail [the state mandated tests].

Parents also seemed to think that the pressure on teachers to meet these benchmarks may be

exacerbated by the student bodies and parent populations in these schools. For example, one

mother expressed that she felt meeting these benchmarks "could be very stressful [for teachers],

especially if you're having challenges in your classroom." She gave the following account of the

implications of the test-based standards for her children, who were among many in their classes

who struggled in reading:

> [W]hen [the teachers] started… concentrating more on the [state standardized test], and concentrating more on how many words you have to remember, that's when I started noticing the change [where my children began to struggle] because, yeah, I can sit down with them, but if they don't know how to read the word, how do you expect them to memorize it?

This mother also suggested that large class sizes create additional challenges for teachers, saying:

> Maybe [the class size is] why they're the way they are because they're so stressed about trying to get--. One of their teachers said, "I spend 90% trying to discipline them and 10% teaching because there's so many of 'em." I agree. It's hard enough for me to discipline four and try to get things done around the house. I can't imagine 32, [all the] same age. It's like, "Wow, you guys are my heroes" [*laughs*].

Interview responses also suggested that parents consider the level of demand on school

staff in evaluating staff trustworthiness, though increased demands on staff appeared to condition

those evaluations in different ways for different parents. Some parents cited the high level of

demand on school personnel as a possible reason for their failure to help children and parents.

For example, one father reflected, "Maybe the teachers want to make the effort, but they feel

frustrated when they see that the students don't want to respond. So, often the teachers get

discouraged. It could be that they're discouraged" (original in Spanish). Although this reflection

is stated somewhat neutrally, other parents appeared to interpret the resultant disinvestment from

teachers as a lack of caring for students and parents. One mother, whose child continued to

struggle academically, recounted how a teacher responded to her plea that she was already going

to great lengths at home and was at a loss for what else to do. According to this mother, "The

response is like, 'Well, we do here at school as much as we can. Then again, we have so many

children.'" When asked how she felt about that, she reported:

> I feel like, "So if you don't know how to help 'em, how do you expect me to know how to
> help 'em?" It's like, "Who do I go to now? Who do I reach out [to]? If you're his teacher
> and you're saying, 'Yeah, but we have so many children that your kid sometimes gets
> lost in the crowd,' then what do we do?

Another parent told the following story:

> I had this friend that was a teacher. She had, I think, second grade kids or whatever. And
> she was telling me, "Oh my goodness. I have this group that is not <u>performing</u> well [*with
> emphasis*], and they're not doing well on their assessments, blah, blah, blah." I says [*sic*],
> "What do you do?" She's like, "Oh, I just focus on <u>these</u> [kids] and I just--." I was telling
> my mom that yesterday and I was like, "What if <u>my</u> son is one of those kids? For
> <u>whatever</u> reason, he just doesn't get [*pauses*] algebra. Is the teacher gonna like, "Oh, you
> don't understand it. Get away." [*Pause*] You know?

Some parents also mused that the high level of demand on the staff in these schools may

result in school personnel shifting responsibility for children's learning onto parents. This is

illustrated in the following account of one mother's conversation with a teacher. She said:

> I remember one time I told [my child's] teacher, I said, "Well, I know that my son's
> struggling, but what are you doing in the class to keep him motivated? What are you
> doing?" She said, "Well, there's really not much we can do because we have so many
> kids. It's really up to you as a parent to [help him]." And that's why I kinda feel that way,
> too. I said, "Yeah, you're right." She said, "We only have 'em for eight hours when you
> guys have 'em all this time at home." But, in reality, it's probably less quality time.

This shifting of responsibility sometimes appeared to cause parents to feel unsupported and

alone, even if they internalize the responsibility as their own. For example, in describing what

the ideal communication with the teacher would look like, this mother said:

Well, don't just tell me that my kid is failing and then you're on your own. Have some options for us. Yeah, I know my child is failing because I haven't seen an improvement all year long, but don't just leave me stranded. Don't leave him stranded… I don't know, just giving me that extra support so that I know that you guys care, too. I know that we're on the same page as far as the child succeeding in school. I don't know. That's how I feel. I don't feel support. I don't feel supported. I feel like my kids are just being--, they're just that group, that it's [*sic*] not succeeding and that group that is being left behind, and we're just gonna have to move in with that same group, but yet that group is not going anywhere. That's how I feel.

Her words indicate that disinvestment from the teachers, even if recognized as a byproduct of the demands on them, still may leave parents feeling that staff members are not personally invested in them or their children. Such feelings reduce trust in school staff, particularly for parents of children who are already struggling, because these parents cannot rely on the staff to help their children succeed. Even worse, for parents whose children are seriously struggling, this can be a stressful and demoralizing experience when parents recognize that the organizational characteristics squeezing staff resources are unlikely to change. Of the future, this mother said:

It's scary. It scares me. It really does, it scares me. I really hope that my children stay engaged and have that hungerness [*sic*] of continue [*sic*] to go to school and not just lose interest because it's boring. I don't like it. I don't understand. I don't know what they're talking about. I'm lost. It's scary.

The experiences of a uniquely positioned mother, who was a teacher herself, shed further light on how demands on the school staff condition parent-staff interactions. She and her mother, a native Spanish-speaker who was also present for the interview, recounted a conversation they had previously. The respondent asked if her mother recalled, "When I was telling you about the children doing poorly in class" and how she doesn't "have the heart" to give up on them (original in Spanish). She added in English:

I don't have [*with emphasis*] that: "Well, okay, bye children. I'll focus on these because I know these are gonna make it. You're a lost cause over there…" And I think about it as a parent. Maybe that's the thing. The mom side of me kicks in, and I'm like, "Oh my God. How would you feel if they would do that to [your child]? Would they just, "Okay, well, okay. Eh. [*As if to say they would give up on him*]"?

The respondent's mother explained:

> She always comes worried because her children don't improve [academically]. Well, the thing is that she's a true teacher because… [she] worries about her children… Not just for one or two, but for all of them. I tell her, "Sweetheart, when you can't, you can't…" Many say, "That's why they go to school." But I tell her, "Education starts at home. It doesn't start in the school. It starts at home." (Original in Spanish)

This conversation suggests that, even well-meaning staff members, such as this teacher-mother, who are trying their hardest to help children reach goals that may be unrealistic, may conclude that they can "only do so much" and that they must rely on parents to do more. According to the grandmother's advice, some emotional detachment may be necessary for the professional or emotional survival of teachers facing unworkable challenges.

Also implicit in this teacher-mother's comments is the idea that shifting the responsibility for children's failures onto parents runs the risk of resulting in (or perhaps justifying) teachers becoming less invested in failing students' success, not only emotionally but also in action. A possible indicator of this is when staff feelings take on a blaming character toward students or parents. Regardless of whether this reflects how staff members actually feel, some parents seemed to perceive this to be the case. For example, one mother whose child was struggling said:

> Well, I went to talk to the teacher and she told me, "Well, [your child] distracts the class. This and that." But to tell you the truth, I don't believe that. Also, [she said] that he was not turning in his homework. I told her, "I'm in charge of his homework." I'm the one doing it because I don't work… I have time to be with my children, to go to school, and to participate in the conferences, and to help them with their homework. So they can't say that I'm not paying attention to my children. (Original in Spanish)

In this case, when the parent believed that the teacher was unfairly blaming her, it caused her to doubt her, thus undermining the parent's trust in the teacher. Another mother, who reported that the school staff viewed her children's outcomes as the parent's responsibility, was less sure about challenging the staff point of view. She said:

It's very overwhelming. That's the word. 'Cause I feel like it's up to me whether they're successful or not, which it shouldn't [be] in a way. Then I stop and think, "Well, it is because I'm their mother, so it is my responsibility." It's hard to explain.

Although she is less critical of staff claims as compared to the other mother, it is also clear that this mother does not feel that she can rely on the school staff.

In light of heightened demands, other parents seemed to make allowances for staff members. For example, one father said he believed that teachers today are dealing with "a different world" than the one in which he grew up. For example, he explained that today's students experience serious family issues, such as "mom getting beat at home, dad getting shot up." As a result, he said of teaching now, "It's a hard job. I wouldn't want it [*laughs*]. They don't get paid enough… [T]hey're working sixty, seventy hours <u>easy</u> [*with emphasis*] getting their lesson plans for the day [ready]." When asked whether his interactions with staff are affected by knowing that they face these challenges, he replied, "Yeah, I have to back off some… [I]t's like, 'You know what? They have some much to do.'" While this seemed to mitigate perceptions of teacher incompetence or lack of caring for this father, it also appeared to leave him feeling that he could not rely on staff. He explained:

> [So] we have to, we <u>have to</u> [*with emphasis*] as parents, step up and do more for our children instead of leaving the burden on the schools… [W]e need to step up as parents to <u>help</u> the teachers get our children where they need to be. They're <u>our</u> children, they're not the schools'. Schools could close up and leave, and it's all on us anyway. They're here to help us; we're not here to help them. We have to help <u>ourselves</u>.

While this father's children were excelling in school, a similar perspective was evident even among some parents whose children were struggling. For example, when asked if she had any ideas about why her younger children struggled in school more than they previously had, one mother explained that she had more time to be involved before, when she was not working. Yet

she also added, "But that's not an excuse either. It's not an excuse. I know I'm working, but I still have my kids in school, and I [*sic*] got my part to do as well."

In the context of heightened demands in struggling schools, some parents even seemed to assume nearly all the responsibility for children's education. For example, one parent said:

> This is the way I have always looked at education: All schools are <u>good</u> [*with emphasis*], and all schools are <u>bad</u>. That's the way I think about it. I think education starts at <u>home</u>. You give them a good education [there], they're going to take the <u>best</u> out of any school.

When asked what part of education belongs to the home and what part to the school, he first said, "I would say that it's like 99.9%, 99% home and the rest school." He later adjusted this to 90% for home and 10% for school. When asked why he thought it should be that way, he explained:

> Because I seen it [*sic*], so many. Left and right, and back there and over here. I seen [*sic*] the parents look at school like a <u>daycare</u> [*with emphasis*], get rid of the kids for that day… They <u>rely</u> on the school to teach the kids good from bad, drugs, and everything that has to do with life, good and bad.

In addition, parents sometimes offered narratives about how deficiencies of the parent population at the school was responsible for stunted child outcomes. Although most parents expressed an opinion that children's learning is the shared responsibility of parents and school staff, for many parents, narratives blaming parents also appeared to mitigate assessments of staff incompetence or disinvestment in children, parents, or the job. Such narratives most commonly indicated that (other) parents at the school are lazy or unwilling to participate in children's education, they do not care about their children, or they do not value education. Sometimes such narratives were communicated implicitly in parents' words. For example, after stating that teachers should be teaching children, one parent added, "Now, again, [as the teacher] I can sit here and teach and teach and teach and teach, but if the kids aren't willing to learn it, and if you don't have the backup at home, you lose it as soon as you walk out of the classroom." Other times, they were more explicit. For example, one father said, "My wife and I, we wanna be

involved in <u>everything</u> [*with emphasis*] that our kids do. We wanna be with them every step of the way. I didn't see that from any [other] parents." Another father said:

> I've seen <u>two different</u> [*with emphasis*] kinds of parents: Parents that <u>don't</u> care, just don't care, and their kids are doing <u>really</u> bad, and I've seen the other kind of parents that believe that [the] school is the educator, and their kids are doing <u>good</u>, doing good. And then, me, I'm the only person that I met like me [that thinks that parents are the educators], and I notice that my kids are always ahead, <u>always</u> ahead.

Relative Social Status of Parents and Staff

A third factor that appeared to condition parents' assessments of staff trustworthiness was social status relations between parents and school staff members. According to the parent interviews, one way this appeared to occur was when cultural distance—for example around ethnicity, nativity, or social class—prevented staff members from genuinely understanding parents, thereby undermining parents' sense of being respected and cared for. A bilingual Latina mother who was a teacher herself offered unique insight based on her experiences as a teacher. She discussed how many of her students' family situations were similar to her own childhood— growing up with parents who struggled to provide homework help given their limited English language proficiency—or to her experience as a mother with her firstborn—raising him on her own and working long hours to make ends meet. In comparison to her current lifestyle—married, college educated, and working in a professional field—she explained: "It's two very complete, different scenarios." Yet given her personal background, she also recognizes that:

> It's <u>hard</u> [*with emphasis*]. It's <u>very</u> hard, especially when you're <u>working</u> and you're a single parent, or you just don't have <u>time</u>, or [*pause*] for whatever reason it's difficult. I've been at <u>both</u> ends. I <u>know</u>. I <u>know</u> how it is over here, and I know how it is over here [*pointing to one side of the table, then the other*].

She expressed that her understanding, or at least her ability to empathize with parents, set her apart from most of her colleagues, because:

[N]ot many teachers have <u>lived</u> [*with emphasis*] in welfare, poverty, or whatever… A lot of them, they've lived the life of, not <u>luxury</u>, but they've been <u>pampered</u>. They went to college, and they finished early, and they didn't have their first child until they were a little bit older, so they were able to <u>buy</u> stuff, and <u>do</u> stuff, and <u>all of this</u>. So they wouldn't understand what it is to be a single parent, or what it is to <u>not</u> have the education to be able to help your student, your <u>son</u>, or your <u>daughter</u>. A lot of 'em have lived <u>the</u> perfect life. Not <u>all</u> of 'em, but <u>most</u> of 'em. It's a very few of us that--. Okay, I had my first son when I was [*pause*] a teenager. So I kind of had to go to work and go to school <u>part-time</u>, quit school, go to work again, go to school part-time, and then, just <u>work</u> myself up. A lot of my colleagues, they're <u>great teachers</u>, but they… were just right out of high school, fresh out of high school, go to college, they had the <u>chance</u>, they had the <u>opportunity</u>, and took advantage of it, and they did it the <u>right</u> way. And, it does help when you're at the other end. It kind of gives you that perspective of, "Oh, I <u>get</u> you. I know why you feel like that. I know why you're all stressed out…"

Parent-staff cultural distance may be greatest for families with highly vulnerable statuses, such as illegal residency status, which also intensify their need for supportive ties to school staff. Many parents discussed the unique challenges faced by undocumented immigrant families. One mother explained that "it's hard for children to learn when they have problems at home and their parents are afraid [about] immigration. It's something stressful for the whole family… There are many children who are suffering because of that" (original in Spanish). Another mother offered the following account, illuminating how increased immigration law enforcement the previous year in Arizona affected family-school relationships in her community. She explained:

Everything changes. It affects the mood of the family, [and] their relationship with the schools, because the children were seeing that their parents were worried. Parents were worried because they didn't have jobs. Spouses were fighting. We saw that [from others]: "My husband tells me we have to go, but I don't want to leave." Children listened to that and didn't know how Mexico was, and they had to go back to a place they didn't know… I guess the school enrollment lowered this year. Many people left. In the last month of school, which was May, many students were leaving. So, it must have been affecting [the school] because of that. There was a period of time that we were getting papers from the school telling us how we needed to talk to our children so the change wouldn't be so hard. They were going to school crying, and they were afraid of going to school. So even teachers needed to talk to them, and they had to be patient. I think that affected our children and families too much. There were arguments, problems, and even problems with the neighbors. I had my neighbor, and the next day they were no longer there. It was familial chaos. (Original in Spanish)

A second way that status relations appeared to condition parent assessments of staff trustworthiness was by shaping staff attitudes and behaviors toward parents. For example, when staff afforded parents less authority on the basis of minority social traits, they communicated disrespect to parents, and perhaps conflicting values or expectations. This is illustrated in one mother's description of how documentation status influences parent experiences in the school. For example, self-described as someone who is not afraid to "fight with" school staff, she explained how teachers react to her by saying, "At first, they were shocked and looking at me like, 'Who opened her eyes? Who talked to her? I can't manipulate her the way I want" (original in Spanish).

For parents from socially devalued backgrounds, a sense of disempowerment in the school sometimes seemed to originate from fear or assumptions, given the broader social milieu, rather than personal interactions with school personnel. For example, one mother said the following about how the broader context of racial/ethnic relations affects how she feels in the school.

> [T]he people who live here [in Phoenix], the citizens who are here might be a bit racist, they might not like us [Hispanics]. Maybe the superintendent is like the senator who established the law [that teachers must be native speakers of English]. He might have the opinion that there should only be English. I also talk to many Americans, and they don't know. They are now aware of the laws, but at the same time they don't know immigration laws. So, if they're told something, they're going to believe it. I call it ignorant racism, because they're not dumb, but they're not aware of the situation and they believe something is bad when it's not bad… If I saw the superintendent and if I knew that he was going to be in my daughter's school, I would feel self-conscious about speaking Spanish. Maybe they don't like Spanish. (Original in Spanish)

Another mother similarly explained why, because she was undocumented, she believed she "was not allowed to talk to the teachers about any abuse" and had felt that she "had no right to talk to them to demand anything" (original in Spanish). As she put it:

> I thought that when we entered the school, the school had to ask for an ID or something… What if I go, and they tell me, "You know what? You don't have any right

to come here to say anything." And plus, in those days, [County Sherriff] Arpaio raided a Walmart which is pretty near here, and I was afraid… I thought, "What if I go see the teacher, and what if she asks for my identification?" (Original in Spanish)

However, this mother reported that her relationship with the school drastically changed after she participated in a parent class, offered by affiliates from a local university. She explained:

And in that class, they told us that teachers don't have any obligation, any right to ask us for our immigration papers… Well before I used to hold back for that reason, but once we knew that--. [Now] I'm making demands for the benefit of my children. They were born here, and they have the right to have the privileges that the American children have. So, once they helped me understand that I did have rights, and that the teachers could not do anything to us, everything became much easier. (Original in Spanish)

This mother was quite explicit in her distrust toward staff in terms of their intentions (e.g., "I no longer believed [the teacher]" or "because we're not here legally in this country, we allow [school staff] to look at us badly" [original in Spanish]), as well as her belief that parents cannot blindly trust staff (e.g., "I'm always observing the teachers" and "not just taking [my children] to school and forgetting about them" [original in Spanish]). She shared a number of instances in which she did not agree with a teacher's behavior. For example, in one incident, she explained:

[In the past,] [w]e [parents] thought that because we don't have papers, we don't have rights. But when [the class leaders] told us how the situation was, I no longer believed the teacher. I told her, "I was taught this and this. And if you don't pay attention to me, excuse me, but above you there is another person who is in charge of you. So, if you don't fix it with me, I will go to talk to the principal… I have rights. I am not fighting for myself but for the children, and they taught me that." The teacher was shocked, and I put her back in her place. She has her rights, but we also have ours. We also have our rights to know. (Original in Spanish)

Yet, she still reported viewing school staff positively, for example saying, "I know practically all the teachers" and "we get along well" or "we have a good relationship" (original in Spanish). Largely, this seemed to be because, ultimately, staff members were responsive to her intervention efforts. In other words, she seemed able to trust that, even if they did not share her values or expectations about treating children or parents fairly, they respected her opinions and requests.

For other parents, social status relations effectively reduced their power or authority in the school context, even despite their efforts to intervene. Specifically, some reported that personnel were less attentive toward children, or less responsive to parents, on the basis of social traits. This appeared to influence their evaluations of shared values and expectations, as well as respect and care for parents and children. An illustrative example is revealed in a particular family's school experiences around language. Both parents, who were bilingual in Spanish and English, discussed how they felt staff treated parents differently on the basis of language dominance. For example, the mother recounted what happened when she confronted a teacher about inappropriately disciplining her child, saying:

> I said, "Well… if you have any other questions in the future, I would appreciate [you] to refer 'em to me instead of my son…" That's when she said, "Well, it's nice to know that you speak English because I think you're like the second or third mom that comes in here and knows how to speak English, and that's nice to know that we can communicate."

When asked how she felt about that comment, she said that she thought to herself, "Wait a minute, so if I didn't know the language [*meaning English*], and I couldn't communicate with you, that doesn't give you the right to treat the children this way." Although this mother was proficient in English herself, she said:

> I felt horrible. I felt horrible because I have an advantage now that most parents don't. Just because I know the language… I was walking and I was thinking about those other families that don't have that advantage, that don't have that communication. What if I didn't know the language? [The teacher] would have just said, "Oh, well deal with it." I felt bad. I felt horrible the way she's--. I don't know. Maybe that's just a personal feeling, but it shouldn't be that way. It shouldn't be--. Even if the parents don't know the language, if you have a problem or concern or something, have an interpreter.

Implicit in these words is the message that, at least in communications with this teacher, English language proficiency is not only required to be able to communicate but also to be treated with respect. This message was more explicitly communicated by her husband, as he discussed how language impacts relationships between parents and staff as follows.

> I think there are many differences when you don't speak English because I've noticed it… I've seen it when I drop off my kids at school. I've seen that [the staff] push aside people who don't speak English. And you can see that they can't defend themselves. You do see that they push them aside. (Original in Spanish)

At first, he offered a neutral explanation, saying, "I don't know why [*stumbling for words*]. It could be the language barrier, or I don't know, but I do see that it does make a big difference" (original in Spanish). Yet his feelings became clearer when elaborating on his experiences:

> It's affected me, and I get very upset. I get mad when someone treats someone [differently] just because of the simple fact that the person doesn't understand the language. [*Stumbling for words, then assertively*:] They push you aside. And that's not good. I don't like that, it's very bad. I get upset, because I've experienced that. I go to the school, and you're saying whatever to them, something, whatever little thing, and the people still cannot understand, and so then they take off. It's as if it's not important [to them]. Or like I'm wasting my words for nothing. "This person is not important.' That's how [*with emphasis*] I see it. (Original in Spanish)

Though he seemed tentative about saying it, he continued:

> Because I've seen teachers doing that. There are many people [*pause*]--. There are teachers that are like, they're very-, they're racist. Yes, because you can see when they push aside any person who doesn't speak English well. And when you can defend yourself, it doesn't matter what race you are… They have that attitude. Because there are several teachers who--. I also see there that [*pause*] they treat the children like that [harshly yelling at them]. Very--.I don't know if it's the teachers' manner [*pause*], or I don't know what the problem could be, because they do yell at the children like that in the school. [*Speaking softly*:] I don't know why. I have seen it, and even my wife has told me, "Hey, I've been watching how that lady treats our son. It's not like they're her slaves." I've seen that sometimes they treat them like that. (Original in Spanish)

In addition to the way that teachers and staff interact with parents and children from Latino and Spanish-speaking families, the mother also speculated that her children's placement in the "second learners class" (i.e., English Language Learner [ELL] class) was the result of *de facto* tracking by ethnic background, and perhaps even discrimination. As reviewed previously, she believed that her children were receiving an inferior education as compared to those in the

"regular" classes.[35] She reported that, unbeknownst to her, all children are assigned to the ELL

class if their parents marked a language other than English as the primary language spoken in the

home when enrolling them in school. This was true even for her children, who primarily spoke

English (according to their parents, they understood but did not really speak Spanish). Once

assigned, students must pass a written proficiency test to move out of the ELL track, so she

reported that "the only reason" that her children are still in that class is because their "reading

level is so low." In fact, when she tried to have them moved at the start of the school year, she

explained, "I didn't sign that paper for them to be in [ELL]. Well, I didn't sign it, but they forced

me to sign it because I had no option." According to her, "They said, they're already enrolled in

that class, so you have to sign it, because no matter what, they're already enrolled, and for them

to be in a normal class, they have to pass reading, and they haven't."

For this mother, the school's course placement policies, and her interactions with the

school personnel upholding them, appeared to make her feel as if she had no voice in her

children's education and could not rely on the school staff to help them. This is evident in the

following explanation she provided about how she feels in these interactions.

> It's very stressful. I'm in a stage that I'm very stressed about the whole situation,
> everything… I guess I have to pretty much deal with it. That's how I feel, like I have to
> deal with it, no matter what I have to say. That's awful because these are my children. I
> am paying taxes. I can't say anything, and if I do, they always find a way around to
> convince me otherwise. I guess I'm stuck. My kids are stuck.

In a saddening account of how she believed that her children feel just as "stuck" in the situation

as she does, she shared that "they call themselves 'stupids.' That's what [my son] says, 'I'm

stupid. I'm stupid… I'm not smart. I'm with the class that's not--.'" When asked why she

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[35] See section on "shared values and expectations about children."

thought her children were saying such things, she seemed uncertain, repeatedly saying, "I don't

know why they're saying that," given her own response to them. In her words:

> This is the first time I've made comments [about this], with you, but otherwise I never say, "Oh, they're in the lower class." No. They just say, "Mom, I'm stupid. I'm turning stupid." I'm like, "What? You're turning stupid?" He's like, "Yeah, 'cause I'm not learning." …When I ask him [why he thinks that], he's like, "Well, I just know I'm stupid." I'm [like], "No, you're not. You're very brilliant. You're smart. Whatever you want, you can learn it. You gotta study, you gotta work hard." He said, "No, I don't know it because I'm stupid. I can't learn it because I'm stupid. I'm not smart like the others." …So I try to explain the difference between smart and not smart: it's just all about studying and doing your homework, so that's the way I end it.

When I pressed her, asking whether she felt that her son understood her, she responded,

"Probably not, actually *[laughs]*. No matter how many times I tell him, he still doesn't get it. He

still calls himself stupid and dumb and not smart, so maybe he's not [understanding me]."

Wondering aloud about where he might be getting such ideas, she continued:

> Now that you mention that, because he keeps saying that over and over, and I [keep] repeating the same thing: "You are very smart. You are. It's all about studying. It's all about learning your words, learning your math, learning this and that, and it's not because you're stupid." Maybe he doesn't, [maybe] he's not getting the concept. Why is he saying it over and over again? I'm repeating myself again over and over. Interesting.

In these reflections, though she associated her children's self-deprecation with their classroom

assignment, she did not directly implicate staff attitudes or behaviors toward students in these

feelings. However, she was explicit in expressing suspicions that the school policies around ELL

course placement are discriminatory. When asked why children who are not proficient in reading

but only speak English are not placed in the same class, she responded:

> I don't know. You're asking me [*with emphasis*], I don't know! *[Laughs.]* That's the same question that I asked [the office staff]… See the problem is that I don't know. I don't know that if they're good in reading or not. I do see—and it's gonna be—this is bad. What I'm gonna say, it's bad. I see all Hispanics and all different cultures in one class and all Caucasians in one class, but very few Caucasians in one class.

When asked what she thinks about that, she said, "I feel like they're being discriminated. That's how I feel."

Power was not so explicit in all discussions of how language shaped parent-staff interactions. For example, one Spanish-dominant mother said, "I would feel much more comfortable speaking Spanish [with school personnel] because it's my language. I speak Spanish much more. But, I would also like to learn to speak English" (original in Spanish). Such narratives were common, in which language was discussed in impartial terms, at least explicitly. This seemed particularly true for parents who seemed to trust the school staff, and when translators were readily available in the school. However, power was often implicit even in these descriptions because parents recognized that limited English language proficiency was a disadvantage in the school context. They discussed how there were times when translators were not available or easily accessible, that they varied in quality, and that communicating through a translator was not the same as communicating directly in one's own words. For example, one mother said that when the translators are not around and you have a question, "you don't ask because there's no one to help you. I just leave my child and go home. If there are questions I want to ask, sometimes I don't ask them" (original in Spanish). Other parents suggested that the lack of common language reduces their likelihood of interacting with staff. As one mother said:

> When I feel more comfortable, when I feel more secure, that's when I go to [my son's] classes to watch how he's behaving. But only if the teacher speaks Spanish. [Otherwise] I just don't feel comfortable… If I knew how to speak English well, if I were able to communicate, I wouldn't feel that way. (Original in Spanish)

Parents also described how limited English proficiency created problems when helping their children with their (typically entirely English) homework. As one Spanish-speaking mother said:

> There are times that it is frustrating because—I do know mathematics, but when it comes to reading, that's much harder. It's much harder for us. Our children are doing much better in math, because they have our support. They are low in reading. Much lower… [T]here are times we get very frustrated, "Why don't we know?" …If I knew how to read

and write English it would be [*laughs*]--. It would be much more help for them. They would progress much more. Sometimes, [the children] feel badly… "Why don't you tell me? The thing is that you don't know." They start crying and I tell them, "Don't cry, we're going to talk to [the teacher]. I'm going to go [to the school] so she can explain it to me [*laughs*]." (Original in Spanish)

Moreover, many parents, regardless of their own language proficiency, implicitly defined English as the default, and therefore dominant, language. For example, by saying things such as, "[I]t's very [*with emphasis*] important here in the United States to speak the English language, especially in the school" (original in Spanish). It was also common for parents to refer to English simply as "the language." Parents also promoted the narrative that it is parents' responsibility to learn English, for example as when one Spanish-dominant mother said, "If an American talks to me, the conversation is going to be short because I can't speak much [English]… But it isn't their fault. On the contrary, it's mine because I don't speak English" (original in Spanish). Many parents also discussed feelings of embarrassment around not speaking English. For example, one mother explained that, while she is not hesitant to seek help from interpreters, "There are many people who don't look for help because they're embarrassed... There are many parents that, because of embarrassment, they don't ask questions" (original in Spanish).

