

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF NONPARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR  
ACTIVITIES BY HISPANIC MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

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Liberty University

Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine the reasons why Hispanic middle grade students choose not to participate in school-based extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities have been recognized to have a positive influence on the educational success of students. Despite the positive effects, Hispanic students have been shown to participate in extracurricular activities at school less than other groups of students. The lack of participation by students in extracurricular activities is related to student disengagement and ultimately dropping out of school. This study uses three methods of data collection: analysis of documents and artifacts, a scaled survey, and a critical case participant who described the experiences of this minority population. The site of the study is a middle school with the highest percentage of minority students in its district. The results of this study provide valuable insights into the current trends of Hispanic nonparticipation in extracurricular activities while in middle school by identifying cultural predictors which prevent this population of students from participating in extracurricular activities. Further, the results may be used to implement strategies to encourage Hispanic students to become more involved in their school community through extracurricular activity participation.

*Key Words:* Extracurricular activities, acculturation, Hispanic culture, critical case

## **Dedication**

I want to thank my Lord and Savior for placing the desire in my heart to strive to get a doctorate degree and for opening the doors, leading the way, and staying by my side throughout the journey.

Saying thank you to my husband does not seem to be enough. He encouraged me to follow my dreams, something no one else did. He drove me to classes, waited in parking lots, and endured countless days and hours without me at his side while I traveled this journey. He believed in me so much I began to believe in myself. I love you, Terry.

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Thank you to my two children, Jennifer and Zack, who have always told me how proud of me they are, no matter what. You are the air I breathe. Also, to my Laney and Libbey, thanks for bringing me joy when I really need it. Mimi loves you both!

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## **List of Abbreviations**

Basic Intra Communication Skills (BICS)

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency Skills (CALPS)

Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT)

Extracurricular Activities (EA)

English Learner (EL)

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)

National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS)

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Extracurricular activity participation among adolescents during middle school has been positively linked to various outcomes, including school achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Gardner, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; Reeves, 2008), higher academic scores (Everson & Millsap, 2005), school engagement (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008; Gardner et al., 2008), and completing high school (Mahoney et al., 2003). In a 2007 study, Feldman and Matjasko found 70% of Caucasian and African American adolescents reported participating in at least one extracurricular activity during middle school. However, 75% of Hispanic students are choosing not to join activities outside the academic classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005).

### **Background**

The indications are extracurricular activity participation is directly related to students becoming academically engaged and completing their education. Yet, Hispanic students are 75% less likely than African American and Caucasian students to participate in activities which have been shown to increase their chances of academic success (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Gardner, et al., 2008; Reeves, 2008). Future generations must be informed and educated in order to attain social and economic success (Vinovskis, 2011).

Concerns for the escalating dropout rates among this minority group in the United States has caught the attention of politicians, economists, and other social leaders, both on local and national levels (Driscoll, 2006; Ingram, 2002). The continuing rise of students

dropping out of school threatens the United States' ability to compete in the global economy which exists today. The latest figures indicate Hispanic students between the ages of 16 to 19 years old are twice as likely as Caucasian students and three times as likely as African American students to drop out of school (Driscoll, 2006). The U.S. Census Department reported 39.9 billion Hispanic students living in the United States, with one third of this population below the age of eighteen (U.S. Bureau of the Census Department, 2007).

The success of Hispanic students is vital to the future success of America's schools, economy, and country (Eccles, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Yet, only 25% of Hispanic children participate in activities outside the academic classroom which have been shown to improve their chances to complete their education. This is a large contrast to 70% of Caucasian children and African American children who are involved in extracurricular activities during middle school (Lugaila, 2004; National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 2010). The reasons for this gap need to be identified and addressed to ensure the educational success of this large minority group.

Research has indicated several possible causes of Hispanic students in middle school choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities. Indications are socioeconomic status (SES) is the largest probable cause of the lack of participation in extracurricular activities by minority students; activities outside the academic classroom cost money and take time from the home and family (Lisella & Serwatka, 2009; Lugaila, 2004; NCES, 2010). However, there are recent studies indicating that when SES is controlled, Hispanic students still choose not to participate in activities at school outside the classroom (Fry, 2006; Simpkins, 2005). Outside of socioeconomic status, there

appears to be possible cultural values unique to Hispanic families which may contribute to Hispanic students choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities (Simpkins, 2005).

The United States Census Bureau reported an increase of 96.1% in the Hispanic population within the state of Georgia since the year 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census Department, 2007). Twenty-three percent of this population is predicted not to complete high school (U.S. Bureau of the Census Department, 2007). The increasing dropout rates among Hispanic students concerns community members, parents, school districts, and economists (Vinovskis, 2011). Students who do not complete their education are more likely to suffer from poverty, homelessness, lack of spiritual guidance, substance abuse, and other negative consequences in their lifetime (Akey, 2006). This study will examine possible cultural influences of Hispanic students which may affect their decision to not participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities during middle school. Additionally, the study will explore how their choices their educational decisions.

### **Situation to Self**

Student diversity in schools is an important issue among teachers across America. Teachers are continually looking for ways to increase student success among minority populations. The reports of the drop-out rate among Hispanic students became a focus when students' names began disappearing from school rosters as early as middle school. Looking for way to increase school success among this population group of students, the literature led to the relationship between school success and extracurricular participation. While there were many quantitative studies which are reporting the lack of participation in extracurricular activities by Hispanic students, they did not address the reasons this

large population of students are not participating in activities outside the academic classroom. Likewise, there were fewer qualitative studies on the topic and none that used critical case participants which could provide the perspective from the population it involves. Reading the existing research, the question became, why doesn't someone just ask the Hispanic population why they don't participate in activities after school?

The philosophical assumption used for this study is ontological. The ontological assumption is based on the philosophical belief that our realities are constructed by social experiences. These realities are relative to the person experiencing them and no reality is considered to be more valuable than any other reality. Through these realities a person becomes more or less informed within the context of their lives.

Constructivism's paradigm is ontological in the sense it states knowledge is constructed and reconstructed by interactions within a person's surrounding (Traill, 2008). The theory of constructivism recognizes the importance of socialization to a learner's success in academic achievement.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem is, outside of socioeconomic status, there appears to be possible cultural values unique to Hispanic families which may contribute to Hispanic students choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities (Simpkins, 2005).

Research has indicated several possible causes of Hispanic students in middle school choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities. Indications are socioeconomic status (SES) is the largest probable cause of the lack of participation in extracurricular activities by minority students; activities outside the academic classroom cost money. Additionally and important to this study, they take time from the home and family



(Lisella & Serwatka, 2009; Lugaila, 2004; NCES, 2010). However, there are recent studies indicating that when SES is controlled, Hispanic students still choose not to participate in activities at school outside the classroom (Fry, 2006; Simpkins, 2005). The decision not to participate in extracurricular activities during middle school marginalizes the educational success of this minority group. The reasons for the gap between Hispanic student participation and other ethnicities need to be identified and addressed to ensure the educational success of this large minority group.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the phenomenon of Hispanic students choosing not to participate in school-based extracurricular activities and to identify possible cultural predictors beyond socioeconomic status, age, and gender. This study used the perspective from one critical case sample to examine the role of specific cultural values including family and acculturation of Hispanic students and the influence these factors have on Hispanic students' decision not to participate in extracurricular activities.

Additionally, this study examines the importance of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities to Hispanic students' school engagement and their decision to complete or not complete their education.

### **Significance of the Study**

The phenomenological approach is used to examine possible cultural influences of Hispanic middle school students and their decision not to participate in extracurricular activities while in middle school. It provides the unique and thick description from the

viewpoint of a Hispanic participant concerning the lack of involvement in school-based extracurricular activities by Hispanic students.

Valuable research confirms the correlation between extracurricular activity participation and students' success in school. The majority groups of student populations, Caucasian and African American, are reaping the benefits gained by participating in extracurricular activities as part of their school day (Logan & Scarborough, 2008). However, current research reveals Hispanic students are not participating in extracurricular activities offered at public schools, and there is limited research on the reasons for nonparticipation in extracurricular activities by this minority group (Fredrick & Eccles, 2006; Garcia-Reid, 2005; Lewis, 2005). More concerning is the existing research does not identify the reasons Hispanic students are choosing not to participate in activities which have been clearly linked to school success (Fredrick & Eccles, 2006; Garcia-Reid, 2005; Lewis, 2005).

Studies have identified a connection between cultural values and parental involvement at schools, but little research has been conducted concerning the influence of cultural values on the decisions of Hispanic students choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities (Gonzales, Knights, Birman, & Sirolli, 2005). A National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) reported in 2008 that 75% of Hispanic students attending schools across America did not participate in activities outside the academic classroom (McCarthy, 2000; NCEES, 2011). Additionally, studies have documented the relationship between Hispanic parent involvement and school achievement, but there is limited information on its affect on extracurricular activity participation (Reality Check, 2006).

Literature has revealed Hispanic students are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities than other minority groups, but little is known concerning what factors can predict their nonparticipation beyond the most probable cause of socioeconomic status (SES). Many Hispanic students are from families who have a low SES, and research indicates that all students with low SES are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities than those with higher SES (Fry, 2006; Simpkins, 2005). Cultural values are now being considered as a contributing factor in Hispanic students not participating in activities outside the academic classroom. However, the existing research is limited and does not include the perspective of nonparticipation from the Hispanic viewpoint (Reeves, 2008).

This study aimed to address a gap in the literature which lacks the Hispanic perspective for choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities in middle school. It provides valuable insight from a critical case participant, who experienced the phenomena, in her own words. The study's results applied to form strategies which can be implemented to assist Hispanic students to overcome the cultural barriers which may prevent them from the benefits of participating in extracurricular activities.

The first component of this research study focuses on the advantages of extracurricular activities participation by Hispanic middle school students. Extracurricular activities have been part of middle school programs for many years. However, their value to student achievement is a newly recognized concept. Research studies have identified participation in extracurricular activities, especially at the adolescent stage, as a positive aspect in student achievement leading to school completion (Farkas & Beron, 2001; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Garcia-Reed, 2005;

Lopez, 2001). Students at the middle school level who experience socialization through extracurricular activities at school more often complete high school than those students who are not involved in extracurricular activities (Garcia-Reed, 2005; Heller, Calderon, & Medrich, 2005; Lewis, 2005). Yet, statistically, Hispanic students choose not to participate in them (Lamont & Small, 2008).

The second component of this research study is to examine the cultural influences of family and acculturation on the decisions of Hispanic students choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities (Lamont & Small, 2008). A comprehensive review of literature revealed few qualitative studies that were focused on culture as a reason for Hispanic students not participating in activities outside the classroom (Lamont & Small, 2008).

The existing studies lack the essence of the phenomenological approach the researcher has chosen use, which offers the perspective from the past experiences of a Hispanic student regarding decisions not to participate in activities outside the classroom and what cultural factors may influenced that decision (Garcia-Reid, 2005; Lamont & Small, 2008 ).

This study contributes to the knowledge base concerning the importance of participating in extracurricular activities by Hispanic middle school students. Additionally, the results of this study will add to the body of research by examining the affect of culture on Hispanic students' decision to not participate extracurricular activities in order to examine ways to alleviate this educational barrier. Results from this research study have the potential to provide valuable information needed to identify strategies to increase participation in extracurricular activities by Hispanic middle school students and

will allow schools to implement strategies to address the causes of Hispanic students not participating in school activities.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this phenomenological study.

1. How does the nonparticipation of Hispanic middle school students compare to students of other ethnic minorities' participation in extracurricular activities (EA)?
2. What factors, other than socioeconomic status, influence Hispanic students' decision not to participate in EA?
3. How are Hispanic students encouraged by their schools to participate in EA?
4. How do Hispanic students view their parents' influence on their decision to participate or not participate in EA during middle school?
5. How are Hispanic students encouraged by their parents to participate or not to participate in extracurricular activities at school?
6. How important do Hispanic students view participation in EA to their success in middle school?
7. How does nonparticipation in school-based extracurricular activities affect the student engagement of Hispanic middle school students?
8. How does not participating in extracurricular activities contribute to Hispanic students' decision to complete or not complete high school?

### **Research Plan**

A qualitative research study was conducted using the explorative approach of

phenomenology. Since the research will strive to “obtain an in-depth understanding of human behaviors and habits, seeking to explain shared experiences of a specific group” (Creswell, 2007, p. 59), the phenomenology research design was chosen.

Phenomenology seeks to understand a given research topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. It is most effective as a means to explore culturally specific information concerning the values and social context of particular information (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology’s goal is “the fulfillment of our human nature; to become more fully who we are” (van Manen, 1990, p. 12.).

Phenomenology research is used to describe the way in which individuals share experiences and those experiences are interpreted. The idea of phenomenology was first introduced in the twentieth century by Edmund Husserl (as cited in Creswell, 2007) who believed that the source of all knowledge is experience. He introduced the premise of phenomenology as “the general doctrine of essence; within the science of the essence, cognition finds its place” (p. 82). He viewed phenomenology as a method to explain the experiences shared by population groups. Creswell noted two commonalities among the many approaches to phenomenology research: the lived experiences in a study are conscious ones (as cited in van Manen, 1990), and the study’s focus is on the description of the experiences, not explanations or analyses (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher will adopt Moustakas’ psychological approach (Moustakas, 1994) of empirical phenomenology for the study of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities among seventh and eighth grade middle school Hispanic students. The researcher will focus more on the describing the in-depth experiences of the critical case participant and not on the researcher’s interpretation.

## **Delimitations**

Delimitations are the boundaries of a study which are set by the researcher and are not considered weakness or flaws within the study (Creswell, 2003).

This phenomenological study uses document data from one middle school in a suburban city located in Georgia. The study site has a Hispanic population of approximately eight percent. The middle school represents the highest number of minority students in the school district, and it has the largest population of Hispanic students in its district. Additionally, the study site is representative of the phenomenon of Hispanic students overwhelmingly not participating in extracurricular activities during middle school.

Critical case sampling was used to provide the experiences of a participant who attended the middle school used to collect the document data. The critical case participant experienced nonparticipation of extracurricular activities while attending middle school and now lives and works in the same city. Additionally, she is a member of a group of four local Hispanics who act as advocates for the Hispanic population in many suburban Georgia schools.

This study is conducive for generalization to school districts that have Hispanic students who attend middle school in demographically like areas. In addition, it provides an in-depth, thick description of the experiences of a Hispanic participant who has lived through the phenomena of not participating in extracurricular activities while attending middle school.

Although qualitative studies are not generalized in the statistical sense, their findings may be transferrable (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). This study

will be conducive for generalization to school districts that have Hispanic students who attend middle school in demographically like areas.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

Reports have indicated the dropout rate in America is declining among all groups of students with the exception of one (NCES, 2010). Hispanic students continue to drop out of school at a rate of two times the amount of their non-Hispanic counterparts (NCES, 2010). Hispanic students between the ages of 14 and 19 account for 41% of current school dropouts (Balfanz & Legters, 2006). A high dropout rate among Hispanic students lessens the pool of professional people who will enter the job market and political arena (Vinovskis, 2011). This is part of the generation who will be making important policy decisions for our country (NCES, 2010). These students are part of the future citizens, workers, and leaders of the United States; as such, it is important they complete their education.

The high rate of dropout among one ethnic group could lead to serious problems with long-term consequences for the educational and economical systems in the United States (Vinovskis, 2011). Education is still the tool used to empower people economically, socially, and personally. It is the backbone of American society and the basis of the culture and civilization. Education is necessary for the development of the values and virtues which are instrumental in producing mature and capable adults. Through education, students begin to view themselves as part of something larger than individuals, learning to make decisions which will benefit people as a whole (Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007). Education helps to form an individual's worldview.

Students who drop out of school lack the skills, resources, opportunities, and the informed perspective they need to become productive citizens (Fry, 2006).

School sponsored extracurricular activity participation is being investigated as an important link between student engagement and successfully completing school (Williford & Wadley, 2008). Participation in activities outside the academic classroom has been linked to positive academic outcomes for adolescents, and the benefits of extracurricular activities in sports have been extensively researched. However, research has also indicated children who participate in other types of activities are also more engaged in school and more likely to complete their education (Williford & Wadley, 2008).

A large portion of the existing literature on the benefits of extracurricular activities has been focused on the impact of socioeconomic status, but studies conducted with socioeconomic status as the controlled variable still indicate students who participate in school activities are linked to successful developmental outcomes (Akey, 2006; Broh, 2005; Erkut & Tracy, 2006). A study conducted by the *National Survey on Student Engagement* reported a definite correlation between extracurricular activity participation and completion of secondary education (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2007). Students who were involved in extracurricular activities such as school clubs, athletic teams, and other social aspects of school were considered to be more engaged students, performed at a higher level, and were more likely to graduate from high school than those who were not involved in extracurricular activities. More importantly, this participation has been shown to be more important for culturally diverse students who statistically are less likely to complete high school (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Exposure to social situations has been proven to provide opportunities for diverse students to connect with their environment, which has been shown to lead to higher academic performance and school completion (Williford & Wadley, 2007).

Hispanic students are the ethnic group least likely to participate in extracurricular activities and most at risk for dropping out of school (Peek et al., 2008). This population of students is 75% less likely to participate in extracurricular activities at school than other ethnic group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Among Hispanic students, their choice to not participate in extracurricular activities is considered a predictor of school withdrawal as early as middle school (NCES, 2010). Nonparticipation in extracurricular activities means this group of minority students are marginalized by their lack of social and academic experiences, which research has shown will increase their school engagement and their chances of school completion (Balfanz & Legters, 2006). This study will examine this phenomenon from the perspective of a Hispanic student who made the choice to not participate in extracurricular activities during middle school, the cultural factors leading to this decision, and how it impacted the participant's educational decisions to complete or not complete high school.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks for this study include an integrated model of social constructivism and social ecological theories (Coll et al., 1996). Research on minority children has typically been limited to race comparisons. Predictably, the outcomes have been negative and assumed to be the results of cultural differences with the dominant races in the United States. The integrated model framework is based on socio-

developmental and ecological theories which consider the culture of minority students (Coll et al., 1996).

The language acquisition theory is included as a factor due to the impact of the language acquisition process of second language learners. It will be followed by discussions of extracurricular activities and their importance to student success during middle school. Hispanic students' nonparticipation is analyzed through the discussions of cultural implications including student mobility, family involvement, and acculturation; as important factors which impact Hispanic students' educational decisions.

### **Constructivism**

Traditional views of child development recognize children's play as nothing more than meaningless behavior. Jean Piaget was the first to identify it as a type of socialization necessary for healthy growth and development. He observed that individuals have basic drives beginning at birth which push them through four stages of development at particular ages. The four stages of development are dependent on each other and use two cognitive processes as tools. The tools, accommodation and assimilation, are used by humans to categorize new environments and information into their present cognitive schemas. They are the processes of taking new or unfamiliar information and altering it to fit into their pre-existing knowledge base (Traill, 2008).

Piaget believed active participation is necessary for learning to take place. In order to build knowledge and successfully pass from one stage of development to the next, students need to become active members in their world. Learning is contingent on individual engagement in social environments. Knowledge is not simply conveyed

verbally, but is continually rebuilt by active participation by the learner. As development occurs and students are interacting with their surroundings, knowledge is constructed and reconstructed (Traill, 2008). The theory of constructivism recognizes the importance of socialization to a learner's success in academic achievement, but it differs from social constructivism on an important premise (Traill, 2008).