A final way that social status appeared to condition parent evaluations of staff trustworthiness was as a lens through which they understood the parent population at the school. As discussed in the previous section, some parents expressed the belief that parent attitudes and behaviors were the primary cause of student outcomes. Most often, parents employed this narrative to explain poor student outcomes as the result of a lazy or disinterested parent population. In these narratives, many parents invoked social categories, by associating negative traits with one or more minority statuses represented in the school community. Most often and most explicitly, parents incited status positions around language (Spanish versus English), ethnicity (Hispanic versus not), legal residency (undocumented versus documented), and nativity

(immigrant versus native). These categories influenced how some parents evaluated school

outcomes and staff attitudes and behaviors, by providing stereotyped scapegoats for what they

otherwise may interpret as evidence of staff irresponsibility or unreliability. At times, these

messages were coded, as in the following comment.

> [Telling parents about promotion standards is] a way for the parents to, "Okay, [as parents] we've got to get on the ball, too." Hopefully some parents will, with all the Kumons and the Sylvans and all those of the world, hopefully, if they know, "Well, see, there's a note where a child is not doing well," they will take the summer [school].

When using coded language, social status relations tended to be implicit in parent narratives,

suggesting that the disadvantaged social positions of certain families—typically immigrant,

Hispanic/Latino, or Mexican families—stem from their inferior culture.

In other instances, status references were more direct. For example, one mother recounted

the following conversation she had with a member of the school staff, sometime after she had

transferred one of her children to another school.

> [The staff member] said, "Do you know what? I'm happy you transferred [your daughter]. It's going to be a positive change for [her]… I work with families, mothers, fathers, and the problems are endless, and I don't want your daughter to fail… The problem in [this school] is that the majority of the families are Hispanics, and the parents—both parents—spend most of their time working. And the children spend their time alone at home, and they don't know anything. Parents are not aware of the things their children do before or after school." (Original in Spanish)

As discussed earlier and reflected here, for parents, these narratives often seemed to justify lack

of caring or even competence from staff. Thus, while this may help preserve parent-staff trust, it

also may come at the cost of tangible support for parents and children. The above example

further suggests that such narratives may even originate from school personnel. For example,

another mother said:

> The majority of the mothers work, and there are others who don't like to help [at the school]. There are many moms who think like typical Mexicans: "[The teachers] are getting paid to teach." Many of them don't want to help… [T]he majority of the students are below level. Those are the moms who don't attend. What I mean is that, I don't know

if it's because they don't worry about their children or what. But obviously they can't do it because of their job. But like the teacher says, "We have to have time for everything, to help them." (Original in Spanish)

These words emphasize the obligation that this mother believes parents have to their children's education and how time constraints due to work, or anything else, are not a valid excuse. This suggests that, while some parents recognize that structural factors, such as work schedules, constrain how parents participate in their children's education, they nevertheless take a 'zero tolerance' stance toward parental responsibility.

While school personnel appear to at least reinforce such narratives, it cannot be concluded from the interview data that they initiate these narratives. Parents likely receive stereotypical messages from multiple sources external to the school, including the media, politics, and law enforcement. Parents also sometimes cited their personal experiences with the parent population as at least confirming such claims. For example, when asked whether she thought these things were true about parents, one of the above mothers replied:

I think so. Whenever there were parent conferences, nobody went. They didn't go. In one occasion there was a class that was going to show us how to teach our children to read, and the only two people there were my husband and I. It was the two of us [*laughs*]. (Original in Spanish)

On the other hand, if school personnel indeed directly communicate these messages to parents, parents may give them more weight, given staff members' insider knowledge and professional expertise. Moreover, it is unclear why parents seemed more willing to excuse staff responsibility due to demands on staff but not parent responsibility due to demands on parents, even when they recognized considerable demands on parents such as long work hours, inflexible schedules, lack of transportation, cultural or social discomfort, and language barriers. In other words, why did parents seem to express more compassion toward school personnel than other parents?

One potentially telling factor is the heterogeneity of experiences even among members of the same status group(s). One type of variation—employment status and work conditions—is implicit in the following words of the above mother, a Spanish-language dominant immigrant.

> As a matter of fact, there are people who tell us [parents who volunteer at the school] that we do this because we don't have chores to do at home, and that's why we are there in the school. But it's not that, because we have to make a little time for everything. Just think, they're there from 7:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., and in an hour or two we can clean our house and prepare their food for when they arrive home. So I feel that we have enough time to help. Well, on my behalf, I'm going to help [the school staff] in whatever they might need." (Original in Spanish)

Although the explicit message in these words is a reiteration of her earlier assertion that parents must make time for their children's education regardless of other obligations, this time she explains it in the context of her lived experience as a stay-at-home mother (as opposed to the experience of parents employed outside the home, which she referenced earlier). The fact that this mother does not work outside the home herself may restrict her insight into and empathy for the challenges faced by working parents. Parents similar in some regards do not necessarily understand the experiences of those who differ from them in other ways. The interviews suggest that a diverse array of experiences constitute 'the' minority experience, even within this relatively homogeneous sample of families. Parents in this sample also discussed differences in cultural traits, educational backgrounds, language skills, and social contacts among immigrants originating from different areas of Mexico (e.g., rural town versus Mexico City). Parents also discussed how undocumented status constrained immigrant parents' educational and employment opportunities, detrimentally so for many residing in Arizona.

In addition, it is important to recognize the central role of assumptions—often stereotypical—in these narratives, about low-status parents and a 'bad' parent population, even when espoused by parents who share those statuses (e.g., Spanish-dominant, undocumented Mexican immigrants). For example, the comments reproduced above indicate that many parents,

as 'typical Mexicans,' make excuses but are not really concerned about their children or interested in helping school personnel educate them. Yet, the multiple and varied voices represented in the interview sample suggest otherwise. Parents consistently and, seemingly genuinely, identified their children's educational advancement as a core value and target of their energy. Based on this sample (and a substantial body of prior research), 'low-status' parents appear to go to great (and often creative) lengths to meet their children's educational needs, according to their best judgment, and often in the face of serious challenges.

Discussion

In this chapter, I explored how trust, respect, and shared expectations develop (or fail to develop) between school personnel and Latino parents of young children, and what factors condition those processes in predominantly low-income, Latino communities with strong immigration flows. Through an inductive analysis of data collected via in-depth interviews, I considered how parents define and evaluate supportiveness in school personnel, and how this is conditioned by intrapersonal and structural factors.

How Parents Define and Evaluate Supportiveness from Staff

The findings suggest that trust may be the most salient aspect of supportive relationships, as parents appeared to assess respect and shared expectations in their evaluation of staff trustworthiness. The interviews revealed five possible criteria for trusting the staff at their children's schools. Collectively, they defined trustworthy staff as personnel who are competent in their roles (i.e., they do their job), share their values and expectations for the child (i.e., they have appropriate or preferable attitudes, goals, and expectations for the child), are personally invested in children and in the job (i.e., they really care about children and their work), respect parents (i.e., they value parental roles and perspectives), and care about parents (i.e., they value

parents as people). Thus, defining the trustworthiness of school personnel seems to be about how parents answer the question: Is my child in good hands?

Each of the five criteria enhances parents' confidence that their child is in good hands with school personnel. Staff competence in their official roles—for example as evidenced by children's safety, children's learning and developmental progress, and classroom and school order—seemed to convince parents that their child is in capable hands. As a result, parents could trust that the staff is able to meet their child's needs. Staff sharing parents' values and expectations for children—for example as evidenced by staff treating children fairly and equally, aptly handling children's problems and issues, and exhibiting appropriate teaching, disciplinary, or management styles—appeared to reassure parents that their child is in reliable hands. This may enable parents to trust that their child will be exposed to consistent expectations and beliefs about how best to reach those goals. Staff personal investment in children and the job—for example as evidenced by staff treating children with love and affection, putting effort into their work, and exceeding their official job duties—seemed to let parents know that they are really committed to children and their work, which suggests that parents can trust them to do their best to meet their child's needs. For parents, staff respect for them—for example as evidenced by staff welcoming, inviting, reciprocating, or cooperating with parents—appeared to signal that staff view them as competent and worthwhile partners. This may enhance parents' sense of security, by believing that personnel will consider their point of view and consult them as necessary. Finally, staff care for parents—for example as evidenced by staff members making efforts to get to know parents on a personal level, and demonstrating understanding, sympathy, empathy, or appreciation for them—seemed to tell parents that staff members value them as a person. This likely comforts parents by suggesting that the staff will do its best to assist them.

While these criteria are conceptually distinct, they are interconnected in the lived experiences of families. The interview reports are consistent with prior research on trust indicating that, to evaluate another's trustworthiness, people engage multiple cognitive processes at once (Kramer, 1999). For example, during a face-to-face interaction with school personnel, parents may simultaneously interpret what staff say, and how they say it, for evidence of how they feel about the parent, how they feel about the child, how they feel about their job, and so on. In addition, the criteria may be interrelated in that some criteria become information upon which parents then evaluate other criteria. For example, some parents interpreted staff caring for their child as evidence that they also care about parents because, as one mother put it, "The way you love my children says a lot about how you love me." This suggests that there may be hierarchical connections among the criteria, where some criteria are nested within others.

These criteria for staff trustworthiness are consistent with earlier research on trust in schools. In their examination of public schools in Chicago, Bryk and Schneider (2002) found evidence of four criteria for trust: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. My concept of 'staff respect for parents' is consistent with their definition of respect as "recognition of the important role each person plays in a child's education and the mutual dependencies that exist among various parties involved in this activity" (p. 23). Moreover, our findings both emphasize "a genuine sense of listening… and in some fashion [taking] others' perspectives into account in future action" (p. 23). The theme of 'staff competence' in this chapter is similar to their criterion of competence. They write:

> Often, the discernment of competence in schools is difficult because the goals are complex and numerous, but parents may judge teachers by their abilities to control students, their approach to discipline, and the amount of meaningful classroom instruction they appear to offer, or principals by the building orderliness, safety, establishment of organizational routines, how they address gross student misconduct, or the provision of materials and supplies. (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 24)

My concept of 'staff care for parents' is similar to what they call personal regard for others, or the act of showing others that they "care about them and are willing to extend themselves beyond what their role might formally require in any given situation," as communicated through various actions demonstrating "caring commitment," such as a willingness to work extra hours or "expressing concern about personal issues affecting [people's] lives" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 25). In addition, my findings about 'staff investment in the child and the job' overlap to some degree with their findings about the criterion they call integrity. They define integrity as "consistency between what [people] say and do" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 25), which is closer to my definition of trust; however, they also assert that, "In a deeper sense, integrity also implies that a moral-ethical perspective guides one's work," and in the school context, this means "advancing the best interests of children" (p. 26).

While the findings presented in this chapter largely confirm this earlier study of trust in schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), they also uniquely reveal shared expectations and values for children as a fifth criterion of staff trustworthiness. While the Bryk and Schneider (2002) study considered a wider range of types of schools, across the city of Chicago, this chapter focuses on a particular population of schools, those serving high proportions of low-income, Latino, and immigrant families. The overall similarity in findings about how parents define and evaluate trust in schools suggests that these may be broadly generalizable, perhaps even universal processes, at least for the four overlapping criteria. The fifth criterion, shared values and expectations for children, may be more salient in the present study context. This could reflect heightened social and cultural distance between parents and school personnel, given the prevalence of immigrant, minority, and socioeconomically disadvantaged families in the study population and sample. Past research confirms that these family background characteristics often are associated with distinct

values and expectations regarding their children's education than those held by members of the

staff in U.S. public schools (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005;

Lawson, 2003; Mapp, 2003).

These data also revealed that, at least for the parents interviewed, parents' feelings

toward school staff appeared more complicated than a simple trust-distrust dichotomy, in which

the absence of trust is distrust, and the absence of distrust is trust. In this sample, there were few

examples of parents who expressed unequivocal trust toward school personnel, a genuine feeling

of being able to rely on the staff. While these parents did not appear to *dis*trust staff members,

they expressed a more passive stance toward them, for example taking the form of an agnostic

understanding of schools as having children's best interest at heart but otherwise expecting little

of school staff. This is perhaps trust as, not a quality of an interpersonal relationship, but more of

a mutual understanding that 'I'm doing my job, and they're doing their job.' Whereas the former

is an interpersonal trust, the latter is closer to contractual trust, in which trust is contingent upon

the existence of a contract "which defines basic actions to be taken by the parties involved" and

"legal actions can be taken… to seek redress" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 16). Whereas

relational trust may inspire feeling or action in parents (e.g., encouraging them to further consult

or seek help from staff [Stanton-Salazar, 2001] or to engage in children's education [Osterling &

Garza, 2004]), a more passive trust may have less influence on parent behaviors and feelings. A

more contract-like trust is also less likely to confer some of the emotional support benefits that

parents receive from interpersonal trust with school staff, as it is used when "the basis for social

exchange is primarily material and instrumental" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 16).

In addition, while a number of parents appeared to actively distrust school personnel, for

example doubting or suspecting that staff members are not doing what they should, other parents

expressed a more passive distrust, reflecting more of an ambivalence about staff trustworthiness than explicit distrust toward them. Whereas actively distrusting staff may encourage parents to increase monitoring, challenge staff decisions, or intervene on their behaviors, parents who only passively distrust staff may feel less entitled to challenge the school staff, or they may question their own assessments of staff trustworthiness. Under some circumstances, outright distrust may be more effective than passive trust for facilitating children's academic outcomes. Among the parents interviewed, active distrust toward staff seemed to put parents on guard and motivate them to action, which included challenging, making demands, or otherwise intervening in staff operations. For many, this appeared to be an effective method for shaping children's educational experiences in desired ways. If parental intervention is a key mechanism for tailoring children's educational experiences and access to resources in the U.S. schools (Lareau, 2000; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001), and if trust in schools inspires parents of Latin American origins to defer to staff expertise out of respect (Tinkler, 2002), parental *dis*trust in schools may be a more valuable educational resource for Latino students than trust, particularly when it is a trust that does not confer socio-emotional benefits such as a sense of belonging and self-worth.

The diverse trust profiles represented in this sample of interview participants proposes directions for future research on family-school connections generally, and in low-income Latino communities in particular. Future research should more carefully explore different versions of trust that emerge in parent-staff relationships. Qualitative research may be particularly useful for generating a typology of parent-staff trust profiles and their consequences for parent actions, staff actions, and children's outcomes. What type of parent-staff trust is ideal for children's academic progress, and does the ideal type differ across contexts? Are different types of parent-staff trust preferable in predominantly minority communities versus predominantly middle-class

or non-Latino White communities? What about for more advantaged families with children attending urban schools serving predominantly minority and low-income families?

In addition, more attention should be given not only to when and how trust facilitates children's educational success, but also to when and how it has null effects—for example when trusting networks are not used to 'activate' resources (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lin, 2000)—and when and how it actually hinders students and families. While supportive relationships may enhance social exchange, norm enforcement, and the flow of information in ways that can facilitate children's development (Coleman, 1988), such ties also may facilitate, or come at the cost of, 'undesirable' outcomes such as "exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms, and downward leveling norms" (Portes, 1998, p. 15).

Factors that Condition Parent Evaluations of Staff Supportiveness

In addition to providing insight into the processes by which Latino parents define and evaluate supportiveness from school personnel, this analysis highlighted intrapersonal (i.e., within-individual) and structural factors that condition those processes in these communities. By and large, these appeared to discourage or impede the development of supportive relationships between parents and school personnel, rather than facilitate or enhance their development. In their interviews, parents highlighted three conditioning factors.

First, the interviews illuminated how the prior beliefs and experiences of parents condition their evaluations of staff trustworthiness. As prior literature on trust suggests, people carry with them into each interpersonal interaction an assembly of attitudes, memories, feelings, beliefs, and values, which collectively define their personal inclination toward trusting or distrusting others prior to interacting with them (Kramer, 1999). This inclination is the product of

their prior experiences and is independent of any impending social interaction during which people collect and assess information about the trustworthiness of others. Discernments of trustworthiness are thus influenced by factors such as "each individual's historical perspective on the institution, personal and cultural beliefs rooted in his or her family, and community of origin, and prior workplace socialization experiences" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 21). The findings of this study similarly indicate that parents' past experiences with and beliefs about their social world in general, schools in general, and their child's school in particular influence their propensity to give school personnel the benefit of the doubt, or to feel suspicious toward them, upon entering social interaction.

In particular, among some interviewed parents, there was evidence that past experiences inspired initial feelings of doubt or suspicion rather than trust toward the school staff. Parents who tended toward distrust seemed to approach interactions with school personnel with heightened awareness and caution, even in the absence of any evidence that anyone on the staff at their child's school is untrustworthy, and sometimes even despite evidence that individual staff members meet criteria for trustworthiness. Parents appeared to weigh both the possibility of what danger *could occur*—as informed by their prior beliefs and experiences—with evidence of what *probably would occur*—as informed by their direct interactions with staff members and discernments of their interpersonal trustworthiness. Thus, while a prior propensity to approach staff with caution does not necessarily preclude trust, it may prolong the work of judiciously monitoring and supervising children's experiences and staff member behavior.

Hence, it appears that prior experiences which heighten parents' sense of vulnerability toward others do not deterministically influence future evaluations of trust, but they do introduce complexity into how parents collect and react to information about others. Among this sample,

the past experiences that appeared to inspire a tendency toward distrust included instances of physical or emotional harm, sometimes quite intense in nature (e.g., abuse) or involving extended exposure (e.g., over an entire childhood). To the extent that such traumatizing events are more prevalent in resource-poor communities (Drake & Pandey, 1996; Kiser, 2007; Kiser & Black, 2005), this may be one source of the patterns of more passive versus active trust and distrust observed among parents in this sample.

In addition, this study provides further insight into how levels of trust in schools depend on organizational characteristics of the school, such as its history of achievement gain or the degree of tension around race or ethnicity (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). The findings not only indicate that organizational characteristics of the school impact parent-staff trust, but they illuminate how they condition the processes by which parents evaluate staff trustworthiness. For example, material and non-material characteristics, such as financial resources, the physical condition of facilities, or the academic culture, appear to serve a vetting function for school staff, by signaling to parents whether the school employing them is a trustworthy organization.

Prior studies indicate that historically disadvantaged (and often academically lagging) student populations, large class sizes, and high-stakes testing procedures and accountability standards of schools constrain actors' attitudes and behaviors (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Booher-Jennings, 2005; Lens & Neves de Jesus, 1999). This study confirms not only that these can impede parent-staff interaction and strong family-school connections (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001), but also that these factors intersect in low-income Latino communities, creating conditions of heightened demand on school staff. These structural conditions reflect two levels of concentrated disadvantage experienced by Latino Americans. At the family level, many Latinos are situated at the nexus of multiple disadvantaged statuses—by

ethnic background, socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, and immigration status—the collective source of "complex layers of oppression" (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010, p. 348). At the community level, Latinos also disproportionately reside in high-poverty neighborhoods (U.S. Census, 2011) and attend predominantly minority schools (Orfield & Yun, 1999). Thus, Latino students may be particularly likely to attend schools in which large class sizes, the needs of student and parent populations, and accountability policies interactively place weighty pressure on the shoulders of the school staff.

Parents in this study reported that school personnel sometimes fail to meet students' educational needs and become frustrated with or perhaps even give up on struggling students and their parents, and some hypothesized that this is due to the professional demands they face. While this study did not directly observe teacher interactions with students or their responses to job pressures, prior research documents how teachers in a Texas elementary school responded to the state's high-stakes accountability system by engaging in "educational triage," in which they "divided students into three groups—safe cases, suitable cases for treatment, and hopeless cases—and rationed resources to those students most likely to improve the school's scores" (Booher-Jennings, 2005, pp. 232-233). This study indicates that organizational constraints on educators influence parent-staff trust in complex ways. Without adequate time, energy, or other necessary resources to help children learn, some parents seemed to make allowances for staff members, relaxing typical standards of competence and personal investment so as to be more 'reasonable' in light of staff working conditions. Although this response may preserve trust between parents and school personnel, it may come at the cost of struggling children continuing to struggle. The interview data suggested that, at times, job constraints may cause teachers to overlook children and families or even to blame them for persistently poor outcomes. Staff

blame sometimes appeared to undermine parent perceptions of respect, shared values and expectations, and, ultimately, trust in the school staff. Yet other parents seemed to accept blame from school personnel, assuming responsibility for their children's (often seemingly hopeless) academic situations; however, this came at the cost of resigning themselves to a lack of staff support, which may lead to disillusionment.

Finally, this study builds on a large body of research documenting how social status relations around social class, race/ethnicity, and nativity structure the experiences of children and families in schools, often in ways that reproduce disadvantage. Some of these effects originate in the broader social contexts in which schools are embedded (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Whether they came from school personnel or other sources, Latino parents that we interviewed reported hearing, and perhaps even internalizing, narratives that hold Latino and immigrant cultures responsible for social problems. For those who reject them as invalid and unjust, such narratives marginalize and disempower parents in schools; for those who accept them as true, they must adopt a 'subtractive' stance that rejects their heritage and co-ethnic peers (Valenzuela, 1999). Moreover, stereotypical narratives may be particularly convincing to outsiders when promoted by members of the minority group(s) they target, because their voices give such narratives insider authenticity. Although this study focused on parent perceptions and did not analyze teacher-reported data, both past research and a limited number of teacher interviews conducted with participants of the CFS study (not reported here) suggest that school personnel, particularly those working in predominantly minority communities, often view minority families through a "deficit lens" and use "deficit discourses" in their informal talk (Olivos, 2009; Pollack, 2013).

Parents with limited English proficiency are particularly vulnerable in social interactions in U.S. schools, where English language often operates as the currency of not only

communication but also respect (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Parents without legal residency in the United States are even more vulnerable, particularly in the context of distrust and fear toward other social institutions, such as law enforcement agencies (Capps, Castaneda, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007; Olivos, 2009). As reflected in parents' words reported here, anti-immigration sentiment in Phoenix and aggressive enforcement of immigration laws in Arizona rendered many undocumented parents fearful and even powerless, in both the wider community and their children's schools. As documented in prior research, this confirms how "the integration of Latino parents is often complicated and undermined by societal and institutional mindsets, policies, and practices which work to disempower them prior to and during their interactions with the school system…" (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010, p. 340).

Among the parents interviewed, limited English language proficiency (and sometimes even Spanish-language proficiency) was at best an inconvenience or occasional barrier, more often a regular source of discomfort, embarrassment, or shame, and at worst the basis of discrimination, marginalization, or hopelessness. Particularly troubling in this study was the suspicion expressed by some parents that disadvantaged linguistic status interacts with the standards-based policy context to effectively set low-status students on lower-quality educational trajectories, as early as first grade. It may be the case that organizational procedures for handling English language learner students produces separate and quite unequal educational experiences for students in some schools. Although this study did not directly examine school practices, a number of prior ethnographic studies demonstrate how "the school landscape [is] woven as a complex tapestry of subtle and explicit racism," institutionalized in policies and practices around grade retention, track placement, and curriculum (Villenas & Dehyle, 1999, p. 427), as well as

disciplinary action and special education referral (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010).[36] It follows then, that on an individual and organizational level, school practices of "educational triage" in response to test-based accountability systems (Booher-Jennings, 2005) may become ethno-racialized (or classed, nativist, or linguistically divided) in the context of predominantly minority and immigrant communities.

The Roles of Parents, Teachers, and Other School Personnel in Building Trust

Despite highlighting substantial barriers to the development of trusting, supportive relationships between parents and school personnel in these communities, this study also revealed some encouraging evidence that parent-staff trust can and does emerge even in such challenging circumstances. For many parents, reports of negative and untrusting experiences with the school staff were limited to particular staff members (e.g., the office staff but not the teachers, an ineffective principal leading an otherwise effective staff, or a teacher whom they perceived to be a 'bad apple'). A number of interview participants also provided overwhelmingly positive appraisals of school personnel and their trustworthiness. These 'success' stories provide insights into the roles of various actors in establishing trust within the school system.

Parent Roles in Building Parent-Staff Trust

First, the interview data indicate that parental agency—structured by prior attitudes, experiences, and structural conditions—influences the development of parent-staff trust, mainly through parent decisions about how and how often they interact with the school and its staff, and how they respond to those experiences. Consistent with past research, I found that parents' "optimism, determination, strong sense of self, and goal-oriented practices [can] serve as

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[36] For instance, studies of secondary schools offer examples of "cultural tracking" (Valenzuela, 1999), the construction of a "school within a school" (Stanton-Salazar, 2001), and a "visible social status disparity in track placement," all apparent to both researchers and students themselves (Tyson, Darity, & Castellano, 2005, p. 598).

powerful counterforces in less-than-optimal circumstances" (Carreón et al., 2005, p. 471).

Parents shared how they overcame barriers pervasive in disadvantaged communities—including

intensive time demands and restrictive schedules (Zarate, 2007), fear and intimidation of school

personnel (Marschall, 2006), and embarrassment about communicating in unfamiliar linguistic or

cultural contexts (Stanton-Salazar, 2001)—to successfully pursue help from and supportive

relationships with school personnel. These stories suggest that building resourceful social ties to

schools may require proactive, even aggressive, efforts from families when schools are under-

resourced, overcrowded, and operated by overworked staff (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Suárez-

Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). The interviews also indicated that Latino immigrant parents

take advantage of programs designed to educate and empower them to actively and assertively

participate in their children's schools. An immigrant mother for whom this strategy reportedly

worked well, offered this closing statement at the end of our interview:

> Now it is in your hands to help the people [*meaning immigrant parents*]. I would like for
> you to help them. They have to fight for their children. You should open their eyes so that
> they aren't afraid of going to the school because the school won't do anything to them.
> The school doesn't have the right to ask everyone's immigration status. And also to say
> how the laws are affecting families. (Original in Spanish)

Given her own successful experience, this parent recommended intervening on social status

relations between parents and staff by empowering minority parents to take charge in the school.

Her words also suggest that active efforts to empower parents may be needed to help combat

natural but incapacitating parental responses to discouraging environments and negative past

experiences, such as 'face-saving' and 'selective avoidance' strategies (Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Teacher Roles in Building Parent-Staff Trust

The study findings also provide insight into how teachers can play an integral role in

establishing trusting relationships with parents. For many parents, their child's teacher is the

main—sometimes the only—member of the school staff with whom they regularly interact.

According to the interviews, teachers can signal trustworthiness to parents in many ways. When teachers *teach* students, as evidenced by cognitive gains and achievement outcomes, the fulfillment of their core professional obligation is a crucial signal to parents that their children are in trustworthy hands. This implies that teachers can help build trust by informing parents of children's progress, but it also suggests the importance of the necessary resources, working conditions, and training to enable effective instruction. Many parents also pointed out that they would not know what teachers expected of them (or their children) if teachers did not tell them. This suggests that teachers can promote trust through shared expectations and values, by making visible "the 'invisible codes of power' embedded in school cultures" which otherwise tend to be a source of confusion and uncertainty for minority parents (Carreón et al., 2005, p. 470). Finally, the interviews illuminate how teachers inspire trust in parents when they go beyond their official job duties, when they are responsive to parents and inclusive of their opinions and preferences, and when they treat children and parents with love and care (for example by behaving in an open and welcoming manner, attending to their emotional needs, or demonstrating an interest in getting to know them on a personal level). These actions communicate to parents that they care about children and their work, and that they respect and care about parents.

Expressing personal investment in children may be particularly important for building trust with Latino parents, for whom the concept of education (*educación*) often encompasses not just book learning but the child's total development, including "both manners and moral values" (Valdés, 1996, p. 125). Similarly, feeling respected and cared for by teachers may be particularly important for parents from low-status socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, nativity, or linguistic backgrounds, who often feel uncomfortable or intimidated in interactions with school personnel who tend to come from comparatively higher status backgrounds (McWayne, Melzi, Schick,

Kennedy, & Mundt, 2013). To genuinely respect and care for Latino and immigrant parents—

that is, to view them with an "additive lens" (Olivos, 2009) and to have compassion for the

challenges they face (Osterling & Garza, 2004)—teachers must be aware of the needs of these

families, and often they must be *made* aware (López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

Non-Teacher School Staff Roles in Building Parent-Staff Trust

While the findings unambiguously highlight teachers as particularly impactful agents of

the school staff in developing trusting relationships with parents, other school personnel also

appeared to play important roles in building family-school trust. For a number of the parents

interviewed, the office staff were the source of their first impressions of the school staff. This is

likely because the office personnel act as gatekeepers of the school campus and manage client-

oriented bureaucratic processes (e.g., visitor check-in and check-out policies or student

enrollment procedures).

Parents also identified noteworthy roles played by administrators, most of all the school

principal, in signaling staff trustworthiness. In some ways, the role of administrators in building

parent-staff trust was more straightforward than the role of teachers. For example, the simple act

of making themselves visible to parents (e.g., by standing outside during pick-up and drop-off

times, walking the hallways, or attending school ceremonies) seemed to effectively communicate

their personal investment in children and their work. In addition, parents cited basic displays of

leadership and management (e.g., physical upkeep of facilities, a motivational speech to parents,

or generally 'orderly' operations) as evidence of principal competence and expectations

consistent with those of parents. In other ways, administrators played more complex roles in

developing parent-staff trust. For example, parent perceptions of staff dependability seemed

responsive to how approachable or accessible principals made themselves to parents,

communicated in various ways (e.g., by being friendly, having an 'open door' policy, or 'making time' and 'taking time' for parents). Parents may consider such principals to provide a safety net, upon whom they can rely as a powerful ally, an impartial mediator, or an avenue for 'going over the head' of lower-ranking personnel to resolve conflicts. Similarly, by being timely and considerate in their responsiveness to parents, particularly when addressing problems or concerns, principals could make parents feel not only heard but valued and listened to by the school staff. Parents indicated that this powerfully influenced the degree to which they felt respected in the school context. Finally, in these historically marginalized communities, where school policies sometimes inadvertently "discourage parental participation" (Zarate, 2007, p. 10), the ways that school administrators define and enforce formal and informal rules and modes of operation can play a particularly important role in fostering (or undermining) parent-staff trust.

Conclusion

This chapter examined parent perceptions of supportiveness—that is, trust, respect, and shared expectations—in relationships with school staff, in the context of communities where barriers may prevent the formation of strong family-school connections. To the extent that social ties between parents and staff are linked to educational inequalities, this study also provides insight into school-based stratifying processes that occur early in the educational career. This analysis of the processes and structural conditions by which parents come to trust or distrust staff at their children's schools also informs future directions for policy and practice. The social fact that teachers and parents are 'natural enemies' (Waller, 1932) makes the establishment of cooperative and trusting relationships between them a tall order in any school, but this fundamental conflict is exacerbated under organizational and social conditions such as those observed in the predominantly low-income Latino communities of focus in this study. While the

findings highlight a number of structural factors that impede parent-staff trust for historically marginalized families, they also indicate that parents, teachers, and other school personnel can play crucial roles in facilitating the emergence of trust in these school communities.

While this study joins the outcry against structural disadvantage and injustice that the U.S. education system brings upon Latino families, a silver lining is revealed in the voices of the study participants. It is clear that these Latino parents are committed to supporting their children's educational progress, and their personal strength, creativity, and fearlessness in facing challenges head on are powerful resources for their children. It is also clear that individual efforts from staff members—for example to treat parents and students with care and respect regardless of their social background, to meet children's academic needs even if it means extending themselves beyond their job duties, or to mobilize resources to holistically address the needs of families—can go a long way in establishing trusting relationships with Latino parents. However, what is missing are organizational structures that support or even encourage these individual actions which, under the current conditions, may require rather extraordinary motivation and dedication on the part of individuals.

In particular, the findings suggest that policies and programs are needed to target the cultural and social distance between school personnel and low-income, Latino, and immigrant parents. This should include efforts to increase not only "cultural awareness" among school personnel about the values, expectations, and needs of families (López et al., 2001; Osterling & Garza, 2004), but also staff understanding of "the school's own unwritten rules, traditions, norms, and expectations" (Osterling & Garza, 2004, p. 274). Prior research proposes four promising approaches that schools may employ—preferably in confluence—to mitigate socio-cultural discord between families and schools in predominantly low-income Latino school

communities, and to facilitate among its actors the effective trust-building attitudes and behaviors uncovered in this study.

One promising approach to reducing cultural conflict is to structure staff operations to create opportunities that familiarize them with the lived experiences of families represented in the school community. For example, school leaders may achieve this by requiring staff home visits, participation in community events (López et al., 2001), or cultural representation on local school councils (Marschall, 2006). Second, because educators tend to be "unaware that their own lack of preparedness in working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations is itself a major obstacle and one that needs urgent and sustained attention" (Gibson, 2002, p. 244), another approach is to make the issue explicit in teacher education programs, of which only a small minority currently include coursework addressing parental involvement at all (Marschall, 2006). A third approach involves instituting targeted efforts that affirm and engage families and give parents the extra push they may need to feel welcome in the school (McWayne et al., 2013). Practices shown to be effective for Latino and immigrant parents include prioritizing personal contact with families, employing more Spanish-speaking personnel, deliberately and strategically inviting parent participation (e.g., through 'projects of interest' or radio advertisements), and offering self-improvement programs for parents (e.g., English classes or computer training) (López et al., 2001; McWayne et al., 2013). A final and essential approach to bridging the parent-staff cultural divide in predominantly low-income Latino communities is to establish and champion a genuine commitment to families. This may be the driving characteristic of schools and districts that successfully engage Latino immigrant parents (López et al., 2001). Specifically, what sets these organizations apart from others is that:

> Rather than perceiving themselves as organizations whose aim was to get parents into the school site, school personnel saw themselves as unrestrained agents who proactively go

> out into the homes, bringing the school to migrant families where they are. This commitment lies outside tasks and/or responsibilities that are narrowly defined by traditional job descriptions. Thus, the role of school staff is not defined by a commitment to a specific set of tasks but rather, by a commitment to a group of people, i.e., the migrant parents whom they serve. (López et al., 2001, p. 281)

This type of genuine commitment to the community of parents is not cultivated simply by establishing a formal mission statement or verbalizing a claim to parents or staff. It instead likely requires continuous maintenance, dedication to action, and perhaps even highly-motivated and effectively-motivating leadership, for example from a district superintendent or school principal. However difficult to cultivate, such a commitment may make or break other methods by which schools attempt to reduce barriers to parent-staff trust in minority communities. For example, efforts to engage parents by offering opportunities to build their skills and knowledge base could exacerbate rather than mitigate distrust if delivered with a focus on 'fixing' rather than empowering parents. The next direction for applied research is to compare various promising intervention strategies, and to test their respective consequences for both parent-staff relationship development and student outcomes.

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Chapter 5. An Intervention Approach: Enhancing Parent-School Connections in Low-Income Latino Communities

The educational disadvantage of Latinos is a serious national policy issue (National Research Council, 2006, p. 181). Achievement gaps between Latinos and Whites emerge before children even enter school and persist over the educational career. By the end of high school, 40% of Latino students cannot read at grade level, and 60% score below basic on math achievement tests (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). In addition, over 20% of Latinos aged 16-24 are not enrolled in school and have not completed high school ('stop-out'), which is more than double the rate for Blacks (8.4%) and almost four times the rate for Whites (5.4%) (Aud et al., 2010). These patterns persist into adulthood. More than one-fourth of Latinos never complete ninth grade (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006), about 40% do not finish high school (Aud et al., 2010; U.S. Census, 2007), and only 13% earn a bachelor's degree, which is less than half the rate for non-Latinos (30.1%) (U.S. Census, 2012). Although these patterns are due in part to Latino immigrants who never enter the U.S. school system, the high school stop-out rate is still about 14-15% among Latino teens who ever enrolled in a U.S. school (Fry, 2003; Oropesa & Landale, 2009), and about 11% among native-born Latinos aged 16-24 (Aud et al., 2010).

While we have a clear picture of these distressing patterns, there is less certainty about what schools can do to effectively address Latino educational disadvantage. In this study, I consider one potential point of intervention: the development of *institutional ties* to the school—that is, social connections between families and school personnel who control institutional resources. Minority students and those with fewer socioeconomic resources, who tend to be disadvantaged in academic contexts, are also more likely to face barriers to building strong school-based relationships (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2011). Past research similarly finds that low-income, Latino, and immigrant parents often experience cultural dissonance and discomfort in

interactions with their children's schools (Ramirez, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

In this chapter, I investigate whether an after-school family engagement program can overcome barriers to enhance relationships between parents and school personnel, and whether its effects differ by family ethnic and linguistic background. I utilize panel data from a school-randomized controlled trial conducted in predominantly low-income Latino communities, focusing on two aspects of parent-school connections: the number of institutional ties a family has to the school, and the degree of supportiveness between parents and school staff. I estimate two types of treatment effects using multilevel piecewise linear growth models: Intent to Treat (ITT) and Treatment on the Treated (TOT). While the ITT estimates fail to provide strong support that offering the program effectively enhances family-school connections in these communities, the TOT estimates indicate that graduating from the program boosts the quantity of institutional ties to the school. However, this benefit appears strongest for non-Latino White families and weaker among Latino families, who are less socially integrated in the school to begin with. Moreover, the results suggest that participation may actually decrease parent perceptions of trust, respect, and shared expectations with school staff.

Family-School Connections and Student Outcomes

Education research and practice has long promoted the belief that social connections between families and schools are critical for student success (see for example, Becker & Epstein, 1982; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Previous research provides evidence of positive associations between various indicators of family-school connections and a variety of student outcomes (see Appendix E).[37] Observational studies in social psychology find

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[37] In contrast, according to a recent analysis of panel data from three national datasets and one regional study, parental involvement has inconsistent implications for children's academic achievement and may even be harmful

that supportive and caring relationships with significant others, including parents, peers, and teachers, are positively associated with children's educational outcomes (Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009; Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowen, 2000; Wentzel, 1999; Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009). Such relationships provide access to concrete resources, like information or assistance, as well as emotional resources, which serve as a protective factor in stressful events (Cobb, 1976; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Wentzel, 1999). These effects appear to operate through psychological factors, including students' motivation, self-concept, attachment to school, educational goals and aspirations, or other values and behavioral commitments (Wentzel, 1997).[38]

Greater communication and contact between parents and schools is consistently linked to more positive student outcomes in observational studies (see for example the meta-analyses: Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007). Effects are observed across a variety of measures, including academic achievement (Cheadle, 2008; Hill et al., 2004; Kao & Rutherford, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Lopez ,1996; Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013), behavioral problems (Hill et al., 2004; McNeal, 1999), academic orientation and aspirations (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Hill et al., 2004), and educational attainment (Barnard, 2004; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Lopez, 1996; McNeal, 1999). Moreover, there is evidence that parent-school connections positively impact academic outcomes regardless of student social class or racial/ethnic

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(Robinson & Harris, 2014). However, as a number of scholars have pointed out, the methods used in this study do not warrant causal claims. At best the authors' conclusions are limited to the specific measures of parental involvement practices and achievement outcomes examined in the study. At worst they may be misguided, in light of conflicting evidence from years of prior research, including a number of recent randomized controlled trials and comprehensive meta-analyses (Miksic, 2014; Price-Mitchell, 2014; Rogers, Coffman, & Bergman, 2014).

[38] These effects also may operate indirectly, where relationships provide social support which acts as a protective factor reducing students' psychological distress, thereby enhancing their psychological and emotional outcomes (Wentzel, 1998). The fact that caring relationships with teachers are especially consequential for students at risk of dropping out is consistent with this theory (Muller, 2001).

background (Cheadle, 2008; Hill et al., 2004; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Kao & Rutherford, 2007; Lopez, 1996; McNeal, 1999).

Although positive associations between family-school connections and educational outcomes have been replicated widely across a variety of measures, the vast majority of these quantitative examinations are observational studies in which we cannot ensure that estimated associations reflect causal rather than spurious relationships (Dika & Singh, 2002; Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002; Nye, Turner, & Schwartz, 2006).[39] However, recent evidence from a school-randomized controlled trial supports the claim that school-based relationships among families of first graders are causally linked to children's outcomes, though their analysis focused on relationships among parents with children attending the same school. Using an intervention approach, the researchers manipulated these school-based relationships via a family engagement program. They find that experimental and quasi-experimental estimates consistently indicate that the program enhanced parent networks in the school, which in turn reduced children's problems relating to their peers (Turley, Gamoran, Turner, & Fish, 2012).

While experimental investigation of the effects of parent-school relationships is rare, likely because the randomization of families to certain types of relationships is seldom feasible, convincing evidence from qualitative work helps bolster causal claims. In particular, ethnographic studies have illuminated plausible mechanisms. For example, studies reveal that

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[39] Non-experimental causal effect estimates may be endogenous to unmeasured factors that bias estimates when omitted; this is a serious concern when estimating the effects of social ties because people tend to develop relationships with others who are similar to them (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Therefore, observed associations between social networks and individual outcomes in observational studies may reflect the impact of individual characteristics (e.g., human capital) which systematically cluster within social groups, rather than effects of the relationships themselves (Mouw, 2006). For example, the positive educational impacts of strong parent-school relationships may be attributable to socioeconomic resources, as parents from more advantaged backgrounds more easily form relationships with teachers, who tend to be middle-class themselves (Lareau, 2003).

parent-school connections structure how often and how effectively parents contest curriculum, request teachers, resolve conflicts with school personnel, negotiate decisions (e.g., grade promotion, placement in educational programs), obtain resources for their children (e.g., special testing services), and access useful information (e.g., regarding selection procedures for a program) (Lareau, 2000, 2003; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003). If family-school ties shape children's educational experiences and performance by influencing the degree to which parents effectively "customize their children's educational careers" (Lareau, 2000, p. 135), then relationships between families and school staff represent a promising point of intervention into children's educational experiences.

Educational Inequality and Family-School Connections

In his network-analytic framework, Stanton-Salazar (1997, 2011) points to the development of social ties to institutional agents as a key mechanism producing educational disadvantage among working-class and poor racial minority youth in the U.S. In part, he argues, this is because students draw on institutional ties to access social support, advocacy, institutional knowledge, and other organizational resources. Institutional ties are social ties to "high-status, non-kin, agents who occupy relatively high positions … and who are well positioned to provide key forms of social and institutional support" (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1066). In the context of schools, institutional ties may include relationships with various personnel, not only teachers and administrative staff but also counselors, academic specialists, and even school secretaries.

Stanton-Salazar further asserts that minority and low-income students are systematically disadvantaged in building relationships with school agents. Ethnographic evidence from predominantly minority communities is consistent with these claims, illuminating barriers that low-income Latino adolescents face in developing institutional ties to schools. These barriers are

heightened for Latinos from immigrant, language minority, and less acculturated families (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Relationships are strained among even well-meaning staff and Latino teens when the school's cultural context devalues minority ethnic culture (Carter, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Cultural values institutionalized in schools also directly influence how teachers evaluate students and their families and form relationships with them (Lareau, 2000, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). For Latino families, this often undermines feeling trust and support from the school (Carter, 2003, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Real or perceived rejection also sometimes discourages Latino students from seeking out relationships with school staff, or can lead to misunderstandings between staff and students that prevent further social engagement (Carter, 2006; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). These ethnographies highlight how weak or failed relationships with school staff produce academic disengagement and block access to institutional resources for low-income and minority students, for whom "learning to negotiate the dominant culture of power within the typical school environment is usually a fiercely alienating and symbolically violent experience" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 334).

Stanton-Salazar's network-analytic framework focuses on how students themselves connect with school agents, but past research suggests that parents have similar experiences with their children's schools. Whereas parents from White and socioeconomically advantaged families tend to know more professionals, experts, and other parents at their children's schools, low-income and minority parent social networks are more commonly kinship-based than school-based (Cornwell & Cornwell, 2008; Horvat et al., 2003; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Research on Latino families similarly indicates that parents often feel isolated from the school community or dissatisfied with the communication and contact they have with their children's

schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Quijada & Alvarez, 2006; Ramirez, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Zarate, 2007). Immigrant and Spanish-language dominant families are particularly vulnerable as they tend to occupy social positions at the nexus of four disadvantaged statuses—around socioeconomic class, ethnicity, language proficiency, and immigrant status—which, even considered independently, "pose challenges for Latino youth and parents in American society and its schools" (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010, p. 347). For Latino children, social support from parents, teachers, and peers has been positively linked to levels of school engagement, academically-oriented behaviors, and positive attitudes toward learning (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Garcia-Reid, 2007; Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2005; Rosenfeld et al., 2000; Woolley et al., 2009).

This body of work indicates that institutional ties to the school constitute a promising point of intervention on educational disadvantage in low-income Latino communities. Intervening early in the educational career may be particularly fruitful, as achievement gaps have been documented as early as kindergarten (Aud et al., 2010), and early educational experiences are believed to set the stage for later experiences and to have cumulative effects over time (see for example: Heckman, 2006). When children are younger, parents may play a more active role than students in accessing educational resources via institutional ties to the school.[40] Thus, practices and policies that facilitate the development of parent-school relationships, particularly when children are young and in environments where barriers are heightened, may help address underachievement among Latino youth.

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[40] This may be why parent-school connections are most impactful when children are younger, for example their effect on achievement is much less obvious in 12th grade than 8th grade (Kao & Rutherford, 2007).

Schools as Potential Points of Intervention into Family-School Connections

Many scholars have drawn attention to the role of school staff in how family-school

connections develop, or fail to develop, for historically marginalized groups such as low-income

Latino families (see for example: LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Marschall, 2006; Olivos & Mendoza,

2010; Pollack, 2013; Zarate, 2007). Recent studies document differences in how school

personnel and Latino parents think about parental involvement, and their expectations about role

responsibilities in children's education (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Lawson, 2003; Mapp, 2003).

At best, it is "difficult for schools to effectively negotiate the parental involvement terrain" when

serving families facing substantial hardships in health, economic wellbeing, or cultural/social

adjustment (López, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha, 2001, p. 253). Ethnographic evidence reveals

how, at worst, "…parents are really 'kept out' of schools by the negative ways in which they are

treated, by insensitive bureaucratic requirements, and by the ways in which school-conceived

parent involvement programs disregard Latino knowledge and cultural base" (Villenas &

Deyhle, 1999, p. 415).

Schools and school staff play an important role in the development of relationships

because social relations are *organizationally embedded*—that is, organizations structure the

actions and interactions of people operating within them in ways that impact the amount, quality,

and effects of their relationships (Small, 2009).[41] Schools structure social interactions between

parents and schools through formal and informal practices. These include purposeful efforts to

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[41] In a mixed-methods exploration of childcare centers in New York City, Small identifies a number of structural features by which organizations, purposefully or not, connect actors to other people and organizations. For example, he finds that parents more often developed and strengthened relationships with other parents when childcare centers created many opportunities for regular and sustained interaction in minimally competitive and maximally cooperative environments. Often this was an unintended consequence of routine operations, such as narrow timeframes for picking up and dropping off children which brought parents to the same place at the same time.

involve parents through events, such as mandatory parent-teacher conferences, optional

classroom parties, or school-wide fundraisers, as well as informal opportunities, such as

volunteering in the classroom. The daily routines and context of schools also shape parent-school

interactions. For example, parents are more likely to be involved in school activities when they

perceive the school environment to be safe, and they are less likely to participate when their

child attends a larger school (Griffith, 1998).

Organizational structures also shape interactions in unintentional ways. The size of an

organization affects the frequency of face-to-face encounters and actors' awareness and

understanding of how it functions as a whole (Griffith, 1998, p. 74), but school size is likely

determined based on unrelated factors, such as current and projected numbers of school-aged

children in the community or the needs of the school district. In low-income and predominantly

Latino communities, the ways schools are organized often create structural and psychological

barriers that undermine the development of strong family-school connections. For example, in a

study of predominantly low-income and minority parents of elementary school students in

California, the authors found that:

> Structured interactions delimit communication between families and schools to formal,
> abrupt, and incomplete exchanges. Time and space are highly regulated within this
> domain. Unannounced visits to the classroom are discouraged; parents are expected to
> check in at the front office counter or to make pre-arrangements with a school official.
> Parents are seen as intruders (Mannan & Blackwell, 1992). Evening meetings convene on
> school grounds rather than in community centers or parents' homes. Meeting agendas are
> set internally and reflect school officials' registered concerns and priorities. Letters go
> home to inform, rarely to solicit input or to generate sustained dialog. Telephone calls
> from school officials signal a serious problem, not a friendly inquiry. (Smrekar & Cohen-
> Vogel, 2001, p. 92)

To effectively engage parents, schools must meet families' needs. Yet administrators may be

unprepared or unaware of the challenges facing parents, especially those from historically

disadvantaged populations, and this reduces the likelihood of forming effective partnerships with families (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Mandell & Murray, 2009).

Educators' expectations about parent-school interactions and parent involvement strategies instead tend to be driven by the "needs and priorities of the schools" (Doucet, 2008; Lawson, 2003). Yet these expectations and approaches systematically undermine the efforts of already disempowered parents, whose actions are often devalued by school staff (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Marschall, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2009). For example, when educators prioritize formal activities, they often interpret failure to participate as a sign that parents are "apathetic" or "too lazy, incompetent, or preoccupied to participate in school programs" (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001, p. 97).

In addition to structural barriers often overlooked by school staff, such misperceptions also result from cultural differences. For example, Latino and immigrant parents often avoid questioning teachers or contesting their decisions because they strongly revere teachers (Marschall, 2006; Thorp, 1997). This can "turn out to be double-edged" in a system where parents are expected to advocate for their children (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 149). Teacher perceptions and beliefs about students and their parents also shape how they interact with families, and these interactions are embedded within a social order that privileges the knowledge and expertise of school personnel over that of families (Salas, 2004; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). Negative expectations may manifest in less attention for historically disadvantaged students and their parents (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007). Psychological factors such as general awareness of racism in society, lack of confidence due to negative childhood experiences in schools, or feeling disrespected by teachers also discourage parents from interacting with schools (Crozier, 1999; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; McKay et al., 2003).

Even in a community with "strong Latino roots," one study found that Latino immigrant parents felt schools ignored their voices and needs, and they felt "abandoned and helpless when trying to gain information regarding their children's education" (Ramirez, 2003, p. 93). When English is the currency of communication if not a marker of basic respectability in their children's schools, parents with limited English language skills often feel intimidated or even ashamed (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). In the context of increased enforcement of (anti)immigration laws, immigrant parents lacking legal documentation sometimes avoid visiting the school or providing personal information about themselves in an attempt to protect their families (Capps, Castaneda, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007; Olivos, 2009).[42]

By examining how institutional practices of organizations shape everyday interactions among people, researchers can gain "more powerful insight into contemporary social inequality" (Small, 2009, p. 191). Past research suggests that many schools are organized in ways that hinder the development of strong family-school connections in predominantly low-income, Latino, and immigrant communities. Yet school-based interventions can help build school, family, and community partnerships and boost student achievement (Epstein et al., 2009; Jeynes, 2012). Rigorous research identifying interventions that effectively strengthen relationships between low-income and minority parents and school staff is needed to soundly inform decisions about where schools should invest resources.

An Intervention Approach to Building Family-School Connections

In this study, I move beyond illuminating the nature and extent of the problem to consider a possible solution, an intervention approach to enhancing family-school connections where

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[42] For further discussion of the relevant literature, see chapter 1, section on "family-school connections in low-income Latino communities."

barriers are likely to exist. Specifically, I assess the effects of an after-school family engagement program known as Families and Schools Together (FAST). FAST is a multi-family after-school program designed to promote healthy child development by empowering parents, increasing parental involvement in the school and community, and reducing stress, social isolation, and family conflict (McDonald, 2008). FAST was developed in Madison, WI in 1988 and has since been implemented in approximately 2,000 schools in 48 U.S. states and eight countries (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014).

The FAST program is implemented by a trained team of adults from the local community. The team must include at least one member of the school staff and be culturally representative of the school population (e.g., reflecting its racial/ethnic composition). The team works collaboratively to adapt the program as needed (up to 60% of the components) to ensure cultural sensitivity to the specific school/community context (Kratochwill, McDonald, Levin, Bear-Tibbetts, & Demaray, 2004). FAST begins with the program staff inviting families to attend a two-month program of eight weekly multi-family group meetings called FAST Nights. Outreach efforts are unusually persistent, for example including visits to families' homes. FAST Nights last about 2.5 hours each and are conducted in the evenings at school by program staff according to a pre-determined schedule of twelve theoretically-based processes (see Appendix F, for a description of the twelve core processes).

FAST activities include a family meal, participatory music, family games, and parent support groups (see chapter 2, section on 'description of the study intervention,' for a narrative description of a typical FAST Night). These activities center on within-family bonding and relationship-building among families and between families and schools (Kratochwill et al., 2004). Because FAST takes place at the school, these relationships are forged within the school

environment. In addition, school personnel serve as program staff or volunteers, facilitating activities, coaching parents, or supervising children while parents participate in adult-only discussions. At the end of the eight weeks of FAST Nights, families transition into two years of monthly parent-led meetings. These incorporate some aspects of FAST Nights but are less structured and more flexible to group preferences, such as meeting at a local park rather than the school.

FAST is one of 284 programs on the National Registry for Evidence-Based Programs and Practices, created by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (Schinke, Brounstein, & Gardner, 2003).[43] Recent randomized controlled trials demonstrate that FAST engages socially marginalized families with schools and improves academic performance for participating children (Kratochwill et al., 2004; Kratochwill, McDonald, Levin, Scalia, & Coover, 2009; Layzer, Goodson, Creps, Werner, & Bernstein, 2001; McDonald et al., 2006). Rather than focusing on educational outcomes, this study examines how FAST impacts supportive parent-school relationships and whether this varies across ethnic/linguistic groups.

Research Questions

This paper assesses the effectiveness of the FAST program for enhancing family-school connections, particularly in social contexts where there are barriers to strengthening social ties between families and schools. I focus on predominantly low-income, high-immigrant Latino communities, one context where previous research suggests such barriers predominate, and early elementary school, a time during which experiences may set the stage for children's later educational experiences and attitudes. Specifically, I address the following research questions:

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[43] The registry identifies scientifically-based mental health and substance abuse interventions via independent review.

RQ1. How does the program impact parent-school relationships in the short-run, immediately after the program is implemented, and over the next two years, as children move from first to third grade?

RQ2. To what extent do these effects differ for non-Latino White, English-dominant Latino, and Spanish-dominant Latino families?

Method

Data

This analysis focused on data collected through written questionnaires administered to parents participating in the Children, Families, and Schools (CFS) study. Parents were invited to complete questionnaires four times over the three years of the study (twice during first grade—once before and after FAST was implemented in treatment schools—and once each in the spring of the next two years). In addition, I consulted student-level administrative records, which school districts provided at the end of the first-grade year, and school-level data from the publically available Common Core of Data (collected by the National Center for Education Statistics), for baseline measures of family and school characteristics.[44]

Baseline Equivalence

The CFS study employed a school-randomized design, where half the participating schools in each city were randomly assigned to receive the FAST intervention while the other half served as controls. The goal of randomization was to yield statistically comparable samples across treatment conditions. Although randomization occurred at the school level, I assess baseline equivalence at both the school and family levels because the study used a two-stage recruitment process—first inviting participation from schools, then inviting participation from

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[44] For additional description of the CFS study design and population, see chapter 2 (Overview of data and method).

families within the selected schools. While schools were recruited to the study prior to randomization to treatment condition, families were recruited into the study after schools were randomized (see chapter 2, Figure 2.2 [CFS within-cohort study design]). Researchers and agency staff who conducted family-level recruitment were trained to mirror recruitment processes in treatment and control schools. Staff were instructed to begin recruitment in all schools by inviting families to participate in the CFS study. In treatment schools, staff were instructed to invite families to attend the FAST program only after parents had made their decision about participating in the study. However, because recruiters were not blind to treatment condition, it is possible that recruitment procedures differed systematically in treatment and control schools. There were no significant differences in study consent rates by treatment condition,[45] but differential recruitment procedures still may have caused systematically different types of families to join the study in treatment and control schools.

I analyzed baseline mean differences by treatment condition for 14 school-level measures and 15 family-level measures. The results suggest that baseline equivalence was achieved at the school level but not the family level. While there were no significant mean differences at the school level ($p > 0.10$, results not shown),[46] there were some mean differences at the family level. As shown in Table 5.1, there was evidence of baseline equivalence on family demographic traits, but there was also evidence of non-trivial treatment-group differences in baseline levels of

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[45] The proportions of first-grade families that consented to participate in the CFS study were statistically equivalent in treatment and control schools ($p = 0.742$).

[46] School-level baseline measures included the proportion of first-grade families that consented to the CFS study, student enrollment in first grade and for all grade levels, teacher-to-student ratio, proportion teachers employed full-time, proficiency rates in reading and math, average attendance rate, socioeconomic and racial/ethnic student body composition indicators (proportion free/reduced-price lunch eligible; proportion White, Black, Latino, and other race/ethnicity), and whether the school had Title I status in the first year of the study.

family social resources. With the exception of supportiveness in parent-school relationships, families that joined the study in control schools tended to have greater baseline social resources than those that joined the study in treatment schools ($p < 0.05$). In accordance with standards for equivalence in randomized controlled trials (RCTs) (What Works Clearinghouse, 2014), no baseline differences exceeded 0.25 standard deviations in size (*E.S.* = 0.08-0.16), and I statistically adjust for any baseline differences exceeding 0.05 standard deviations (measures of baseline social resources).

Measures

Dependent variables: parent-school relationships. The outcome of interest in the analysis is parent-school relationships. I use two measures, created from parent questionnaire responses collected at four time-points: (1) the number of institutional ties parents have to the school, and (2) the degree of supportiveness in parent-staff relationships. See Table 5.2 for a full description of all variables.

The first dependent variable is *number of institutional ties,* a single item asking parents to report the number of school staff they would feel comfortable approaching with a question about their child. There were seven response options, ranging from 0 ("0") to 6 ("6 or more"). The overall sample mean number of institutional ties reported by parents at baseline was 3.79 (*SD* = 1.78). As shown in Figure 5.1, the distribution of responses on this variable indicate possible censoring as responses are relatively normally distributed across the bottom six categories (0-5) with disproportionately high responses on the top category ("6 or more"). At baseline, nearly 30% of respondents reported feeling comfortable approaching six or more school staff with a question about their child. Greater institutional ties to the school may increase families' access to educational resources, by 'bridging' them to institutional gatekeepers, who can become powerful

advocates and role models, provide expert guidance, and serve as 'funds of knowledge' (Stanton-

Salazar, 1997, p. 11).