While Piaget's view of constructivism stated that development proceeds from the individual to the social world, Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism stated development begins at the social level (Gardener et al., 2008). This is an important difference between the two views because it alters the basic idea about how students learn. Piaget maintained that development precedes learning and a learner's surroundings were impacted by the individual's learning, but Vygotsky maintained learning in the social context precedes development, and that learners are greatly impacted by their surroundings and the people in them (Demetriou, Mouyi, & Spanoudis, 2010). Hispanic students are less likely than other students to participate in academic settings, making Piaget's constructivist view of how learning and engagement occurs important for this study (Nguyen, 2006). Vygotsky's theory explains the link between extracurricular activity participation and student engagement. Hispanic students who choose not to participate in school activities outside the academic classroom have less likely chance of becoming academically engaged in the classroom.

### **Social Constructivism**

This theory is based on the premise that people learn based on their life experiences. Social constructivism is based on the assumption that learning is an active experience (Demetriou et al., 2010). Learners are constructors of information and

actively create their own mental interpretations based on prior knowledge and experiences. People learn by applying new knowledge to previous experiences, and by the learner judging the consistency of both and using that judgment to modify their knowledge base (Hoover, 2007). Social constructivism is based on the foundation of learning as a collaborative process between socialization and education. The attention, perceptions, and memory capabilities are changed by students' environments. In order for learning to occur on an interpersonal level, a diverse learner must make a connection to their social environments (Demetriou et al., 2010).

Most important for the purpose of this study is Lev Vygotsky's (1987) assumption which stated, "Social learning precedes cognitive learning" (p. 4). He stated, "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p. 5).

Vygotsky's constructivism is known as a social theory because of the importance it places on the culture and social context of learning. He stated that learning is inherently social and, it occurs "from the outside in" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 4). Vygotsky's theory focuses on the connections between people and the sociocultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences with others (Crawford, 1996; 2006). He believed students could not be successful learners academically without the experience of learning socially.

**Social constructivism's four principles of learning.** Vygotsky's is the prominent view of social constructivism. They posit that knowledge is not a single entity but built through social interactions and continual communications with other people

(Nguyen, 2006). Based on these beliefs concerning how learning occurs, Vygotsky developed basic four principles concerning how learning occurs.

Vygotsky's first principal is that children build their own knowledge. Students construct knowledge in their own minds through interactions with adults and other students they are in contact with in their environments (Nguyen, 2006). This is facilitated by the social interactions they have outside the academic classroom where there is less pressure to perform at a certain level (Gonzales et al., 2004; Lisella & Serwatka, 2009). This is important to Hispanic students whose may perceive themselves as less than adequate due to their lack of academic skills; such as language skills (Lisella & Serwatka, 2009).

Secondly, Vygotsky surmised that humans use tools, such as language, to mediate their social environments. Initially, students develop skills to serve only in social interactions as avenues to communicate their needs. The type and quality of the acquired skills determine the pattern and rate of development by a learner. The internalization of these skills leads the learner to a higher level of cognitive thinking. Adults, such as parents and teachers, are the vehicles who provide students with their cultural history, socialization skills, and language (Vygotsky, 1980).

Vygotsky's third principal is related to cognitive development. Social constructivism contends that to understand knowledge development one must understand the historical and social origins of knowledge and how changes occur in knowledge. Vygotsky's theory places language in the center of the learning process. He argued that knowledge begins in socially meaningful activities and is formed by language. Knowledge is a process that begins a social context and then is transferred to person'

mental schema; leading to higher level thinking skills (Vygotsky, 1987). Vygotsky surmised learning did not just occur in the minds of children, but occurs as a process he described as the zone of proximal development.

The fourth principle of learning is an important aspect of Vygotsky's (1926/1987) theory. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) explains how cognitive development occurs.

**Zone of proximal development.** Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD places social interaction as the basis for cognitive growth. The communication that transpires in a social setting between more knowledgeable or proficient people (parents, teachers, peers, others) helps students to build an understanding of any given concept. American psychologist, Jerome Bruner's (2004), explanation of the ZPD states that this zone places students into situations that challenge them to learn at an appropriate level, not too easy or difficult for the student to complete (Lajoie, 2005). These tasks, whether academic or social, are met with the assistance from a peer or adult, but cannot be performed independently.

Vygotsky's theory of ZPD is based on the premise that through the support of teachers, parents, and peers students are challenged to go beyond what they perceive to be their comfort (proximal) zone of learning. The results of students learning within their ZPD are that they are able to construct mental schemas. Learning increases by building on what the students already know, even if their knowledge is flawed. Through this base knowledge they begin to scaffold or connect new information.

**Scaffolds.** Scaffolds are mental levels of knowledge a learner has acquired and are used as blocks to attach new knowledge and to develop learners' zones of proximal



development. Instruction should emphasize connections to what the learner already knows in other familiar everyday contexts. ZPD is increased by social interactions such as participating in extracurricular activities with school peers and respected adults and increases the mental levels, scaffolds, of students (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

### **Social Constructivism Summary**

The view of social constructivism is based on the understanding that children are active social learners who acquire constructed concepts and language through a mediated process. Research has indicated this is especially true for diverse populations when they are faced with new environments (Hughes, et al., 2006; Monroe, 2004; Navarro, Flores, & Worthington, 2007). In a study which focused on learning styles, Hispanic students required significantly more sociological variety than Caucasians or African American students to be academically successful (Kinney, & Hofferth, 2003). Research showed these processes occur more often for students when the interaction is through their involvement in activities within their immediate environment. This point is addressed by the ecological approach of development in which emphasis is on the importance of environment.

### **Ecological Approach to Development**

Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological approach of development places an emphasis on the importance of the multiple environments in which students spend their time. This theory explains how children's culture and environment affects how they grow, develop, and learn. The different environments which influence development are divided into four levels, the microsystem, the mesosystem, ecosystem, and the macro-systems. Its basis is focused on the interactive relationships a child has within each

environment, and how each level interacts with each other. Accordingly, a student is directly affected by the ecological setting in which they spend their time. For the purposes of this study, a discussion of the micro-settings and mesosystems will follow.

**Micro-settings.** Bronfenbrenner indicated environments, such as home and school, are part of a student's micro system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The student is at the center of this "nested structure" (p. 3). This structure is the setting where the student lives and includes their family, peers, and schools. It is within this system that the most direct social interactions occur. The micro system affects the student, and the student affects the micro system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Mesosystem.** This layer of a student's ecological system involves the relationships between the micro settings. According to this theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the capacity of a setting, such as the home, school, or workplace, to function effectively as a context for development is dependent on the existence and nature of the social interconnections it involves, including joint participation, communication, and the existence of information in each setting about the other. (p. 5)

### **Psychosocial Stages of Development**

Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial stages of development provides additional support to the importance of the ecological environment of students. It is stated in this theory that everyone should pass through eight stages of development from birth to death (Woolfolk, 2007). If a stage is missed, a developmental issue will appear at some point in that person's life (Erikson, 1950; 2001). Each stage of development is important to the next stage of the development. In each stage, a person learns basic personality virtues such as trust, shame, initiative, motivation, and competency.

The fourth and fifth stages of development occur between the ages of seven to fourteen. It is during these stages adolescents begin to compare their feelings of self-worth and belonging to their peers at school. This theory recognizes the importance of extracurricular activities as an environmental setting during these two stages of development. It is during these stages students are entering middle school, forming their identity with peers and teachers and beginning to make choices about their future, such as completing high school (Fredericks & Eccles, 2008; Peck et al., 2008). Involvement in extracurricular activities outside the classroom during this time is important to help students develop self-esteem and confidence. Clearly, these virtues have a positive correlation to higher academic progress and school completion for all students (Erikson, 1950; Fredericks & Eccles, 2009; Peck et al., 2008).

Empirical evidence supports Erikson's concepts of development. Research suggests that feelings of competence and self-esteem are positively associated with academic performance (Mahoney et al., 2003; Woolfolk, 2007). Likewise, research indicates students with relatively no involvement in extracurricular activities outside the classroom are less likely to complete high school (NCES, 2010). From an ecological viewpoint, experiences of competency outside the classroom greatly impact the performance inside the classroom. In the developmental stages of students in middle school, Eccles (2005) posited that "children's experiences of success or frustration in organized activities outside the classroom can also play a crucial role in development, as they either exacerbate or compensate for children's experiences in school" (p. 32). Through the positive experience of participating in extracurricular activities at school, a student may learn they are capable of success. Consequently, this knowledge is applied

to their schoolwork which improves their academic performance. From the ecological development view, the student will gain confidence through the environment of the extracurricular activities which will affect their classroom confidence, increasing their overall academic performance (Peck et al., 2008).

Research has acknowledged the importance of students' environments and the relationships which are formed within them to academic success in school (Peck et al., 2008; Woolfolk, 2007). Further indications point to the importance of environmental variables, such as extracurricular activity participation to student performance in the micro systems in which they live (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Woolfolk, 2007).

Extracurricular activities at school are recognized as an important element of a student's micro system and developmental well being. The research is evidence of the importance of the ecological development theory and school success among majority groups, such as Caucasians and African American students, but there is considerably less research on the outcome of minority groups of students, such as the Hispanic population, who choose not to participate in extracurricular activities at school (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Woolfolk, 2007). There are indications of specific cultural factors within Hispanic students' ecological settings which influence their decisions not to become involved in activities outside the academic classrooms (Flanagan et al., 2007; Woolfolk, 2007).

Studying Hispanic students' nonparticipation in extracurricular activities involves the acknowledgement of the importance of examining the relationships between the micro and mesosystem in which this population of students are a part (Flanagan et al., 2007; Woolfolk, 2007). The ecological systems of this population present variables

which must be recognized and discussed within this study. These cultural variables include parental involvement, student engagement, and acculturation.

Additionally, the variable of learning a second language must be considered in the way Hispanic students socialize and learn at school to fully understand the educational choices they make.

### **Second Language Acquisition Theory**

Krashen's theory of second language acquisition connects the theories of social constructivism and the ecological approach to language development. Language acquisition is important to diverse students' academic success, because it combines both the social and the cognitive elements as a part of learning (Krashen, 1987, 2007) as a prerequisite of acquiring language. Holding a sociocultural view of language acquisition, Krashen views learning and language development as a process resulting in participation in specific sociocultural communities, such as extracurricular activities. Through this participation, learning occurs as students' level of social engagement increases. Krashen believes learning is achieved through social interactions and relationships. He compares the role of language and its acquisition to social learning involving two cognitive processes. These two processes are independent from one another and are based on each person's performance. The language which is acquired is relevant to the cognitive part of human development. It occurs naturally along with other developmental processes that begin in infancy. The cognitive process is complete when verbal interaction begins to occur (p. 25).

Krashen's research found that language, responses, and non-verbal communication are the key factors in creating a foundation for further learning. Students' values, beliefs,

and attitudes are found to be associated with their behaviors and are seen as individual characteristics, but in reality, they are in the social interactions which form the foundation for academic engagement (Krashen, 1987, 2007).

James Cummins (2000), a Canadian linguistic researcher, furthered Krashen's language theory by the distinction of two types of language dimensions: basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency skills (CALPS).

**Basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS).** BIC language skills are typically the first to be acquired by a language learner. They are considered to be the surface skills of listening and speaking and are normally acquired quickly by interaction with native speakers of the second language. Cummins' studies indicated BICS is acquired at a quicker rate when students become involved in school through activities such as athletic programs, civic clubs, and music or drama groups. Additionally, BICS is necessary in order for the language learner to develop cognitive academic language proficiency (Cummins, 2000).

**Cognitive academic language proficiency skills (CALPS).** CALPS language skills are the skills used by a language learner to cope with academic language. It is the specialized language a student needs to be academically successful. It takes a language learner a longer period of time to acquire this specialize language. However, if BICS is at a functioning level, a student can begin to build on and expand that language knowledge to develop CALPS. It is clear that the language needed to be successful in academic learning can only be preceded by the development of basic communication skills (Woolfolk, 2007). In order for a student to be both socially and academically

successful both dimensions must be developed. BICS development plus CALPS development is equal to academic engagement and success (Cummins, 2000).

The language acquisition theory is focused on students learning by placing emphasis on their social context to develop BIC language skills. Students learn by active participation, and the relationships they form with classmates and teachers. Cognitive and educational psychologists (e.g. Vygotsky, 1926/1987) believe that schools must provide students with opportunities for socialization if learning is to take place. Their perspective shifts importance from isolating students while learning to the students' interaction within the larger social context of school. This is especially important for students from diverse backgrounds because it helps to in order to develop a sense of belonging in their environment. In addition to accounting for the gaps in achievement between Hispanic students and those in other groups, lack of socialization may account for the often significant differences in academic motivation and engagement among this group of students (Eccles, 2003; Fredrick & Eccles, 2008).

### **Summary of Theoretical Framework**

The common thread among these three theories is the importance of socialization by students outside the academic classroom. The consequences for nonparticipation in extracurricular activities appear to be substantial for all students but especially important for adolescents in middle school (Garcia-Reid, 2005). The integration of the socio-developmental and ecological theories may provide explanations for the suggestion that extracurricular activity participation at school is more important to culturally diverse students due to the low self-confidence and feelings of perceived culture inadequacies (Flanagan et al., 2007). Current studies have revealed two important themes among

Hispanic students; they are choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities at school, and they have the highest dropout rate of any student population (Flanagan et al., 2007; NCES, 2010).

The integration of three models including social constructivism, ecological, and language acquisition theories clearly indicates the chances of academic success are greater when students are involved in extracurricular activities. This study examines the role of specific cultural values including family, student engagement, and acculturation of Hispanic students and the influence these factors have on their decision not to participate in extracurricular activities. Additionally, this study examines the importance of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities to Hispanic students' school engagement and their decision to complete or not complete their education.

### **Extracurricular Activities**

For the purpose of this study, extracurricular activity refers to any activities which are sponsored by the school and are voluntary. They are programs which fulfill two basic conditions: They are not part of the regular school curricular program, and they are structured in some way. They are not just socializing, but working toward a common mission or goal (Fredricks, & Eccles, 2005). These activities are offered outside school hours but at the school setting and may include a wide range of civic, sport, literary, music, and social organizations.

Recent studies show that involvement in school activities is related to both higher standardized test scores and academic grades; both predictors of student engagement (Broh, 2005; Contreras, 2005; Lewis, 2005). However, historically extracurricular



activities were not always seen as a benefit to students, but rather a distraction (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008).

### **History of Extracurricular Activities in the United States**

Extracurricular activity began in the United States during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century as a physical education program. Most people during this period saw this type of activity as not being pertinent to the education of children. However, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson were advocates of activities outside of the academic realm and offered advice and instruction on how to set up the program as part of the regular school day. In his writings, Jefferson expressed the view that physical exercise was an integral part of a total education. Additionally, he spoke of the socialization aspect that students would be receiving outside the academic classroom (la Torre & Gwynne, 2009).

With the support of Franklin and Jefferson, physical education began to gain acceptance among other Americans. With this acceptance, came the idea that schools are primarily responsible for the physical and intellectual education of its youth. Still, there were those who held to the beliefs that extracurricular activities, such as physical education were a waste of time (la Torre & Gwynne, 2009).

During the first part of the nineteenth century, the concept of extracurricular activities in schools grew and many schools began to include physical education for boys and dance for girls. However, the effects of the Civil War caused enormous setbacks in education in general by changing the focus from academics to military training. The focus on the military continued until late 1870, when Dudley Sargent, a professor from Yale University, led the fight to reinstate physical education in schools. Sargent's fight was successful. During the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, the number and

the variety of extracurricular activities once again began to appear in American schools. While most of the activities were based on physical education programs, some schools began to experiment with drama, dance, and civic groups (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Gilman, Meyers, & Perez, 2004).

Early Twentieth Century saw the development of extracurricular activities begin to thrive, and the concept of extracurricular activities outside the classroom increased in popularity. Still, there were opponents who viewed activities outside the classroom as a hindrance to the academic program in schools. The two opposing views reached a compromise through the publication in 1919 of *The Cardinal Principles of Education* (Fry, 2006) written to establish guidelines for educational opportunities students should be afforded. This guideline instructed schools to include activities that would address health, ethical character, civic education, and the socialization of students while they were attending school. By 1920, the majority of schools were offering extracurricular activities, but after World War II, once again, criticism began to increase concerning the amount of time spent for such activities. The concern that extracurricular activities were detrimental to students' academic progress grew, and critics began looking for ways to return to a balance between the two programs. The solution was the development of extracurricular activities into elective classes or after school programs for students made available for student participation (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Gilman et al., 2004).

During the 1980s, professionals in the field of education began to focus on many of the methods used in our schools to educate students. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released a study, *A Nation at Risk*, detailing what was wrong with America's schools. The study concluded the U.S. had "lost sight of

the basic purpose of schooling and of the high expectations and discipline effort needed to attain them (p 5). Accordingly, states began to restructure and reform their school systems. Extracurricular activities were taken out of the academic day and held either before or after school. They were sponsored by the school with a staff member to oversee them. Each extracurricular activity had guidelines and eligibility requirements a student had to meet in order to participate (la Torre, & Gwynne, 2009).

### **Benefits of Extracurricular Activity Participation**

Extracurricular participation during school is linked to positive educational outcomes during all stages of development, but especially during the adolescent stage (Eccles, 2003; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Gilman, et al., 2004; Mahoney et al., 2003). Students who participate in extracurricular activities are the most likely to have successful outcomes; such as higher academic grades and school completion (Bucknavage & Worrel, 2005).

### **Benefits from Different Types of Extracurricular Activities**

Early research on the benefits of extracurricular activities was focused on athletic participation, but now contemporary research is attempting to identify benefits of participation to the type of activities students are involved in. Still, the majority of students, across grade level and ethnic groups, are involved in athletic activities more than any other type of extracurricular activities (Bucknavage & Worrel, 2005).

**Athletics.** Athletics were found to help students in forming a stronger commitment to school, parents, and other team members. The difference between athletics and other types of extracurricular activity participation is contributed to the elevated status athletes have during middle and high school. (Broh, 2005) At most

schools, athletes had a perceived status image, while students involved in music, debate, and other types of extracurricular activities did not experience the same adulation (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007). Early research indicated athletic participation yielded no higher benefit than other types of extracurricular activities (Broh, 2002). However, more recent research (Lipscomb, 2006; Taras, 2005) found athletes had a higher academic success rate than students who participated in other types of extracurricular activities. Lipscomb (2005) attributed this difference to the number of academically focused students who tend to be involved in athletics. Research conducted by Marsh (1992/2002) used sixteen different categories of extracurricular activities to study the effect of the type of activity on academic success. The results clearly indicated which activities contributed the maximum benefits to students. While he concluded community youth groups have no significant effect on student success, he identified seven types of extracurricular activities offered through schools as having a positive effect on student success; sports, honor society, student government, community service organizations, cheerleading, academic clubs, and school publications.

**Performing arts.** Performing arts encompass the areas of dramatic arts, music, and dance for the purposes of this study. Research of participation in performing arts extracurricular activities lead to three major positive implications for middle school students (Lampert, 2006). These activities were found to promote high critical thinking skills, social development and lower the chances of at risk behaviors. Evidence revealed the arts, a form of inquiry based curriculum, led to higher levels of critical thinking. “Learning in the arts builds strengths in several critical thinking dispositions and offers evidence that the arts do indeed enhance the disposition to think ethically” (Lampert,

2006). Students who participate in arts program have been shown to improve both academically and socially. Not only does participation in extracurricular activities such as art and drama build critical thinking skills, they have been linked to student improvements in the subject areas of mathematics, reading, and writing (Paige, 2005). Improved academic development has been shown to increase self-esteem, which is most critical during the middle school years when peer approval is at its highest (Rubert, 2006).

**Clubs and organizations.** For the purposes of this study, clubs and organization are defined as any which school sponsored other than athletics or performing arts. Participation in clubs and organizations at school provide opportunities for students to become active in new roles. They provide valuable experiences that are generally not available to young people. Relationships students form during their participation in various clubs and organizations with peers and adults serve as important sources of social and academic support. Research has shown supervised and constructive activities such as civic groups, yearbook club, and other types of organized groups provide positive influences for growth in social and academic skills (Afterschool Alliance, 2008).