The second dependent variable is *degree of supportiveness,* an additive scale of four

items asking parents to indicate how much trust, respect, and shared expectations they perceive

in their relationships with school staff. There were four response options, ranging from 0

("none") to 3 ("a lot"), so the scaled variable ranges from 0 to 12. A scale score of 0 indicates

that a parent reported "none" on all four items, while a score of 12 indicates responses of "a lot"

on all four items. The overall sample mean score on the supportiveness scale at baseline was

10.15 ($SD = 2.39$), and the scale is internally reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$). As shown in Figure

5.1, this variable is left-skewed with higher proportions of parents indicating high supportiveness

than low supportiveness in their relationships with school staff. At baseline, about 45% of

respondents reported "a lot" of supportiveness on all four items, and over 85% reported at least

"some" supportiveness on all items. The degree of trust, respect, and shared expectations in

parent-school relationships can facilitate children's educational success, by communicating to

family members that they are valued and cared for (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Murdock, 1999;

Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Wentzel, 1997).

Timing of survey observation. To explore how relationships develop, that is, how they

change over time, I measure the timing of each survey observation for the two outcome variables

across the four survey waves (year 1 pretest, year 1 posttest, year 2, and year 3). I measure the

timing of survey observations in months since the start of first grade (*month*), defined as August

2007 for cohort 1 and August 2008 for cohort 2.[47] (For a description of survey timing data

collection, see chapter 1, measures section.)

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[47] Study participants in the analytic sample completed the year 1 pretest 0-13 months after the target child started
first grade (in August). On average, the year 1 pretest was completed in late January of the first-grade year (over five

In the statistical models, I examine changes in parent-reported relationships with school staff over two sequential time periods: (1) during the first-grade year (i.e., August of the first grade fall semester through the following August) and (2) during the second- and third-grade years (i.e., August of the second grade fall semester through August of the fourth grade fall semester). The variable *Growth Period I* captures the timing of survey observations collected during the first-grade year, measured in months since the start of first grade, while *Growth Period II* captures the timing of survey observations collected during the second- and third-grade years, measured in months since the start of second grade. Following Raudenbush and Bryk (2002), survey observations collected during second and third grade (i.e., 12-42 months since the start of first grade) were coded as the top value for the first growth period (*Growth Period I* = 12), while those collected during first grade (i.e., 0-12 months since the start of first grade) were coded as the bottom category for the second growth period (*Growth Period II* = 0).

Key independent variables: family ethnic and linguistic background. The key predictor in the analysis is family ethnic background, measured by combining indicators of family ethnicity and language dominance. As an indicator of family ethnicity, I use the target child's race/ethnicity as reported in school district administrative records, either "White" or "Hispanic/Latino." Although I conceptualize race and ethnicity as two distinct constructs, the school districts employed definitions that conflate racial and ethnic categories. Although about half of all Latino residents in the U.S. self-identify as having White racial origins (U.S. Census, 2011), the school districts defined Hispanic/Latino ethnicity and White race as mutually

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months since the start of first grade, i.e., *month* = 5.83). Parents completed the year 1 posttest 5-15 months after the start of first grade, on average around mid-May during the spring of the first-grade year (*month* = 9.60). Parents completed the year 2 posttest 19-24 months after the start of first grade, on average at the end of March during the spring of the second-grade year (*month* = 19.95). Parents completed the year 3 posttest 32-42 months after the start of first grade, on average in early May of the spring of the third-grade year (*month* = 33.21).

exclusive categories. Thus, the district label of 'White' family background more accurately

indicates non-Latino White racial/ethnic background.[48]

As an indicator of language dominance, I use the survey language (either English or

Spanish) selected by the parent when consenting to the study. As previously reported (see

chapter 1, measures section), survey language choice is correlated with levels of Spanish- and

English-language use (in speaking, reading, and writing), as well as first-generation immigrant

status (i.e., parent was born outside the U.S.) and potentially linguistic acculturation among

immigrant parents (as indicated by average number of years in the U.S.). I derive three categories

of family ethnic and linguistic background based on the child's race/ethnicity and parental

language dominance: (1) English-dominant Latino families, (2) Spanish-dominant Latino

families, and (3) non-Latino White families, all of whom were English dominant. In the analysis,

I measure family ethnic and linguistic background using two dummy variables, one each

indicating English-dominant Latino (*Eng-Latino*) or Spanish-dominant Latino (*Span-Latino*)

background, and where non-Latino White families comprise the reference category (*White*).

Control variables. The analysis includes a similar set of standard controls for baseline

family and school characteristics as those employed in Chapter 1. The family-level control

variables include dummy indicators for student gender (*female*), family poverty (*free/reduced*

lunch), English language learner status (*ELL*), and special education status (*SPED*). The school-

level controls include variables accounting for school size, characteristics that may structure

teachers' availability to interact with parents, and randomization blocks. I use five dummy

variables to control for randomization block: *cohort2,* indicating whether a school was randomly

assigned to study cohort 1 (0) or cohort 2 (1), and *block1-block4,* indicating in which of the five

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[48] Consequently, I use the terms 'White' and 'non-Latino White' interchangeably in the remainder of this chapter.

within-cohort randomization blocks a school was located.[49] I control for school size because

parent-school relationships may be weaker in quality and fewer in quantity in larger schools,

where feelings of anonymity or alienation are theorized to be more prevalent among parents

(Griffith, 1998). School size is measured using the continuous variable, *1st grade size,* which

indicates the number of students enrolled in first grade in the year that the study began. I also

control for two school characteristics that may influence the degree of teacher interactions with

parents: the proportion of teachers who are full-time educators (*FTE*) and the average class size

(*pupil/teacher ratio*). Teachers who are employed part-time and those who are responsible for a

greater number of students may have less time to interact with each family, as compared to their

counterparts working full-time or with smaller classes.

Factors predicting program attendance. While CFS researchers randomly selected

schools to receive the intervention or serve as comparisons, they could not ensure that all

targeted families joined the study, or that families in treatment schools attended the program.

Consequently, study participation and treatment take-up involved non-random decision-making

processes at the family level. If the factors that determined whether families attended the

program also impacted their relationships with school staff, these factors may induce a spurious

association between the treatment indicator and the outcome variables. In other words, an

observed treatment effect may reflect characteristics of families that attend programs rather than

a causal impact of the program itself. The same potential threat is introduced by factors driving

differences in who consented to the study in treatment versus control schools, if these factors

also affect the outcomes. To explore potential confounding of the treatment effect estimates, I

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[49] There were five randomization blocks within each cohort. Three correspond to the participating school districts in Phoenix. The remaining two differentiate schools in San Antonio with relatively lower and higher proportions of low-income students in their student bodies.

examine the impact of 12 additional control variables beyond the standard controls for family and school characteristics. I consider variables which were statistically different on average between participants in treatment and control schools at baseline ($p < 0.05$) or which I theoretically expected to influence both the outcomes and whether treatment-school families would attend the program.

One potentially confounding factor is the degree to which families were socially connected to other families in the community and to members of their own family at the start of the study. Families' baseline social resources likely impact their later social resources as well as whether they decide to attend the program; for example, those with greater social resources may be less likely to attend the program because they already feel adequately socially integrated in the school community. I consider three variables tapping families' social resources within and outside the family at baseline.

To measure social resources within the family, I construct the scaled variable, *parent-child bond*, as the mean of five items on relationships between parents and target children at the year 1 pretest (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.60$). Each item asked parents to indicate whether, on a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (4), they are nurturing parents, consistently encourage their children to express their emotions, tell their children how they feel when they misbehave, regularly talk to their children about school activities, and regularly participate in activities at the school. Families in treatment schools had higher average parent reports at baseline ($p = 0.002$).

I consider two measures of social resources outside the family: the size and quality of social networks among parents in the school. The variable, *parent network size*, is a single item asking parents, "How many parents of your child's friends at this school do you know?" The

response categories range from 0 ("0") to 6 ("6 or more"). The variable, *parent network quality*, is a scaled variable constructed as the mean of seven survey items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$). These asked parents to rate the degree to which other parents at the school share their expectations for their child and the degree to which parents help each other (with babysitting, shopping, etc.), listen to each other about their problems, and invite each other to social activities such as meals and parties. Each item had response categories ranging from 0 ("not at all") to 3 ("a lot"). On average, parents in treatment schools reported larger ($p = 0.013$) and higher quality ($p = 0.002$) social networks with other parents in the school at baseline.

In addition to characteristics of families, characteristics of schools may confound the treatment effect. School contextual factors structure how parents feel about school staff as well as their involvement in school programs (Griffith, 1998). Parental decisions about whether to attend school programs and how parents and school staff engage with one another may be responsive to perceptions of the quality of education provided by the school, norms and expectations about parental involvement in school programs, and beliefs about shared expectations with families, such as the degree to which they care about children's education. I consider six aspects of school context measured during the first year of the study.

As indicators of the quality of education provided by schools, I use the variables, *reading proficiency rate* and *math proficiency rate*, which respectively indicate the proportion of the student body (third grade and above) who met state standards for reading and math proficiency in the first year of the study. To approximate social norms about parental involvement in school programs, I use the variable, *study consent rate,* which indicates the proportion of first-grade families in the school that consented to participate in the CFS study. I also consider the variable, *attendance rate*, the average proportion of days attended by students in a school year, which may

tap social norms among parents and influence beliefs about whether parents are invested in education. In addition, I use measures of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic student body composition as proxy measures for aspects of school context that influence parent and staff beliefs about whether families share values and expectations. Specifically, I consider the proportion of students who are White, Black, Latino, or other race/ethnicity and the proportion eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in each school.

Missing Data

The analytic sample excludes respondents missing all district administrative data, and therefore missing data on child race/ethnicity ($n = 99$), which also eliminates those without a valid year 1 pretest parent survey ($n = 7$). Families missing observations on family-level control variables are also excluded, which drops families missing one or more baseline measure of social resources ($n = 51$). Among respondents in the analytic sample, there are no item-level missing data on any of the school-level variables or the other family-level control variables.

There are two additional types of missing data on the analytic sample. First, for some respondents, the timing of one or more survey observations is unknown. The timing of each respondent's year 1 pretest survey was measured using the date provided on the consent form completed by each study participant at the time when the pretest survey was completed. About one percent of respondents ($n = 33$) did not provide a date on the consent form. The timing of survey observation for the posttest surveys was measured as the date when the UW Survey Center received the survey. This date of receipt is missing for around six percent of families with valid year 1 posttest surveys ($n = 122$) and year 3 surveys ($n = 70$) and a full 58.5% of those with a valid year 2 survey ($n = 638$). To preserve sample size, I mean-imputed missing data on the

timing of a valid survey observation within each survey wave (year 1 pretest, year 1 posttest, year 2, or year 3), study cohort (cohort 1 or 2), and study season (fall, winter, or spring).[50]

A second source of missing data in the analytic sample is that some respondents are missing one or more observations on the outcome variable(s). Each respondent had up to four observations per outcome variable, one for each survey wave (year 1 pretest, year 1 posttest, year 2, year 3). Missing data on dependent variable observations is mainly due to respondents missing an entire survey (i.e., sample attrition across survey waves). While the seven cases missing a pretest survey were excluded from the analytic sample, there was substantial sample attrition in each follow-up survey wave, with about 32% of respondents missing a year 1 posttest ($n = 838$), 58% missing the year 2 survey ($n = 1,524$), and 54% missing the year 3 survey ($n = 1,404$). There were multiple patterns of attrition, with some respondents missing one posttest survey but then re-entering the sample at a later wave by completing another posttest survey (for details, see Appendix C, Table C1 in chapter 3). As indicated in Table 5.3, nearly 30% of the sample completed a survey at all four time-points ($n = 750$), about half completed three or more surveys ($n = 1,321$), and more than three-fourths completed a survey at least twice ($n = 2,005$). Still, more than one-fifth of the sample completed only the year 1 pretest survey ($n = 609$). Among respondents who completed a survey at a given wave, rates of item-level missingness on time-point observations are low across outcome variables (about 1% on average).

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[50] The mean survey timing for the year 1 pretest was about 2.5, 6.5, and 9.0 months respectively for the fall, winter, and spring seasons pooled across cohorts. The mean survey timing for the year 1 posttest by season was around 6.5, 10.0, and 12.5 months respectively, across cohorts. For the year 2 and year 3 posttest surveys, the mean survey timings were approximately 20.5 and 33.0 months respectively, across seasons and cohorts. In the analysis and imputation, survey timing was measured in months, rounded to six decimal places. Although I also estimated models including dummy indicators for missing data on survey timing, I present the results for the more parsimonious models (excluding missing data indicators) as there were virtually no differences in the model results. With the exception of the intercepts, any differences in the coefficient estimates are no longer visible after rounding to the nearest hundredth of a point, and conclusions about statistical significance are unchanged at an alpha level of 0.10.

Of the total possible 10,456 time-point observations per outcome measure, 36.7% are missing for the *supportiveness* variable, and 36.8% are missing for the *institutional ties* variable. On average, respondents in the analytic sample are missing approximately 1.5 time-point observations per outcome measure. To preserve the family-level sample size, I employ a growth modeling approach which uses all available data on families with at least one time-point observation on the outcome variable. I discuss this analytic approach in more detail below. An additional concern is potential bias introduced by non-random differences in rates of attrition across treatment conditions or in the types of families missing surveys (versus those that complete surveys). Such bias may occur if characteristics systematically associated with attrition are also related to the dependent variable(s).

According to an investigation of RCTs in education, risk of attrition bias is a function of overall rates of attrition (in the overall sample) and differential rates of attrition (across treatment conditions) (What Works Clearinghouse, 2014). Table 5.4 reports overall and differential attrition rates on parent surveys at each follow-up wave, for the analytic sample. At the year 1 posttest, about 32% of families in the analytic sample did not complete a parent survey, and attrition rates were nearly 9% higher in treatment schools than in control schools. In contrast, at the year 3 posttest, overall rates of family-level attrition are higher (54%), while the degree of differential attrition across treatment conditions is lower (4%). If each follow-up wave is considered an independent event, then these combinations of overall and differential attrition rates across survey waves indicate that bias may be greater than 0.05 standard deviations in the analysis (What Works Clearinghouse, 2014, p. 11).[51] Therefore, to ensure that the study "meets standards with reservations," I include covariate controls in the analysis to achieve baseline

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[51] For an RCT to "meet standards without reservations," the rate of differential attrition must be less than 7.8% when the overall attrition rate is 32% (as in the CFS year 1 posttest wave), less than 1.9% when the overall attrition rate is 58% (as in the CFS year 2 wave), and less than 2.8% when the overall attrition rate is 54% (as in the CFS year 3 wave) (What Works Clearinghouse, 2014, p. 13).

equivalence on the analytic sample through statistical adjustment (What Works Clearinghouse, 2014, p. 13).

Analysis

Analytic Sample

The analytic sample includes families with a valid year 1 pretest parent survey and whose target child was identified as White or Latino in school district records. I first eliminated the seven families missing the baseline survey.[52] I then restricted the sample to include only White and Latino students. This eliminated about 13% of the families, including 92 students with missing race/ethnicity, 40 Native American students, 47 Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 235 Black students. Finally, families missing observations on family-level covariates were dropped from the sample. This eliminated about two percent of the remaining sample ($n = 51$), including 20 cases missing one observation and 31 cases missing more than one baseline measure of social resources (*parent-child bond*, *parent network quality*, and *parent network size*).

The resulting analytic sample includes 2,614 families in 52 schools and approximately 6,600 time-point observations per outcome variable (6,604 for *institutional ties* and 6,620 for *degree of supportiveness*). Descriptive statistics for the analytic sample are reported in Table 5.5. The sample was predominantly low-income (80.1% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch) and Latino (84.5%). Of the sample families, 15.5% ($n = 405$) were categorized as non-Latino White, 54.1% ($n = 1,414$) as English-dominant Latino, and 30.4% ($n = 795$) as Spanish-dominant Latino. Just over half of the target children were female (50.8%), 28.0% were English language learners, and 9.7% were special education students.

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[52] Of these, three were missing all parent surveys, three were missing both year 1 surveys, and one was missing all but the year 1 posttest survey.

At the school level, first grade enrollments ranged from 21 to 163 students, with a mean of 98.4 ($SD = 29.0$). As few as one-third and as many as 86% of first-grade families consented to the study in each school, with a mean of 61.5% ($SD = 12.1\%$). The pupil-to-teacher ratio in study schools ranged from 12.9 to 22.4 students per teacher, with a mean of 16.2 ($SD = 2.1$). The mean proportion of full-time educators was 43.8% ($SD = 10.2\%$). On average, about three-fourths of students were proficient in reading and math, with proficiency rates ranging from 33% to 96%. Schools served high proportions of low-income families, with a mean of 76.6% ($SD = 16.9\%$) and a range of 24% to 97% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. Schools also served predominantly minority populations. While the representation of White students in schools ranged from one percent to about 65%, on average student bodies were about 13.4% White, 73.8% Latino, 9.8% Black, and 2.9% other racial/ethnic minority.

In treatment schools, families on average attended about three of the eight weekly FAST sessions offered. Just over one fourth of the families attended at least six of the sessions (26.2%), about half attended between one and five sessions (48.7%), and about one fourth did not attend any sessions (25.1%). Among treatment-school families that attended at least one FAST session, the average number of sessions attended was about four (half the sessions).

Analytic Approach

The purpose of the analysis was to assess program impacts on parent-school relationships during the early years of elementary school, and to examine whether any effects are moderated by family ethnic and linguistic background. I assessed program impacts and effect heterogeneity by considering two types of treatment effects. First, I estimated the impact of treatment assignment, which I refer to as intent-to-treat (ITT) effects. I use the ITT to assess average family-level returns that a school can expect from offering the program to an entire grade level.

Second, I estimated the effects of graduating from the program, defined as attending at least six of the eight weekly FAST sessions. I refer to these as treatment-on-the-treated (TOT) effects, which I use to assess average family-level returns to fully participating in the program. This has useful policy implications for schools that may be interested in targeting the program to specific families.

Intent-to-treat (ITT) effects. To evaluate ITT effects, I initially considered population-average family-level effects associated with treatment assignment. Specifically, using the regression approach described below (see section on statistical model), I estimated the effect of attending a school that received the FAST program. That is, I compared all families in control schools to all families in treatment schools. This will yield an unbiased estimate of the ITT effect when treatment groups are statistically equivalent at baseline (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001). In the CFS, offering the program was randomly assigned at the school level, but families within treatment schools self-selected into (or out of) study participation. As previously discussed, while the study appears to have achieved baseline equivalence at the school level, the treatment groups were not statistically equivalent at the family level. If the factors driving non-random family-level selection processes also impact the outcomes of interest, then the average ITT effect estimate will be biased. I explored potential confounding of the ITT effect estimates, due to differential family-level selection into the study across treatment groups, by including additional controls for baseline family-level social resources and school characteristics.

Treatment-on-the-treated (TOT) effects. In addition to the effects of offering the FAST program to families (ITT effects), I assessed the impacts of actually graduating from the program (TOT), defined as attending at least six of the eight FAST sessions. I estimated TOT effects as treated-average propensity-score weighted ITT effects, adjusted for the average rate of family-

level program participation within treatment schools. To do this, I combined a propensity-score weighting method (Morgan & Todd, 2008) with the 'Bloom' adjustment for non-compliance (Bloom, 1984). Below, I describe the motivation and procedures for implementing this approach.

The TOT impact is the average family-level difference in potential outcomes produced by receiving the treatment (in this case defined as attending 6-8 program sessions) rather than not receiving the treatment. Recall that only about one-fourth of CFS families in treatment schools graduated from the program, while about half the families attended 1-5 sessions, and another one-fourth never attended the program. If partial participation diminishes returns to the program, or the program has weaker or nonexistent spillover effects (i.e., indirect effects on treatment-school families that never attend the program), then comparing the average outcomes of all treatment-school families to the average outcomes of all control-school families (i.e., ITT effect estimate) will underestimate the effect of actually graduating from the program (TOT).

Under the assumption of no spillover effects in treatment schools—that is, if there is no indirect program effect for families in treatment schools that did not graduate from the program—then any observed ITT effect can be attributed solely to program graduates. If this assumption holds, an unbiased estimate of the TOT effect can be derived from the ITT effect estimate via the 'Bloom' adjustment (Fortson & Schochet, 2011). In this approach, the TOT is estimated by simply dividing the ITT estimate by the graduation rate (Bloom, 1984). Because the Bloom-adjusted-TOT effect estimate is a function of the ITT effect estimate, the same potential for omitted variable bias discussed earlier would apply here. That is, differential selection of families into treatment groups may confound ITT estimates. I thus estimated TOT effects from ITT effect estimates net of the full set of controls described above.

Moreover, because the TOT assesses the effect of actually graduating from the program, there is additional potential omitted variable bias due to differential selection of families into (or out of) program attendance. That is, factors which cause families to graduate from the program and also impact the outcomes of interest could bias the effect estimates. To estimate TOT effects, I therefore applied the Bloom adjustment to treated-average propensity-score weighted ITT estimates. I derived these weighted ITT estimates via the propensity-score weighting approach proposed by Morgan and Todd (2008) for estimating average treatment-on-the-treated impacts from observational data. This approach "attempts to turn the control group into a representative sample of the population-level treatment group" via sample weighting (p. 244). In this case, I weighted CFS families that did not graduate from the program[53] to be representative of families that graduate from the program.

To derive the weights, I first modeled the family-level population average propensity of graduating from the FAST program, p_{ij}, as a function of baseline observable characteristics at the family and school levels.[54] I estimated this propensity by fitting a multilevel logistic regression model to data on treatment-school families (see Appendix G for details). Then, using the fitted regression model results, I estimated for all families in treatment and control schools

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[53] That is, treatment-school families that attended five or fewer of the eight total FAST sessions offered, and all control-school families, who were not offered the opportunity to attend any FAST sessions.

[54] Family-level predictors included indicators of when the year 1 parent pretest survey was completed, family racial/ethnic background, student gender, family poverty, the target child's statuses as an English language learner or special education student, baseline measures of parents' social connections to school staff, other parents at the school, and the target child. School-level predictors included baseline measures of first grade enrollment, the proportion of full-time educators, teacher-to-student ratio, academic performance, proportion of first-grade families that consented to the CFS study, average proportion of school-year days attended by students, socioeconomic and racial/ethnic student body composition, and indicators for study season and randomization block.

the predicted propensity of FAST graduation, $\hat{p}_{ij}$, from which I generated the regression weights, w_{ij}, shown in Equation 2.

For families that graduated from FAST: $w_{ij} = 1$ **Equation 2**

For families that did not graduate from FAST: $w_{ij} = \frac{\hat{p}_{ij}}{1-\hat{p}_{ij}}$

Thus, while the weights leave the sample of treatment-school families that actually graduated from FAST unadjusted, families in treatment and control schools that did not graduate from the program were weighted by the predicted odds of graduation to create a sample with population-average characteristics of graduating families. After checking for adequate balance on the adjustment variables (see Appendix G), I re-estimated the ITT effects as the w_{ij}-weighted-average effects of treatment assignment (net of the full set of covariate controls). Finally, I calculated the TOT by applying the Bloom adjustment to these resultant propensity-score-weighted ITT effects, using the FAST graduation rate among treatment-school families (26.2%).

Statistical model. To estimate the treatment effects, I employ a multilevel piecewise linear growth modeling approach using HLM 7.0 software. In the CFS data, time-point observations are clustered within families, and family-level measures are clustered within schools. Consequently, the data violate the assumption of independent observations, and approaches such as standard ordinary least squares regression which rely on this assumption will yield biased estimates of the standard errors (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). To account for the clustering of error variances within higher-level units, I specified three-level Hierarchical Linear Models (HLMs) where time-points (level 1) were nested within families (level 2) and schools (level 3). There was statistically significant variation at each level of analysis in both outcome measures ($p < 0.001$). For each aspect of parent-school relationships, well over half of the variation (56-58%) occurred within families, across time-points (level 1). Around 38-42% of the variance in each outcome was due to differences between families within schools (level 2). Only

about 4.5% of the variance in *supportiveness* and 2.4% of the variance in *institutional ties* was due to differences between schools (level 3).

I employed piecewise linear growth modeling, in which I estimated linear change per month in the outcome variables within two growth periods: during the first-grade year (*Growth Period I*) and over the next two years (*Growth Period II*). This allowed me to explore program impacts not only during first grade, when the intervention was offered (*FAST*Growth Period I*), but also whether any effects are sustained over the next two years (*FAST*Growth Period II*). The growth modeling approach maximizes the sample size by utilizing all available data on respondents with at least one time-point observation on the outcome variable. While this approach avoids dropping respondents missing one, two, or three time-point observations from the analysis, the resultant regression estimates are more reflective of respondents with more time-point observations, and missing observations still reduce statistical power to estimate change over time.[55]

I used a stepwise modeling procedure, where I built up from simpler models, adding variables in construct groups. For each outcome, I first estimated a baseline model including the growth-period indicators, ethnic/linguistic background indicators, and the standard control variables on the unweighted analytic sample (model 0). I next estimated the main effect of the program within the two growth periods (model 1), then explored effect heterogeneity by family ethnic and linguistic background for the first growth period (model 2). In these models, program effects were estimated net of standard controls for student- and school-level characteristics on the unweighted analytic sample. I then explored potential confounding of the effect estimates by

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[55] As previously discussed, an additional concern is potential bias introduced by systematic differences in rates of attrition by family characteristics. See discussion section for reflection on the implications of this threat for interpretation.

re-estimating models 1 and 2 with additional covariate controls. Finally, to derive the TOT

estimates, I re-estimated the models using the family-level weights, w_{ij}. These models included

the full set of covariate controls, to account for any remaining imbalance across graduates and

non-graduates of the program (Morgan & Todd, 2008). The full model (model 2) estimated for

each outcome, Y, at time, i, for student, j, in school, k, is shown in Equation 1.

Level 1: Time-points **Equation 1**
$$Y_{ijk} = \pi_{0jk} + \pi_{1jk}*(Growth\ Period\ I)_{ijk} + \pi_{2jk}*(Growth\ Period\ II)_{ijk} + e_{ijk}$$

Level 2: Students
$$\pi_{0jk} = \beta_{00k} + \beta_{01k}*(Eng\text{-}Latino)_{jk} + \beta_{02k}*(Span\text{-}Latino)_{jk} + \beta_{0nk}*(X_S)_{jk} + \underline{\beta_{0mk}*(X_C)_{jk}} + r_{0jk}$$
$$\pi_{1jk} = \beta_{10k} + \beta_{11k}*(Eng\text{-}Latino)_{jk} + \beta_{12k}*(Span\text{-}Latino)_{jk} + r_{1jk}$$
$$\pi_{2jk} = \beta_{20k} + r_{2jk}$$

Level 3: Schools
$$\beta_{00k} = \gamma_{000} + \gamma_{001}*(FAST)_k + \gamma_{00n}*(Z_S)_k + \underline{\gamma_{00m}*(Z_C)_k} + u_{00k}$$
$$\beta_{01k} = \gamma_{010} + \gamma_{011}*(FAST)_k$$
$$\beta_{02k} = \gamma_{020} + \gamma_{021}*(FAST)_k$$

$$\cdot$$
$$\cdot$$
$$\cdot$$

$$\beta_{10k} = \gamma_{100} + \gamma_{101}*(FAST)_k + u_{10k}$$
$$\beta_{11k} = \gamma_{110} \underline{+ \gamma_{111}*(FAST)_k}$$
$$\beta_{12k} = \gamma_{120} \underline{+ \gamma_{121}*(FAST)_k}$$
$$\beta_{20k} = \gamma_{200} + \gamma_{201}*(FAST)_k + u_{20k}$$

As shown in Equation 1, I estimated linear change within each growth period on the

outcome variable, Y, one of the two measures of relationships between parents and school staff

(*degree of supportiveness* or *number of institutional ties*). The indicators for family ethnic and

linguistic background differentiate between the reference category (*White*) and Latino families

which are English-language dominant (*Eng-Latino*) or Spanish-language dominant (*Span-

Latino*). The standard control variables, used in all models, are denoted by the student-level

vector, X_S, which includes indicators of student gender, family poverty, English language learner

status, and special education status, and the school-level vector, Z_S, which includes baseline

measures of randomization block, first grade enrollment, the proportion of educators employed full time, and the pupil-to-teacher ratio. The potentially confounding variables introduced in the final models are denoted by the student-level vector, X_C, consisting of baseline indicators of family social resources within and outside the family, and the school-level vector, Z_C, including various baseline measures of school context.[56] All control variables included in the models were centered on the grand mean.

The underlined text in Equation 1 denotes terms excluded from the models exploring only the overall effects of the program (model 1) or the models that do not include the potentially-confounding covariate controls (models with only standard controls). The grand mean, γ_{000}, represents the average score on the parent-school relationship outcome measure for White families (the reference group for the ethnic/linguistic family background indicators) in control schools at the start of first grade, net of student- and school-level controls. The two random effects, r_{0jk} and u_{00k}, respectively represent each student's and school's deviation from the grand mean. These are assumed to be normally distributed around a mean of zero and serve as the basis for estimating variance in parent-school relationships at the student and school levels. Average ethnic/linguistic differences in parent-school relationships at the start of first grade, net of student and school characteristics, are represented by the parameters, γ_{010} (which captures the average difference between English-dominant Latinos and Whites) and γ_{011} (which represents the difference between Spanish-dominant Latinos and Whites).