**School based extracurricular activities.** School based extracurricular activities have been linked to higher academic engagement, higher self-esteem, and more positive educational decisions pertaining to students' future (Afterschool Alliance, 2008; Marsh & Klietman, 2002). While out-of-school extracurricular activities reflected some benefits to students, the majority was linked to negative results of lower academic grades and greater at risk behaviors in school (Afterschool Alliance, 2008). School based extracurricular activities were shown to affect the academic success of students more than extracurricular

activities offered through community organizations, because the activities involve participants who are in the students' daily lives. The connection built by involvement in extracurricular activities between students, peers, and adults are key components of fostering student engagement in the classroom (Heller et al., 2005). Students who are involved in extracurricular activities outside the academic classroom are more engaged in the classroom (Zwart, 2007).

Student engagement serves as a means to improve the emotional and developmental growth of students. Participation in extracurricular activities were shown to increase student engagement and academic improvement, both which have been linked to students completing their education (Gonzales et al., 2004; Mahoney et al., 2003).

### **Extracurricular Activity and Student Engagement**

Skinner and Belmont (1993/2005) offer a definition of student engagement based on cognitive and behavioral indicators of specific tasks. Engagement is further defined as the degree of participation and intrinsic interest and success in school students' display. There are assumptions within this individual perspective which suggest that educational attainment is dependent on both social stability and academic achievement. Engaged students show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities while maintaining a positive attitude and behavior. They seek out activities in academics and social settings of the schools they attend. A review of the underlying factors within student engagement (academic and social) includes identification with the school and peers through extracurricular activities (Kuh, 2009).

Student engagement yields a picture of students' willingness to actively participate in routine school activities, such as attending classes, completing required

work and following teachers' directions in class. Engaged students are more likely to select more difficult tasks, initiate action to solve a problem, and exert effort and concentration when learning new tasks. During the learning process engaged students display positive attitudes and higher confidence levels (Garcia-Reed, 2005).

Student engagement is based on individual perspectives that focus on student attributes such as; values, attitudes, and behaviors (Regnerus, 2003/2005). Research on student engagement suggests dropping out of school is the final stage of a cumulative process of disengagement or withdrawal from school (Fry, 2006).

There are some differences among the theories, but all agree on two dimensions of student engagement: academic engagement (progress) and psychological (social) engagement. Both are integral components of educational success. Academic engagement measures the students' time on task, active involvement in the classroom, or credit accrual for high school students. Social engagement includes identification with the school and peers through extracurricular activities. To increase student engagement, focus should be on the students' involvement in activities outside the academic classroom. Student engagement is a prerequisite for building a sense of community within the school setting. It is an effective way to help all students relate to their school experiences and to improve academically, but it is particularly important to minority students as they are struggling to find their place in the school community (Richwine, 2009).

Student engagement is measured by effective participation inside and outside the academic classroom. It leads to an array of measurable outcomes and should be reflected by the positive academic progress by engaged learners (Kuh, 2009).

**Academic progress.** Scholars, Durlak's and Weissberg's, 2007 study found extracurricular activity participation had a positive effect on school grades and standardized test scores. Kevin McCarthy (2000) focused on extracurricular activities' influence on academic performance. The results of his study indicated students who participated in extracurricular activities had a significantly higher grade point average (GPA). These were consistent across gender, age, socio-economic status, and ethnicities. In the surveys collected by (Fry, 2006), involvement in activities was continually cited as being extremely important to the students' ability to achieve academically. The students reported involvement in extracurricular activities as helping them to build self-confidence; which was reflected by their increased academic success.

Descriptive studies that compared students who achieved high academic performance to those who did not found a correlation between the students' involvement or noninvolvement in school activities outside the classroom. A majority of the students who were academically successful were also involved to some extent in extracurricular activities at their schools, had increased peer relationships outside their culture, and were engaged academically and socially (Capps, 2005; Driscoll, 2006). Ethnic groups within the study were examined to determine if the correlation could be linked to diverse groups. The results indicated while there was a lower extracurricular activity participation rate among ethnic groups, those who did participate had an increase in academic success. This point was further proven by a study conducted by Marsh and Kleitman (2003) which looked at the correlations between the total numbers of extracurricular activities a student is involved in with various outcomes. They determined higher extracurricular activity participation scores had a positive correlation with social and academic self-concept,



taking more advanced courses; time spent on homework, post-secondary educational aspirations, higher GPA, and less absenteeism among school age students of all ethnicities (NCES, 2010). Their research indicated although, diverse groups are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, the effects of participation in extracurricular activities have a positive to higher academic achievement. Indications are that all ethnic groups of students who participate in extracurricular activities gain academic progress at school (NCES, 2010). Schreiber and Chambers (2002) looked at NELS-88 data to examine extracurricular participation and academic progress of 8,305 eighth and tenth grade minority students. Extracurricular activities were categorized as (a) school/academic/organized, (b) in-school/nonacademic/organized, (c) out-of-school/nonacademic/organized, (d) out-of-school/nonacademic/nonorganized and (e) out-of-school/academic/nonorganized. Results indicated that, in general, in-school, academic, and organized activities can be used as predictors of academic achievement and school completion among all ethnic groups. This was substantiated by further researcher on the relationship between extracurricular participation and academic achievement in minority students attending urban schools. The participants consisted of 766 eighth-grade students of African American, Hispanic, or American Indian descent who attended poor inner-city schools. This sample of students was used to study the pattern of extracurricular involvement by minorities (The National Education Longitudinal Study, 1988). The results were similar to that of the general student body and were also similar to the pattern for their Caucasian peers attending the same inner-city schools (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).

School-based extracurricular activities play an important role in the lives of students by boosting academic success. Academic success is linked to positive outcomes for all groups of students. Students who are success academically are more likely to become engaged in academics and have an increased rate of school completion (Valdez, 2001).

**Drop-out rate.** The dropout rate declined in 2009 from fourteen percent to eight percent among White and Black students. However, Hispanic students continue to dropout before completing high school at a rate of fifteen percent (NCES, 2011). Research (Driscoll, 2006) identifies a lack of social engagement by students as predictive of dropping out, even if academic engagement is high. Indications are student engagement influences many of the decisions made by students concerning their decision to complete their education (Rumberger & Rhodes, 2007). There have been many studies conducted on the dropout rate of Hispanic students, but researchers have just begun to consider the effects of social engagement through extracurricular activities at school as a factor for high school completion among this minority group of students. There is a formed consensus among educators and school administrators, that involving minority groups of students in extracurricular activities lead to students who perform at a higher academic level, less likely to experience negative peer pressure, have higher levels of self-esteem, and are more likely to graduate from school than children who do not participate in extracurricular activities at all (Akos, 2006; Meyers & Perez, 2004).

### **Hispanic Students' Participation in Extracurricular Activities**

Hispanic students are the largest and youngest minority in the United States today. For the first time in history a minority ethnic group makes up a large proportion of

America's youth and will help shape the twenty-first century. This is problematic because emerging research is indicating this large minority group of students is choosing not to participate in school based extracurricular activities (Garcia & Jensen 20095; National Center for Education Statistics, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Extracurricular activities can result in the increase academic progress and student engagement; factors which increase the chances of graduating from school (Fry, 2006). Nine out of 10 Hispanic students believe it is necessary to get an education to be successful in life (Fry, 2006). Yet, less than one half of Hispanic students are choosing not to complete high school and not to become involved in activities which are recognized to increase their chances of completing high school (U.S. Census Department, 2010). Research shows all ages of Hispanic students participate in extracurricular activities less than Caucasian students (U.S. Census Department, 2006). The Survey of Income and Program Participation (2007) found only 28% of Hispanic youth, ages twelve to seventeen, participated in extracurricular activities during middle and high school (Lugaila, 2004). In order to examine the nonparticipation in activities which has been proven to benefit this group of student, it is necessary to consider who they are.

**Hispanic students.** Nearly one half (46%) of Hispanic students live in metropolitan areas, compared to non-Hispanic Whites (21%). They also comprise 75% of students enrolled in limited English proficiency programs; including bilingual program and English as a second language programs (ESL). Many (35%) of Hispanic students live in urban households that face sustained poverty. They attend schools where twice as many of their classmates are poor, and they change schools often. Research has found Hispanic students are more likely to attend schools that are poorly maintained,

underfunded, structurally inferior, and employ a large number of uncertified teachers (Garcia-Reid, 2005). Still, the Hispanic culture places emphasis on cooperation in the attainment of goals, which can result in Hispanic students feeling uncomfortable with the competition in classrooms of American schools (Richwine, 2009).

There are specific cultural barriers faced by Hispanic students which are important to consider when determining the reasons why this group of students are choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities. There is a possibility that the cultural values unique to Hispanic families may contribute to different priorities for children, which may not include participation in activities other than academics during middle school years. These are critical factors which influence the success of Hispanic students and can be addressed by schools immediately (Entwisle & Alexander, 1994).

**Acculturation.** The Hispanic population in the United States is continuing to grow and is significantly diverse in the areas of country of origin. A majority of this population in the U.S. (68%) are first and second generations (Census Report, 2010). There are discussions concerning Hispanic children's education coming from research on immigrant students (Gonzales et al., 2004; Richwine, 2009). Over time immigrant families typically lose the sense of identity from their country of origin and begin to connect with the new. This does not seem to be the case with Hispanic students in our schools today (Levels, Jaap, & Gerbert 2008). They culturally straddle two worlds, making it difficult to shift back and forth. Many educators believe the reason for educational failure is due to their inability or refusal to assimilate into the culture of their school (Richwine, 2009). Research conducted on educational outcomes for Hispanic students are defying this theory; countering the lack of cultural considerations including

family, parental involvement, and student mobility (Stone & Han, 2005). These factors are used as early predictors of students who are becoming disengaged as early as first grade and totally disengaged by third grade (Stone & Han, 2005).

**Language acquisition and acculturation.** Acculturation is one aspect of language acquisition, and the level in which a student acculturates to the target language group directly affects the level of second language the student will acquire. Research continually connects participation in extracurricular activities at school to higher degrees of acculturation by adolescent students (Gonzales et al., 2004; Rodríguez, 2003). The ability to make social connections through extracurricular activities play a large role in how well students learn the second language and how well they learn to use school resources to become engaged in their environment (Garcia & Jensen 2009).

**Family.** The cultural value most often emphasized by Hispanic parents is the family. Hispanic cultures places a large importance on family commitment; involving loyalty, a strong family support system, the belief that a child's behavior is reflective on the honor of the family, a hierarchical order among siblings, and a sense of duty to care for family members (Capps, 2005; Velez & Saenz, 2001). Hispanic adolescents are more inclined than other adolescents to adopt their parents' commitment to religious and political beliefs, occupational preferences, and lifestyle. Spirituality, individual dignity, and respect for authority figures are valued throughout Hispanic culture and are demonstrated in America's classroom (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

**Parental involvement at school.** Research indicates the more support a student receives; the more likely the student will succeed. The support system is most effective if it extends from the school into the student's home. In school the degree of family

involvement plays a major role in the success of the student (Epstein, 2007). Low academic achievement and involvement in school by Hispanic students is often attributed to family factors. This perspective is focused on socio-cultural causes such as, parenting styles, lack of educational values and lack of competition (Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008).

Hispanic parenting styles are considered to be authoritarian in nature. They teach their children to respond to teachers in a different manner than Caucasian students. Research indicates most Caucasian students are taught to be more aggressive and active in communicating with their teachers, while Hispanic students are taught to be more content and less challenging in the classroom (Valverde, 2006). Likewise, Hispanic parents are not involved at school in the same manner as other ethnicities.

The ability to define the meaning of parental involvement is part of the discrepancies between Hispanic parents and teachers. They have different views of what parental involvement is, and they have different goals concerning how parents should be involved in their children's schools. Additionally, they have different views of how parental involvement should be implemented (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Eisner, & Hernandez, 2007). In the past it has meant parents serving on councils, serving as classroom aides, working on bake sales, or helping teachers and schools in other ways (Stone & Han, 2005). Today it means working on learning activities at home to improve students' school achievement and participation in school activities, such as meetings and conferences (Trumball, 2007).

Teachers' view of Hispanic parental involvement is often incorrect. A recent study showed 98% of teachers believe parents of Hispanic students are not working with

their children at home. Moreover, they believe most Hispanic parents are not concerned with their children's education. Many teachers interpret noninvolvement as a lack of caring. However, a study examining the perceptions of their role in education found that Hispanic parents care very much about their children's future and want to be involved in their schools. Hispanic parents believe parental involvement means helping their children with homework, instilling cultural values, and sending them to school fed, clean, and rested (Preston, 2010; Trumball, 2007).

A study of a Hispanic migrant family whose children consistently maintained a high level of academic achievement, proposes a different definition of parent involvement. The researcher indicated the family provided their children's report cards as proof of their school involvement. The father of the family said their goal was to teach their children to appreciate the value of their education through the medium of hard work. They took their children to work with them in the fields to teach them the ethic of working hard. They told them to work hard at school, or they would continue to work hard in the fields. They focused their children on the work limitations they have due to lack of education. As a result of this study, it became necessary to include socio-cultural values when defining parental involvement (Lopez, 2001).

In the Hispanic culture, teachers are highly respected. Hispanic parents believe it is their job to teach morals, respect, and good behavior (Lamont & Small, 2008). It is the role of the teachers to instill knowledge. Parents consider any interference by them with their children's teachers as rude and disrespectful. A recent survey of public opinion indicated the large majority of Hispanic parents' trust and respect teachers; they gave excellent rating to school principals and other leaders of schools (Reality Check, 2006).

Considering the oppositional views of what parental involvement is schools do not realize the full scope of the contributions of Hispanic parents. Research has provided evidence of a link between parental involvements and how their children respond to the choices they are faced with making while in middle school. Students who feel their parents are not meeting the expectations of other parents may feel insignificant and lack self-confidence; both socially and academically (Capps, 2005). Students with little confidence have been linked to lack of participation in extracurricular activity involvement in school.

Studies have indicated that students whose parents who are involved in their children's education generally are more engaged in schools than student who do not have parental support (Dunn et al. 2003). Additionally, parents of Caucasian students continued to increase and minority parents decreased the contact they have with their children's school.

In the Midwestern part of the United States, Hispanic students who performed well reported a rate of high parental involvement (Jones & Valdez, 1997; Newman et al., 2007). A study of Hispanic parents in New Orleans, who became involved in a leadership program at their children's school, found that their children's grades improved, showed greater self-esteem, and were more willing to become involved in activities outside their academic classroom (Newman et al., 2007). The common factor reported by these studies is increased parental involvement at school both academically and through extracurricular activities.

### **Parental Involvement and Extracurricular Activity Participation**

Parents have an influence on the decisions of which extracurricular activities



students choose to participate in (Dunn et al., 2003; Newman et al., 2007; Shannon, 2006). They not only communicate values and beliefs concerning extracurricular activities, but they model certain behaviors about the value of participating in them. Moreover, parents among different cultures have different expectations of their children, and these cultural differences influence the types of extracurricular activities their children are involved (Newman et al., 2007). Unlike American adolescents, who participate in self-selected extracurricular activities at school that promote both academic and social skills, Hispanic students are more centered around their families and often see extracurricular activities as not important to academic success. However, Hispanic families do see value in social connections and support from family and friends have been found as critical factors for academic success as well as extracurricular activity choices and participation (Bouchev & Harter, 2005; Shannon, 2006). Often times the close connections to family is due to the frequent migration of Hispanic family for the purposes of supporting their families (Shannon, 2006).

**Student mobility among Hispanic students.** Student mobility refers to the phenomenon of students changing schools for reasons other than grade promotion. The causes of student mobility are due to housing issues, poverty, personal, and family issues (la Torres & Gwynne, 2009). Many Hispanic parents are not prepared for the work force due to immigration issues, language barriers, or lack of educational background. Statistics show a high majority are migrant workers. A recent study reported 47% of Hispanic parents move their families at an average of 2.3 times during a school year (NCES, 2010). Although, they are concerned with educating their children, it is sometimes a choice of moving where there will be work or not being able to feed their families.

Students who are considered to be mobile are more likely to live in low income households, attend inner city schools and have low English proficiency. They transfer frequently between schools during the school year and are at greater risk for academic and behavioral problems, low student performance, behavior problems, and absenteeism (Rumberger & Rhodes, 2007). The students in these families often fall behind academically and socially when they are absent from school. Continuously being the new student affects their motivation, self confidence, and assimilation in to the school culture. The Denver Public School Systems conducted a study in 1989, revealing students who made even one school change were twice as likely not to complete high school (McMillan, 1991). Some research suggests that differences in student achievement between non-mobile and mobile students can also be attributed to students' cultural background (Rumberger & Rhodes, 2007).

Both residential and school mobility increase the chances of students choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities. A recent study revealed a majority of students who have withdrawn from high school have moved or changed schools at least one time, while the majority of students who graduated have not (Driscoll, 2006). A recent report issued by the General Accounting Office to the House of Representatives indicated students with high mobility rates are usually low-income, Limited English Proficient (LEP), and migrant (IDRA, 2002). It also reported lower academic achievement, higher risk of grade retention and lower student dropout rate among these groups (IDRA, 2002). Student mobility is one of the major factors which influenced student determined engagement and achievement. A study of a group of tenth grade students at a New Jersey High School determined mobility as predictor of extracurricular activity participation,

school engagement. The results place mobility a minute percentage below the other factors of income, language, family and extracurricular activity involvement as predictors of student engagement and academic success (Shannon, 2006).

**Influence of mobility on early school years.** During the last 20 years, research has increased its emphasis on the importance of the early years of school on future life chances and learning experiences. First grade students learn ten times the amount of information when compared to a high school student. These years are even more crucial for Hispanic students because it is the beginning of their exposure to the English language, the numeric system, and literacy skills. Skills acquired during this time are a strong predictor of academic success (Farkas & Beron, 2001). Yet, research consistently shows Hispanic students scoring lower than other students on the Kindergarten Readiness Test (Fry, 2008).

During the early years of school, Hispanic students are not only coping with the transitions of home to school experienced by most students; they must also adapt to language and cultural changes. To bring about change, Hispanic students need to possess a true desire to be successful in school and schools need to be educated concerning Hispanic students' values, culture, and aspirations. Encouragement, motivation, mentoring, and involving them in extracurricular activities at an early age will help to establish student engagement and promote academic success (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007).

### **Summary**

Frances Contreras, (2011) author of *The Latino Education Crisis* stressed the importance of engaging Hispanic students if they are to be successful in school. While

the interactions within a classroom provides some opportunity for Hispanic students' to be exposed to the mainstream culture of our society, more significant opportunities are found by their participation in school based extracurricular activities (Preston, 2010). The participation in extracurricular activities has been proven to promote student engagement, academic progress, and the completion of school among students (Preston, 2010). Students who are involved in extracurricular activities report they feel more connected to school and their peers, have more self-confidence and improve academically. Additionally, they see their participation in extracurricular activities as extremely important to their ability to be successful in school. A recent study found a clear correlation between school success and participation in school based extracurricular activities among Hispanic students (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Yet, 71% of Hispanic students make the choice not to be involved in extracurricular activities (Pizarro, 2005). This can lead to problems, because involvement in such activities is now seen as the primary key to students feeling more connected to their school both socially and academically.

Research studies have examined social interaction between students and schools and have concluded immigrant students are marginalized by their choices to not participate in activities outside the academic classroom (Gitlin, Edward, Crosland, & Fode, 2003; Lee, 2005; Todorova, 2007). These students are at risk of school failure. Schools, parents, and policymakers need to develop strategies to engage this group of students in extracurricular activities, which have been shown to increase student engagement and academic progress (Preston, 2010). Extracurricular activities have been proven to increase these key elements of school success.