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[56] The student-level vector, X_S, denotes four dummy variables: *female*, *free/reduced lunch*, *ELL*, and *SPED*. The school-level vector, Z_S, included seven variables: four indicators of randomization blocks (*block1-block4*), *1st grade size*, *FTE*, and *pupil/teacher ratio*. The student-level vector, X_C, included three variables: *parent-child bond*, *parent network size*, and *parent network quality*. The school-level vector, Z_C, included eight variables: *reading proficiency rate*, *math proficiency rate, study consent rate, attendance rate, proportion free/reduced lunch, proportion White, proportion Black,* and *proportion other racial/ethnic minority* (other than Black or Hispanic/Latino). All variables in these vectors were grand-mean centered in the models.

The parameter, γ_{100}, represents the average rate of change per month in the parent-school relationship outcome over the first grade year (i.e., during Growth Period I) for White families in control schools (the reference category), net of student and school characteristics. The parameters, γ_{110} and γ_{120}, represent differences in the average rate of change in the outcome over the first grade year, for English-dominant Latinos versus Whites (γ_{110}) and Spanish-dominant Latinos versus Whites (γ_{120}) in control schools. The parameter, γ_{001}, captures any baseline differences among White families on the outcome measure between treatment and control groups. Any ethnic/linguistic group variation in these baseline treatment-group differences are captured in the parameters, γ_{011} and γ_{011}, respectively representing differences between Whites and English-dominant Latinos or Spanish-dominant Latinos. The parameter, γ_{200}, represents the average rate of change per month in the outcome over the second and third grade years (i.e., during the second growth period) in control schools. The random effects, r_{1jk}, u_{10k}, r_{2jk}, and u_{20k}, respectively represent each student's and school's deviation from the average rates of change during the first grade year (*Growth Period I*) and over the next two years (*Growth Period II*).

The parameters, γ_{101} and γ_{201}, capture the average difference between treatment and control schools in the rate of change during the first growth period (γ_{101}) and the second growth period (γ_{201}), net of family and school controls. Thus, these are the parameters of interest for assessing the main effect of the program. In model 1, γ_{101} and γ_{201} respectively represent the average ITT effects of the program during the first-grade year when the program was offered (*Growth Period I*) and over the next two years (*Growth Period II*). In model 2 (effect-heterogeneity model), the parameters, γ_{111} and γ_{121}, represent the difference in the treatment effect during the first-grade year for English-dominant Latinos versus Whites (γ_{111}) and Spanish-dominant Latinos versus Whites (γ_{121}). Thus, these are the parameters of interest for assessing

effect heterogeneity during the first growth period. These respectively capture the degree to which program impacts differ for Whites as compared to English-dominant Latinos or Spanish-dominant Latinos. The other γ parameters are regression coefficients for the student- and school-level control variables, in the scale of the outcome variable.

Results

I present the results of the analysis in two parts. In the first section, I discuss results for the effects of offering the FAST program (ITT estimates). I first review evidence regarding the overall impact (i.e., average across all families), reporting results for model 1, which tested whether offering the program, on average, impacts parent relationships with school staff. I then assess potential heterogeneity in the effect of offering the program, reviewing results for model 2, which tested whether impacts differ by family ethnic and linguistic background. In the second section, I discuss the results for the effects of graduating from the program (TOT estimates), first overall (model 1) and then by family ethnic/linguistic background (model 2).

Effects of Offering the FAST Program

Overall Program Effects

Descriptive patterns in overall program effects are shown in Figure 5.2, which plots the family-level observed sample mean for each outcome variable across the four survey waves, by treatment group. The patterns for *number of institutional ties* are shown in the top panel, while the bottom panel plots the means for *degree of supportiveness*. For supportiveness, there was a similar pattern across treatment conditions, where mean ratings declined slightly over the first-grade year then changed little over the next two years. In contrast, the mean *number of institutional ties* declined slightly over the first-grade year in control schools but increased slightly in treatment schools, by about 10% of a standard deviation across the four survey waves.

These descriptive patterns suggest that, on average, offering FAST may boost the quantity but not the quality of parents' institutional ties to the school. To assess whether these observed mean differences are statistically significant and robust to potentially confounding student and school characteristics, I next turn to the results from the multilevel regression models.

Selected results from the statistical models estimating ITT effects on parent-staff relationships are presented in Table 5.6 (coefficient estimates for control variables and variance components are reported in Appendix H, Table H1). Estimates are presented in both the original unit of the dependent variable (coefficient: Coeff.) and standard-deviation units (effect size: E.S.). I report results for *number of institutional ties* in the top panel of the table and for *degree of supportiveness* in the bottom panel. Within each panel, the first block of columns presents the results for model 1 with only standard controls, while the second block of columns presents model 1 results net of the full set of controls, including covariates for potentially confounding baseline characteristics.

For both outcome measures, the results indicate a pattern of decline over the first-grade year and no significant change over the next two years in control schools.[57] In model 1, the γ_{101} and γ_{201} parameters are the effects of interest, respectively representing the average ITT effect of the program during the year it was offered, the first-grade year (γ_{101}), and over the next two years

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[57] The γ_{100} parameter represents the average rate of change per month in the outcome variable for the first growth period. According to the coefficient estimates net of all controls, in comparison schools, the number of school staff parents feel comfortable approaching declines on average by about 5% of a person per month during the first-grade year ($\hat{\gamma}_{100} = -0.051$, $p = 0.005$), and parent perceptions of supportiveness in their relationships with staff decline by about 10% of a point per month over the same period ($\hat{\gamma}_{100} = -0.095$, $p < 0.001$). The γ_{120} parameter estimates indicate that, as compared to White families in control schools, Spanish-dominant Latino control-school families on average experience less decline in institutional ties to the school ($p = 0.009$; the average decline per month is <1%, $\hat{\gamma}_{100}+\hat{\gamma}_{120} = -0.051+0.041 = -0.009$), but possibly greater decline in perceptions of supportiveness ($p = 0.103$). According to the estimates of the γ_{200} parameters, families in control schools experience no change on average in either quantity ($p = 0.174$) or quality of institutional ties to the school over second and third grade ($p = 0.482$).

(γ_{201}). The full model results for *number of institutional ties* indicate that, even net of potentially confounding controls, offering the program on average prevents most of the decline in number of staff parents feel comfortable approaching during the first-grade year ($p = 0.023$), reducing the decay by nearly half a person over the full year ($0.468 = 12*0.039$), or about one quarter of a standard deviation ($0.264 = 12*0.022$). However, the program appeared to have no additional effect on quantity of institutional ties over the next two years ($p = 0.728$). According to the results for *degree of supportiveness*, offering the program has no average impact on the quality of parent-staff relationships, either initially ($p = 0.552$) or over the next two years ($p = 0.715$).

Heterogeneity by Family Ethnic and Linguistic Background

Figure 5.3 depicts descriptive patterns in program effects over the four survey waves, separately by family ethnic/linguistic background group. As shown in the top panel, for English-dominant and Spanish-dominant Latino families, the patterns of change over time in observed mean *number of institutional ties* were similar in treatment and control schools. Treatment-group differences were evident only among non-Latino White families, where the mean quantity of parent-staff ties declined slightly across waves in control schools but increased slightly in treatment schools, particularly over the first-grade year. As shown in the bottom panel, regardless of family ethnicity and language dominance, parent-reported *degree of supportiveness* declined slightly on average over the first-grade year then remained fairly stable over the next two years in both treatment and control schools. However, among English-dominant Latino families, the decline over the first-grade year in treatment schools (about 38% of a standard deviation) was noticeably larger than the decline in control schools (about 28% of a standard deviation). These patterns suggest that FAST effects on parent-staff relationships may be moderated by family ethnic and linguistic background, where the positive impact on quantity of

ties may be concentrated among non-Latino White families and any negative impact on the

quality of ties may be experienced mainly by English-dominant Latino families. To assess

whether these patterns are systematic and attributable to the program (rather than background

factors), I turn to the regression results.

Table 5.7 reports selected results from the statistical models testing ethnic/linguistic

heterogeneity in ITT effects for the first growth period (i.e., model 2; see Appendix H, Table H2,

for estimates of control variable coefficients and variance components). I again report results for

both outcome measures, net of standard controls (block 1) and the full set of controls (block 2).

In these models, the γ_{101} and γ_{201} parameters capture the average treatment effects for non-Latino

Whites (reference category) during the first and second growth periods, respectively. To assess

heterogeneity during the first growth period by ethnic/linguistic background, the effects of

interest are the coefficients for the γ_{111} and γ_{121} parameters. These correspond to the average

difference in the Growth-Period-I treatment effect between English-dominant Latinos and

Whites ($\hat{\gamma}_{111}$) and between Spanish-dominant Latinos and Whites ($\hat{\gamma}_{121}$), net of family- and

school-level controls.

Even net of full controls, the results indicate that offering the program on average reduces

the decay over the first-grade year in the number of staff parents feel comfortable approaching,

by about 8% of a person per month ($\hat{\gamma}_{101} = 0.078$, $p = 0.010$). While there was no evidence that

this impact differs for non-Latino White and English-dominant Latino families ($p = 0.199$), the

program impact may be lower for Spanish-dominant Latino families than White families, by

about 6% of a person per month ($\hat{\gamma}_{121} = -0.055$, $p = 0.091$). According to the results, offering the

program is associated with an average return of nearly one person over the first-grade year

($0.936 = 12*0.078$), or more than half a standard deviation ($0.528 = 12*0.044$), for non-Latino

White families. In contrast, for Spanish-dominant Latino families, offering the program is associated with estimated returns of less than one-third of a staff person on average over the first-grade year (0.276 = 12*[.078-0.055]), or less than one-fifth a standard deviation in number of institutional ties (0.156 = 12*[.044-0.031]). There was again no evidence that offering the program has any additional effect on the quantity of institutional ties over the next two years ($p = 0.679$).

For the *degree of supportiveness*, the results for heterogeneous effects (model 2) were similar to those for the overall effect (model 1). There was no indication that ethnic/linguistic heterogeneity ($p > 0.500$, for both $\hat{\gamma}_{111}$ and $\hat{\gamma}_{121}$) masks a program impact on parent-staff supportiveness over the first-grade year ($p = 0.750$). There was again no evidence that offering the program has a delayed impact on the quality of institutional ties in the two years following first grade ($p = 0.716$).

Effects of Graduating from the FAST Program

To assess the treatment-on-the-treated (TOT) effects—that is, the average family-level impact of graduating from the program, defined as attending at least six of the eight weekly sessions—I applied the Bloom adjustment to treated-average propensity-score-weighted ITT estimates. Table 5.8 presents the TOT estimates, along with the weighted ITT estimates from which they were calculated, for models 1 and 2 (see Appendix H, Table H3 for omitted results). Again, the results for *number of institutional ties* are reported in the top panel, while those for *degree of supportiveness* are reported in the bottom panel.

Overall Program Effects

Model 1 predicted the overall average family-level program impact. For both outcome measures, the propensity-score-weighted model yielded similar conclusions as the unweighted

ITT estimates of the overall effect of offering the program (previously reported in Table 5.6).

The results indicated that graduating from the program may increase the number of institutional

ties for families overall, on average by about 20% of a person or 10% of a standard deviation per

month during the first-grade year ($\hat{\gamma}_{101} = 0.211$, *E.S.* = 0.119). However, this estimate was not

statistically significant at conventional levels ($p = 0.062$). Graduates also do not appear to

experience additional gains in number of institutional ties to the school over the next two years,

as students move to second then third grade ($p = 0.296$). The TOT estimates provided no

evidence that graduating from the program has an overall impact on the degree of supportiveness

in parent-staff relationships during first through third grade ($p > 0.270$, for $\hat{\gamma}_{101}$ and $\hat{\gamma}_{201}$).

Heterogeneity by Family Ethnic and Linguistic Background

   Model 2 assessed effect heterogeneity by family ethnic and linguistic background for

program impacts in the first-grade year. For both outcomes, the propensity-score-weighted

model results differed in some important ways from the unweighted ITT estimates (previously

reported in Table 5.7). While there was a large, positive main effect during the first-grade year

on *number of institutional ties* ($\hat{\gamma}_{101} = 0.442$, $p < 0.001$), there was also evidence that this effect

differs for non-Latino White families as compared to not only Spanish-dominant Latino families

($\hat{\gamma}_{121} = -0.265$, $p = 0.019$) but also English-dominant Latino families ($\hat{\gamma}_{111} = -0.273$, $p < 0.001$).

According to the model estimates, graduating from the program boosts the quantity of

institutional ties during first grade, on average by nearly 25% of a standard deviation per month

for White families (*E.S.* = 0.248). According to the total effects, graduation also increases the

number of institutional ties for English-dominant and Spanish-dominant Latino families, but only

by about 10% of a standard deviation per month (for *Eng-Latino*, $0.095 = 0.248 - 0.153 =$

E.S.[$\hat{\gamma}_{101}$]-*E.S.*[$\hat{\gamma}_{111}$]; for *Span-Latino*, $0.099 = 0.248 - 0.149 = E.S.$[$\hat{\gamma}_{101}$]-*E.S.* [$\hat{\gamma}_{121}$]). In other

words, for the quantity of institutional ties, the estimated average first-year returns to program participation were about 60% smaller for English-dominant and Spanish-dominant Latino families than for non-Latino White families. As with the estimated impact of offering the program, the results indicated that graduating from the program has no additional effect on number of institutional ties over the next two years ($p = 0.281$).

According to the results for *number of institutional ties*, the first-year returns to graduating from the program are non-trivial for families of all ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, even by the most conservative estimates. Upper- and lower-bound estimates of the graduation impact under the range of possible assumptions about spillover effects are respectively given by the unadjusted weighted-ITT and Bloom-adjusted-TOT estimates (presented in Table 5.8).[58] The estimated increase in number of institutional ties over the full first-grade year is about 0.8-3.0 standard deviations for non-Latino White families, compared to about 0.3-1.1 standard deviations for English-dominant Latino families and 0.3-1.2 standard deviations for Spanish-dominant Latino families. These estimates indicate that graduating from the program on average increases ties to the school in the first year, by at least 30% of a standard deviation for Latino families, and at least 80% of a standard deviation for non-Latino White families.

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[58] The reported TOT can be interpreted as the impact of graduating from the program under the extreme assumption of no spillover effects (i.e., attending 0-5 of the eight total FAST sessions has no impact on family-school connections). The reported (unadjusted) weighted ITT can be interpreted as the effect of graduating from the program under the equally extreme assumption of perfect spillover effects (i.e., attending 0-5 sessions has the same impact as attending 6-8 sessions). If attending less than six FAST sessions has any impact, then the Bloom-adjusted TOT results will overestimate the true TOT. If there are non-zero returns to attending 0-5 sessions, but these returns are smaller than the impacts of attending 6-8 sessions, then the unadjusted weighted-ITT results will underestimate the true TOT. Under intermediary assumptions about spillover effects—for example, that attending 0-5 sessions impacts parent-staff relationships but to a lesser degree than attending 6-8 sessions, or that there are no returns to attending less than half the sessions (0-3) but some returns to attending at least half (4-8)—the estimated effects of FAST graduation will fall somewhere between these upper and lower bounds.

For the *degree of supportiveness* measure, the TOT estimates also differed in important ways from the unweighted ITT estimates, which provided no evidence that offering the program impacts the quality of parent-staff relationships. Though not reaching conventional levels of statistical significance, the TOT results reveal possible heterogeneous impacts of actually graduating from the program. The main effect estimate was negative, suggesting that program participation actually may reduce levels of perceived supportiveness in parent-staff relationships ($\hat{\gamma}_{101}$ = -0.486, p = 0.054). The coefficient estimates for the interaction terms further suggest that this decline may be concentrated among (non-Latino) White and Spanish-dominant Latino families,[59] or at least that the negative impact may be smaller for English-dominant Latino families ($\hat{\gamma}_{111}$ = 0.389, p = 0.067). Again, the model results provided no evidence that graduating from the program has any additional impact on the degree of supportiveness in relationships with staff over the second- and third-grade years (p = 0.328).

Discussion

This chapter considered whether a family engagement program known as Families and Schools Together (FAST) facilitates the development of relationships between parents and school staff as children move from first to third grade. I focused on communities where barriers to building strong family-school connections may be heightened. The purpose of the analysis was to determine whether the program holds promise for addressing educational inequalities, by enhancing family-school connections in low-income Latino communities. I thus assessed the degree to which the program facilitates the development of relationships between parents and

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[59] For the graduation impact during the first-grade year, there was no evidence of effect heterogeneity between White and Spanish-dominant Latino families (p = 0.148), though the coefficient was positive ($\hat{\gamma}_{121}$ = 0.360).

school personnel in such contexts. I also investigated whether the program has consistent effects for families of varying ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

Drawing on the randomized design of a field experiment, I estimated average family-level impacts of offering the program and of graduating from the program, defined as attending at least six of the eight weekly program meetings. I considered both immediate impacts, during the first-grade year when the intervention was implemented, and longer-term effects over the second- and third-grade years. I considered effects on two aspects of family-school networks: the number of institutional ties connecting parents to the school, and the degree of trust, respect, and shared expectations—or supportiveness—between parents and school staff.

According to the results, any effects of the FAST program on family-school connections occur immediately, during the year the program is offered. The findings provide some evidence that the program enhances family-school relationships for historically marginalized populations. Specifically, there was evidence of positive returns of offering the program on the number of school staff parents feel comfortable approaching with a question about their child. However, offering the program appeared to have no average impact on the degree of supportiveness in parent-staff relationships.

According to the results for number of institutional ties, the overall average return to offering the program is moderate in size at best (about a quarter standard deviation over the first-grade year). Moreover, examination of total effects reveals that, rather than actually increasing the overall family-level average quantity of institutional ties, offering the program prevents it from declining over the first-grade year, which otherwise occurs when schools operate business as usual. Table I1 (Appendix I) reports predicted change over the first-grade year in each outcome measure, by model specification. According to the ITT estimates (effects of offering the

program) for model 1, on average the number of institutional ties declines by about 29% of a standard deviation over the first-grade year in the absence of targeted family engagement efforts, while it changes only trivially when schools offer the FAST program (dropping by about 1% of a standard deviation over the entire year).

Moreover, the models assessing effect heterogeneity indicated that the impact on institutional ties is not experienced equally by families of all ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Whereas offering the program was associated with an average advantage of about one additional institutional tie (more than half a standard deviation) over the first-grade year for non-Latino White families, the positive effect for Spanish-dominant Latino families was about 70% smaller (less than one-fifth a standard deviation over the first-grade year). This suggests that the program may exacerbate ethnic/linguistic inequality in social resources, as the findings indicate that Spanish-dominant Latino families also tend to start out with fewer institutional ties than White families when children begin first grade ($p < 0.001$).

Further evidence that this is the case is revealed by examining ethnic/linguistic gaps for predicted change in number of institutional ties over the first-grade year (see Appendix I, Table I2). According to the predicted gaps based on the ITT estimates for number of institutional ties, the population-level gap between Spanish-dominant Latino and non-Latino White families (shown in the block of columns on the far right) at the start of first grade is about three-fourths a standard deviation. In control schools, this gap narrows by about 69% over the first-grade year, where the Spanish-dominant Latino disadvantage is less than one-third a standard deviation by the end of first grade. However, according to the predicted gaps for treatment schools, the Spanish-Latino/White gap narrows only slightly (by less than 10%) over the first-grade year when the program is offered.

The estimated impacts of actually attending six or more of the eight program sessions provided further insight into program impacts on family-school connections. For quantity of institutional ties, the findings for the effects of graduating from the program were similar to those for offering the program. Again, there was evidence that FAST increases the number of school staff parents feel comfortable approaching, but unlike the moderately-sized average impact of offering the program, graduating from the program appears to yield substantial gains. According to the model estimates, program participation increases the number of institutional ties by about 0.8-3.0 standard deviations over the first-grade year for non-Latino White families.[60] However, the returns are about 60% smaller for English-dominant Latino families (0.3-1.1 standard deviations) and Spanish-dominant Latino families (0.3-1.2 standard deviations).

According to the predicted change in ethnic/linguistic gaps in institutional ties over the first-grade year (see Table I2, results from weighted-ITT and TOT estimates), graduating from the program exacerbates the White advantage. Among the type of families that graduate from the program when it is offered at their children's schools, both English-dominant Latino and Spanish-dominant Latino families started out with fewer institutional ties on average than White families at the start of first grade ($p < 0.001$). Under business as usual, when families do not receive the FAST intervention, the models predict that these gaps narrow by 40-50% over the first-grade year. In comparison, according to model estimates, graduating from the program increases the White advantage over English-dominant Latino families, by more than 120% at worst, and over Spanish-dominant Latino families, by nearly 300% at worst. These effects may

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[60] As previously described, the range of estimates correspond to estimated impacts of graduation under the range of possible assumptions about spillover effects. The upper bound is the Bloom-adjusted TOT estimate, the estimated impact under the assumption that attending 0-5 of the eight FAST sessions has no impact on family-school ties (i.e., no spillover). The lower bound is the unadjusted weighted-ITT estimate, the estimated impact under the assumption that the effect of attending 0-5 sessions is equal to that of attending 6-8 sessions (i.e., perfect spillover).

be overestimated, given that the Bloom-adjusted estimates assume the program has no impact on families that attend up to five of the eight FAST sessions—a strong assumption, particularly for families that attended at least some program sessions. Yet, the effects are non-trivial in size even under the most conservative (and equally unlikely) assumption about spillover effects—that the indirect program effect on families attending 0-5 sessions is equal in size to the direct effect of attending 6-8 sessions.

Taken together, the findings for returns on number of institutional ties indicate that actually graduating from the program yields large returns for families, but offering the program to a population of families yields a small positive return on average, likely due to non-participation rates among the targeted population.[61] Given the intensive recruitment and retention efforts used in the CFS study—for example including phone calls and home visits—it is not realistic to expect that schools will achieve substantially higher participation rates, at least in majority low-income and racial/ethnic minority contexts. Therefore, schools can expect small overall returns when universally offering the program to an entire grade-level of families, but large returns at the family level when families actually graduate from the program. This implies that the program is not an ideal intervention for enhancing parent-staff relationships at the population level, but it may be appropriate for addressing weak family-school connections among a targeted sub-population of families.[62]

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[61] In the CFS study, nearly half (48.7%) of participants in treatment schools attended the program at least once, and more than one-third (38.0%) went to at half the program sessions, but only about one-fourth (26.2%) attended six or more of the eight total sessions, which was considered 'graduating' from the program.

[62] Further support for this conclusion is provided by evidence from the four previous independent randomized assessments of the FAST program, all of which targeted particular sub-populations for intervention—families of students at high risk for school failure and dropout, drug abuse, behavioral and academic problems, or emotional disabilities (Kratochwill et al., 2004; Kratochwill et al., 2009; Layzer et al., 2001; McDonald et al., 2006). These

The analysis of treatment effect heterogeneity by family ethnic and linguistic background revealed that the program yields positive returns not only for non-Latino White families, but also for English-dominant Latino and Spanish-dominant Latino families (see Table I1, predicted change in number of institutional ties from model 2 estimates). This suggests that, even in majority low-income and racial/ethnic minority contexts, FAST effectively strengthens family-school connections for both White and Latino families. Thus, as a 'rising tide that lifts all boats' intervention, the program has promise for enhancing family engagement in historically resource-poor communities.

However, the chapter findings also revealed two surprising patterns of concern. First, the FAST program may exacerbate White advantage on quantity of institutional ties over English- and Spanish-dominant Latino families during early elementary school. As shown in Table I1, the models predicted larger treatment-versus-control school advantage for White families than for English- and Spanish-dominant Latino families. In other words, the program appears to be more effective at increasing institutional ties for non-Latino White families than for English- and Spanish-dominant Latino families. Thus, if schools seek to reduce ethnic or linguistic inequality in educational outcomes, the program may not be an ideal intervention.[63]

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studies find that, for the targeted population, FAST engages socially marginalized families with schools, improves academic performance, reduces risky behavior, and reduces the likelihood of special education referral.

[63] There may be exceptions. For example, if gains in institutional ties have larger returns on educational outcomes for minority families than White families, then the fewer institutional ties of minority families still could provide greater educational benefits for minority students than the benefits accrued to White students from their institutional ties (even if greater in quantity). This may occur if minority and White families draw on their social connections in different ways. Similarly, it may be the case that the quantity of ties is less important than the quality of resources accessed through the ties. If the program connects minority families with more resource-rich school personnel than the staff with whom it connects White families, then the new institutional ties of minority families, though fewer in number, still may yield larger gains in educational outcomes than those of White families. According to recent research on the impacts of having informal adult mentors, there is some evidence of greater academic returns for families with less social resources (Erickson et al., 2009).

Second, graduating from the program may actually diminish parent perceptions of trust, respect, and shared expectations with school staff. While the analysis did not detect an average effect of offering the program on supportiveness in parent-staff relationships, the results of the TOT analysis yielded suggestive evidence of a heterogeneous negative impact. According to the weighted-ITT estimates, attending 6-8 program sessions may reduce the quality of institutional ties that first year, by about 10-30% of a standard deviation per month on average and possibly more for English-dominant Latino families. These effects were not significant at conventional levels ($0.05 < p < 0.10$), suggesting that the observed patterns may reflect random sampling variability in the data, rather than a true program impact. Yet a more lenient significance level may be appropriate for these models, in light of tradeoffs between model complexity and sample size, which may increase the risk of Type II error—a false rejection of the null hypothesis. That is, the estimation of program effects may be underpowered in the models specifying heterogeneous effects.

More importantly, given the FAST program design, the negative impact on parent-staff supportiveness is theoretically plausible, though unintentional. As compared to how the program facilitates relationship development between families (e.g., parent networks) and within the family unit (e.g., parent-child bond), FAST components more indirectly target relationships between parents and school staff. For example, nearly one hour of programming is devoted to adult-only parent discussion time (designed to function as a parent support group) and over an hour is devoted to within-family bonding activities (a family meal, participatory games, and one-on-one child-directed play with a parent). In contrast, the key mechanisms by which the program is designed to connect parents to school staff include increasing opportunities to see and interact with personnel (by bringing parents to the school), structuring reciprocated exchanges between

parents and one or more school staff members (by recruiting at least one to join the implementation team), and creating a positive experience for families within the school context (by holding the program at the school). In light of prior research demonstrating that low-income, immigrant, and Latino parents often feel uncomfortable or even disrespected in interactions with school personnel, FAST may simply speed up the process by which parents are alienated by staff in majority-minority contexts.

If real, the negative program impact on the quality of relationships between parents and staff has potentially important implications for program design. To effectively enhance supportiveness between parents and school staff in communities where mistrust and vulnerability are heightened, simply providing additional opportunities for parent-staff interaction may be insufficient. Interventions may need to explicitly change *how* parents and school personnel interact, in ways that facilitate the development of trust, respect, and shared expectations, and by thwarting processes that otherwise undermine their emergence.

The field-experimental design of the CFS study proved both a strength and weakness in this analysis. The randomized design in theory produces data from which unbiased causal impacts of the program can be estimated. The school-randomized approach helps avoid cross-over between treatment conditions, which is more likely in a within-school family-randomized design. Yet a number of implementation issues warrant caution in interpreting the findings.

First, the timing of randomization prior to family-level recruitment, and the family-level self-selection into program participation within treatment schools, may have introduced confounding factors that biased estimates of program impacts. Although the analytical approach and rich set of covariate controls likely reduced this threat to validity, additional omitted variable bias is still possible. For example, unmeasured motivational differences may remain which drive

study participation or program participation and impact family-school connections. It is likely

that such motivational factors are captured in part by observed baseline measures of parent-child

bond, parent network size and quality, and quantity and quality of institutional ties to the school.

Still, while including additional controls for potentially confounding factors did reduce the initial

average treatment-group differences on the outcomes to non-significance for most models ($p >$

0.05), suggesting that these model results meet evidence standards for RCTs "with reservations"

(What Works Clearinghouse, 2014), baseline differences on number of institutional ties

remained in the unweighted effect heterogeneity model (model 2) and the propensity-score

weighted models (models 1 and 2).

A second caveat about the validity of the findings is that the reliance on self-reported

measures introduces the potential of a Hawthorne effect. Although CFS researchers did not

inform families in control schools that the FAST intervention was offered at other study schools,

they invited families in treatment schools to attend FAST, thereby making them aware of the

intervention. Simply knowing that the FAST program was offered may have influenced how

parents in treatment schools responded on the questionnaires. The mixed findings about program

impacts on family-school connections provide some confidence that this is not the case. A

Hawthorne effect driving the observed findings would mean that parent reports were upwardly

biased for number of institutional ties, but downwardly biased for the degree of supportiveness.

It is unlikely that knowing about the program would affect parent reports in different ways for

the two outcomes.

Third, the observed patterns may be an artifact of attrition across survey waves, given the

substantial attrition rates, differential rates of attrition across treatment conditions, and evidence

of differential characteristics of participants by likelihood and patterns of attrition (also see

chapter 3, Appendix B [Analysis of differential attrition on parent surveys]). Rates of attrition were higher in treatment schools than comparison schools for all posttest survey waves ($p <$ 0.05). Families in treatment schools also had fewer institutional ties on average at baseline ($p <$ 0.001) and higher average perceptions of supportiveness from staff ($p = 0.052$). Thus, if the families leaving the sample tended to be those with fewer institutional ties and higher supportiveness at baseline, then the differential attrition across treatment groups could artificially produce the observed treatment effects. However, there was no evidence that attrition was systematically associated with baseline measures of either outcome variable ($p > 0.500$, for attrition on each survey wave and for attrition on any survey wave). In addition, when I restricted the sample to families with all four time-points (not shown), the patterns by treatment group and ethnic/linguistic background in parent-staff relationship measures over the four survey waves appeared similar as the patterns for the analytic sample (previously shown in Figures 5.2 and 5.3).