Efforts must be focused on the Hispanic population in middle school, their educational perceptions, values, and aspirations. To bring about change, Hispanic students need to be engaged, academically successful in school, and encouraged to continue their education.

Hispanic students and their families must be informed the importance of participating in activities outside of the academic classroom. This study examines the phenomenon through their eyes and will present viable insights concerning their choice not to participate in extracurricular activities. Additionally, possible cultural predictors beyond socioeconomic status, age, and gender will be identified. It will examine the role of specific cultural values including family, mobility, and acculturation of Hispanic students and the influence these factors have on their decision not to participate in extracurricular activities. This study examines the importance of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities to Hispanic students' school engagement and their decision to complete or not complete their education. This information may provide schools with the opportunities to develop strategies to encourage Hispanic middle school students to choose to participate in extracurricular activities during middle school; leading to higher student engagement and academic success (Balfanz, & Legters, 2006).

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomena of Hispanic students choosing not to participate in school-based extracurricular activities and to identify possible cultural predictors beyond socioeconomic status, age, and gender that may influence their decision. This study examines the role of specific cultural values including family and acculturation of Hispanic students and the influence these factors have on their decision not to participate in extracurricular activities. Additionally, this study explores the importance of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities to Hispanic students' school engagement, and their decision to complete or not complete their education. The rationale for the selection of the research method is included in this section. Other topics of importance addressed in this chapter include the role of the researcher, research design, context of study, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, and trustworthiness.

### **Design**

A qualitative research study was conducted using the explorative approach of phenomenology. Since the research strives to “obtain an in-depth understanding of human behaviors and habits; seeking to explain shared experiences of a specific group” (Creswell, 2007), the phenomenology research design was chosen. Phenomenology seeks to understand a given research topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. It is most effective as a means to explore culturally specific information concerning the values and social context of particular information (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenology's goal is "the fulfillment of our human nature; to become more fully who we are" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 12.).

Phenomenology research is used to describe the way in which individuals share experiences, and the way in which those experiences are interpreted. The idea of phenomenology was first introduced in the twentieth century by Edmund Husserl (as cited in Creswell, 2007) who believed that the source of all knowledge is experience. He introduced the premise of phenomenology as, "the general doctrine of essence, within the science of the essence, cognition finds its place" (p. 82). He viewed phenomenology as a method to explain the lived experiences. Husserl believed in order to fully understand the experiences of others; we must begin with "the phenomenon itself". He argued that we can study experiences rigorously and systematically on the basis of how they appeared to consciousness. Phenomenological research is distinguishable from other qualitative research because its emphasis is from a subjective point of view. Phenomenology allows researchers to reflect on the lived experiences of human existence. This reflection is thoughtful process, free from theoretical, prejudicial, and suppositional interference (Van Manen, 2007).

More recent research is exploring phenomenology as method to know the world through lived experiences. In "Phenomenological Methodology in Human Sciences" Duke (1984) states the phenomenological approach is a means not to explain experiences but to understand them. More and more researchers are opting for this approach for the purposes of research today (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 ). Creswell noted two commonalities among the many approaches to phenomenology research: the lived

experiences in a study the experiences are conscious ones (van Manen, 1990) and the development of a description of the data; not explanations or analyses (Moustakas, 1994).

Van Manen (1990) argues that phenomenological research aims to create a formative relationship between being and acting, between who we are and how we act, and between thoughtfulness and tact. From a phenomenological point of view, the purpose of research is “always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings” (van Manen, 1990, p. 5). For these reasons phenomenological research is often used in the field of education (Coleman, 2001; Vespi & Yewchuk, 1992). However in exploring the learning experiences of diverse students, especially Hispanic students, participants are difficult to find (Catina, 2010; Tananuraksakul, 2009). This can pose a problem. Within phenomenological research, interviews with diverse populations are an advantage; because they yield a deep understanding of experiences that otherwise may not be understood to those outside the culture.

Typically phenomenological inquiry is focused in depth on a relatively small number of participants (Patton, 2002). However, in considering the participants for this study, the Hispanic culture was considered. Students with a cultural background different from the researcher’s are often influenced by the cultural relationships within their family. Hispanic parents are guarded and normally do not involve themselves in any activities outside the academic realm of school (Fry, 2006; Gaitan, 2004). They are not open to many questions from individuals outside their cultural community. Additionally, many Hispanic parents instruct their children not to share personal information of any nature with anyone of authority, refuse to allow photographs, or internet consents at



school. Hispanic students may respond to any inquiries concerning any topics other than school the way they perceive others within their culture wants them to and not honestly how they feel. Typically, Hispanic parents do not understand any curiosity focused on them or their traditions (Gaitan, 2004; Garcia-Reid, 2005).

This study is focused on the phenomenon of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities by Hispanic students when they attend middle school. While ideally the participants would include middle school students, the lack of parental trust among Hispanic parents, and the focus of the current immigration law in the media prevented student involvement in this study (Ceballo, 2004; Dodd, 2012; Trevizo, 2011). For these reasons, it was necessary to design this study based on a critical case participant sample.

Critical cases, sometimes referred to as a case participant, are those which are particularly important to the design of the phenomenology study. In phenomenological studies, a case study is a method of purposeful sampling and not the research design (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is used when there is a need to identify a case which can illustrate some phenomenon dramatically (Patton, 2002). While the researcher would prefer multiple critical case participants, this study is culturally atypical (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Atypical cases involve areas of research that are markedly different in the number or types of samples used due to extreme circumstances, such as lack of willingness of a population to participate (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Additionally, in research of this nature multiple cases may not be representative of the experiences of not participating in extracurricular activities during middle school and would actually limit the depth of the study (Creswell, 2007). In a recent study concerning drug recovery with six critical case participants, the researcher chose to only use the description of one

participant based on the richness and depth of the information the participant provided (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011).

With the knowledge that finding Hispanics who were willing to speak candidly was an issue, an important element in this study became identifying a critical case participant who has experienced not participating in extracurricular activities while in middle school. Based on the lack of trust and willingness of Hispanic parents to consent to allow their children to be involved in any activities which may bring attention to them, it was necessary to locate a critical case participant which had experienced not participating in extracurricular activities and was of legal age to provide an informed consent without the requirement of parental approval.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline specific considerations when selecting participants for qualitative phenomenological studies. Researchers are encouraged to select only a few participants because within qualitative research it becomes necessary to redefine and adjust the criteria for participation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Redefining and adjusting the criteria for participation can involve the sample size, sample type, or the criteria for participation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, redefining and adjusting the criteria involved selecting Hispanic middle school students who could not speak candidly to a Hispanic adult who would provide in-depth critical information concerning the study topic. Patton (1990) provides specific strategies for selecting participants and identifies a critical case participant as one who will give dramatic evidence of the phenomenon being studied. Critical cases yield information that would not be gained through other types of participants (Patton, 1990).

A common concern in using a critical case participant is the size of the sample.

It can be confusing for some to overcome the idea that a single-figure sample is valid (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, this design is used now used as a research method in medical, psychological, and educational disciplines for the purposes of examining phenomenological cases that do not have a large sample (Bradfield & Knight, 2008; Koltz & Champe, 2010; Miller, 2011).

Another caveat for the selection of one critical case participant is how it can be generalized. Patton (2002) warns against making broad generalizations from a study with one or a few critical case participants, but emphasizes logical generalizations can be made. Typically, qualitative researchers attempt to obtain insights into specific educational, familial, and social practices that exist within a specific location and context, and not to make inferences about the underlying populations (Connolly, 1998).

Small qualitative studies may not be generalized in the traditional sense, some have redeeming qualities that set them above the requirement (Myers, 2000). The research value of qualitative studies is based on the participant's responses in context to the research questions. Accordingly, the issue of generalization of the research finding needs to be explored. Yin (2003) stated, "Qualitative research can be generalized." Analytic data can be generalized to some defined population that has been sampled, but to a theory of the phenomenon being studied, a theory that may have much wider applicability than the particular case studied. In this, it resembles experiments in the physical sciences, which make no claim to statistical representativeness, but instead assumes that their results contribute to a general theory of the phenomenon (p. 32). With these constraints in mind, critical case sampling was chosen.

The researcher adopted Moustakas' psychological approach (Moustakas, 1994) of empirical phenomenology for the study of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities among seventh and eighth grade middle school Hispanic students. The researcher focuses more on the describing the experiences of the participant and not on the researcher's interpretation. Creswell (2003) states the conduct of a psychological phenomenological study has been addressed in numerous studies and procedures should be as follows:

- Determination of phenomenology as the appropriate study design,
- Identification of the phenomenon,
- Recognition and specifications of broad philosophical assumptions,
- Data collection from participants who have experienced the phenomenon
- Data analysis and,
- Composite description of structural and composite descriptions.

This design will be optimal to explore the unique shared experience of nonparticipation by Hispanic middle students in school-based extracurricular activities.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions served as the framework for this inquiry:

1. How does the nonparticipation by Hispanic middle school students compare to students of other ethnic minorities' participation in extracurricular activities (EA)?
2. What factors, other than socioeconomic status, influence Hispanic students' decision not to participate in EA?
3. How are Hispanic students encouraged by their schools to participate in EA?

4. How do Hispanic students view their parents' influence on their decision to participate or not participate in EA during middle school?
5. How are Hispanic students encouraged by their parents to participate or not to participate in extracurricular activities at school?
6. How important do Hispanic students view participation in EA to their success in middle school?
7. How does nonparticipation in school-based extracurricular activities affect the student engagement of Hispanic middle school students?
8. How does not participating in extracurricular activities contribute to Hispanic students' decision to complete or not complete high school?

### **Context of Study**

This study took place in a school district located in a suburb of Georgia. This section addresses the unique atmosphere of the study site which directly effects the selection of one critical case participant in this study. The Hispanic population of this study tends to be very guarded and untrusting of the local school systems due to introduction of new immigration legislation in the state. The local, state, and national daily news for the last three years has been focused on how to control illegal immigration, and how to legally handle the population of immigrants who are living here without proper documentation. Schools are struggling to find financial avenues to meet the needs of a large undocumented population of students (Ceballo, 2004; Dodd, 2012; Trevizo, 2011). Adversely, Hispanic families are less willing to allow their students to participate in activities at school which could mandate the need for photographs or personal information they feel could place focus on them. As an ESOL teacher in the

school district, the researcher has personal knowledge of how Hispanic parents react to anyone seeking to obtain information that could identify their legal status. This makes the selection of participants in this study very important, yet very difficult. A recent study conducted which involved the use of one interview participant explains the shift from nationalism to globalization is forcing researchers to alter their views in order to study population groups with different cultures (Campbell, 2005). For this research study, the participant must have experienced the phenomena of not participating in extracurricular activities while in middle school, represent an information-rich case, and be willing to share their beliefs and experiences without fear (Penny & Kinslow, 2006).

### **Study Site**

The United States Census Bureau reported an increase of 96.1% in the Hispanic population within the state of Georgia since the year 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census Department, 2007). The Hispanic population in the county of the study's school site is reported as seven percent of the total population (U.S. Bureau of the Census Department, 2007). Hispanic students represent a total of approximately ten percent of the county's schools population. Most Hispanic families in the county live in the same area and attend the same middle school.

Legislators, citizens, and lawmakers are increasingly concerned about the number of undocumented Hispanics and the economic hardship it places on the taxpayers. In 2009, legislation, House Bill 87, was introduced to insure legal citizenship for obtaining employment, attending state college, and receiving state aid (Georgia General Assembly, 2012). This legislation has created an atmosphere of a lack of trust and fear among many Hispanics. They are fearful of the being unable to provide legal documentation and what

that could mean for their families. Hispanic parents keep a low profile within the context of school involvement and instruct their children to do the same.

The site used in this study for the purposes of collecting document data is a suburban middle school located in central Georgia. For the purposes of this study, it is referred to as Community Middle School. It is one of eight middle schools in the county. Community Middle School currently has a student enrollment of 966 students in grades sixth through eighth. The current demographics include 64% White, 24% Black, 9% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 2% Multiracial. This site was chosen because it is demographically congruent with the other middle schools in its district, and it has the largest representation of Hispanic students among its minority population. Additionally, it was chosen, because it is the middle school attended by the critical case participant of the study.

Community Middle School offers students in seventh and eighth grades the opportunity of participation in a variety of 15 school-based extracurricular activities including band, orchestra, chorus, three art programs, dance, computer art, drama, football, volleyball, soccer, softball, track, basketball, student government and yearbook.

Data gathered from Community Middle School substantiate the existence of the phenomena. Hispanic students participate in extracurricular activities less than all other ethnicities. The data shows an overall participation in activities outside the classroom at 64% among seventh and eighth grade students. Extracurricular participation by ethnicity is as follows: Hispanic students .01%, Korean students .04%, Asian students .04%, Multi-Racial students .02% Caucasian students .66% and African American students .25%.

## **Methods of Data Collection**

The data for this study was collected from two samples. Archival document data was collected from Community Middle school to substantiate the existence of the phenomena in 2009. The use of a critical case participant was utilized to provide a rich description of someone who has lived through the phenomenon of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities during middle school. While ideally the participants would include middle school students, the lack of parental trust among Hispanic parents, and the focus of the current immigration law in the media prevented student involvement in this study (Ceballos, 2004; Dodd, 2012; Trevizo, 2011). For these reasons, it was necessary to design this study based on a critical case participant sample.

**Document data.** Criterion sampling involves selecting data that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002). The criterion for this sample is seventh and eighth grade students attending the middle school at Community Middle School. The data was grouped by ethnicity. Within each ethnic group, two subgroups were developed: Students who participate in extracurricular activities and students who do not participate in extracurricular activities. Participants selected were male and female in seventh or eighth grade. This data are used to substantiate the occurrence of the phenomena at the Community Middle School and can be generalized the data collected from the critical case participant (Creswell, 2003).

This study uses the results from the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) as a measure of student engagement. The scores from the CRCT are used to diagnose a student's individual strengths and weakness and are the means of measure for the quality of the education throughout Georgia (Georgia Department of Education,



2011). The CRCT is given annually to students in the public school systems in the state of Georgia. Community Middle School has a success rate of 92% in reading and 77% in math on the CRCT.

**Critical case sampling.** Critical case sampling is the method of selecting a purposeful sample which identifies a particular a case based on a participant's prior experiences of being a Hispanic middle school student who did not participate in extracurricular activities while in middle school (Creswell, 2003). The information which is true for the critical case is likely to be true for the group who has shared experiences. Data gathered from the critical case participant are valuable based on the quality of the data rather than for quantity (Creswell, 2003).

As previously discussed, as a researcher the decision to use critical case participants was based on the lack of parental trust within schools located in the study site's state. Lack of trust is exhibited by Hispanic parents by an unwillingness to participate in any activities outside the academic realm of school. Hispanics are fearful of speaking candidly concerning issues they feel will elicit unwanted focus on their families. For that reason, the researcher chose to seek a critical case participant who had experienced the phenomena and was willing to share their in-depth description. In critical cases that meet the criteria of atypical or deviant cases, this is recognized as a method to look at a phenomenon in depth (Patton, 1990). He identifies a critical case participant as a one who will give dramatic evidence and descriptions of living through the phenomenon being studied. Critical cases yield information that would not be gained through other types of participants (Patton, 1990). While it limits broad generalizations,

it allows logical generalizations concerning why Hispanic students are continually choosing not participate in extracurricular activities (Patton, 2002).

Within the local community, there is a group of Hispanic adults who are advocates for Hispanic families in the area. Their bilingualism serves to assist parents in registering students for school, attend school conferences, or handle other issues as needed by the families. As a researcher seeking to find critical case participants who can provide the study with rich, thick information concerning why Hispanic students do not participate in extracurricular activities, I sought to gain the consent of one of the four advocates to become a part of my study.

Critical case sampling is used in this study to identify one participant, Maria, who has had the shared experience of extracurricular activity nonparticipation while attending the document data study site, Community Middle School. Maria represents a critical case participant as described by Patton (1990). The participant completed a scaled survey and the researcher conducted a two-part, semi-structured inductive open-ended interview with the critical case participant. The information which is collected from the critical case participant, Maria, is likely to be true for other groups of seventh and eighth graders who share the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2003).

### **Procedures**

The researcher secured the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A) and obtained research approval from the district of Community Middle School (Appendix B). After obtaining the approval from both the IRB and the district of Community Middle School, data collection for the study began. Data were collected for a period of four weeks beginning January 24, 2012 until February 21, 2012.

In order to choose a critical case participant, an electronic invitation was sent to four Hispanic community volunteers, two men and two women, to join the research project (Appendix F). These four possible participants were selected based on their work in the schools as advocates for the Hispanic population. The invitation included the title of the study, a brief description of the study, and a brief description of their role. The possible two male critical case participants declined participation in the study, one female participant did not respond, and one female volunteer accepted the invitation to join the research study. The researcher reviewed the information provided by the critical case participant indicating she had attended school in a county middle school and graduated in 2009. The critical case participant signed an informed consent and agreed to respond to the scaled survey tool and take part in the semi-structured interview.

The approval of the school system in which Community Middle School is located allowed the researcher to access to the electronic reporting system, *Infinite Campus*. Infinite Campus is an electronic reporting system which maintains registration, testing, grading, behavior, activity participation, and demographic information of each student enrolled in the school district, including Community Middle School. It allows anonymous information to be accessed without student identification factors. Additionally, the school's yearbook provides a complete list all extracurricular activities offered at the document data school site.

## **Documents**

*Infinite Campus*, Community Middle School's electronic reporting system, was utilized to collect the data pertaining to Research Questions 1, 3,8, and 5; including ethnicity, birth place, languages, and academic progress of students. Academic progress

was measured by the students' scores on the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). These documents were utilized for purposes determining the academic engagement of the participants. The CRCT has been recognized by research as a valid measurement of academic student engagement (Capps, 2005; Driscoll, 2006; Fry, 2006).

Additionally, to gather the data for Research Question 1 and 5, the school yearbook was used to identify extracurricular activities the middle school offers to seventh and eighth grade students.

### **Scaled Survey**

Immediately following the selection of the critical case participant and the completion of the consent form, the researcher sent by electronic mail to the participant a survey (Appendix E). The survey is a scaled response survey aimed to illicit an initial emotional response from the critical case participant. The scaled survey word selection was compiled by referring to the literature review to achieve face validity. It was peer tested by a group of three ESOL teachers. The teachers were asked to review the scale survey to insure the word selection was appropriate for the study. Responses indicated no changes were needed for clarification, study significance, or word change.

The participant responses were used to guide the initial standardized interview questions and to answer all research questions.

### **Interview**

The researcher developed a set of standardized, open-ended interview questions to encourage detailed responses from the critical case participant (Table 1). After the initial development of the standardized interview questions, the researcher enlisted the assistance of two ESL administrators who reviewed the questions. No changes to the

questions were offered. Additionally, after receiving IRB approval, a pilot interview was held with a participant, an ESOL teacher, outside my study. The pilot participant offered no further recommendations concerning clarity or significance of questions of the interview questions.

For phenomenological research the basic rule is maximum depth, minimum structure. A series of interviews are preferable to a single session. This method provides the opportunity for reflection by the participant and allows the opportunity for a level of rapport to be established between the researcher and participant (Gorden, 1969). The critical case participant was interviewed in two 90 minute interviews.

The purpose of background questions 1 through 3 was to gather information pertaining to the critical case participant's personal and educational background. Questions 5 through 6 were to ascertain the general knowledge of the participant concerning extracurricular activities. Questions 7 through 14 were developed to account for the resilience research concerning the academic benefits of participation in extracurricular activities (Bucknavage& Worrel, 2005; Eccles, 2003; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Gilman, et al., 2004; Mahoney et al., 2003). Questions 7 through 9 were expressly designed to get specific description by the critical case participant's personal views concerning school community and acceptance by the school community. Lack of acculturation by the Hispanic students and their families is often cited as a major reason for Hispanic student participation in activities outside the classroom (Gonzales et al., 2004; Richwine, 2009). The researcher hoped to examine the viewpoint from the perspective of the Hispanic culture concerning how they are treated by the school, teachers, and students of other ethnicity in terms of extracurricular activities. Questions

10 through 14 were used to elicit insight from the participant concerning the types of extracurricular activities which are offered and how she would describe the school's role in soliciting Hispanic students to join activities outside the classroom. The lack of participation by Hispanic students during middle school is attributed to family involvement (Capps, 2005; Garcia & Jansen 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Valez & Saenz, 2001). Questions 15 through 19 were specifically developed to allow the critical case participant to share and describe the family values of the Hispanic culture, and how they affected her decisions to participate in extracurricular activities. Resilient research demonstrates the importance of extended family and friends within the Hispanic culture (Bouchev & Harter, 2005; Shannon, 2006). Question 20 was designed to explore the depths of these relationships in the context of extracurricular activity participation.

Given the research concerning the comparison between ethnicities and their frequency of participating in extracurricular activities, question 20 and 21 allows the critical case participant to describe the relationship from the Hispanic perspective (Garcia & Jansen 2005; National Center for Education Statistics, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Resilience research concerning the lack of language acquisitions is a critical factor in most studies concerning Hispanic students (Garcia, 2009; Gonzales et al., 2004; Rodríguez, 2003). Question 22 was included to explore the importance of language acquisition in regards to Hispanic students' decision to participate in extracurricular activities.

The critical case participant was interviewed in two 90 minute interviews. This method provided the opportunity for reflection by the participant and allowed for a level of rapport to be established between the researcher and participant (Gorden, 1969).

**Table 1**

**Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions**

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**Questions**

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Critical Case Participant's Background History

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. How long have you been out of school?
3. Did you graduate from school?
4. Do you understand what is meant by extracurricular activities?
5. How would you describe extracurricular activities to someone who has never attended school in the United States?
6. Did you attend school after high school? (only ask if participant graduated)

**Open-Ended Interview Questions:**

7. As a middle school, student did you understand what extracurricular activities were?
8. Were you encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities by teachers, peers, parents, or other people?
9. Do you feel you were part of the school community?
10. Do the extracurricular activities offered at school offer a variety of interest for all students?
11. Were there any school barriers which prevent you from participating in extracurricular activities?



12. Were there any family or cultural barrier which prevented or encouraged you to participate in extracurricular activities during middle school?
13. How important do you perceive extracurricular activities to be to your school experience?
14. As a Hispanic student in middle school, did you feel there were any EA which would be beneficial or of interest to you?
15. How would you describe your middle school experience?
16. How did family and social culture affect your school performance?
17. Discuss how you think schools could encourage Hispanic students to participate in extracurricular activities?
18. Were your parents involved with your middle school? How?
19. Did your parents encourage you to become involved in extracurricular activities during middle school?
20. When you were in middle school, did your friends participate in extracurricular activities?
21. Were students of all ethnic backgrounds encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities?
22. Was language a consideration in deciding to or not participate in extracurricular activities?

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The data collected from Infinite Campus and the school yearbook were used in analysis of research questions one and seven. Research one and seven are used in the study to substantiate the continuance of the phenomena of Hispanic students not

participating in extracurricular activities during middle school, and how it affects their student engagement.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher's name is Janelle Garner. The primary role of the researcher was one of a collector and interpreter of data. The role as an ESOL teacher for eight years allows the researcher to act as an instrument used to collect and examine data, not relying solely on survey tools, but examines the phenomenon through the eyes of those who experience it through the valuable descriptions provided by the critical case participant (Creswell, 2007). Prior to teaching English language learners, the researcher taught middle school in an at-risk school located in an urban school in Georgia for seven years. The continual experience of the researcher during the context of these two roles brought me to this research topic. The researcher's experiences resulted in first-hand knowledge of the importance of extracurricular activities to academic success and cultural assimilation. Through God's love, the researcher has developed a deep sense of love for immigrant students and their assimilation into our culture. They hold a large part of our country's success in their hands. God is clear about HIS love for children, and how we are to treat them. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17, KJV). Ultimately, this qualitative phenomenology study will be creditable research to identify reasons and to duplicate additional studies for nonparticipation in school-based extracurricular activities of Hispanic middle school students.

Based on the awareness of the importance of increasing the opportunity for Hispanic students to complete high school, the researcher approaches this study using

both, a justice and a personal perspective, as described in the next paragraphs.

From the personal perspective, the researcher examines the data collected in the study using “a participant’s view point, not the researchers” (Merriam, 1998, p. 7; Creswell, 2007). In order to mitigate interview bias, “occurring when the researcher’s own feelings and attitudes or gender, race, age, and other characteristics influence the way questions are asked or influenced” (Ary et al., 2002; Creswell, 2007). The researcher employed the semi-structured inductive method for interviewing the study’s participant.

From the justice perspective, the researcher assumes an important role in the study, acting not only as a researcher, but also as an ESOL teacher who is collecting and analyzing data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) acknowledge the researcher and the participant influence each other. With this in mind, the researcher used strategies to control bias which are discussed in the trustworthiness section of this study.

### **Data Analysis**

Three methods of data collection were used in this phenomenological study. These methods allowed the researcher to understand nonparticipation in school-based extracurricular activities by Hispanic students. After the document data collection at Community Middle School, and the completion of scaled survey and interviews with the critical case participant, data analysis was implemented.

The researcher implemented the practical analytic approach for phenomenological reduction as outlined by Creswell, (2007, p. 159). Phenomenological reduction is a process of steps including: bracketing, horizontalization, clustering the horizons into

themes of meaning units, organizing the horizons and themes and, writing a composite description of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003, 2007)

### **Bracketing**

Personal biases are predictable when studying human beings. In a phenomenological study it is dealt with by placing the biases in the situation. As the researcher and an ESOL teacher, the researcher attempted to become conscious of any preconceptions and biases before beginning the study by creating an open dialogue with peers within the same educational field to discuss possible preconceptions. This allowed the researcher to become fully conscious of any personal thoughts surrounding the study topic. While the study was occurring, the researcher used memoing to note any personal feelings while developing the themes of the study. These methods allowed the researcher to ignore previous intuitions and judgments concerning the research questions and described the experience as related by the collected data. As a researcher, the goal is to be as open as possible to what the participant wants to share (Creswell, 2007; Gearing, 2004).

### **Horizontalization**

The process of horizontalization allowed the researcher to reduce the potential for personal biases. Each statement from the critical case participant was taken “individually as indicators of the truth” (Givens, 2008 p 401). Building on the archival document data from the first research question, the researcher reviewed the interview transcriptions and the scaled survey responses and highlighted significant statements, quotes, or sentences that may provide an understanding of how the critical case participant experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The highlighted statements were placed on a list to

avoid repetition or overlapping of the data. This process served to give each statement made by the critical case participant equal value. This prevented the magnification of one statement by the participant and required the researcher to focus on the participant's perspective of the phenomenon as a whole.

After the list of significant states was created, the researcher ignored insignificant statements which provided no information about the study topic. By eliminating these statements, the researcher was left with the horizons; the unique perspective of the critical case participant. The researcher considered each horizon through self reflection and awareness of prior research studies on nonparticipation of extracurricular activities by Hispanic students. Through this process an understanding of the participant's experience emerged (Creswell, 2007). These statements were clustered into larger units of information called themes or meaning units (Creswell, 2007; Givens, 2008).

The development of themes or meaning units allowed the researcher to move from viewing the raw data as a representation of empirical information, to allowing the researcher to begin to identify the underlying essence of the data (Creswell, 2007; Givens, 2008).

### **Meaning Units**

As the researcher looks at the data each statement was examined to determine its importance to the study. These statements are placed into meaning units which allowed the researcher to group the lists of significant statements into larger clusters of information. The process of developing and organizing the meaning units allowed the researcher to write a composite description of what and how the phenomenon was experienced by the critical case participant (Moustakas, 1994).

**Transcription.** The critical case participant's interview was transcribed. To ensure that no information was omitted from the interview, the researcher listened to the audio recording repeatedly and transcribed the data.

Member checks were utilized to guarantee accuracy of information transcribed. The critical case participant was given the opportunity to listen to the audiotapes of the interviews and examine the written transcripts.

The researcher listened to the audio recording and read the transcripts repeatedly to identify emerging themes that reflected the critical case participant's true essence of the phenomenon of why Hispanic students choose not to participate in extracurricular activities while in middle school.

**Memoing.** Creswell (2007) stated, "The theory emerges with help from the process of memoing, a process in which the researcher writes down any ideas about the evolving theory throughout the process of open, axial, and selective coding" (p. 67). The researcher reviewed the transcripts repeatedly to determine the developing themes. Additionally, notes were made in the margins of the transcripts and examined. Analytic memos were used to form questions and thoughts about the transcriptions to relate them to the document data and the scaled survey responses. Last, the researcher wrote self-reflective memos to gather my personal thoughts to the participant's responses. Memos allow me to check my thoughts and help to identify any potential bias (Creswell, 2007).

### **Composite Description**

In writing the composite description of what and how the participants experienced the phenomenon of Hispanic students choosing not to participate in extracurricular

activities, the researcher used the research questions as a guide to develop themes which provides a textural and structural description.

A composite description incorporates a textural description (what happens) and a structural description (how it happens) to explain how Hispanic students experience extracurricular activity participation in middle school, and how it affects their academic progress, student engagement, and decision to complete high school (Moustakas, 1994).

**Research Question 1:** *What is the comparison of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities by Hispanic middle school students to students of other ethnic minority groups?* Using the site's electronic reporting system, Infinite Campus, the researcher collected the ethnicity extracurricular activity participation data on the seventh and eighth grade students at Community Middle School. The researcher organized the data into clusters based on ethnicity and EA participation. The clusters are illustrated by the use of a bar graph and developed into significant statements concerning research question one and used in a developing a textural description.

**Research Question 2:** *What factors, other than socioeconomic status, influence Hispanic students' decision not to participate in EA?* The scaled survey and the unstructured interview completed by the critical case participant were used to explore this question. The researcher looked at each statement from the interview and each response to the scaled survey to determine its importance to the study. Each statement was placed into meaning units which allowed the researcher to group lists of significant statements into larger clusters of information. The process of clustering allowed me to develop themes. The process of developing and organizing the meaning units allowed the

researcher to write a composite description of what and how the phenomenon was experienced by the participants (Creswell, 2007).

**Research Question 3:** *How are Hispanic students encouraged by their schools to participate in EA?* The scaled survey and the unstructured interview completed by the critical case participant were used to explore how schools encourage Hispanic students to participate in activities at school outside the academic classroom. The researcher looked at each statement to determine its importance to the study. Each statement was placed into meaning units which allowed the researcher to group lists of significant statements into larger clusters of information. The process of clustering allowed the researcher to develop themes. The process of developing and organizing the meaning units allowed the researcher to write a composite description of what and how the phenomenon was experienced by the participants (Creswell, 2007).

**Research Question 4:** How do Hispanic students view their parents' influence on their decision to participate or not participate in EA during middle school? The researcher used responses from the unstructured interview using open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses from the critical case participant concerning her views of how parents influence decision to participate or not participate in extracurricular activities at school. Each statement was either placed into meaning units which had developed or new meaning units were developed as needed. The development of meaning unit allowed the researcher to identify and group lists of significant statements into larger clusters of information. The process of clustering allowed the development of themes. The process of developing and organizing the meaning units into themes brings the researcher unique perspective of the Hispanic student.



**Research Question 5:** How are Hispanic students encouraged by their parents to participate or not to participate in extracurricular activities at school? As the researcher, responses from the scaled survey and the unstructured interview using open-ended questions were used to encourage detailed responses from the critical case participant, concerning their perspective on how their parents encourage them to participate or not participate in extracurricular activities at school. Each statement was placed into meaning units which allowed the researcher to group lists of significant statements into larger clusters of information. The process of clustering allowed the researcher to develop themes. The process of developing and organizing the meaning units allows the researcher to write a composite description of what and how the phenomenon was experienced by the participants (Creswell, 2007).

**Research Question 6:** *How important do Hispanic students view participation in EA to their success in middle school?* The scaled survey and the unstructured interview completed by the critical case participant were used to explore this question. The researcher examined each statement to determine its importance to the study and placed it into meaning units which allowed the researcher to group lists of significant statements into larger clusters of information. The process of clustering assisted the researcher in the development of themes. Themes developed from meaning units allowed the researcher to write a composite description of what and how the participation in extracurricular activities is viewed by the critical case participant.

**Research Question 7:** How does nonparticipation in school-based extracurricular activities affect the student engagement of Hispanic middle school students? Using the site's electronic reporting system, Infinite Campus, CRCT test scores of seventh and

eight graders at Community Middle School was collected and grouped according to ethnicity. The data was organized into clusters based on EA participation, and test scores. The clusters are illustrated by the use of a bar graph (Figure 1), and the results developed into significant statements concerning student engagement.

Additionally, data was collected to compare all ethnic groups and used in developing a textual description of the differences between the scores of Hispanic students who participate in extracurricular activities, and those Hispanic students who do not participate in extracurricular activities.

**Research Question 8:** How does not participating in extracurricular activities contribute to Hispanic students' decision to complete or not complete high school? The scaled survey and the unstructured interview completed by the critical case participant were used to explore this question. Looking at each statement to determine its importance to the study, they were placed into meaning units which allowed me to group lists of significant statements into larger clusters of information. The process of clustering allows the development of themes. The themes are the basis of the composite descriptions (Creswell, 2007).

### **Trustworthiness**

An essential component of qualitative research is the trustworthiness of the collected data. Though qualitative research is new to social sciences, it has become a credible and trustworthy approach to research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study used the qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The theoretical lens used in this study is the integration of three models including social constructivism, ecological, and language acquisition theories clearly indicates the chances of academic success are

greater when students are involved in extracurricular activities. This integrated model shaped the study of the nonparticipation by Hispanic middle school students in extracurricular activities.

The criteria for trustworthiness are a combination of confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Credibility**

Certain aspects of the study were considered and operational techniques were used to ensure the credibility of the study. The study focused on the nonparticipation in extracurricular activities among Hispanic middle school students. The case participant was selected through purposeful sampling to assure the richness and depth of the interview and scaled survey data. Repeated transcription of interview was employed to ensure that no information was omitted. Member check was utilized to ensure the accuracy of transcriptions and feedback was used to assure credibility of the data.

Feedback was another method used to assure the credibility of the study. Feedback from others is important to eliminate validity threats, biases, flaws, and assumptions (Maxwell, 1996). Three professionals in the field of multicultural education reviewed the data collected to provide evidence of credibility.

### **Reliability**

The findings in this phenomenology reflect the reality of middle school for Hispanic students who do not participate in school-based extracurricular activities. The researcher addressed trustworthiness by the use of member checks and triangulations of data.

## **Confirmability**

While Guba and Lincoln report confirmability is not pertinent to a phenomenology study (1985). The researcher used strategies to strengthen and validate the results of the study. Member check and feedback were used by the researcher to insure the accuracy of the interview, document data, and scaled survey. The critical case participant's review the data transcribed and the summary of the themes for accuracy in reporting her responses.

## **Transferability**

Qualitative researchers strive to show that the findings of a study can be transferred or generalized to other individuals, situations, and contexts. The data collected through the use of purposeful sampling provided a rich description of the essence of Hispanic students not participating in extracurricular activities.

**Member check.** Member check is the first method used to increase the reliability and to increase the trustworthiness of the study. It is a procedure to ensure the validity, creditability, and confirmability of the data collected. It has been described as the most vital method for establishing trustworthiness in a study (Creswell, 2007). Member checks take the data and the interpretations to the participants in the study for their confirmation as to the credibility of the researcher's information and the narrative account. This allows the researcher to systematically check their account of the data (Creswell, 2007).

The critical case participant in this study was given the opportunity to listen to the audio tape of the interviews. After the audio tape review by the critical case participant,

she was allowed to review the final transcripts to insure the researcher had captured the true essence of her experiences in middle school and extracurricular participation.

**Transcription of the interview.** The researcher repeatedly reviewed the audio tape of the critical case participant to ensure its accuracy. The participant was allowed to review and check the transcriptions to ensure the researcher had accurately recorded the participant's experience of not participating in extracurricular activities during middle school.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation is a strategy for improving the trustworthiness of a research study's findings. It has become an accepted approach used to control bias and to assist in establishing validity in the qualitative approach to research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The process of substantiating evidence from data collection of students' grading documents and interviews were used to validate findings, increasing the transferability of the study's finding. This process increased the reliability of the study, because it permitted the use of multiple sources of data collection to note emerging themes to better understand the issue of Hispanic students not participating in extracurricular activities. The researcher employed multiple-data collection sources such as surveys, interviews, participant review, and triangulation (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, multiple data analysis procedures such as transcription, member checking, rich data, and feedback to guarantee credibility. The researcher was able to develop a report that is reliable and accurate.

Thick description. According to Creswell (2003), "thick descriptions are deep dense, detailed accounts; thin descriptions, by contrast, lack detail, and simply report

facts” (p. 83). This method establishes credibility through the use of the constructivists’ viewpoint to contextualize the people who are being studied. The process of thick description demands the researcher provide as much detail as possible to create the feeling that reader has or could experience the events being described. The researcher used vivid details of the document data, scaled survey, and interview to help the reader understand the creditability of the study. The use of thick description assists the reader in establishing applicability of the findings to other settings or similar contexts (Creswell, 2007). It is especially important in the use of one critical case participant (Patton, 2002).

### **Ethical Issues**

The researcher obtained Institutional Review Board approval from Liberty University as well as approval from the research consultant for the school district where the study took place prior to any data collection. The researcher obtained consent forms from the participants before the study began to ensure trustworthiness. All participant information and collected data remain confidential with the identity of the participant only known by the researcher. In order to maintain trustworthiness of the study, electronic files were printed and the electronic file destroyed. The data are being kept in locked file cabinets and under password protection for up to three years after the study is completed, at which time the data will be destroyed.

Pseudonyms were used for the participant and school to ensure their privacy. After the transcription of the audio-taped interview, the tape was destroyed. Participants were given a statement ensuring all information obtained as a part of the study will not be discussed with others. Additionally, the data collected in this study will be secured in a locked file cabinet for a period of three years, at which time it will be destroyed.

The researcher's personal ethics serve to further ensure the true responses and results of the study will be used in the findings of her research. Since the researcher is an ESOL teacher in the district where the study took place, she will bracket any personal feelings. The purpose of the study is to report what the participants have experienced, and how they feel about those experiences. The researcher presents all findings honestly and clearly, removing any personal bias. Only then does the study represent a true phenomenological study, reflecting the essences of the experiences shared by Hispanic students.

The ethical considerations of this study are based on the researcher's Christian belief that all people should be treated fairly and with respect. All students, including the culturally diverse, should have the opportunity to attend school and participate in activities which have been shown to increase the quality of their education. If given the opportunity, these students will "fulfill the plans God has for their lives," and success in school will give, "them hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11, KJV).

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine and describe the attitudes, beliefs, and possible cultural influences of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities by Hispanic middle school students from their perspective. Since the research strives to “obtain an in-depth understanding of human behaviors and habits; seeking to explain shared experiences of a specific group” (Creswell, 2007), the phenomenology research design was chosen. Phenomenology seeks to understand a given research topic from the perspective of the local population it involves. It is most effective as a means to explore culturally specific information concerning the values and the social context of particular information (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology’s goal is “the fulfillment of our human nature; to become more fully who we are” (van Manen, 1990, p. 12.)