Conclusion

A growing body of research on Latino children suggests that social support from parents, teachers, and peers is associated with higher levels of school engagement, academically-oriented behaviors, and positive attitudes toward learning (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Garcia-Reid, 2007; Garcia-Reid et al., 2005; Rosenfeld et al., 2000; Woolley et al., 2009). Yet exchanges between school personnel and low-income, Latino, and immigrant parents regularly result in unease (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Rigorous assessment of how available programs impact family-school connections, particularly in communities most in need of such interventions, can soundly inform policy decisions about school investments in Latino children's educational futures. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether a particular

family engagement program is a promising intervention for addressing Latino educational disadvantage.

The study examined whether an after-school program impacted the development of parent-school relationships in low-income and high-immigrant Latino communities during the first years of elementary school. A key contribution of this study is that it examined impacts on two aspects of family-school networks—not only the more often studied quantity of institutional ties, but also the quality of parents' ties to the school. This multidimensional investigation revealed that the program has mixed effects on family-school connections. On the one hand, the program appears to boost the number of school staff parents feel comfortable approaching. Even with only about half the families ever attending a program session and only about one-fourth fully participating, a small-to-moderate positive effect was evident at the population level. On the other hand, the program appears to be less effective for the parents who are initially most marginalized—Latino parents and particularly those who are Spanish-language dominant. Moreover, the findings suggest that program participation may actually reduce the degree to which parents perceive trust, respect, and shared expectations with school personnel.

As a whole, this analysis did not provide strong evidence that the program is a promising policy solution for broad patterns of Latino educational disadvantage. Rather, the program may be more useful when implemented on a smaller scale with targeted sub-populations. Nevertheless, given the complexity of its design and effects, the program is a potentially informative model for practice. Examination of how the program operates, and what it does well, could reveal which components drive what effects. Once identified, it may be possible to distill specific components to be implemented on a smaller scale, at a lower cost, or to be incorporated into school policies and everyday practices of school personnel.

The motivation for this study was the need to identify ways to address educational inequality. Rooted in literature documenting educational benefits of family-school connections, as a first step this study focused on how to facilitate strong parent-staff relationships among historically marginalized populations. Yet, the schooling experiences and educational outcomes of students are of ultimate interest, and the findings raise various questions for future research.

We need to understand not only whether particular programs effectively strengthen family-school connections, but also how such networks are used to support children's learning. This has implications for interpretation of the study results. Though theory and past research suggest that educational benefits accrue from having additional and more supportive institutional ties to the school, this may not always be the case, or it may differ for families with particular demographic characteristics. For example, research on Mexican-origin parents reveals that they tend to hold school staff in particularly high esteem, and their deep respect often translates into unquestioning trust in the professional expertise of staff. Yet, in the context of U.S. schools, where parents may be expected to directly and even forcefully advocate for access to scarce resources, such trust and respect may not serve their children well (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 151).

Future research is needed to explore how parents draw on institutional ties to support their children's education. Do parents use institutional ties as advocates, sources of information, or expert knowledge? Do the quantity and quality of institutional ties change the frequency or form of parental engagement behaviors? Do parents' relationships with school staff influence children's motivation to learn, their attachment to the school, or their own relationships with school personnel? It is also important to consider whether these mechanisms differ by family

background, or whether they differ when ties are 'artificially' initiated through programs rather than through 'naturally' occurring processes.

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Tables and Figures

Table 5.1

Assessment of Family-Level Baseline Equivalence: Mean Differences in Social Resources

	Mean		t-test
	Control	Treatment	*p*-value
Demographic characteristics			
Female	0.512	0.522	0.652
Free/reduced lunch	0.801	0.798	0.904
Non-Latino White	0.150	0.175	0.155
English-dominant Latino	0.519	0.493	0.269
Spanish-dominant Latino	0.331	0.333	0.949
Age of child	-0.038	0.007	0.346
ELL	0.306	0.289	0.444
SPED	0.100	0.092	0.585
Attended kindergarten at 1st grade school	0.831	0.858	0.234
Distance from home to school	4.350	6.880	0.528
Baseline family social resources			
Parent-School Networks			
Degree of supportiveness in relationships with staff	10.500	10.700	0.052
Number of institutional ties	3.940	3.660	0.001
Parent-Parent Networks			
Parent network quality	1.060	0.961	0.018
Parent network size	3.240	2.980	0.013
Parent-Child Bond			
Parent-child bond	3.550	3.480	0.002

Note. Reported *p*-values come from independent samples t-test for mean differences, based on all valid observations for White and Latino families, in treatment and control schools, with a valid baseline parent survey (*n* = 1,003-1,751, *N* = 52).

Table 5.2

Description of Measures

Variable	Description	Response Options
Parent-School Relationship Measures (time-varying parent survey reports)		
Degree of supportiveness **4-item Additive Scale** **Range: 0-12** **Cronbach's α = 0.8820** **Measured at 4 time-points**	(1) How much do you trust school staff to do what is best for your child? (2) How much do you feel respected by school staff at this school? (3) How much do you feel the school staff works to build trusting relationships with parents? (4) How much does the school staff share your expectations for your child?	For each item: 0 = None 1 = A little 2 = Some 3 = A lot
Number of institutional ties **Range: 0-6** **Measured at 4 time-points**	How many of the school staff would you feel comfortable approaching if you had a question about your child?	0, 1, …, 6 or more
Timing of survey observation		
Growth Period I **1st grade year**	Months since start of 1st grade (Aug., Fall), over period Aug., 1st gr. Fall - Aug., 2nd gr. Fall	0 – 12[a]
Growth Period II **2nd-3rd grade years**	Months since start of 2nd grade (Aug., Fall), over period Aug., 2nd gr. Fall - Aug., 4th gr. Fall	0 – 24[a]
Family ethnic and linguistic background		
English-dominant Latino	Child race/ethnicity is Hispanic/Latino and parent prefers English survey	Dummy indicator (1 = yes, 0 = no)
Spanish-dominant Latino	Child race/ethnicity is Hispanic/Latino and parent prefers Spanish survey	Dummy indicator
Non-Latino White **(omitted category)**	Child race/ethnicity is White and parent prefers English survey	Dummy indicator
Child demographic traits		
Female	Child gender is Female	Dummy indicators
Free/reduced lunch	Child is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	
ELL	Child is English Language Learner (ELL) student	
SPED	Child is special education (SPED) student	
Parent-child bond **5-item Mean Scale** **Range: 0-4** **Cronbach's α = 0.5891** **Measured at baseline**	(1) I am a nurturing parent. (2) I consistently encourage my child to express his or her emotions. (3) I often tell my child how I feel when he or she misbehaves. (4) I regularly talk to my child about his or her school activities. (5) I regularly participate in activities at my child's school.	0 = Strongly disag. 1 = Somewhat dis. 2 = Neither agree nor disagree 3 = Somewhat ag. 4 = Strongly agree
Parent network size **Measured at baseline**	How many parents of your child's friends at this school do you know?	0, 1, …, 6 or more

Table 5.2 Continued

Variable	Description	Response Options
Parent network quality **5-item Mean Scale** **Range: 0-3** **Cronbach's α = 0.9062** **Measured at baseline**	How much do other parents at this school: (1) …help you with babysitting, shopping, etc.? (2) …listen to you about your problems? (3) …invite you to social activities such as meals and parties? How much do you: (4) …help other parents at this school with babysitting, shopping, etc.? (5) …listen to other parents at this school about their problems? (6) …invite other parents at this school to social activities such as meals and parties? (7) How much do other parents at this school share your expectations for your child?	0 = Not at all 1 = A little 2 = Some(what) 3 = A lot
School characteristics		
Cohort2	School was assigned to study cohort 2	Dummy indicator
Block1-Block4, Block5 **(omitted category)**	Within-cohort study randomization blocks	Dummy indicators
1st grade size	Number of children enrolled in first grade	Count
Pupil/teacher ratio	Ratio of pupils to teachers	Proportion
% FTE	Percentage of full time educator (FTE) teachers	Percentage
Reading proficiency rate Math proficiency rate	Proportion students scoring at least proficient in reading/math on state standardized tests	Proportions
Attendance rate	Mean proportion of school days students attend	Proportion
Study consent rate	Proportion 1st grade families consented to CFS	Proportion
Pr. free/reduced lunch	Proportion students free/red.-price lunch eligible	Proportion
Pr. White; Black; Other; Latino **(omitted category)**	Proportion of students categorized by district as White, Black, other minority, or Hispanic/Latino	Proportions

a. To enable piecewise linear growth period modeling (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002), survey observations in the first growth period (during the 1st grade year, i.e., 0-12 months since the start of 1st grade) were assigned the bottom value on the second growth period variable (*Growth Period II* = 0). Survey observations in the second growth period (2nd - 3rd grade years, i.e. 12-36 months since the start of 1st grade) received the top value on the first growth period variable (*Growth Period I* = 12).

Table 5.3

Family-Level Response Rates for Analytic Sample, by Number of Surveys Observed

	Percent	Cumulative Percent
4 time-points (*all surveys*)	**28.69%**	**28.69%**
3 time-points	**21.84%**	**50.54%**
y1pre + y1post + y2	*8.07%*	
y1pre + y1post + y3	*11.59%*	
y1pre + y2 + y3	*2.18%*	
2 time-points	**26.17%**	**76.70**
y1pre + y1post	*19.59%*	
y1pre + y2	*2.75%*	
y1pre + y3	*3.83%*	
1 time-point (*y1pre only*)	**20.25%**	**100.00%**

Note. Response rates calculated for the chapter 5 analytic sample of White and Latino families, in treatment and control schools, with valid parent pretest surveys, and valid observations on all baseline measures other than timing of survey observation (n = 2,614, N = 52).

Table 5.4

Rates of Family-Level Attrition by Follow-up Wave, Overall and by Treatment Condition

	Year 1 Posttest	Year 2 Posttest	Year 3 Posttest
Overall attrition rate (full sample)	**32.3%**	**58.3%**	**53.7%**
Difference in attrition rates by treatment condition	**8.8%**	**8.7%**	**4.0%**
Attrition rate for treatment condition	36.5%	62.5%	55.7%
Attrition rate for control condition	27.7%	53.9%	51.6%

Note. Attrition rates calculated for the chapter 5 analytic sample of White and Latino families, in treatment and control schools, with valid parent pretest surveys, and valid observations on all baseline measures other than timing of survey observation (n = 2,614, N = 52).

Table 5.5

Sample Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Level 1 (time-points)					
Number of institutional ties	6604	3.79	1.78	0	6
Degree of supportiveness in relationships with staff	6620	10.15	2.39	0	12
Growth Period I (1st grade year)	6703	8.90	3.35	0.00	12.00
Growth Period II (2nd - 3rd grade years)	6703	5.24	8.09	0.00	30.40
Level 2 (students)					
English-dominant Latino	2614	0.54	0.50	0	1
Spanish-dominant Latino	2614	0.30	0.46	0	1
Non-Latino White	2614	0.15	0.36	0	1
Female	2614	0.51	0.50	0	1
Free/reduced lunch	2614	0.80	0.40	0	1
ELL	2614	0.28	0.45	0	1
SPED	2614	0.10	0.30	0	1
Parent-child bond	2614	3.51	0.54	0	4
Parent network size	2614	2.98	2.15	0	6
Parent network quality	2614	0.97	0.84	0	3
Level 3 (schools)					
FAST	52	0.50	0.50	0	1
Block1	52	0.12	0.32	0	1
Block2	52	0.15	0.36	0	1
Block3	52	0.23	0.43	0	1
Block4	52	0.27	0.45	0	1
Block5	52	0.23	0.43	0	1
Cohort2	52	0.54	0.50	0	1
1st grade size	52	98.37	28.99	21	163
Pupil/teacher ratio	52	16.20	2.15	12.90	22.40
% FTE	52	43.80	10.20	22.00	62.50
Reading proficiency rate	52	0.75	0.17	0.41	0.96
Math proficiency rate	52	0.72	0.20	0.33	0.96
Study consent rate	52	0.61	0.12	0.33	0.86
Attendance rate	52	0.95	0.02	0.85	0.96
Proportion free/reduced lunch	52	0.77	0.17	0.24	0.97
Proportion White	52	0.13	0.17	0.01	0.65
Proportion Black	52	0.10	0.08	0.00	0.49
Proportion other minority	52	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.12
Proportion Latino	52	0.74	0.20	0.24	0.97

Note. Reported statistics are based on the chapter 5 analytic sample.

Table 5.6

Selected Estimates: Hierarchical Linear Models Predicting Overall Intent-to-Treat Effects on Parent-Staff Relationship Quantity and Quality (Model 1)

	Basic Controls				Full Set of Controls			
Y = Institutional Ties	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.
Intercept, γ000	4.521	2.540	0.175	<0.001	4.659	2.617	0.166	<0.001
FAST (baseline), γ001	-0.403	-0.226	0.153	0.012	-0.271	-0.152	0.158	0.095
Eng-Latino, γ010	-0.158	-0.089	0.189	0.403	-0.308	-0.173	0.191	0.107
Span-Latino, γ020	-1.043	-0.586	0.194	<0.001	-1.478	-0.830	0.202	<0.001
Eng-Latino*FAST, γ011	-0.134	-0.075	0.146	0.357	-0.114	-0.064	0.154	0.458
Span-Latino*FAST, γ012	0.025	0.014	0.161	0.877	0.106	0.060	0.171	0.534
G.P. I (1st gr.), γ100	-0.046	-0.026	0.018	0.017	-0.051	-0.029	0.017	0.005
Eng-Latino*G.P. I, γ110	-0.006	-0.003	0.015	0.692	0.002	0.001	0.014	0.893
Span-Latino*G.P. I, γ120	0.037	0.021	0.016	0.025	0.041	0.023	0.016	0.009
FAST*G.P. I, γ101	0.042	0.023	0.018	0.025	0.039	0.022	0.016	0.023
G.P. II (2nd-3rd gr.), γ200	0.008	0.004	0.005	0.146	0.007	0.004	0.005	0.174
FAST*G.P. II, γ201	-0.002	-0.001	0.007	0.752	-0.002	-0.001	0.007	0.728
Model Deviance	25053.119 (*df* = 37)				24726.546 (*df* = 46)			

	Basic Controls				Full Set of Controls			
Y = Supportiveness	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.
Intercept, γ000	10.636	4.448	0.200	<0.001	10.645	4.452	0.209	<0.001
FAST (baseline), γ001	0.301	0.126	0.242	0.221	0.444	0.186	0.247	0.081
Eng-Latino, γ010	0.361	0.151	0.225	0.109	0.334	0.140	0.236	0.157
Span-Latino, γ020	0.669	0.280	0.294	0.023	0.413	0.173	0.311	0.185
Eng-Latino*FAST, γ011	-0.293	-0.123	0.184	0.112	-0.274	-0.115	0.193	0.156
Span-Latino*FAST, γ012	-0.248	-0.104	0.257	0.335	-0.135	-0.056	0.266	0.612
G.P. I (1st gr.), γ100	-0.096	-0.040	0.023	<0.001	-0.095	-0.040	0.023	<0.001
Eng-Latino*G.P. I, γ110	-0.014	-0.006	0.016	0.382	-0.009	-0.004	0.016	0.567
Span-Latino*G.P. I, γ120	-0.037	-0.015	0.021	0.078	-0.035	-0.015	0.021	0.103
FAST*G.P. I, γ101	-0.005	-0.002	0.025	0.838	-0.015	-0.006	0.025	0.552
G.P. II (2nd-3rd gr.), γ200	0.007	0.003	0.008	0.408	0.006	0.002	0.008	0.482
FAST*G.P. II, γ201	0.003	0.001	0.011	0.748	0.004	0.002	0.011	0.715
Model Deviance	28725.251 (*df* = 37)				28589.774 (*df* = 46)			

Notes. Coeff. = Coefficient, E.S. = Effect Size (Coeff./Standard Deviation$_Y$), SE = Robust Standard Error, G.P. = Growth Period, p-val. = *p*-value, *df* = degrees of freedom. Estimates for 52 level-3 units (schools), 2,614 level-2 units (families), and 6,604 (institutional ties) or 6,620 (supportiveness) level-1 units (time-points). All models specify random intercepts and slopes (growth periods I-II) at levels 2-3 and include basic controls (child gender, poverty, ELL, and SPED; school district, size, student/teacher ratio, and full-time educators). The model with full set of controls also includes baseline family social resources (parent-child bond, parent-parent relationship measures) and characteristics of schools (study consent rates, attendance rates, reading proficiency rates, and student body socioeconomic and racial/ethnic composition). See Appendix H, Table H1 for omitted model results.

Table 5.7

Selected Estimates: Hierarchical Linear Models Assessing Ethnic/Linguistic Heterogeneity in Intent-to-Treat Effects on Parent-Staff Relationship Quantity and Quality (Model 2)

Y = Institutional Ties	Basic Controls				Full Set of Controls			
	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.
Intercept, γ000	4.717	2.650	0.255	<0.001	5.051	2.838	0.267	<0.001
FAST (baseline), γ001	-0.749	-0.421	0.276	0.010	-0.617	-0.347	0.262	0.024
Eng-Latino, γ010	-0.349	-0.196	0.301	0.246	-0.505	-0.284	0.296	0.088
Span-Latino, γ020	-1.325	-0.745	0.301	<0.001	-1.751	-0.984	0.299	<0.001
Eng-Latino*FAST, γ011	0.204	0.115	0.340	0.548	0.233	0.131	0.329	0.479
Span-Latino*FAST, γ012	0.526	0.296	0.354	0.137	0.589	0.331	0.330	0.074
G.P. I (1st gr.), γ100	-0.067	-0.038	0.026	0.012	-0.073	-0.041	0.025	0.005
Eng-Latino*G.P. I, γ110	0.015	0.008	0.027	0.583	0.024	0.013	0.027	0.372
Span-Latino*G.P. I, γ120	0.068	0.038	0.028	0.015	0.072	0.040	0.027	0.007
FAST*G.P. I, γ101	0.081	0.046	0.030	0.009	0.078	0.044	0.029	0.010
Eng-Lat.*FAST*GPI, γ111	-0.038	-0.021	0.031	0.224	-0.040	-0.022	0.031	0.199
Span-Lat.*FAST*GPI, γ121	-0.057	-0.032	0.034	0.095	-0.055	-0.031	0.033	0.091
FAST*G.P. II, γ201	0.008	0.005	0.005	0.135	0.008	0.004	0.005	0.161
G.P. II (2nd-3rd gr.), γ200	-0.003	-0.001	0.007	0.703	-0.003	-0.002	0.007	0.679
FAST*G.P. II, γ201	4.717	2.650	0.255	<0.001	5.051	2.838	0.267	<0.001
Model Deviance	25050.977 (*df* = 39)				24724.459 (*df* = 48)			

Y = Supportiveness	Basic Controls				Full Set of Controls			
	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	E.S.	SE	p-val.
Intercept, γ000	10.669	4.462	0.266	<0.001	10.680	4.467	0.283	<0.001
FAST (baseline), γ001	0.246	0.103	0.334	0.465	0.410	0.172	0.336	0.230
Eng-Latino, γ010	0.344	0.144	0.320	0.283	0.319	0.133	0.332	0.337
Span-Latino, γ020	0.600	0.251	0.383	0.117	0.379	0.158	0.401	0.345
Eng-Latino*FAST, γ011	-0.266	-0.111	0.358	0.458	-0.248	-0.104	0.369	0.502
Span-Latino*FAST, γ012	-0.127	-0.053	0.447	0.777	-0.075	-0.031	0.471	0.873
G.P. I (1st gr.), γ100	-0.100	-0.042	0.030	0.002	-0.097	-0.041	0.029	0.002
Eng-Latino*G.P. I, γ110	-0.013	-0.005	0.030	0.676	-0.008	-0.003	0.030	0.800
Span-Latino*G.P. I, γ120	-0.028	-0.012	0.034	0.404	-0.031	-0.013	0.034	0.366
FAST*G.P. I, γ101	0.002	0.001	0.035	0.955	-0.011	-0.005	0.034	0.750
Eng-Lat.*FAST*GPI, γ111	-0.003	-0.001	0.034	0.926	-0.003	-0.001	0.034	0.925
Span-Lat.*FAST*GPI, γ121	-0.016	-0.007	0.043	0.708	-0.008	-0.003	0.043	0.860
FAST*G.P. II, γ201	0.007	0.003	0.008	0.405	0.006	0.002	0.008	0.481
G.P. II (2nd-3rd gr.), γ200	0.003	0.001	0.011	0.750	0.004	0.002	0.011	0.716
FAST*G.P. II, γ201	28725.076 (*df* = 39)				28589.745 (*df* = 48)			

Notes. . Coeff. = Coefficient, E.S. = Effect Size (Coeff./Standard Deviation$_Y$), SE = Robust Standard Error, G.P. = Growth Period, p-val. = *p*-value, *df* = degrees of freedom. Also see Table 5.6 notes for details on model specification and sample, and see Appendix H, Table H2 for omitted model results.

Table 5.8

Comparison of Estimates: Weighted Intent-to-Treat and Treatment-on-the-Treated Program Impacts on Parent-Staff Relationship Quantity and Quality

		Weighted ITT		TOT	
Y = Institutional Ties	p-val.	Coeff.	E.S.	Coeff.	E.S.
Model 1					
Growth Period I ($\gamma 101$)	0.062	0.055	0.031	0.211	0.119
Growth Period II ($\gamma 201$)	0.296	-0.017	-0.010	-0.065	-0.036
Model 2					
Growth Period I ($\gamma 101$), main effect	<0.001	0.116	0.065	0.442	0.248
Diff. vs. reference group (non-Latino Whites):					
English-dominant Latino families	<0.001	-0.071	-0.040	-0.273	-0.153
Spanish-dominant Latino families	0.019	-0.069	-0.039	-0.265	-0.149
Growth Period II ($\gamma 201$)	0.281	-0.018	-0.010	-0.068	-0.038
		Weighted ITT		TOT	
Y = Supportiveness	p-val.	Coeff.	E.S.	Coeff.	E.S.
Model 1					
Growth Period I ($\gamma 101$)	0.271	-0.044	-0.018	-0.168	-0.070
Growth Period II ($\gamma 201$)	0.363	0.016	0.007	0.060	0.025
Model 2					
Growth Period I ($\gamma 101$), main effect	0.054	-0.127	-0.053	-0.486	-0.203
Diff. vs. reference group (non-Latino Whites):					
English-dominant Latino families	0.067	0.102	0.043	0.389	0.163
Spanish-dominant Latino families	0.148	0.095	0.040	0.360	0.151
Growth Period II ($\gamma 201$)	0.328	0.017	0.007	0.063	0.026

Notes. ITT = Intent to Treat, TOT = Treatment on the Treated, p-val. = *p*-value (associated with Robust Standard Error estimate), Coeff. = Coefficient, E.S. = Effect Size (Coefficient/Standard Deviation$_Y$). ITT estimates are from treated-average propensity-score-weighted hierarchical linear model results, including full covariate controls (family level: child gender, poverty, ELL, SPED status, and baseline family social resources; school level: study cohort and within-cohort randomization block indicators, first grade size, student/teacher ratio, proportion full-time educators, attendance rate, study consent rate, reading/math proficiency rates, and student body socioeconomic and racial/ethnic composition). TOT estimates were calculated via the Bloom adjustment, where the compliance rate was defined as the treatment-school rate of attending at least six of the eight program sessions (26.223%). While model 1 estimated only the overall program impact, model 2 also assessed effect heterogeneity by family ethnic and linguistic background. See Table 5.6 notes for details on model specification and sample, and see Appendix H, Table H3 for omitted model results.
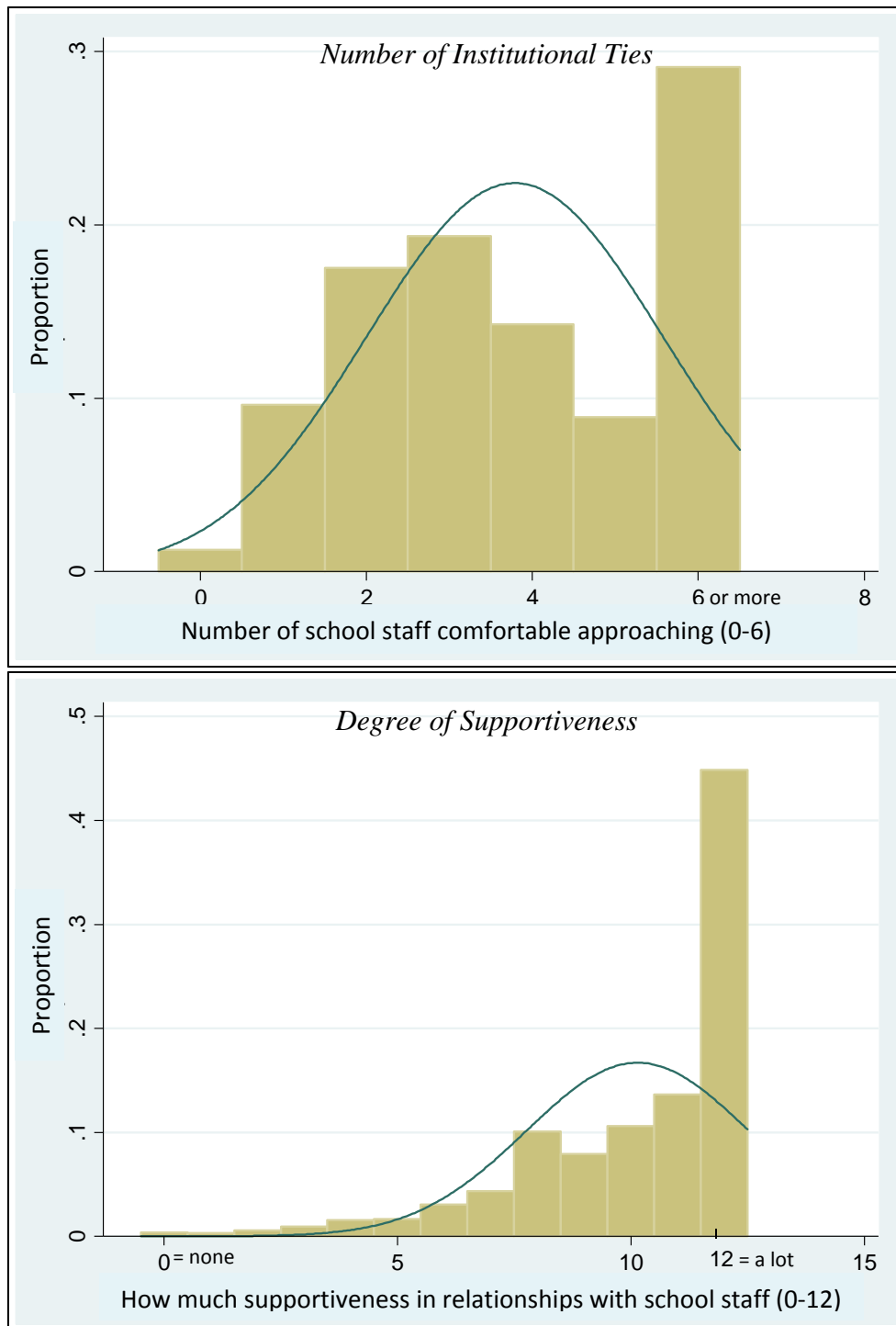
Figure 5.1. Histograms of Dependent Variables (with Normal Curve). *Note.* Histograms shown are based on the chapter 5 analytic sample of White and Latino families, in treatment and control schools, with a valid parent pretest survey and observations on baseline measures other than survey timing ($n = 2,614$, $N = 52$).
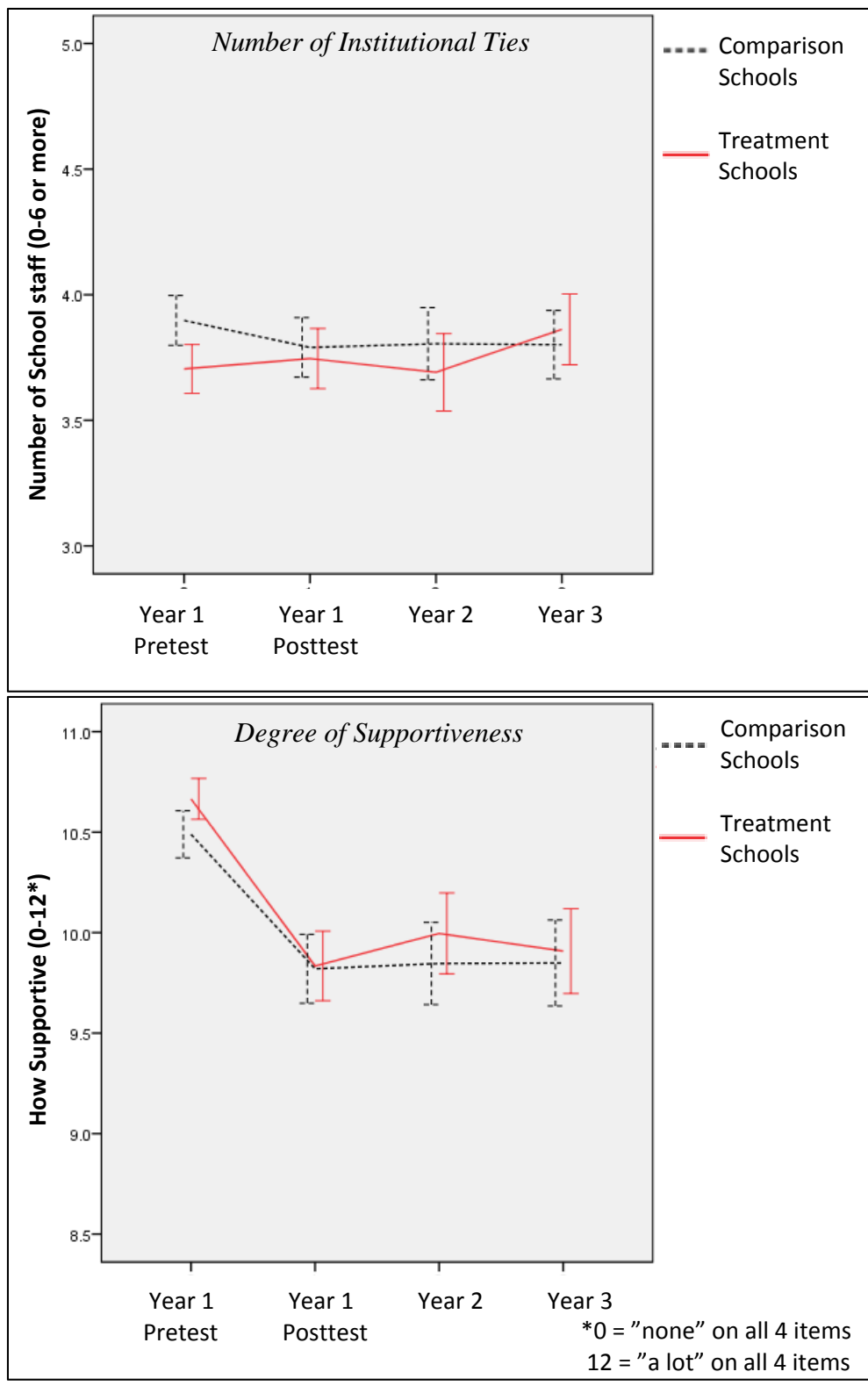
Figure 5.2. Observed Mean Parent Reports of Parent-Staff Relationships, by Treatment Group (with 95% Confidence Interval Bars). *Note.* Group means shown are based on the chapter 5 analytic sample ($n = 2{,}614$, $N = 52$).
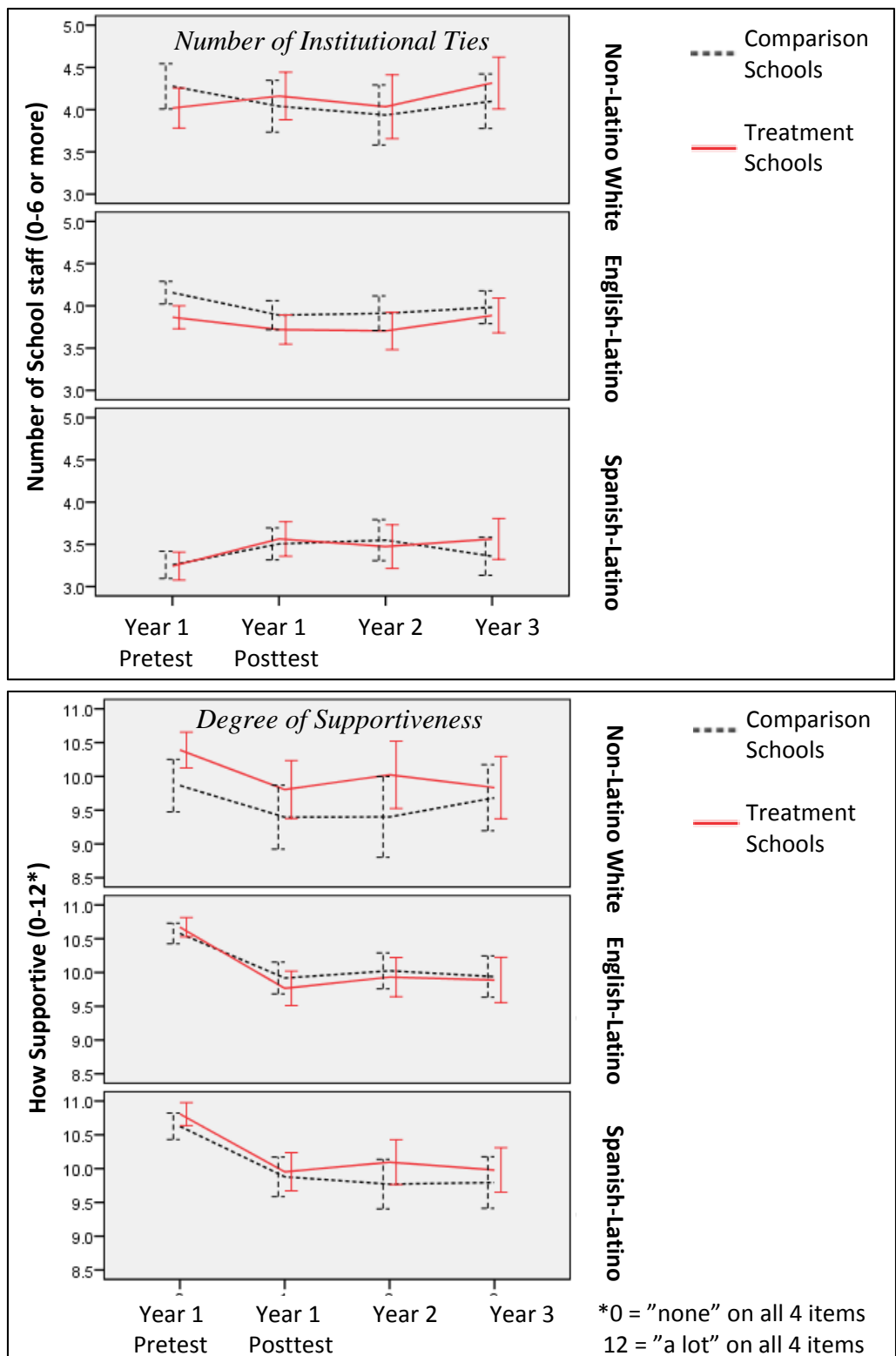
Figure 5.3. Observed Mean Parent Reports of Parent-Staff Relationships, by Treatment Group and Family Ethnic and Linguistic Background (with 95% Confidence Interval Bars). *Note.* Group means shown are based on the chapter 5 analytic sample ($n = 2,614$, $N = 52$).

Summary of Cited Evidence from Past Quantitative Studies: Family-School Relationship Effects on Educational Outcomes

Citation	Family-School Connection Measure(s)	Educational Outcome Measure(s)	Effect: Effect Size or Odds Ratio	Method
			(I) STUDIES FOCUSING ON GENERAL SAMPLES (not specific to Latino populations)	
Barnard, 2004	Number years, 1st-6th grade, teacher rated parental involvement as 'average' or better	HS dropout	*OR* = 0.72-0.79	**Data:** Non-representative, 1986 preschoolers, Chicago, *n* = 1,165 (Chicago Longitudinal Study)
		On-time HS completion	*OR* = 1.32-1.49	**Method:** Logistic and OLS regression with controls (child gender, race/ethnicity, subsidized lunch eligibility, parental educational attainment, parental employment status, parent marital status, family participation in the study intervention, 1st grade socio-emotional maturity, kindergarten word analysis)
		Highest grade completed	*ES* = 0.12-0.19	
Cheadle, 2008	Parental educational investments: Child activities, Material academic resources, & Parental involvement	Standardized test: Math	At KG entry, *ES* = 0.15-0.27; For KG growth, 4-6% more; For summer growth, 17-22% more (sometimes non-sig.); For 1st grade growth, 2-3% more (sometimes non-sig.);	**Data:** Nationally representative, 1998 kindergarteners, *n* = 14,544-14,579 (Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-K) **Method:** Multilevel piecewise-growth modeling with controls (child age, gender, race/ethnicity, SES, 2nd-time kindergartner, home language, family structure, child-adult household ratio, mother's age, mother's employment status, mother's work history, parental educational expectations, childhood care arrangements)
		Standardized test: Reading	At KG entry, *ES* = 0.15-0.26; For KG growth, 2-5% more; For 1st grade growth, 2-4% more	

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Citation	Fam.-Sch. Tie Measure(s)	Ed. Outcome Measure(s)	Effect: Effect Size or Odds Ratio	Method
Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007	Parental involvement (e.g., talk with teachers, volunteer)	Academic orientation (e.g., like school, grades are important)	*ES* = 0.03, but only for economically disadvantaged families	**Data:** Non-representative, inner-city families with children aged 10-14 in 1990, four working/lower-class Philadelphia communities, *n* = 489 (Philadelphia Project) **Method:** OLS regression with controls (family income/poverty, welfare, parental education, teen parent, family structure, child gender, race/ethnicity, age, prior GPA)
Erickson et al., 2009	Presence of positive mentor relationship: Non-parent relative, friend, teacher, or community member	Achievement: 12th grade GPA	For a teacher, *ES* = 0.21; For any mentor, *ES* = 0.14	**Data:** Nationally representative, 1994 7th-12th graders, *n* = 6,819 (National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health) **Method:** OLS & ordinary logistic regression with controls (child age, gender, private school, extracurricular activities, work hours, race/ethnicity, neighborhood disadvantage, SES, family structure, parent-child relationship, parent PTA, number friends, friends' mean GPA, peer network centrality, student-teacher environment, average class size, school size, physical attractiveness, personality attractiveness, college aspirations, prior picture vocab test, prior GPA)
		Attainment: Highest degree	For a teacher, *OR* = 1.99; For any mentor, *OR* = 1.53	

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Citation	Fam.-Sch. Tie Measure(s)	Ed. Outcome Measure(s)	Effect: Effect Size or Odds Ratio	Method
Hill et al., 2004	7th grade parental involvement (e.g., attend school event, knows how child is doing)	8th gr. behavioral problems (e.g., argues, fights)	*ES* = -0.29, only for high-SES families	**Data:** Non-representative, 1987-88 kindergartners, TN (Knoxville, Nashville) & IN (Bloomington), *n* = 463 (longitudinal study) **Method:** Structural equation models with controls (child ethnicity, SES, prior achievement)
		9th gr. achievement (Math/language grades, test score percentiles)	Indirectly via 8th gr behavioral problems (*ES* = -0.31)	
		11th gr. aspirations (Educational, occupational)	*ES* = 0.37; Indirectly via 9th gr. achievement (*ES* = 0.62)	
Kao & Rutherford, 2007	8th grade parental involvement (At school, PTO)	8th gr. GPA	*ES* = 0.09, but non-sig. for 1st gen. Asian families	**Data:** Nationally representative, 1988 8th graders, *n* = 16,489 (National Educational Longitudinal Study, NELS) **Method:** OLS regression with controls (8th grade parent-parent networks, child race/ethnicity and immigrant status, gender, SES, family structure, urbanicity; In some models: prior achievement)
		8th gr. test scores (Standardized: math, reading)	ES = 0.07; Especially for 3rd gen. Hispanic families (*ES* = 0.16)	
		12th gr. GPA	*ES* = 0.03, but after controlling for prior GPA, *ES* < 0.01	
Lee & Bowen, 2006	Parental involvement (e.g., visit school, volunteer)	Achievement (Reading, math grades and 'at grade level')	*ES* = 0.20-0.21	**Data:** Non-representative, 3rd-5th graders, southeastern United States, *n* = 415 **Method:** OLS regression with controls (child race/ethnicity, subsidized lunch eligibility, parental educational attainment)
	Parental educational expectations	[Achievement]	*ES* = 0.23; For higher-SES, *ES* = 0.44; For lower-SES, *ES* = 0.22-0.44	
	Homework help	[Achievement]	For White families, *ES* = -0.19; For Latino families, *ES* = 0.04; For Black families, *ES* = -0.01	

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Citation	Fam.-Sch. Tie Measure(s)	Ed. Outcome Measure(s)	Effect: Effect Size or Odds Ratio	Method
Lopez, 1996	'Social capital' of the home (e.g., educational expectations, parental involvement)	Curricular track: Academic/college vs. General/vocational	OR = 1.24	**Data:** Non-representative, Latino and White students, Western region 1980 10th graders, n = 1,329-1,658 (High School and Beyond) **Method:** Logistic regression with controls (GPA, SES, hours spent on HW, home or school social capital)
	'Social capital' of the school (e.g., teacher, counselor interest in students)	[Curricular track]	OR = 1.22	
McNeal, 1999	Parent-child ed. discussion	8th gr. science test	$Coeff.$ = 0.15 (SD_Y unreported)	**Data:** Nationally representative, 1988 8th graders, n = 11,401-15,663 (NELS) **Method:** OLS and logistic regression with controls (child race/ethnicity, family structure, ever retained, gender, SES, prior science test, GPA, hours spent on HW, hours spent working)
		8th grade truancy	OR = 0.92	
	Parental monitoring of education	8th gr. science test	$Coeff.$ = -0.07 (SD_Y unreported)	
		8th gr. truancy	OR = 0.89	
		HS dropout	OR = 0.93	
	Parental ed. support strategies	8th gr. truancy	OR = 1.09	
	Parental involvement in PTO	8th gr. science test	$Coeff.$ = -0.12 (SD_Y unreported)	
		8th gr. truancy	OR = 0.93	
		HS dropout	OR = 0.82	
Wentzel, 1997	Perceived caring from teachers	8th gr. prosocial goal pursuit (how often share and help peers academically)	ES = 0.31	**Data:** Non-representative, 6th graders, mid-Atlantic suburban school, n = 248 **Method:** OLS regression with controls (child gender, psychological distress, psychological beliefs about control, prior academic motivation, prior prosocial behavior, prior irresponsible behavior, prior GPA)
		8th gr. ac. effort	ES = 0.40	
		8th gr. responsibility goal pursuit (follow classroom rules)	ES = 0.34 {table continued next page}	

Citation	Fam.-Sch. Tie Measure(s)	Ed. Outcome Measure(s)	Effect: Effect Size or Odds Ratio	Method
Wentzel, 1998	Perceived support from teachers: Social, academic	6th gr. responsibility goal pursuit	*ES* = 0.20	**Data:** Non-representative, 6th graders, mid-Atlantic suburban school, *n* = 167
		6th gr. interest in school	*ES* = 0.33	**Method:** OLS regression with controls (child gender, psychological distress, social support from peers, social support from family)
		6th gr. interest in class	*ES* = 0.18	

		6th gr. GPA	Possibly indirectly, via:
			  Resp. goal pursuit (*ES* = 0.26)
			  School interest (*ES* = 0.24)
			  Class interest (*ES* = 0.43)	

Woolley & Bowen, 2007	Number positive adult relations:
	  Teachers,
	  family members,
	  Neighborhood
	  adults
		School engagement:
		  Psychologically,
		  (e.g., fun)
		  Behaviorally
		  (e.g., activities)
			ES = 0.34	**Data:** Non-representative, 2001 6th-8th graders, multiple states (contracted with School of Social Work, NC-Chapel Hill), *n* = 7,764
				Method: OLS regression with controls (child gender, race/ethnicity, subsidized lunch eligibility, grade-level, ever repeated, contextual threats to safety/security, high-risk peer associations, social stressors)

(II) STUDIES FOCUSING ON LATINO SAMPLES				

LeFevre & Shaw, 2012	At-school parental involvement
	  (e.g., parent
	  visited school)
		On-time HS completion	*OR* = 1.14	**Data:** Nationally representative, Latino families, 1988 8th graders, *n* = 1,476 (NELS)
				Method: Generalized estimating equation (GEE) regression with controls (SES, family structure, home language, parental educational attainment)

	At-home parental involvement
	  (e.g., family rules
	  about education)
		[On-time HS completion]	*OR* = 1.12	

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Citation	Fam.-Sch. Tie Measure(s)	Ed. Outcome Measure(s)	Effect: Effect Size or Odds Ratio	Method
Brewster & Bowen, 2004	Teacher support (care, respect, encouragement)	Problem behavior (e.g., cut class)	*ES* = -0.22	**Data:** Non-representative, Latino MS & HS students, 10 U.S. states, *n* = 699
		School engagement (e.g., look forward to school)	*ES* = 0.31-0.33	**Method:** OLS regression with controls (supportive parent-child educational communication, child gender, family structure, subsidized school lunch eligibility, school level)
Garcia-Reid, 2007	Teacher support (e.g., really care)	School engagement (e.g., school is fun and exciting)	*ES* = 0.32	**Data:** Non-representative, Latino youth, middle school in 2002, urban NJ, *n* = 226 **Method:** Path analysis with controls (child behavioral problems, neighborhood safety, school safety, neighborhood support, peer support, parental support)
Garcia-Reid et al., 2005	Teacher support (e.g., really care)	School engagement (e.g., school is fun and exciting)	*ES* = 0.30	**Data:** Non-representative, Latino females, middle school in 2002, urban NJ, *n* = 133 **Method:** Path analysis with controls (neighborhood danger, peer support, parental support)
Rosenfeld et al., 2000	Social support profiles: Parents Teachers Peers	School attendance (e.g., cut class)	*ES* = 0.24-0.27	**Data:** National probability, 1996-97 6th-12th graders, *n* = 1,815 **Method:** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
		Time spent studying	*ES* = 0.23-0.24	
		Avoidance of problem behaviors	*ES* = 0.25-0.26	
		School satisfaction	*ES* = 0.54-0.58	
		School engagement	*ES* = 0.36-0.38	
		Educ. self-efficacy	*ES* = 0.42-0.47	
		Grades	*ES* = 0.23-0.27	

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Citation	Fam.-Sch. Tie Measure(s)	Ed. Outcome Measure(s)	Effect: Effect Size or Odds Ratio	Method
Woolley et al., 2009	Teacher support (e.g., they care)	School behavior (e.g., cut class)	ES = 0.20	**Data:** Non-representative, Latino youth, 2001 6th-8th graders, multiple states (contracted with School of Social Work, NC-Chapel Hill), n = 848
		School satisfaction (e.g., enjoy school)	ES = 0.58	
		Time spent on HW	Indirectly via: School behavior (ES = 0.16) School satisfaction (ES = 0.10)	**Method:** Structural Equation Models (SEM) with controls (child gender, subsidized lunch eligibility, ever retained, parental support, friend support, friend behavior)
		Grades	Indirectly via: School behavior (ES = 0.32) School satisfaction (ES = 0.06)	
	Parental educ. monitoring (Discussions about school)	School satisfaction (e.g., enjoy school)	ES = 0.08	
		Time spent on HW	Indirectly via school satisfaction (ES = 0.10)	
		Grades	Indirectly via school satisfaction (ES = 0.06)	
Turley et al., 2012	Family engagement program: Families & Schools Together (FAST)	Total problem behaviors (Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire)	ES = -0.13	**Data:** Non-representative, 2008-09 1st grader families, low-income public schools, Phoenix (AZ) & San Antonio (TX), n = 1,951 (Children, Families, and Schools study)
		Peer relationship problems	ES = -0.18	**Method:** Cluster-randomized controlled trial (RCT) [Intent-to-treat estimate from multilevel regression model with controls (baseline parent-parent network size & quality, study randomization blocks)]

Note. OLS = Ordinary Least Squares, ES = Effect Size (in SD_Y), OR = Odds Ratio, SD_Y = Standard Deviation for the outcome variable (Y), *Coeff.* = Coefficient. For all reported effects, p-value < 0.05. For studies reporting effects in units other than odds ratio or effect sizes, I used the available reported information to transform the reported effects to odds ratios or effect sizes when possible. For additional summary information, also consult meta-analyses (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2012) and literature review syntheses of empirical evidence (Dika & Singh, 2002; Mattingly et al., 2002; Nye et al., 2006; Van Voorhis et al., 2013).

Appendix F

Description of FAST Core Activities

Family Flag (20 min) and Family Hellos (5 min): At the first FAST Night, each family works together to create a small flag to place on their family table. Parents direct the process and ensure that each family member adds to the flag. In subsequent weeks, these flags designate family tables, from where families introduce themselves to the larger group at the start of each session.
Family Music (10 min): Families sing the FAST song and other songs that families are invited to share and teach to each other.
Family Meal (20 min): Each family shares a meal at their table. Parents direct their children to serve them first before serving themselves. The main dish is planned and prepared by the host family for that week. The host family is thanked openly by all participating families at the end of the night. The family who won the lottery the previous week serves as the host family the following week and receives money and support needed to provide the main dish.
Scribbles (12 min): In this drawing and talking game, each member of the family creates a drawing then family members ask questions about what others drew and imagined. Parents are in charge of enforcing a turn-taking structure and ensuring positive feedback.
Feeling Charades (12 min): Parents and children take turns acting out feelings depicted on a drawn card while other members of the family attempt to guess the emotion. The parent is in charge of ensuring turn-taking and facilitates discussion of emotions.
Kid's Time (75 min): Children from different families engage together in supervised developmentally-appropriate organized activities without their parents.
Parent Time (55 min): Parents connect with one another through one-on-one adult conversation ("buddy time") followed by larger-group parent discussions ("parent group") facilitated by a member of the FAST Team. Parents direct the topics of conversation.
Special Play (15-20 min): Parent and child engage in child-directed one-on-one play. The parent is coached to follow the child's lead and not to teach, direct, or judge the child in any way. FAST personnel do not engage with children but offer support to parents through discrete coaching.
Lottery (5 min): Each week, one family wins a basket filled with prizes specifically chosen for that family (valuing up to $50). The winning family is showcased during closing circle. Each family is guaranteed to win once, a secret known by parents but not children.
Closing Circle and Rain (5 min): At the conclusion of every FAST Night, families and FAST Team members create a circle and share announcements. Rain is a non-verbal game requiring turn-taking and close attention. It is designed to visually and actively reinforce status as a group.
Serious Family Communication: In week six, a special guest presents on a topic relevant to families. Example topics include early-childhood pregnancy, gangs, drugs, and violence.
Family Graduation: At the last Fast Night, a ceremony is held to commemorate completion of the program. This is a special event where each family is announced in front of the group, and school representatives are invited to participate. FAST Team members write affirming messages to parents, and families often dress up, receive diplomas, wear graduation caps, and take photos.
Note. Time allotments and activity summaries are derived from descriptions provided in McDonald (2008).

Appendix G

Propensity Score Estimation Procedures

Statistical Model Estimation Procedures

I estimated the propensity of graduating from the FAST program, defined as attending at least six of the eight total FAST sessions, using a Generalized Hierarchical Linear Modeling approach and HLM 7.0 software. Specifically, I estimated the log-odds (logit) of graduating from FAST as a linear function of family and school characteristics, using data on treatment school families. As shown in Equation G1, the model is a two-level random-intercepts logistic regression model, predicting the outcome, *GRAD*, accounting for the clustering of families within schools.

Level 1: Families **Equation G1**

$$\Pr(GRAD_{ij} = 1 \mid \beta_j) = p_{ij}$$

$$ln\left(\frac{p_{ij}}{1-p_{ij}}\right) = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{nj}*(X)_{ij}$$

Level 2: Schools

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{0n}*(Z)_j + u_{0j}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10}$$

$$\vdots$$

$$\beta_{nj} = \gamma_{n0}$$

The outcome variable, *GRAD*, is a dummy variable indicating whether family, *i*, in school, *j*, graduated from the program (1), by attending at least six of the eight total FAST sessions, or did not graduate from the program (0), by attending fewer than six weekly sessions. The family-level vector, *X*, contains 12 variables measuring baseline characteristics of families, while the school-level vector, *Z*, contains 18 variables measuring baseline characteristics of schools.

Measures

Most of these measures used to predict the propensity of FAST graduation were also utilized in the main analysis (see main section on measures for additional description). At the family level, I used 12 variables to measure various baseline characteristics of families, including family ethnic and linguistic background, poverty, and social resources; child gender, English language learner, and special education status; and timing of completion for the year 1 parent pretest survey. I measured family ethnic and linguistic background using two dummy indicators to distinguish three groups: *Eng-Latino* (Latino child, English survey), *Span-Latino* (Latino child, Spanish survey), and the reference category, *White* (non-Latino White child, English survey. I measured family poverty with a dummy indicator for free or reduced-price lunch eligibility (*free/reduced lunch*). I also used dummy indicators to indicate the target child's gender (*female*) and statuses as an English language learner (*ELL*) or special education student (*SPED*). As in the main analysis, I measured baseline family social resources using five variables constructed from year 1 parent pretest survey responses about relationships between parents and school staff (*number of institutional ties* and *degree of supportiveness*), between parents and the target child (*parent-child bond*), and between parents at the school (*parent network size* and *parent network quality*). The timing of completion for the year 1 parent pretest survey was measured in months since the start of first grade, defined as August of the first grade year (*y1premonth*).

At the school level, I used 18 variables to measure baseline characteristics of schools, including school size, characteristics of the staff, academic record, student body composition, and features of the study design. I measured school size in terms of first grade enrollment (*1st grade size*). As indicators of staff characteristics, I used measures of the proportion of full-time

educators (*FTE*) and the average number of students per teacher (*pupil/teacher ratio*). I measured

school academic record in terms of proficiency rates on state standardized tests in reading

(*reading proficiency rate*) and math (*math proficiency rate*). As indicators of student body

characteristics, I included measures of the proportion of first-grade families that consented to the

CFS study (*study consent rate*), the average proportion of school-year days attended by students

(*attendance rate*), and indicators of socioeconomic composition (*proportion free/reduced lunch*),

and racial/ethnic composition (*proportion White, proportion Black,* and *proportion Latino*;

reference category: *proportion other race/ethnicity*). I also include measures indicating school

assignment to study blocks, including study season (*seas2, seas3*; reference group: *seas1*) and

randomization block indicators (*block1-block4* and *cohort2*; reference group: *cohort1, block5*).

Sample

I fit the model predicting the log-odds of graduation to the analytic sample used in the

main analysis, restricted to families in treatment schools. Hence, the sample includes all

treatment-school families with valid year 1 parent pretest survey, a target child categorized as

"White" or "Hispanic/Latino" in school district administrative records, and valid observations on

baseline measures family social resources (parent-child bond and characteristics of parent-parent

networks in the school). This yielded a sample of 1,306 families within 26 schools.

Propensity Score Prediction Procedures

The school-level variance component estimate ($\hat{u}_{0j}$) was statistically significant ($p <$

0.001), indicating that the mean log-odds of program graduation vary across schools, net of the

school-level control variables. I used the fitted model results to estimate family-level propensity

scores as a function of the observed baseline family and school characteristics included in the

model. To do this, I first estimated the predicted logit of graduation for each family, *i*, in school,

j, based on the observed baseline characteristics and population-average coefficient estimates

from the fitted model, as shown in Equation G2.[64]

Equation G2

$$\ln\left(\widehat{\frac{p_{ij}}{1-p_{ij}}}\right) = \hat{\gamma}_{00} + \hat{\gamma}_{01} * (block1)j + \hat{\gamma}_{02} * (block2)j + \hat{\gamma}_{03} * (block3)j + \hat{\gamma}_{04} * (block4)j$$

$$+ \hat{\gamma}_{05} * (cohort2)j + \hat{\gamma}_{06} * (seas2)j + \hat{\gamma}_{07} * (seas3)j + \hat{\gamma}_{08} * (study\ consent\ rate)j$$
$$+ \hat{\gamma}_{09} * (1st\ grade\ size)j + \hat{\gamma}_{010} * (pupil/teacher\ ratio)j + \hat{\gamma}_{011} * (FTE)j$$
$$+ \hat{\gamma}_{012} * (reading\ proficiency\ rate)j + \hat{\gamma}_{013} * (math\ proficiency\ rate)j$$
$$+ \hat{\gamma}_{014} * (attendance\ rate)j + \hat{\gamma}_{015} * (proportion\ White)j$$
$$+ \hat{\gamma}_{016} * (proportion\ Black)j + \hat{\gamma}_{017} * (proportion\ Latino)j$$
$$+ \hat{\gamma}_{018} * (proportion\ free/reduced\ lunch)j + \hat{\gamma}_{10} * (ELL)ij + \hat{\gamma}_{20} * (SPED)ij$$
$$+ \hat{\gamma}_{30} * (y1premonth)ij + \hat{\gamma}_{40} * (female)ij + \hat{\gamma}_{50} * (free/reduced\ lunch)ij$$
$$+ \hat{\gamma}_{60} * (EngLatino)ij + \hat{\gamma}_{70} * (SpanLatino)ij + \hat{\gamma}_{80} * (degree\ of\ supp.)ij$$
$$+ \hat{\gamma}_{90} * (num.\ institutional\ ties)ij + \hat{\gamma}_{100} * (parent\ network\ quality)ij$$
$$+ \hat{\gamma}_{110} * (parent\ network\ size)ij + \hat{\gamma}_{120} * (parent/child\ bond)ij$$

$$= (-3.07) + (1.91)*(block1)j + (1.96)*(block2)j + (2.79)*(block3)j + (-0.61)*(block4)j$$
$$+ (0.51)*(coh.2)j + (2.38)*(seas2)j + (4.63)*(seas3)j + (1.53)*(study\ cons.\ rate)j$$
$$+ (<0.01)*(1st\ grade\ size)j + (-0.32)*(pupil/teacher\ ratio)j + (0.02)*(FTE)j$$
$$+ (0.34)*(reading\ proficiency\ rate)j + (4.00)*(math\ proficiency\ rate)j$$
$$+ (0.84)*(attendance\ rate)j + (3.44)*(proportion\ White)j$$
$$+ (5.15)*(proportion\ Black)j + (4.73)*(proportion\ Latino)j$$
$$+ (-4.09)*(proportion\ free/red.\ lunch)j + (0.42)*(ELL)ij + (-0.33)*(SPED)ij$$
$$+ (-0.76)*(y1premonth)ij + (0.03)*(female)ij + (-0.22)*(free/red.\ lunch)ij$$
$$+ (0.34)*(EngLatino)ij + (0.59)*(SpanLatino)ij + (-0.03)*(degree\ of\ supp.)ij$$
$$+ (-0.01)*(num.\ institutional\ ties)ij + (0.01)*(parent\ network\ quality)ij$$
$$+ (0.11)*(parent\ network\ size)ij + (-0.03)*(parent/child\ bond)ij$$

Using the predicted logit, I then calculated family-level predicted propensity scores, $\hat{p}_{ij}$, or the

predicted probability of graduation for each family, i, in school, j, as shown in Equation G3.