In a phenomenological study the findings are a derivative of the researcher’s view of the data as it pertains to the topic. The researcher’s assumptions and ideas are not ignored, but they are rooted in the study and the interpretation of the data (Patton, 2002). The researcher of this study exercised great care in reporting the scaled survey, the interview experience, and document data with accuracy. The scaled survey and interview were transcribed by the researcher, and reviewed by the critical case participant to ensure it represents the essence of what her experiences were during middle school.

The study is designed to answer specific research questions which used in a composite description in Chapter Five concerning the phenomenon of Hispanic middle



school students choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities and to explore and examine possible cultural predictors that influence their decision. Eight research questions are used to guide this study.

Accordingly, this chapter uses the research questions to develop themes and topics to arrange the findings found from the analysis of the document data, scaled-survey, and the interview of the critical case participant. These themes are used to develop the key issues surrounding the phenomenon of Hispanic middle school students not participating in extracurricular activities.

### **Hispanic Student Participation in Extracurricular Activities**

Criterion sampling involves selecting data that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002). In this study, it was utilized to identify second language learners in the seventh and eighth grades enrolled at School A. The data were collected by the use of an electronic reporting system and grouped by ethnicity. Within each ethnic group two subgroups were developed: English learners (EL) who participate in extracurricular activities and EL who do not participate in extracurricular activities. Participants selected will be male and female.

Demographic information for the school year 2009 was used to substantiate the phenomena at Community Middle School during the year the critical case participant attended. The student data are reported by Infinite Campus as 890 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students for the academic year of 2009. For the purposes of analysis, 302 sixth grade students were removed from the data, because they are only permitted to take part in band and general music as part of their academic class schedules. Hispanic students represent 8% (47), Asian students 4% (24), Multi-racial students 1% (6),

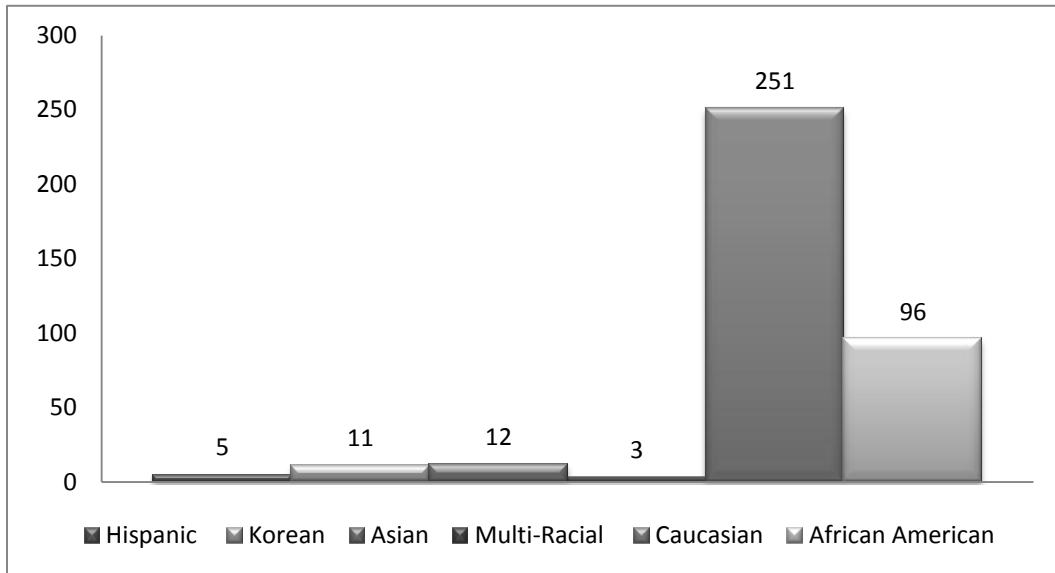
Korean students 2% (13), Caucasian students 59% (346), and African American students 26% (152) of the remaining 588 student population.

Using the school's electronic reporting system and yearbook, data documents were collected to determine the extracurricular activities that were offered to all students. Sixteen extracurricular activities were identified as activities available to seventh and eighth grade students at Community Middle School in 2009. The activities were placed into clusters based on their purpose. Four major clusters developed and were classified as academic clubs, service clubs, fine arts, and athletics. Table 2 provides the analysis of extracurricular activity participation by each activity cluster and used to answer research question one.

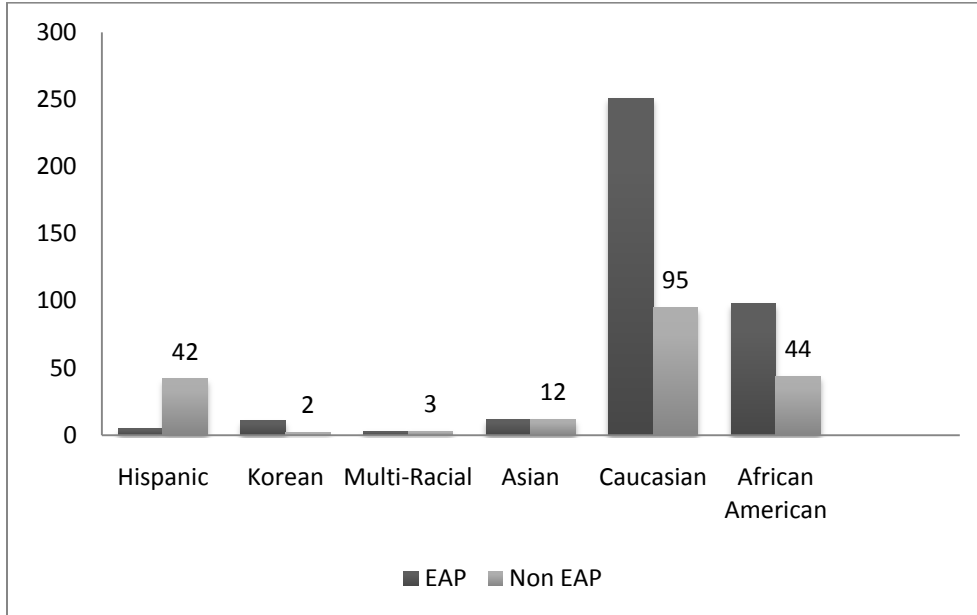
Analysis of the clusters shows an overall participation in activities outside the classroom at 65% (380 students) among seventh and eighth grade students. Extracurricular participation by ethnicity is as follows: Hispanic students .01%, Korean students .04%, Asian students .04%, Multi-Racial students .02% Caucasian students .66% and African American students .25%. Table 2 and Figure 1 are representations of the results and illustrate minority students are participating less in extracurricular activities than Caucasian or African American students by a large margin. Further, Hispanic students are participating less than all other minority ethnicities at Community Middle School. A further comparison of the data revealed, when comparing ethnicities based on the number of students represented in each group, Hispanic students are participating a much less rate than other ethnic groups (see Figure 2).

**Table 2***Extracurricular Activity Participation at Community Middle School in 2009*

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Korean</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Multi-Racial</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<b>Academic Clubs</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>97</b>
Future Teachers	2	1	3	2	30	10	48
Science Olympiad	0	0	0	0	6	1	07
Academic Bowl	0	0	0	0	11	1	12
Beta Club	1	1	2	1	21	2	28
JR Law	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
<b>Service Clubs</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>65</b>
Green Leaf	0	0	1	0	13	6	20
Heartbeat	0	2	1	0	17	4	24
Ambassadors	0	0	0	0	17	4	21
<b>Fine Arts Clubs</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>
Art	0	1	1	0	7	2	11
<b>Athletics</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>210</b>
Volley Ball	0	0	0	0	15	2	17
Track	0	0	0	0	28	24	52
PEP Squad	0	0	1	0	9	10	20
Football	1	3	0	0	31	22	57
Soccer	1	2	2	0	27	2	34
Basketball	0	1	1	0	17	8	27
<b>Participation by Ethnicity</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>380</b>



**Figure 1** Participation between ethnic groups, comparison of ethnic groups.



**Figure 2:** Comparison of student extracurricular participation within the same ethnic group.

### **Portrait of the Critical Case Participant**

Critical case sampling is the method of selecting a purposeful sample which identifies a particular a case based on a participant’s prior experiences (Creswell, 2003). The information which is true for the critical case participant is likely to be true for the group who has shared experiences. Data gathered from the critical case participant is valuable based on the quality of the data rather than for quantity (Creswell, 2003). It allows the researcher to generalize data from the critical case sample to data gathered in the study and make logical generalizations concerning why Hispanic students are not participating in extracurricular activities while in middle school.

The researcher conducted a semi-structured, inductive open-ended interview with the critical case participant in two sessions. Prior to the first interview, the participant completed a scaled survey for the purpose of gathering data to ascertain the overall

attitudes and emotions concerning the participant's experiences in middle school. The data collected from the critical case participant are likely to be true for the group of seventh and eighth graders who have and will share the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2003).

**Meet the critical case participant.** The participant chosen for this study is a 20 year old Hispanic woman who attended Community Middle School. For the purposes of this study, she is referred to as Maria. Maria's participation in this study as the critical case is significant in two ways; she represents a Hispanic who lived through the phenomenon this study strives to examine and her status among the Hispanic population in the community. She is among a small group of young Hispanics who serve as advocates in the school district of the Community Middle School. She assists Hispanic families by serving as a translator and liaison. She is much respected among the Hispanic population and a model for their behavior. Her participation will hopefully lead to other within the Hispanic population participating in such studies without fear.

Maria was born in Mexico and lived there until the age of nine. She began her education in a small Mexican public school. Maria left Mexico and moved to California with her parents, where she was enrolled in fourth grade at an English-speaking school. She spoke only Spanish and remembers having a difficult time in American schools. California has a bilingual education program and as a result Maria learned to speak little English. Within the year, Maria's father and mother decided to move her to the state of Georgia where she would live with her grandparents. From this point forward, she has lived with her grandparents and extended family of cousins, uncles, and aunts. She began school in the study site's district at a public elementary school and was immediately

placed in the ESOL program. She attended Community Middle School and high school in the same school district and graduated from high school in 2009. She is currently employed in a local dentist office as a receptionist.

**Data collection from the critical case participant.** The critical case participant completed two processes of data collection. This study included a scaled survey and a two- part, semi-structured, inductive open-ended interview.

*School life school survey.* The critical case participant completed a school life scaled survey to elicit initial emotions and attitudes concerning experiences while in middle school. The participant was instructed to select a number one through ten to rate emotional response to 16 words which are significant in this study. The numbers were identified within the survey as the number one representing no importance to the critical case participant to the number ten representing very important to the critical case participant. The responses were then placed by the number rating into clusters to develop themes to utilize as a horizon to link all data.

The lower the scaled-survey response the lower emotional connection felt by the critical case participant. The lowest reaction was extracurricular activities as shown in Table 2, which is consistent with the document data collected and allowed the researcher to develop initial questions to guide the semi-structured, inductive open-ended interview.

Consistent with past research on the Hispanic culture, family involvement and influence was identified as extremely important to Hispanic students (Garcia-Reid, 2005).

**Table 3**  
*School Life Survey Responses*

<b>School Life Survey Words</b>	<b>School Life Scaled Survey Score</b>
Extracurricular Activities	2
Engaged	3
Peer Pressure	4
Acceptance	5
Community	4
Mobility	5
Social Connections	6
Engaged	5
Peer Pressure	4
Acceptance	4
Community	4
Teachers	8
Rules	7
Support	8
Dropout	9
Guidance	8
Learning	10
Parental Influence	10
Grades	10
Attendance	10



*The semi-structured, inductive open-ended interview.* Using the school life scaled-survey and the document data collected and used to create a list of significant statements. The researcher developed interview questions to guide the unstructured interview. The purpose of the interviews was to identify and examine the experiences of the critical case participant. It allowed the critical case participant to share her experience and to bring the essence of how she and other Hispanic students share the experience of not participating in extracurricular activities during middle school.

The researcher used the process of horizontalization to reduce the potential for personal biases. Horizontalization gave each statement made by the critical case participant in the school life scaled-survey and the semi-structured interview equal value. This prevented the researcher from magnifying one statement by the participant and required the researcher to focus on the participant's perspective of the phenomenon as a whole. Each statement from the critical case participant was taken "individually as indicators of the truth" (Givens, 2008 p. 401).

The interview took place in two ninety minutes sessions. This allowed Maria the opportunity to reflect on her responses to insure they are a true essence of her experiences.

### **Data Analysis**

Building on the archival document data from the first research question, the researcher reviewed the interview transcriptions and the scaled survey responses and highlighted significant statements, quotes, or sentences that may provide an understanding of how the critical case participant experienced the phenomenon

(Moustakas, 1994). The highlighted statements were placed on list to avoid repetition or overlapping of the data. This process served to give each statement made by the critical case participant equal value. This prevented the magnification of one statement by the participant and required the researcher to focus on the participant's perspective of the phenomenon as a whole.

After the list of significant states was created, the researcher ignored insignificant statements which provided no information about the study topic. By eliminating these statements, the researcher was left with the horizons; the unique perspective of critical case participant. The researcher considered each horizon through self reflection and awareness of prior research studies on nonparticipation of extracurricular activities by Hispanic students. Through this process an understanding of the participant's experience emerged (Creswell, 2007). These statements were clustered into larger units of information called themes or meaning units (Creswell, 2007; Givens, 2008).

The development of themes or meaning units allowed the researcher to move from viewing the raw data as a representation of empirical information, to allowing the researcher to begin to identify the underlying essence of the data (Creswell, 2007; Givens, 2008).

### **Themes**

The meaning units or themes allowed the researcher to group the lists of significant statements into larger clusters of information. The process of clustering the significant statements resulted in the development of themes used for analysis. Six major themes developed through the horizontalization of the data collected.

**Theme 1: The school's influence.** The scaled survey indicates an overall positive attitude toward the school as a whole. Maria revealed she felt the school never treated her or any of her friends differently because of their culture. Extracurricular activities were viewed as a positive part of middle school, although Maria scored them very low on the scaled survey, because she said she thought they were more important in high school.

The school provided all students with lists of extracurricular activity they were free to pursue. However, they were only provided in the English language. In addition to the lists which were distributed, the extracurricular activities sponsors made announcements to all the students inviting them to join their organizations. There were posters displayed throughout the school inviting students to join various activities, but none targeted the minority ethnicities attending the school. Maria indicated the types of extracurricular activities seemed to cover a lot of interest, but speculated an activity designed specifically for Hispanic students might have increased her and her family's view of participating.

During a general music class, Maria was influenced by her chorus teacher to join chorus, which is not considered an extracurricular activity. It is part of the academic school day, although there were times when she was expected to be at practices and performances after school. She proudly reported she was the only Hispanic student in the chorus, and though it is not considered an extracurricular activity by the school, it was clearly considered one by Maria. The afterschool requirement was a problem for her, because of transportation home from school and her home responsibilities. She felt her grandparents were too busy to spend time traveling to pick her up, because it was after the normal school day. Her grandparents did not see the importance of her staying after

school, because they did not consider extracurricular activities as helping her in school. She was quick to add the teacher or school never penalized her for the practices she missed.

Overall, Maria's view of the influence of the school in encouraging students and offering appropriate extracurricular activities was positive. Her feeling was they did everything they could to make extracurricular activities available for all students and exhibited no indications she or her parents thought schools were obligated to provide anything special for ethnic groups. Although Maria indicated she and her friends thought extracurricular activities were just for fun and getting to know other people, she did not think they could help her in her academic class. When Maria learned extracurricular activities have been proven to enhance school success and improve language skills, she was surprised. She commented that she and many of her friends did not join in many activities, because they thought they did not speak English well enough. They assumed they would be a detriment to the other members and could not do what would be expected of them. The idea to educate the second language learners about extracurricular activities helping them to learn English was suggested by Maria. In addition, she thought if schools could help to provide transportation in some way it would increase the chances of Hispanic students participating in activities which are held after school.

**Theme 2: Student engagement.** In this cluster, the critical case participant discussed her successes, failures, and her connection to the school community. Maria is proud she graduated with "good grades". Her background as a child of very young parents, a father who was 15 years old and mother 14 years old, left a lasting impression that continues to come up during our interview. She spoke several times of her parents

not graduating, not being able to get good jobs, and the need for them to move frequently to look for work. It was that which caused her to be separated from her immigrant parents and ultimately brought her to live with her grandparents. She is glad her parents made that decision. Maria's grandparents have been in the United States for approximately ten years, and she indicated they encouraged her to complete high school. Her grandparents have come to value education more so than most other Hispanics, who live in the United States and have passed those values along to Maria and her cousins, who live with her also. She explained that most of her Hispanic friends do not feel the same, because their parents have not been in America very long. Their parents are thinking more about how to make money. She described one friend who she encouraged to join an activity to make friends. Her friend, however, saw no value in education and thought it was a "stumbling block" keeping him from living his life. He did not do well in school and did not join any activities at school. He dropped out of school to marry at age 15. This caused an obvious sadness in Maria's voice. She said this happens frequently among Hispanics and feel they do not think about the kind of future they are going to have. She explained further that many Hispanics see no value in trying hard in school, because they say they would not be able to afford college. They want to use the language they have learned to start earning money.

The document data collected and analyzed from School A supports Maria's remarks. In 2009 the CRCT scores used in the state of Georgia to measure the student and school performance showed marked differences among ethnicities. The state of Georgia looks specifically at the reading and math scores for the purposes gauging student success. Community Middle School's document data reported 79% of the 7<sup>th</sup> and

8<sup>th</sup> grade students at School A passed the CRCT in reading and language arts. Among the 21% that did not meet the CRCT standards, 12% were Hispanic students. The math CRCT for School A during 2009 reported 73% of the students met math standards. Of the 27% of students who did not meet the CRCT math standards, 9% were Hispanic students. Looking specifically at the five Hispanic students who are engaged in extracurricular activities, four out of five passed the CRCT in 2009.

**Theme 3: Extracurricular activities and Hispanic students' educational decisions.** On the scaled survey extracurricular activities were rated a three out of ten on being important to education. This is consistent with the document data and the data collected from the interview with the critical case participant. Students in the Hispanic culture normally do not make their own decisions concerning their education, or what they do after school. Family is important in the Hispanic culture, and parents or grandparents determine how students spend their time. Parents and often students themselves do not see extracurricular activity as being beneficial to the family. In many cases, boys go to work, and girls have responsibilities at home. Maria indicated during the time she was in middle school she had to be at home after school to watch younger children and to cook and clean. While she was encouraged to do well in academics, school ended when the academic classes were completed. She relayed the story of her best friend who was forced by her parents to quit school when she was in middle school to work to help support the family. When asked if this was common, Maria said it occurs more than anyone realizes because of the need to make money quickly.

When asked about college, Maria indicated she did not think extracurricular activities made a difference in whether someone went to college or not. When told that

many colleges consider the activities students were involved in during school in determining if a student would be accepted or not, she was surprised. The lack of knowledge about the benefits of extracurricular activities other than just social was apparent.

The subject of immigration was opened by Maria. The researcher intentionally had not planned to question the critical case participant on this sensitive subject. In discussing what influences Hispanics to participate in activities at school, immigration was cited by her to be a huge influence on students and families. Hispanic students are taught by their parents to go to school to learn and not to become too connected to anyone outside their Hispanic circle. The fear is if they have too much focus on them, it will cause repercussions, which could cause them or members of their family to either return to Mexico or move to another state. Most of her friends and their families are not in the United States legally, so their feeling is it is more important to learn as much English as they can, so they can get a job to earn money. According to Maria, this is often why Hispanic students drop-out of school at an early age. Additionally, most Hispanic students never consider college because of their illegal status. They think it is more important to earn money as long as they can and send the money to Mexico, so if or when their immigration status is questioned, they can leave the United States quickly.