Equation G3

$$\ln\left(\widehat{\frac{p_{ij}}{1-p_{ij}}}\right) = \widehat{logit}_{ij}$$

$$\hat{p}_{ij} = \frac{\exp(\widehat{logit}_{ij})}{(1 + \exp(\widehat{logit}_{ij}))}$$

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[64] Although Equation G2 reports coefficient estimates rounded to the nearest hundredth on the logit scale, I predicted the logit of graduation using coefficient estimates rounded to the nearest millionth (sixth decimal place).

Assessment of Balance

Table G1 presents a comparison of mean scores on baseline family and school characteristics before and after applying the family-level survey weights derived from the predicted propensity scores. As shown in the table, on average, a number of baseline characteristics were statistically different for treatment-school families that graduated from FAST (i.e., attended 6-8 weekly program sessions) and those that did not graduate (i.e., attended 0-5 sessions). After applying the weights, which were derived from the predicted propensity scores as described above, no statistically significant mean differences remained ($p > 0.10$).

Table G1

Comparison of Means by FAST Graduation Status, Pre- and Post-Weighting

	Pre-weighting			Post-weighting		
	Non- Grads	**Grads**	**p-val.**	**Non- Grads**	**Grads**	**p-val.**
ELL	**0.235**	**0.356**	**<0.001**	0.366	0.356	0.770
SPED	0.103	0.073	0.105	0.074	0.073	0.968
Y1 pretest month	**5.540**	**4.824**	**<0.001**	4.719	4.824	0.572
Female	0.518	0.516	0.946	0.515	0.516	0.986
Free/reduced lunch	0.804	0.796	0.755	0.801	0.796	0.858
Non-Latino White	**0.178**	**0.128**	**0.035**	0.126	0.128	0.931
English-dominant Latino	**0.565**	**0.481**	**0.007**	0.498	0.481	0.614
Spanish-dominant Latino	**0.258**	**0.391**	**<0.001**	0.375	0.391	0.654
Parent-staff supportiveness	10.700	10.627	0.605	10.596	10.627	0.816
Number of institutional ties	3.740	3.633	0.327	3.668	3.633	0.769
Parent network quality	**0.879**	**1.018**	**0.007**	0.995	1.018	0.709
Parent network size	**2.670**	**3.259**	**<0.001**	3.201	3.259	0.695
Parent-child bond	3.470	3.473	0.956	3.467	3.473	0.873
Study consent rate	**0.619**	**0.644**	**<0.001**	0.646	0.644	0.793
1st grade size	**113.000**	**107.813**	**0.007**	107.853	107.813	0.986
Pupil/teacher ratio	16.100	16.057	0.563	15.995	16.057	0.686
% FTE	46.500	45.684	0.150	45.735	45.684	0.947
Reading proficiency rate	**0.787**	**0.766**	**0.032**	0.764	0.766	0.877
Math proficiency rate	0.753	0.733	0.089	0.731	0.733	0.853
Attendance rate	0.952	0.952	0.749	0.951	0.952	0.758
Proportion White	0.139	0.129	0.326	0.128	0.129	0.936
Proportion Black	0.088	0.083	0.281	0.080	0.083	0.642
Proportion Latino	0.743	0.763	0.122	0.767	0.763	0.807
Proportion other minority	**0.029**	**0.025**	**0.011**	0.025	0.025	0.978
Proportion free/reduced lunch	0.761	0.769	0.474	0.773	0.769	0.707
Phoenix	0.398	0.434	0.235	0.432	0.434	0.955
Block1	0.121	0.111	0.599	0.112	0.111	0.966
Block2	0.136	0.131	0.822	0.132	0.131	0.987
Block3	**0.140**	**0.192**	**0.021**	0.189	0.192	0.912
Block4	0.313	0.277	0.218	0.259	0.277	0.538
Block5	0.290	0.289	0.970	0.308	0.289	0.534
Cohort2	**0.589**	**0.536**	**0.092**	0.528	0.536	0.795
Seas1	**0.313**	**0.362**	**0.097**	0.371	0.362	0.781
Seas2	0.339	0.350	0.704	0.343	0.350	0.835
Seas3	**0.349**	**0.289**	**0.042**	0.286	0.289	0.935

Note. Estimates based on treatment-school sample: 1,306 families in 26 schools. Bold text denotes graduation-status mean differences where p<0.10.

Appendix H

Additional Statistical Model Results

Table H1

Omitted Model 1 Results: Unweighted HLM Estimates (Overall ITT)

Y = Number of Institutional Ties	Basic Controls			Full Set of Controls		
	Coeff.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	SE	p-val.
Level 2 (student level) controls						
Female	-0.031	0.053	0.554	-0.045	0.049	0.350
Free/reduced lunch	-0.105	0.082	0.199	-0.048	0.079	0.542
ELL	-0.021	0.098	0.834	-0.057	0.094	0.545
SPED	0.257	0.094	0.006	0.269	0.091	0.003
Parent-child bond				0.263	0.051	<0.001
Parent network size				0.155	0.017	<0.001
Parent network quality				0.208	0.044	<0.001
Level 3 (school level) controls						
Block1	-0.345	0.171	0.050	-0.006	0.262	0.981
Block2	-0.676	0.225	0.004	0.154	0.333	0.647
Block3	-0.502	0.219	0.027	-0.008	0.370	0.983
Block4	-0.025	0.095	0.794	0.026	0.114	0.818
Cohort2	-0.053	0.078	0.503	0.031	0.087	0.723
1st grade size	-0.002	0.003	0.488	-0.005	0.003	0.093
Pupil/teacher ratio	0.069	0.030	0.026	0.053	0.026	0.043
% FTE	0.002	0.009	0.799	0.013	0.007	0.065
Reading proficiency rate				0.864	0.792	0.282
Study consent rate				-0.082	0.337	0.808
Attendance rate				6.656	2.239	0.005
Proportion free/reduced lunch				0.154	0.671	0.820
Proportion White				-1.477	0.675	0.035
Proportion Black				-0.121	0.451	0.791
	Var. Comp.	p-val.			Var. Comp.	p-val.
For Level 1 (time-point level) intercept, e	1.555	n/a			1.549	n/a
For Level 2 (student level) intercept, $r0$	1.990	<0.001			1.727	<0.001
For Growth-Period-I slope, $r1$	0.012	0.004			0.013	0.003
For Growth-Period-II slope, $r2$	0.001	0.222			0.001	0.199
For Level 3 (school level) intercept, u00	0.024	0.014			0.120	0.001
For Growth-Period-I slope, u10	0.001	0.028			<0.001	0.025
For Growth-Period-II slope, u20	<0.001	0.008			<0.001	0.004

Table H1 Continued

Y = Degree of Supportiveness	Basic Controls			Full Set of Controls		
	Coeff.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	SE	p-val.
Level 2 (student level) controls						
Female	-0.125	0.068	0.065	-0.140	0.068	0.041
Free/reduced lunch	-0.109	0.112	0.331	-0.073	0.110	0.505
ELL	0.178	0.077	0.021	0.177	0.078	0.023
SPED	0.078	0.139	0.576	0.088	0.137	0.518
Parent-child bond				0.413	0.081	<0.001
Parent network size				0.008	0.019	0.664
Parent network quality				0.208	0.343	0.058
Level 3 (school level) controls						
Block1	-0.213	0.200	0.292	0.285	0.358	0.432
Block2	-1.126	0.276	<0.001	-0.304	0.444	0.498
Block3	-1.131	0.332	0.001	-0.240	0.553	0.667
Block4	0.060	0.155	0.699	0.047	0.139	0.737
Cohort2	0.110	0.131	0.404	0.175	0.125	0.170
1st grade size	-0.002	0.004	0.564	-0.010	0.004	0.020
Pupil/teacher ratio	0.105	0.039	0.011	0.114	0.052	0.035
% FTE	0.010	0.013	0.455	0.036	0.010	0.001
Reading proficiency rate				2.489	1.039	0.022
Study consent rate				0.472	0.536	0.384
Attendance rate				17.314	2.434	<0.001
Proportion free/reduced lunch				1.058	1.048	0.319
Proportion White				-0.125	1.011	0.902
Proportion Black				0.873	0.718	0.232

	Var. Comp.	p-val.		Var. Comp.	p-val.
For Level 1 (time-point level) intercept, e	2.527	n/a		2.517	n/a
For Level 2 (student level) intercept, $r0$	0.874	0.309		0.733	0.466
For Growth-Period-I slope, $r1$	0.009	0.213		0.010	0.182
For Growth-Period-II slope, $r2$	0.006	<0.001		0.006	<0.001
For Level 3 (school level) intercept, $u00$	0.087	0.001		0.107	<0.001
For Growth-Period-I slope, $u10$	0.002	0.005		0.002	0.004
For Growth-Period-II slope, $u20$	0.001	0.002		0.001	0.002

Notes. Coeff. = Coefficient, E.S. = Effect Size (Coefficient/Standard Deviation$_Y$), SE = Robust Standard Error, p-val. = *p*-value, Var. Comp. = variance component Estimates based on the chapter 5 analytic sample: 52 level-3 units (schools), 2,614 level-2 units (families), and 6,604 (institutional ties) or 6,620 (supportiveness) level-1 units (time-points). All models specify random intercepts and slopes (Growth-Period-I, Growth-Period-II) at family and school levels.

Table H2

Omitted Model 2 Results: Unweighted HLM Estimates (Heterogeneous ITT)

Y = Number of Institutional Ties	Basic Controls			Full Set of Controls		
	Coeff.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	SE	p-val.
Level 2 (student level) controls						
Female	-0.032	0.053	0.544	-0.046	0.049	0.342
Free/reduced lunch	-0.103	0.082	0.212	-0.046	0.079	0.562
ELL	-0.022	0.098	0.824	-0.058	0.094	0.537
SPED	0.258	0.094	0.006	0.270	0.091	0.003
Parent-child bond				0.263	0.051	<0.001
Parent network size				0.155	0.017	<0.001
Parent network quality				0.208	0.044	<0.001
Level 3 (school level) controls						
Block1	-0.350	0.172	0.048	-0.005	0.264	0.985
Block2	-0.689	0.227	0.004	0.147	0.336	0.665
Block3	-0.510	0.221	0.026	-0.006	0.373	0.987
Block4	-0.028	0.095	0.767	0.027	0.113	0.810
Cohort2	-0.051	0.078	0.516	0.027	0.087	0.756
1st grade size	-0.002	0.003	0.483	-0.005	0.003	0.094
Pupil/teacher ratio	0.071	0.031	0.024	0.056	0.026	0.036
% FTE	0.002	0.009	0.795	0.013	0.007	0.069
Reading proficiency rate				0.918	0.799	0.258
Study consent rate				-0.066	0.344	0.850
Attendance rate				6.340	2.256	0.008
Proportion free/reduced lunch				0.201	0.668	0.765
Proportion White				-1.457	0.680	0.039
Proportion Black				-0.148	0.457	0.749
	Var. Comp.	p-val.		Var. Comp.	p-val.	
For Level 1 (time-point level) intercept, e	1.554	n/a		1.548	n/a	
For Level 2 (student level) intercept, $r0$	1.989	<0.001		1.726	<0.001	
For Growth-Period-I slope, $r1$	0.012	0.004		0.013	0.003	
For Growth-Period-II slope, $r2$	0.001	0.218		0.001	0.195	
For Level 3 (school level) intercept, u00	0.024	0.016		0.014	0.001	
For Growth-Period-I slope, u10	0.001	0.030		<0.001	0.028	
For Growth-Period-II slope, u20	<0.001	0.008		<0.001	0.004	

{Table H2 continued on next page}

Table H2 Continued

Y = Degree of Supportiveness	Basic Controls			Full Set of Controls		
	Coeff.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	SE	p-val.
<u>Level 2 (student level) controls</u>						
Female	-0.125	0.068	0.065	-0.140	0.068	0.041
Free/reduced lunch	-0.108	0.112	0.334	-0.073	0.110	0.506
ELL	0.177	0.076	0.020	0.177	0.077	0.022
SPED	0.078	0.139	0.574	0.089	0.137	0.517
Parent-child bond				0.413	0.081	<0.001
Parent network size				0.008	0.019	0.665
Parent network quality				0.343	0.058	<0.001
<u>Level 3 (school level) controls</u>						
Block1	-0.215	0.201	0.290	0.283	0.358	0.434
Block2	-1.134	0.279	<0.001	-0.308	0.444	0.493
Block3	-1.135	0.334	0.001	-0.242	0.552	0.664
Block4	0.058	0.155	0.710	0.047	0.139	0.737
Cohort2	0.110	0.131	0.403	0.175	0.126	0.174
1st grade size	-0.003	0.004	0.557	-0.010	0.004	0.019
Pupil/teacher ratio	0.106	0.040	0.011	0.115	0.052	0.034
% FTE	0.010	0.013	0.447	0.036	0.010	0.001
Reading proficiency rate				2.490	1.034	0.021
Study consent rate				0.476	0.534	0.378
Attendance rate				17.251	2.442	<0.001
Proportion free/reduced lunch				1.066	1.053	0.318
Proportion White				-0.119	1.009	0.907
Proportion Black				0.870	0.721	0.236
	Var. Comp.		p-val.	Var. Comp.		p-val.
For Level 1 (time-point level) intercept, e	2.528		n/a	2.517		n/a
For Level 2 (student level) intercept, $r0$	0.872		0.313	0.733		0.468
For Growth-Period-I slope, $r1$	0.009		0.214	0.010		0.183
For Growth-Period-II slope, $r2$	0.006		<0.001	0.006		<0.001
For Level 3 (school level) intercept, u00	0.086		0.001	0.105		<0.001
For Growth-Period-I slope, u10	0.002		0.005	0.002		0.004
For Growth-Period-II slope, u20	0.001		0.002	0.001		0.002

Notes. Coeff. = Coefficient, E.S. = Effect Size (Coefficient/Standard Deviation$_Y$), SE = Robust Standard Error, p-val. = *p*-value, Var. Comp. = variance component. Estimates based on the chapter 5 analytic sample: 52 level-3 units (schools), 2,614 level-2 units (families), and 6,604 (institutional ties) or 6,620 (supportiveness) level-1 units (time-points). All models specify random intercepts and slopes (Growth-Period-I, Growth-Period-II) at family and school levels.

Table H3

Omitted Results: Weighted HLM Estimates (Overall and Heterogeneous Weighted-ITT)

Y = Number of Institutional Ties	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coeff.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	SE	p-val.
Level 2 (student level) controls						
Female	-0.010	0.072	0.894	-0.010	0.072	0.884
Free/reduced lunch	-0.110	0.125	0.376	-0.111	0.125	0.372
ELL	0.015	0.129	0.906	0.013	0.129	0.919
SPED	0.154	0.122	0.208	0.153	0.122	0.211
Parent-child bond	0.176	0.065	0.007	0.178	0.065	0.006
Parent network size	0.139	0.019	<0.001	0.138	0.019	<0.001
Parent network quality	0.234	0.064	<0.001	0.234	0.064	<0.001
Level 3 (school level) controls						
Block1	0.014	0.340	0.968	-0.006	0.341	0.986
Block2	0.075	0.369	0.840	0.069	0.370	0.853
Block3	0.278	0.370	0.458	0.269	0.371	0.474
Block4	-0.088	0.132	0.509	-0.084	0.133	0.530
Cohort2	-0.020	0.095	0.838	-0.024	0.095	0.804
1st grade size	-0.006	0.003	0.083	-0.006	0.003	0.086
Pupil/teacher ratio	-0.003	0.033	0.937	-0.002	0.034	0.961
% FTE	0.016	0.007	0.023	0.016	0.007	0.025
Reading proficiency rate	1.366	0.796	0.095	1.382	0.792	0.090
Math proficiency rate	-0.743	0.724	0.312	-0.768	0.722	0.295
Study consent rate	-0.090	0.439	0.839	-0.075	0.440	0.865
Attendance rate	13.783	2.453	<0.001	13.496	2.472	<0.001
Proportion free/reduced lunch	-0.864	0.861	0.323	-0.810	0.863	0.355
Proportion White	-1.713	0.898	0.065	-1.673	0.899	0.072
Proportion Black	-0.384	0.459	0.409	-0.409	0.460	0.380
Proportion other race/ethnicity	0.833	2.433	0.734	0.899	2.452	0.716
	Var. Comp.		p-val.	Var. Comp.		p-val.
For Level 1 (time-point level) intercept, e	1.413		n/a	1.414		n/a
For Level 2 (student level) intercept, $r0$	3.029		<0.001	3.018		<0.001
For Growth-Period-I slope, $r1$	0.028		<0.001	0.028		<0.001
For Growth-Period-II slope, $r2$	0.002		<0.001	0.002		<0.001
For Level 3 (school level) intercept, $u00$	0.235		<0.001	0.230		<0.001
For Growth-Period-I slope, $u10$	0.004		<0.001	0.004		<0.001
For Growth-Period-II slope, $u20$	0.001		<0.001	0.001		<0.001

{Table H3 continued on next page}

Table H3 Continued

Y = Degree of Supportiveness	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coeff.	SE	p-val.	Coeff.	SE	p-val.
Level 2 (student level) controls						
Female	-0.275	0.077	<0.001	-0.271	0.077	<0.001
Free/reduced lunch	-0.209	0.176	0.235	-0.208	0.174	0.233
ELL	0.150	0.161	0.353	0.153	0.160	0.337
SPED	-0.054	0.200	0.787	-0.051	0.200	0.798
Parent-child bond	0.415	0.130	0.001	0.412	0.129	0.001
Parent network size	0.006	0.031	0.840	0.007	0.031	0.824
Parent network quality	0.292	0.086	<0.001	0.291	0.086	<0.001
Level 3 (school level) controls						
Block1	1.583	0.500	0.003	1.611	0.491	0.002
Block2	0.861	0.552	0.128	0.875	0.544	0.117
Block3	1.530	0.598	0.015	1.530	0.589	0.014
Block4	0.047	0.183	0.800	0.037	0.182	0.841
Cohort2	0.410	0.140	0.006	0.410	0.138	0.005
1st grade size	-0.008	0.005	0.082	-0.008	0.004	0.084
Pupil/teacher ratio	-0.013	0.046	0.783	-0.011	0.045	0.803
% FTE	0.050	0.010	<0.001	0.048	0.010	<0.001
Reading proficiency rate	0.441	1.274	0.731	0.450	1.253	0.722
Math proficiency rate	2.974	1.088	0.010	2.989	1.073	0.009
Study consent rate	0.119	0.569	0.835	0.083	0.562	0.883
Attendance rate	26.511	2.770	<0.001	27.307	2.871	<0.001
Proportion free/reduced lunch	-0.525	1.195	0.663	-0.606	1.191	0.614
Proportion White	-1.501	1.225	0.229	-1.560	1.207	0.205
Proportion Black	-0.429	0.708	0.549	-0.441	0.706	0.537
Proportion other race/ethnicity	0.348	2.505	0.890	0.347	2.447	0.888
	Var. Comp.		p-val.	Var. Comp.		p-val.
For Level 1 (time-point level) intercept, e	2.509		n/a	2.512		n/a
For Level 2 (student level) intercept, $r0$	2.418		<0.001	2.419		<0.001
For Growth-Period-I slope, $r1$	0.032		<0.001	0.032		<0.001
For Growth-Period-II slope, $r2$	0.007		<0.001	0.007		<0.001
For Level 3 (school level) intercept, u00	0.337		<0.001	0.381		<0.001
For Growth-Period-I slope, u10	0.004		<0.001	0.005		<0.001
For Growth-Period-II slope, u20	0.001		<0.001	0.001		<0.001

Notes. Coeff. = Coefficient, E.S. = Effect Size (Coefficient/Standard Deviation$_Y$), SE = Robust Standard Error, p-val. = *p*-value, Var. Comp. = variance component. Estimates are from treated-average propensity-score-weighted HLM, for 52 level-3 units (schools), 2,556 level-2 units (families), and 6,478 (institutional ties) or 6,491 (supportiveness) level-1 units (time-points). All models specify random intercepts and slopes (growth periods I-III) at family and school levels. Model 1 estimated only the overall program impact, while model 2 also assessed heterogeneity by ethnic/linguistic background.

Appendix I

Analysis of Total Effects of Program on Parent-Staff Relationships over the First-Grade Year

Table I1

Predicted Total Standard-Deviation Change in Parent-Staff Relationship Quantity and Quality over the First Year (start of August, fall 1ˢᵗ grade, through start of August, fall 2ⁿᵈ grade), by Effect Estimate and Model

			Model 2 (Heterogeneous Effects)					
	Model 1 (Overall Effect)		Non-Lat. White families		English-Latino families		Spanish-Latino families	
Y = Number of Institutional Ties	Control	FAST	Control	FAST	Control	FAST	Control	FAST
Intent to Treat (ITT)	-0.29	-0.01	-0.45	0.09	-0.35	-0.06	<0.01	0.17
Weighted-ITT	-0.35	0.33	-0.61	0.18	-0.34	-0.04	-0.18	0.13
Treatment on the Treated (TOT)	-0.35	1.38	-0.61	2.38	-0.34	0.81	-0.18	1.01
Y = Degree of Supportiveness	Control	FAST	Control	FAST	Control	FAST	Control	FAST
Intent to Treat (ITT)	-0.55	-0.57	-0.50	-0.60	-0.57	-0.57	-0.64	-0.71
Weighted-ITT	-0.35	-0.73	0.04	-0.60	-0.41	-0.54	-0.64	-0.81
Treatment on the Treated (TOT)	-0.35	-1.36	0.04	-2.40	-0.41	-0.90	-0.64	-1.27

Notes. For all models, predicted change was calculated based on fitted hierarchical linear model results predicting program effects, for families with otherwise average characteristics attending otherwise average schools. Predicted change for ITT effects come from unweighted models (for model results, see Tables 5.6, 5.7, H1, and H2). For the weighted-ITT effects, predicted change is based on the treated-average propensity-score-weighted model results prior to the Bloom adjustment (for model results, see Tables 5.8 and H3). Predicted change for the TOT effects is based on the compliance-rate-adjusted weighted model results, i.e. the Bloom-adjusted treatment effect. All change is reported in standard-deviation units for the outcome measure.

Table I2

Predicted Ethnic/Linguistic Background Gaps in Parent-Staff Relationship Quantity and Quality, at the Start and End of First Grade in Standard-Deviation Units over the First Year, by Effect Estimates from Model 2 (Effect Heterogeneity Model)

Y = Number of Institutional Ties	English-Latino vs. White		Spanish-Latino vs. White	
Intent to Treat (ITT)	Control	FAST	Control	FAST
1st grade start	-0.20	-0.20	-0.74	-0.74
1st grade end	-0.09	-0.35	-0.29	-0.67
Diff:	-0.11	+0.15	-0.45	-0.07
Weighted-ITT	Control	FAST	Control	FAST
1st grade start	-0.53	-0.53	-1.11	-1.11
1st grade end	-0.26	-0.74	-0.69	-1.16
Diff:	-0.27	+0.21	-0.42	+0.05
Treatment on the Treated (TOT)	Control	FAST	Control	FAST
1st grade start	-0.53	-0.53	-1.11	-1.11
1st grade end	-0.26	-2.10	-0.69	-2.47
Diff:	-0.27	+1.57	-0.42	+1.36
Y = Degree of Supportiveness	English-Latino vs. White		Spanish-Latino vs. White	
Intent to Treat (ITT)	Control	FAST	Control	FAST
1st grade start	0.14	0.14	0.25	0.25
1st grade end	0.08	0.18	0.11	0.14
Diff:	-0.06	+.04	-0.14	-0.11
Weighted-ITT	Control	FAST	Control	FAST
1st grade start	0.45	0.45	0.44	0.44
1st grade end	<-0.01	0.51	-0.24	0.23
Diff:	-0.45	+.06	(-0.68)	-0.21
Treatment on the Treated (TOT)	Control	FAST	Control	FAST
1st grade start	0.45	0.45	0.44	0.44
1st grade end	<-0.01	1.95	-0.24	1.56
Diff:	-0.45	+1.50	(-0.68)	+1.12

Notes. For all models, gaps were calculated in terms of the difference in predicted scores, in standard-deviation units on the outcome measure, according to fitted hierarchical linear model results predicting program effects net of standard controls, for families with otherwise average characteristics attending otherwise average schools. Predicted change for ITT effects come from unweighted models. For the weighted-ITT effects, predicted change is based on the treated-average propensity-score-weighted model results prior to the Bloom adjustment. Predicted change for the TOT effects is based on the compliance-rate-adjusted weighted model results, i.e. the Bloom-adjusted treatment effect.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This dissertation addressed a core issue for the largest ethnic minority group in the nation: the educational experiences of Latino students in U.S. schools. In three empirical papers, I explored the development of relationships between parents and school personnel in predominantly low-income, Latino immigrant communities. Employing a multi-method design—drawing on panel data collected through written questionnaires, parents' own words collected through in-depth interviews, and a cluster-randomized intervention design—this study yielded mutually informative findings that deepen our understanding of how family-school connections develop (and fail to develop) in historically marginalized communities during the first years of elementary school.

In the first empirical paper, I examined patterns in both the quantity and quality of parent-staff relationships by family ethnic and linguistic background, when schools operate business as usual. Based on parent questionnaire responses collected as children moved from first to third grade, I found evidence of disparities in school ties by family background at the start of first grade that persist through third grade. The results also revealed important heterogeneity within the Latino population, by language dominance, and across different aspects of parent-staff networks. As compared to non-Latino White and English-dominant Latino parents, Spanish-dominant Latino parents reported the highest levels of—*supportiveness*—that is, trust, respect, and shared expectations—in their relationships with school staff. Yet, they also had the fewest number of social ties to the school. This suggests that, for Spanish-dominant parents, greater perceptions of trust and respect may not be enough to facilitate comfort in approaching institutional agents at the school.

In the second empirical paper, I analyzed parents' own words, collected through in-depth interviews, for insights into the processes and conditions by which supportiveness emerges between Latino parents and school staff in predominantly low-income minority communities. Trust emerged as the most salient aspect of supportive relationships with school personnel, where parents judged staff trustworthiness along five criteria: staff competence, investment in children and the job, shared values and expectations for children, respect for parents, and care for parents. Parents appear to evaluate whether they can trust school personnel through an ongoing process of information-gathering and discernments, and these processes are conditioned by parents' prior experiences and beliefs, organizational characteristics of the school, and social status relations between parents and staff. In the context of these historically disadvantaged communities, these characteristics more often appeared to hinder rather than facilitate the emergence of supportive connections between parents and school staff. At the same time, 'success' stories about efforts on the part of parents, teachers, and other school personnel that effectively developed trust, respect, and shared expectations provide insight into promising strategies for overcoming barriers to enhance family-school collaboration in these communities.

In the final empirical paper, I investigated whether a particular family engagement program offers promise for intervening on the processes of relationship development uncovered in the second paper. While I did not find strong support that offering the program effectively enhances family-school connections in low-income Latino communities, the program does appear to have positive returns for families who actually attend the program. Program participation prevents the decay that otherwise occurs over the first-grade year in the number of school staff that parents feel comfortable approaching with a question about their child. However, this benefit may be strongest for non-Latino White families and weaker among Latino

families. This may inadvertently exacerbate the social inequalities revealed in the first empirical paper, as Latino families tend to be less socially integrated in the school to begin with.

Taken together, this study contributes to our understanding of Latino educational disadvantage in at least three ways. First, it builds on research linking racial/ethnic inequalities in family-school connections to unequal educational outcomes by examining how ethnic and linguistic inequalities are produced. Instead of assessing differences in family-school relationships at a single point in time, this study demonstrated patterns in how they develop over time. Such knowledge is needed to design effective policies and programs because it is through dynamic rather than static processes that relationships are changed. Second, this study extends previous research on how Latino adolescents build social connections with their schools by focusing on family-school connections when children are younger. This is important because we know that educational inequalities intensify with time, so to the extent that relationship development acts as a pathway into different educational experiences, it is critical to understand how this functions early on. Finally, this dissertation considered how we can intervene on these processes by assessing the effects of a family engagement program. Although the findings do not nominate this program as a cost-effective solution, important insights were gleaned about the complex and varying ways that offering programs impact families in diverse contexts.