**Theme 4: Hispanic students' view of parental involvement.** The scaled survey indicated a strong commitment, love, and respect for family by the critical case participant. Maria confirms that within the Hispanic culture family comes first. The term family in the Hispanic culture refers to not only immediate members, but extended family. She lives with her grandparents and has a great respect for them. She

also speaks of her father and mother, and the lesson she learned from them. She learned the value of education through watching her parents' struggle looking for work. Her grandparents are the matriarch and patriarch of the family, and the decision for Maria to come live with them was made because of the constant moving her parents endure to find work. Her family consists of aunts, uncles, and cousins residing together. School involvement by her family is viewed in terms of her grandparents supporting and encouraging her to work hard, supplying her with school supplies, and requiring her to make good grades. This is typical according to the scaled survey and interview results.

Hispanic parents do not believe extracurricular activities are necessary to do well in academics. In the interview, the critical case participant spoke of a lack of understanding by her grandparents concerning what extracurricular activities are, and what their purpose would be to the family. They see the benefits of graduating from school, but do not understand the connection between academics and clubs or organizations. They view extracurricular activities as social functions. Social functions at school are not important; socialization is typically kept within the family circle.

Within the realm of parental involvement, the subject of attendance of PTA or other functions at school was discussed. The scaled survey again rated parental involvement at school at ten out of ten, but during the interview portion of data collection, it was revealed Hispanic parents do not typically attend any school functions outside academic conferences with teachers. The discrepancies between the two data collections were due to the differences in how parental involvement is defined by Hispanic parents and schools. Hispanic parents view involvement as making sure their children are at school, have supplies, and to attend academic conferences. They do



not see the importance of attending organizational meetings such as PTA meetings or other activities outside of the academic realm. Their belief is that it is the teachers who are in charge of the academic success of their children. In addition to their cultural belief that teachers and schools are the one who need to make the decisions regarding academics, Hispanic parents often feel out of place, because they cannot read, speak, or write English. When reminded of the free programs offered to parents to learn to speak Spanish, Maria indicates many of the older Hispanics find it too difficult to learn a language, need a social security number to register, or have the feeling that learning a new language would be a step towards losing their culture. Maria speaks of the feeling of many Hispanics who do not want to change their way of life, because they feel they will return to Mexico one day. They are in the United State, because there is more help and opportunities for their families.

Maria also speaks of her responsibilities at home after school as a factor of parental involvement. Again, parents feel extracurricular activities are not useful, and they can find more valuable ways for their children to contribute to the family. It is common among Hispanic families for children to have responsibilities at home.

**Theme 5: Transportation.** Most Hispanic middle school students are dependent on bus transportation to and from school. Extracurricular activities are after school, and they have no way to get home. Hispanic parents or guardians see no merit in activities outside the classroom, so they are not willing to allow their children the time away from home or take time from their work to pick them up from school. While Hispanic parents value a certain level of education, Hispanic families value working for the benefit of the family now and are not concerned with the future. Hispanic parents work and Hispanic

children typically have responsibilities at home or have a job after school, both which is important to the families' survival. Middle school age girls do household jobs such as cooking, watching younger siblings, and cleaning to allow their mothers to work evenings, while middle school age boys go to work with their fathers to earn income for the family.

Maria speaks candidly when she discusses the legal status of a large portion of Hispanics in regards to driving. Due to many state laws which require birth certificates to acquire a driver's licenses, many Hispanic drive without them. Now that so many states are passing stricter laws regarding immigration status, many Hispanic are afraid to drive to work and especially would not drive to school to pick-up a child from an activity in which they see no value. Many Hispanic adults walk or ride bicycles and only take a chance of driving to work to earn money.

**Theme 6: Immigration.** The issues of immigration are in the news daily. According to the data from the critical case participant, it is on the forefront of how and why decisions are made by the Hispanic population. Maria describes this as a "huge" factor in every decision Hispanic families make. A large portion of Hispanic students and their families are in the United States without legal documentation. The critical case participant reported the feeling is if they are going to be sent back to Mexico, they and their children need to make as much money as they possibly can while they are in the United States. Extracurricular activities take place at the prime time of day for working to earn money or for the responsibilities they have at home which allows others in the family to work, therefore participating in activities after school is not usually an option.

Maria focused on the fact that Hispanic parents send their children to school for academic purposes, but because of the renewed interest among politicians and other lawmakers to pass stricter immigration laws, parents encourage their children to keep a low profile. They attend academic classes during the regular schedule day, but rarely take part in extracurricular activities of any kind.

## **Research Questions**

### **Research question 1.**

*What is the comparison of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities by Hispanic middle school students to students of other ethnic minority groups?* The document data collected reflected Hispanic students are participating in school sponsored extracurricular activities less than all other groups of students. Particularly important is the fact that Hispanic students are participating in extracurricular activities less than other ethnic minorities. The data shows an overall participation in activities outside the classroom at 64% among seventh and eighth grade students. Extracurricular participation by ethnicity is as follows: Hispanic students .01%, Korean students .04%, Asian students .04%, Multi-Racial students .02% Caucasian students .66% and African American students .25%.

### **Research question 2.**

*What factors, other than socioeconomic status, influence Hispanic students' decision not to participate in EA?* The critical case participant's responses to the scaled survey and the semi-structured interview identifies transportation, fear of new immigration laws, and family commitments and obligations as factors which influence Hispanic students' decision not to participate in extracurricular activities at school. The

critical case participant and scaled survey data show Hispanic student value education and want to do well at school until they reach the age they can use their language skills to earn money. At this age many are force or decide on their own to use the English language to earn money, rather than staying in school.

**Research question 3.**

***How are Hispanic students encouraged by their schools to participate in EA?***

The critical case participant reported positive responses to methods in which her school encouraged all students to participate by distributing flyers and posters throughout the school. Additionally, they made morning announcements concerning club and organizational opportunities. She did convey one teacher encouraging her personally to become part of chorus, which is considered an academic class at the study site. The school offers no particular method for encouraging minority groups of students to participate in extracurricular activities. Additionally, the ESOL program does not educate the students on the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities to language acquisition or student achievement.

**Research question 4.**

***How do Hispanic students view their parents' influence on their decision to participate or not participate in EA during middle school?*** The critical case participant discloses a strong parental influence in all aspects of Hispanic middle school student. They are the head of the family and family is the most important factor within the Hispanic culture. The parents make decisions based on what is best for the family as whole unit. While they value academic classes, they do not see value in activities offered after school. Many students have more responsibility than student from other cultures

and expected to be at home to care for younger siblings or work outside the home to earn money for the family.

**Research question 5.**

*How are Hispanic students encouraged by their parents to participate or not to participate in extracurricular activities at school?* The data collected during the interview with the critical case participant concerning this research question was focused on parental influence and the responsibilities of Hispanic students. While they are not discouraged to participate in extracurricular activities, parental influence is strong in this area. Participation in activities which are not seen as valuable to the family is not a consideration among Hispanic parents. The responsibilities they have to the family and home make it almost impossible for Hispanic students to participate in anything at school, if they do not take place during the academic school day.

**Research question 6.**

*How important do Hispanic students view participation in EA to their success in middle school?* While the scaled-survey reflected a high response to this question the interview portion of the data collection resulted in a lack of understanding about the benefits of extracurricular activities. The critical case participant answered yes to the questions, based on the making social connections and becoming part of the school. However, she had no knowledge concerning the connection between participating in extracurricular activities and the increase chance of academic success. For example, she was surprised to hear participating in extracurricular activities could increase her level of language acquisition.

### **Research question 7.**

*How does nonparticipation in school-based extracurricular activities affect the student engagement of Hispanic middle school students?* The document data reveals the CRCT test scores for the five Hispanic students' who were involved in extracurricular activities reported four students as achieving a passing score.

### **Research question 8.**

*How does not participating in extracurricular activities contribute to Hispanic students' decision to complete or not complete high school?* The factors which influence Hispanic students to complete or not complete their education are far removed from their nonparticipation in extracurricular activities. The critical case participant reveals a major decision such as dropping out of school is often made by the situation of the family or the desire to earn money rather than earn a diploma.

### **Summary**

This chapter introduces the amazing critical case participant of this study who consented to share her life story and provide the Hispanic perspective on participation in extracurricular activities during middle school through the use of a scaled survey instrument and an unstructured interview. This data analyses, along with document data analysis from School A, yield six important themes. The first theme uncovered is the influence of the school on student participation in extracurricular activities. The second theme discussed is the affect of participation into extracurricular activities and student engagement. The third theme was the impact of extracurricular activities participation on Hispanic students' educational decisions. The fourth theme was the view of Hispanic parental involvement. The fifth theme discussed in this chapter was effect of

transportation and extracurricular activities. The final theme was on the immigration status of Hispanic students and how it affects extracurricular participation. Three major barriers for Hispanic students and their participation in extracurricular activities at school are identified in this chapter; the lack of knowledge concerning the benefits of extracurricular activities among Hispanic students and their parents, family responsibilities, and their fear of being identified as illegal immigrants. The final chapter of this research study will reveal the discussion and implications for educators and students and suggest future studies.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Research confirms middle school students experience a higher rate of academic success from extracurricular activity participation (Fredrick & Eccles, 2006; Lewis, 2005; Garcia-Reid, 2005). The benefits of improved social and academic engagement, higher levels of language acquisition, and a lower dropout rates have been documented (Kuh, 2009). The majority groups of student populations, Caucasians and African American, are reaping the benefits gained by participating in extracurricular activities as part of their school day (Logan & Scarborough, 2008). However, current research indicates Hispanic students are underrepresented in extracurricular activities offered at public schools (Fredrick & Eccles, 2006; Lewis, 2005; Garcia-Reid, 2005). Existing research on nonparticipation in extracurricular activities by Hispanic students is not based on their perspective. This study examines this phenomenon from the view of those who have experienced it.

As explained in Chapter 3, the design used here is a phenomenology to explore why Hispanic middle school students are choosing not to participate in school sponsored extracurricular activities during middle school and to identify possible cultural predictors beyond socioeconomic status, age, and gender. As in a phenomenological study, this research employs a qualitative perspective. The research strives to “obtain an in-depth understanding of human behaviors and habits; seeking to explain shared experiences of a specific group” (Creswell, 2007). It is the most effective method to explore the culturally specific information concerning the values and social context of the information presented.



This phenomenological study relied on criterion sampling, allowing the researcher the opportunity to explore a “purposeful sample”. Criterion sampling involves selecting data that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002). It was utilized to identify second language learners in the seventh and eighth grades enrolled at the study’s site. This data was grouped by ethnicity. Within each ethnic group two subgroups were developed: Students who participate in extracurricular activities and students who do not participate in extracurricular activities. Participants were male and female. Critical case sampling is the method of selecting a purposeful sample which identifies a particular a case based on a participant’s prior experiences (Creswell, 2003). The information which is true for the critical case is likely to be true for the group who has shared experiences. Data gathered from the critical case participant is valuable based on the quality of the data rather than for quantity (Creswell, 2003). Critical case sampling was used to identify one interview participant who has had the shared experience of extracurricular activity nonparticipation in middle school. The participant completed a scaled-survey to identify overall experiences related to middle school, family, and extracurricular activities. Using the scaled-survey as a guide, the researcher conducted a semi-structured inductive open-ended interview with the critical case participant. The information collected from the critical case is likely to be true for the group of seventh and eighth graders who share the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). The following is a synopsis of the research questions used to guide this study

1. *How does the nonparticipation by Hispanic middle school students compare to students of other ethnic minorities’ participation in extracurricular activities (EA)?* Overall minority students do participate in school sponsored

extracurricular activities less than Caucasian or African American students during middle school. Additionally, Hispanic students participate in extracurricular activities less than other minority students.

2. *What factors, other than socioeconomic status, influence Hispanic students' decision not to participate in EA?* The data reflected Hispanic students are influenced by their family commitments, lack of parental involvement at school, transportation issues, and fears of immigration laws.
3. *How are Hispanic students encouraged by their schools to participate in EA?* The middle school study site encourages all students to participate in extracurricular activities by distributing flyers and announcements, but make no special efforts to provide information about extracurricular activities to specific ethnic groups.
4. *How do Hispanic students view their parents' influence on their decision to participate or not participate in EA during middle school?* Hispanic students view not only parents but extended family members as being the biggest influence in their lives. Hispanic students typically are not influenced by friends as most middle school students. Their cultural inclination is toward family. All decisions made by the parents are based on what will be best for the family as one unit.
5. *How are Hispanic students encouraged by their parents to participate or not to participate in extracurricular activities at school?* Hispanic middle school students are not encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities after school by their parents. Hispanic parents view education as being valuable to their children, but consider the value of school to end with the academic day. Their

perception is extracurricular activities are not beneficial to their children's education, therefore are not necessary to get a good education. In addition, there are problems with transportation home from extracurricular activities, the lack of understanding concerning the connection between participating the extracurricular activities and school success, the fear they do not speak English well enough, and the fear of immigration laws. Typically, Hispanic parents want their children to attend school and not to do anything that would cause focus on them or the family.

6. *How important do Hispanic students view participation in EA to their success in middle school?* Hispanic students do not view extracurricular activities as important to their academic success, but feel they are important to the feeling of being a part of the school. They do not understand the connection between extracurricular activities and academic success or language acquisition.
7. *How does nonparticipation in school-based extracurricular activities affect the student engagement of Hispanic middle school students?* Data document clearly indicates Hispanic students do not score as high as other ethnicities on the CRCT. In addition, it revealed the CRCT test scores of the four out of the five Hispanic students' who were involved in extracurricular activities as achieving a passing score. While this data gives the indication that extracurricular activity cannot be discounted as a difference between the four students who passed the CRCT, most Hispanic parents or students do not have an understanding of the importance of extracurricular activities to their success in middle school.

8. *How does not participating in extracurricular activities contribute to Hispanic students' decision to complete or not complete high school?* Hispanic students who drop out of school usually are influenced by factors other than extracurricular activities. Often, it is made due to legal or financial situations within the family.

### **Composite Description**

The themes of this study were used to describe a textural description of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities by Hispanic middle school students (Moustakas, 1994). A textural description, or themes, describes what and how this minority population experiences the phenomenon.

Six themes emerge when analyzing the document data, the scaled survey, and the interview. The six themes identify the essence of how Hispanic students make the decision not to participate in extracurricular activities during middle school and what they experience. The six themes include school influences, student engagement, educational decisions, parental involvement, transportation, and immigration.

Data analysis reveals from the six themes several factors impact Hispanic students' decision to participate in extracurricular activities during middle school. Those factors include transportation, family commitment, lack of understanding concerning the importance of extracurricular activities to the student success, and fears concerning immigration laws.

### **Extracurricular Activity Participation**

Extracurricular activity participation has been linked academic success during middle school. Literature has revealed Hispanic students are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities than other minority groups, but little is known concerning what

factors can predict their nonparticipation beyond the most probable cause of socioeconomic status (SES) (Fry, 2006; Feldman & Majasko, 2005). This study uses the research method of phenomenology to explore the reasons why Hispanic middle school students are choosing not to participate in activities which have a clear correlation to students' academic success. This research is unique because it is based on the perspective of a critical case participant who has lived through this phenomenon. The themes which formulated during the data analysis identify three main barriers which prevent a majority of Hispanic students from participating in extracurricular activities during middle school.

**Transportation.** Most middle school Hispanic students depend on the school bus to get to and from school each day. This study reveals this to be one of the determining factors in their decision not to participate in activities after the academic day. Hispanic fathers are working and do not see the value in leaving their jobs to pick-up students from school after academic classes. Additionally, many Hispanic mothers do not drive due to their immigration status. These two factors are a realization for Hispanic students who feel that asking their parents to take the time to come to school to pick them up after school is an added hardship on the family.

**Family influence.** Within the Hispanic culture, family is the main social unit in what is a close-knit group. The Hispanic family goes beyond the immediate family members. They each consider it to be their moral responsibility to help other family members experiencing financial problems, poor health, or other life issues. In a Hispanic family the needs of the family are placed above the needs of an individual. All of the family members have specific roles. Many middle school girls within the Hispanic

culture are cooking and cleaning the house while their mothers are going to work, and many middle school Hispanic boys leave school to work with their fathers or other family members. Hispanic parents do value education, but do not understand participation in extracurricular activities increases the educational success. In addition, they are more concerned with survival in the present than in the future. It is sometimes necessary for the parents of Hispanic students to make decisions which may be viewed as nontraditional in American culture. Especially, concerning the responsibilities Hispanic students have to the family unit.

This study extends prior research which connects the lack of parental involvement at school to the decision not to participate in extracurricular activities to the Hispanic population. It supports research that has found a direct oppositional view of parental involvement by schools and Hispanic parents (Dunn et al., 2003; Newman et al., 2007; Shannon, 2006). The cultural view among the Hispanic population is that parental involvement at school is getting their students to school on time daily, making sure their children have what they need for school, and to instill the value of hard work. It is the school's job to determine the academic needs of their children and Hispanic parents depend on teacher to do what is best for them.

This study extends prior research which does not include the perspective of a Hispanic student who experienced the phenomenon. Hispanic students consider the parents' view as an enormous influence. Factors identified by the critical case participant that inhibits Hispanic parents from becoming involved at school and allowing their children to participate in activities outside the academic classroom include the parents

feeling they do not speak enough English, lack of trust in the schools and teachers due to current immigration laws, and no understanding of the value of extracurricular activities.

Hispanic parents do care about giving their children the opportunity to succeed. However, most immigrant parents lack the knowledge of what those opportunities are. In addition, they lack confidence and do not believe in their own ability to communicate with schools to learn about extracurricular activities. Hispanic parents view anything outside the school's regular hours as not necessary for the success and immediate needs of their children. They do not understand the factors which sometimes keep them and their children isolated from the school community. Their lack of understanding the benefits which participating in extracurricular would improve, language acquisition and student social and academic engagement, is identified as factors which keep Hispanic students from EA.

**Immigration laws.** The fear of being noticed by law enforcement is on the minds of most Hispanic parents, even more so today than in past years. With the focus by states throughout America on ways to financially handle the large numbers of immigrants in their communities, Hispanic families are experiencing a heightened concern about their own legal status. They live daily with the realization of being unable to get a driver's license, to apply for higher paying jobs, and not taking part in any activities which would bring unwanted focus on the family due to their legal status. In the minds of the Hispanic parents and students of working age, it is better to work and make money while they are in the United States, because if they are forced to leave, in their minds, money is more valuable in Mexico than an education.

From the textural description the researcher identified implications for students,

schools, and teachers are educated and the need for future research identified.

### **Impact on Education**

The drop-out rate among the Hispanic population within the state of Georgia stands at 23% for students between the ages of 14 to 18 years of age (U.S. Bureau of the Census Department, 2010). Additionally, The United States Census Bureau reported an increase of 96.1% in the Hispanic population within the state of Georgia since the year 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census Department, 2007). The increasing dropout rates among Hispanic students concerns, community members, parents, school districts, and economists (Vinovskis, 2011).

Education policymakers and other politicians are now focusing on the individual progress of school districts and individual schools by the implementation of standards to ensure all students are successful. In order for these standards to be met, the reasons this large group of minority students not completing their education must be identified and addressed. Past research has been focused on ethnicity, gender, age, and socioeconomic factors as predictors of Hispanic students being successful educationally (Fredrick & Eccles, 2006; Lewis, 2005; Garcia-Reid, 2005; Fry, 2006; Simpkins, 2005). However, recent studies indicate the participation in extracurricular activities during middle school increase the academic success of all students and particularly minority ethnicities. Lack of participation in activities shown to increase student achievement marginalizes this group of students (Driscoll, 2006; Fry, 2006; McCarthy, 2005).

### **Implications of the Study**

This study implies that acculturation has a substantial impact on the Hispanic middle school students choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities.



This study examines family, mobility, parental involvement as acculturation factors which can be possibly used as predictors for nonparticipation in activities outside the classroom. The benefits of extracurricular activity participation outside the academic classroom heighten the chance of school success, both academically and socially. The need for students to complete school is crucial for the preparation of youth to compete in today's world economy. The question becomes how are educators, schools, and the Hispanics population going to build bridges to lessen the barriers which prevent this group of students from experiencing the benefit from participating in extracurricular activities during middle school?

### **Hispanic Students**

Hispanic students view schools as treating them fairly and giving them an equal chance to participate in extracurricular activities. They report knowing the value of participation in activities outside the academic classroom, but are not familiar with specific benefits. They also question whether they will fit in with the other students who participate. They realize their cultural differences and view students from other ethnicities as having lesser responsibility outside of school. Most Hispanic students live in two culturally different worlds, one at home and one at school. As such, they are much less in charge how they spend their time out of school than other cultures. Ultimately, they look to their parents to make the decision concerning extracurricular activities and the value of their participation in them for the family. If schools want Hispanic students to reap the benefits of participating in extracurricular activities, they will need to find productive methods to educate Hispanic parents concerning the value of such participation.

Hispanic middle school students need to begin to educate their parents on the benefits of becoming involved at school outside the academic classroom. They need to let their parents know such activities will help them learn more English and to make connections with other students and teachers which help them to become success in the classroom. Additionally, they need to encourage their parents in a positive way to become involved in the school community through attending activities at school.

### **Schools**

Concerns for the escalating dropout rates among Hispanic students in the United States has caught the attention of politicians, economists, and other social leaders, both on local and national levels (Driscoll, 2006; Ingram, 2002). The U.S. Census Department reported 39.9 billion Hispanic students living in the United States, with one third of this population below the age of eighteen (U.S. Bureau of the Census Department, 2007). The success of Hispanic students is vital to the future success of America's schools, economy, and country (Eccles, 2003, Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Yet, only 25% of Hispanic children participate in extracurricular activities, compared to 75% of Caucasian children (Lugaila, 2004; NCES, 2010). This is a large contrast to 70% of Caucasian children and African American children who are involved in extracurricular activities during middle school (Lugaila, 2004; NCES, 2010). This study substantiates past studies which have identified minority students' lack of participation in extracurricular activities during middle school (NCES, 2010).

If the reasons for this gap are identified from the perspective of the critical case participant as being two-fold, Hispanic parents lack the understanding in the value of extracurricular activities to the student and to the family and they lack the trust they need

to become more involved at school. The school's responsibility is in educating all parents through the implementation of traditional and non-traditional programs which address every culture represented in their school. This could be as easy as providing extracurricular activity information for the parents in their native language, having translators at events, or assigning adult mentors to each family. It is not necessary for schools to have specific cultural knowledge to involve parents in conventional school activities, open-house or parent meetings, they just need to recognize there are cultural differences and be willing to accept the differences by treating all parents with respect and openness.

### **Hispanic Parents**

Acculturation of Hispanic parents is often a barrier to their involvement at schools. This study identified Hispanic parents' inability to communicate effectively in English, low degree of becoming Americanized, lack of education concerning how American schools operate, and fear of immigration laws as acculturation barriers to their involvement at school and allowing their children to become involved in extracurricular activities. While many Hispanic families strive to keep their cultural heritage, a certain level of acculturation needs to be reached in order for them to recognize the benefits their children are missing by not participating in extracurricular activities during middle school. They need to embrace the schools and take advantage in any programs which could help them to become better English speakers. This enables them to take part in programs, student conferences, and other school activities which will build their confidence and help them to understand the educational system and the opportunities it affords their families.

## **Conclusion**

It is easy to say schools, teachers, and Hispanic parents need to make changes which would increase the chances of Hispanic students participating in extracurricular activities which have been shown to increase academic success. However, there are factors which prevent this population of students from such activities that are far beyond the scope of what any of the three groups can easily do.

Immigration is in the headlines of our news across the nation. The critical case participant voiced her concern about the enormous impact the potential changes in immigration laws bring to this phenomenon. Hispanic families across the nation are affected by this issue. It affects their ability to legally drive, to get steady employment which affects their mobility, and what decisions they make concerning their children's education. As policymakers, educators, and concerned citizens, we need to recognize the urgency to settle this unique situation.

## **Limitations**

Limitations are those conditions that restrict the scope of the study which may affect the results and cannot be controlled by the researcher (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative researchers must recognize their bias and possible self-interest within the study (Creswell, 2007). The researcher of this study is an ESOL teacher in the school district of the study's site. Chapter Three contains a detailed design to reduce bias in the study; still this aspect of the study is a limitation worth mentioning. Accordingly, the conceptual analysis of this study is derived from the data collected by the researcher in order to establish a composite description of the phenomenon of Hispanic students choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities during the middle school.

Another limitation is the use of critical case sampling. It is used to provide the unique perspective of a Hispanic participant who lived through the experience. The critical case participant provided insightful, real descriptions of why Hispanic middle school students are choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities. The use of one critical case participants and gender certainly limits its findings. Additionally, the relationship between the number of Hispanic students within other schools in the district could have affected the outcome of the study.

The value of qualitative research must meet the criteria of reliability, validity, and generalizability. Although no qualitative studies are generalized in the statistical sense, their findings may be transferrable in the logical sense (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2000). Qualitative researchers must recognize their bias and possible self-interest within the study (Creswell, 2007).

Validity and reliability are addressed by the triangular method of data collection through artifacts, data, multi-levels of note taking, a survey instrument, and an interview of a critical case sample. The researcher approached the study using a participatory design; sharing the findings with the participant.

Qualitative studies are conducted in natural settings and therefore can be difficult to replicate (Creswell, 2007). Purposeful decisions were made by the researcher to ensure the truth value of the research study. The conceptual analysis of this study will be derived from the data collected by the researcher to establish a composite description.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative research study which explores the phenomenon of Hispanic middle school students is limited to school districts with like demographic populations.

Additional phenomenological research using critical case participants of both genders are strongly recommended. The data of this study could be further supported in a broader context by such studies; which would improve its overall trustworthiness.

The current study examines the reasons Hispanic middle school students choose not to participate in extracurricular activities. Another aspect of the study involves how not participating in activities outside the academic classroom affects their educational decisions. The results of the study provides support for the view that lack of participation in extracurricular activities is due in part to the acculturation of Hispanic families, transportation, a lack of understanding about the benefits of extracurricular activities, and a fear of immigration laws. These results raise the need for further studies which should include:

- A study designed to explore the outcomes of clubs and organizations using the minority students' native languages for distribution of posters and announcement to see if would affect their participation rate.
- A phenomenology focused on the small population of Hispanic students who made the choice to participate in EA to examine the factors which led them to their decision to find positive ways to influence other Hispanic students.
- Additional research is needed to examine the phenomenon among the different generations of immigrants to identify participation differences. Conduct a study which explores the nonacademic outcomes that from participation in extracurricular activities.

## **Context of the Theoretical Framework**

The integration of three models including social constructivism, ecological, and language acquisition theories clearly indicates the chances of academic success are greater when students are involved in extracurricular activities. This study examined the role of specific cultural values including family, student engagement, and acculturation of Hispanic students and the influence these factors have on their decision not to participate in extracurricular activities. Additionally, this study examined the importance of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities to Hispanic students' school engagement and their decision to complete or not complete their education.

The common thread among these three theories is the importance of socialization by students outside the academic classroom. The consequences for nonparticipation in extracurricular activities appear to be substantial for all students but especially important for adolescents in middle school (Garcia-Reid et al., 2005). The integration of the socio-developmental and ecological theories may provide explanations for the suggestion that extracurricular activity participation at school is more important to culturally diverse students due to the low self-confidence and feelings of perceived culture inadequacies (Flanagan et al., 2007). Current studies have revealed two important themes among Hispanic students; they are choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities at school, and they have the highest dropout rate of any student population (Flanagan et al., 2007; NCES, 2010). This study extends prior studies by identifying three cultural barriers which prevent Hispanic middle school students from participating in extracurricular activities.

The barriers described by the critical case participant are transportation, family

influence, and fear of immigration laws. They are all linked to cultural traditions and lack of acculturation into the socialization of middle school.

### **Summary**

There is a great deal to be learned from the findings of this study. They are a valuable contribution to the current research on nonparticipation by middle school Hispanic students, because this phenomenological study gives a voice from the perspective of a Hispanic critical case participant. The participant is someone who has lived through the experience and can contribute an essence to its causes. While this description is based on critical case participant, its importance is in the in-depth and honesty responses to my research questions. While there are limits in this study which prevents a broad generalization, a logical generalization to the Hispanic population is a reasonable assumption.

The findings of this study confirms past research which reports there is a marked difference in participation by Hispanic students in extracurricular activities when compared to other ethnicities. Additionally, there are data from this study which confirms Hispanic students who do participate in extracurricular activities experience a higher level of academic engagement, as measured by CRCT scores.

The critical case participant's experiences provide expected and unexpected causes of the experiences of Hispanic middle school students choosing not to participate in activities after school. The level of acculturation by Hispanic families was confirmed as an issue for nonparticipation in extracurricular activities by this population of students while in middle school. There were three specific barriers described by the critical case



participant which are representative of lack of acculturation, including transportation, family influence, and fear of immigration laws.

Many of the changes needed to increase the participation rate in extracurricular activities by Hispanic students can be address by the schools. Schools can develop programs and implement changes to address the issues with transportation and educating parents and students concerning the benefits of extracurricular activities. However, the realization is schools have no direct influence over immigration laws. As the immigration issues across the country evolve, each Hispanic family will make the choices which are best for their family. Acculturation at the level which it benefits the family is possible without losing the primary culture. This may be the choice Hispanic parents will need to make for themselves. It is the same choice many immigrants before them have had to face in order to assimilate into the American culture.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A: IRB Approval

**LIBERTY**  
UNIVERSITY™

The Graduate School at Liberty University

January 24, 2012

Janelle Garner

IRB Approval 1247.012412: A Phenomenology of Nonparticipation in  
Extracurricular Activities by Hispanic Middle School Students

Dear Janelle,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.

*IRB Chair, Associate Professor Center for Counseling & Family Studies*

(434) 592-5054

## **Appendix B: County Approval**

County School System of School Site A

Research Application

### **RESEARCHER INFORMATION**

Name of researcher: Janelle Garner Home Phone: 678-416-2854

Address: 1255 Lillie Patrick Road Gay, GA 30218

Business Phone: 678-254-2875

College or institution sponsoring project: Liberty University

Name of individual sponsoring project: Dr. Grania Holman

Address: GHolman@liberty.edu

Phone number:

### **II. PROJECT INFORMATION**

Beginning & ending dates of study: January 30, 2012-December 31, 2012.

Synopsis of research: The research will study the nonparticipation of school based extracurricular activities by Hispanic middle school students and its affect on student engagement. This study will focus on possible cultural predictors, excluding socio-economic, gender, and age.

### **III. POPULATION INFORMATION, continued**

No direct contact with students.

Identify characteristics of participants:

Specify amount of time needed:

Schools: N/A

## Appendix B: County Approval

Will you need access to students' permanent records?

Yes, report cards, testing results, ethnicity, and other information obtainable through Infinite Campus.

I understand that no individual participant(s) or school(s) will be identifiable through this research project. I recognize that the research is not complete until a copy of the results is sent to the Director of Testing and Research for the Coweta County School System.

Due to the system's comprehensive academic program, research activities will be conducted during the following months unless special arrangements have been made:

October-November                      AND                      January-March

Please attach a copy of all correspondence (cover letter, questionnaires(s), etc. that you intend to send to School System staff.

Will students be surveyed as a part of this study? \_\_\_YES \_\_\_X\_NO

If "YES", please attach a copy of your proposed survey instrument.

I realize that I will be notified in writing concerning the status of this research project within three weeks after the application has been received.

JANELLE GARNER                      December 14, 2011

Signature of Applicant                      JANELLE GARNER      Date December 14, 2011

<i>Garnier, Janelle</i>	
<b>For System Use Only</b>	
Date Application received:	<u>12/14/11</u>
Date Applicant notified:	<u>12/14/11</u>
Approved: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved: <input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Melanie S. Carroll</u>	<u>12/14/11</u>
Authorized Signature	Date
<small>* Must have parent permission to case participant/Not needed - over * Must be able to collect data on her own, No identifying information</small>	

*For school - over - 18 -*

## **Appendix C: Consent Form**

Phenomenology of Nonparticipation in Extracurricular Activities by Hispanic Middle School Students

Please read this form. You are free to ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

You are invited to be in a research study of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities by Hispanic middle school students. You were selected as a possible participant because of your Hispanic ethnicity and background of attending middle school in this area.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Janelle Garner –Education Department, Liberty University.

### **Background Information**

The purpose of the study will be to explore the phenomena of Hispanic students choosing not to participate in school-based extracurricular activities and to identify possible cultural predictors beyond socioeconomic status, age, and gender. This study will examine the role of specific cultural values including family, mobility, and acculturation of Hispanic students and the influence these factors have on Hispanic students' decision not to participate in extracurricular activities. Additionally, this study will examine the importance of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities to Hispanic students' school engagement and their decision to complete or not complete their education.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Complete a scaled survey concerning your middle school experience. This survey will be sent to you via email and should take no longer than one to two hours of your time. After the survey is returned, via email, an interview will be scheduled, within one week, at a time and place of your convenience. The interview will consist of open-ended questions concerning your life experiences including your school life and extracurricular activities. Notes and audio tapes will be taken during the interview for later review and transcription. You will have the opportunity to review the final transcription of both to ensure your responses were represented correctly.

**The interview should take approximately two hours. After the interview, you will have the option to review the tape. Though the interview and questionnaire will take no more than 6 hours of you time total, the study will span from one to three months. Risks and Benefits of being in the Study**

No study is without risk, but risks of this study are minimal and no more than the risks you encounter in everyday life. If at any time during the study you feel that the exploration of the phenomenon is exposing emotional feelings, you will be reminded that the study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. I will also make available the name of a local clergy or professional counselor if requested.

The benefits to participation are that many participants find that telling their stories have a healing benefit.

Also, your experiences may help other Hispanic students currently in similar situations. By relating your experiences, it may help those in leadership understand the perspectives of Hispanic students concerning participation in extracurricular activities and may help

them take appropriate actions to encourage a higher rate of participation in activities outside the academic classroom which have been shown to increase school success.

**Compensation:** None

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Pseudonyms will be used to protect participants' identity. The scaled survey response will be printed and the electronic file will be deleted from the computer's hard drive. The taped interview and transcription along with all other research records in print format will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet or in data files protected by passwords. Only Janelle Garner and her committee chair advisor will have access to the files. The research records will be destroyed three years after the end of the study.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. This research has minimal risk to the participant. It at any time you decide not to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is: Janelle Garner You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact them Dr. Grania Holman, School of Education, Liberty University, [ggholman@liberty.edu](mailto:ggholman@liberty.edu), 678-234-2414

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr.

Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix D: Informed Consent for Critical Case Participant**

### **Nonparticipation in Extracurricular Activities by Hispanic Students: A Phenomenological Study**

Principal Investigator: Janelle Garner

Liberty University

Education Department

Please read this form. You are free to ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in a research study of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities by Hispanic students during middle school. I understand that I was selected as a possible participant because I am a Hispanic student who attended middle school and experienced nonparticipation in extracurricular activities. This study is being conducted by Janelle Garner and is authorized by the Education Department of Liberty University.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of Hispanic middle school students who do not participate in school-based extracurricular activities and how it affected their educational decisions.

#### **Procedures**

By agreeing to be in this study, I understand that I will be interviewed and asked to respond to some open ended questions about my life experiences including my school life. The interview will be questionnaire; with a follow-up meeting to review the transcribed answers from the first interview. I understand that I am encouraged to write comments following the questionnaire. The first interview should take one or two hours. Though the interviews and questionnaire will take no more than 6 hours of my time total, I understand that the study will span a three to six month period to complete.

#### **Risks and Benefits of being in the Study**

The study has several risks. All precautions will be taken to protect my identity; by the use of pseudonyms. There is the possibility that someone reading the final product may recognize the details of my story. Second, reflecting on that period in my life may cause some of emotions to resurface. The benefits to participation are that many participants find that telling their stories has a healing benefit. Also, my experiences may help other Hispanic students currently in a similar situation. Third, by relating my story, it may help those in leadership understand the phenomenon better and may help them take appropriate action for students considering similar decisions.

## **Appendix D: Informed Consent for Critical Case Participant**

### **Confidentiality**

The records of this study will be kept fully confidential. The presentation of this study will present no information which will identify me as a participant. Any references to me during presentations will be in pseudonym to protect my identity. The code sheet used to link my personal identity with my data will be. Research records in print format will be stored securely in locked file cabinets or in data files protected by passwords. Only Janelle Garner and her committee chair advisor will have access to the files and will be destroyed 12 months after the end of the study.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary. I know I may refuse to continue participating in the study at any time. I also may refuse to answer questions posed during the interviews. My decision to participate or not to participate will not affect my current or future relations with the Liberty University.

### **Contacts and Questions**

The researcher conducting this study is Janelle Garner. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at 678-416-2850 or at [jgarner2@liberty.edu](mailto:jgarner2@liberty.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 2400, Lynchburg, VA 24502. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent**

**I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.**

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**I have discussed this information with the participant and answered all questions posed to me.**

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: School Life Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire is to examine how strongly you feel about certain things related to your school experiences. Once your questionnaire is returned, the email response and any attachments will be saved to a separate external hard drive, protected by a password, until the end of the research study at which time a hard copy will be printed and the electronic file will be deleted. This questionnaire will remain in a locked file cabinet for a period of three years, after which time it will be destroyed. No identification or email information will be given out, sold or distributed in any form or fashion.

Please rate the items below based on your initial emotional response. Think about your time in middle school. Reflect on how this word influenced your educational decisions. If it evokes a strong positive or negative emotional response (or if it did when you were in middle school), please mark the #10 bubble. If, on the other hand, the word evokes no response positively or negatively, then indicate that on bubble #1. If your emotional response to a word fits somewhere in between, note that. Only mark one bubble per word. To mark electronically, simply highlight your response with bold print. **You may add additional comments at the bottom;** especially concerning those words with a score of six or higher.

Engaged

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Community Member

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Teachers

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Attendance

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Extracurricular Activities

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Peer pressure

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Acceptance

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Rules

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Support by School to Participate in Activities

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Risk

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Language

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Encouragement by Parents

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Social Connections

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

**Appendix E: School Life Survey**

Dropout

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Parental Influence to Participate

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Grades

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Learning

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Guidance

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Changing schools

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Family

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Home Responsibilities

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE INCLUDE ANY INFORMATION YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE CONCERNING YOUR EXPERIENCES IN MIDDLE SCHOOL YOU THINK WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO THIS RESEARCH STUDY. **Please email back to me when it is completed.**

## **Appendix: F**

### **Subject: Email Invitation to Participate in Study**

I am a graduate student at Liberty University working on the completion of my dissertation.

I will be conducting research on the following topic and would like to invite you to participate.

Topic: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF NONPARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BY HISPANIC MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

The purpose of this study will be to explore the phenomena of Hispanic students choosing not to participate in school-based extracurricular activities and to identify possible cultural predictors beyond socioeconomic status, age, and gender. This study will examine the role of specific cultural values including family and acculturation of Hispanic students and the influence these factors have on Hispanic students' decision not to participate in extracurricular activities. Additionally, this study will examine the importance of nonparticipation in extracurricular activities to Hispanic students' school engagement and their decision to complete or not complete their education.

If you choose to participate you will be ask to complete survey form via email and participate in a semi-structured interview in two sessions.

Please reply to this email within one week if you are interested in participation.

Respectfully,

Janelle Garner

Liberty University Doctoral Student