TELL YOUR STORY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE, LATINA MOTHERS LIVING IN POVERTY

by

Thaeda Jean Franz

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

This transcendental phenomenological study involved an examination of the experiences, parenting practices, and utilization and perception of community supports among single Latina mothers experiencing poverty. Purposive sampling was used in requesting volunteers from local parenting education programs. Six Latina mothers living in Reading, PA, were interviewed. Participants reported experiencing neglect and abuse as children and struggling to meet their children's needs. They also reported feeling as though they were the "black sheep" of their families of origin and having a lack of connection to their families. The mothers in the study described wanting to give their children a better experience than they had growing up, the effort required to balance the roles of nurturer and disciplinarian, the difficulties of co-parenting, and the need to make good choices to avoid putting their children at risk of harm. Themes pertaining to how the participants understood and utilized supports in their community included finding social programs unhelpful due to conflicting program requirements and a lack of trust of service providers. Participants reported the desire for help to come in the form of community. They also described the role of faith as a source of support and expressed maintaining an optimistic outlook as a method of coping. Findings revealed that the mothers often created a "family of choice" to gain the support not provided by their families. The role of context in making parenting decisions was also observed, as participants described using specific parenting strategies due to living in neighborhoods they perceived as being violent and dangerous. Implications for parent educators, social workers, and other human services workers are presented, as are suggestions for future research.

Keywords: community, Latina, parenting, poverty

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to “Angelique” and to the single, Latina mothers who courageously shared their stories and their hearts for the purpose of this research.

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To God, who is love and creates through love. Thank you for creating in and through me. This has been a beautiful journey and I am grateful for each and every lesson it contained.

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List of Abbreviations

Signature Family Services (SFS)

Berks County Children and Youth Services (BCCYS)

The Incredible Years (TIY)

Nurturing Parenting (NP)

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

Los Niños Bien Educados (LNBE)

Center for Improvement of Child Caring (CICC)

Parent development theory (PDT)

National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN)

Child Protective Services (CPS)

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse (CEBC)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA)

Behavior Parent Training (BPT)

Parent management training (PMT)

JusticeWorks Youth Care (JWYC)

Berks County Juvenile Probation Office (BCJPO)

General Equivalency Diploma (GED)

Helping Our Providing Encouragement (HOPE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Of the 115 million households in the United States in 2012, almost 10 million were headed by single mothers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Research has demonstrated single mothers often have increased psychological stress and face more difficulties related to caring for their children (Aguilar, 2010). Results from multiple studies indicate single mothers experience many stress-inducing challenges with regard to providing for and raising their children, including a lack of education, difficulty establishing residency, inadequate social support, substandard housing, neighborhood crime, poverty, and poverty-related stress (Aguilar, 2010; Prelow, Weaver, Bowman, & Swenson, 2010; Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider, 2013; Zhan & Pandey, 2004).

Of the almost 10 million households headed by single mothers in 2012, 28% of these mothers were Latina (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Single Latina mothers not only face the stress-inducing challenges many single mothers face, they have additional challenges that come with being an ethnic minority, including discrimination, language barriers, and limited access to education and employment (Flores, Olson, & Tomany-Korman, 2005). Research indicates economic inequality increases the likelihood that Latino families will experience limited advancement related to employment and high levels of poverty-related stress (Correa & Alvarez-McHatton, 2005).

In fact, Latinos have low levels of educational attainment and bear a disproportionate burden of long-term poverty (Aguilar, 2010). Although 46.5 million people in the United States are living in poverty (Hargreaves, 2013), 23% are Latino (Institute for Research on Poverty, 2011) and 4.1 million Latina single mothers nationwide live in poverty (Vespa et al., 2013). Living within these conditions and being exposed to high levels of poverty can have long-lasting

effects on Latino children related to their biological development and the availability of community resources to help these children and their families.

Living in poverty can have profound effects on children's development (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2003). Children in low-income families can have delayed cognitive development and difficulty learning (Shea, 2000). They also have been shown to have higher rates of behavioral, social, and emotional problems compared to children living above the poverty line (Evans, 2004). The impact of poverty is so pervasive it can even carry into adulthood, as adults who lived in poverty as children have been shown to be less likely to maintain employment, less likely to pursue higher education, and more likely to live in poverty themselves (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2003).

Living in poverty also comes with a collection of structural stressors, including underfunded schools, poor housing conditions, limited access to community resources, and a threat of community violence (Evans, 2004). For the parents of children living in poverty, financial and environmental stressors are likely to take a psychological toll, increase the demands of parenting, and affect their ability to parent (McLoyd, 1998). Research on poverty and parenting practices has linked economic stress with lower levels of parental locus of control and more hostile parenting practices, such as the use of corporal punishment (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2003).

Given the research that shows the disproportionate numbers of Latinos living in poverty and the links between poverty and the increased risk of maltreatment of children, it becomes understandable that approximately 10% of all abused children are Latinos and the percentage of Latino children in foster care nationwide more than doubled between 1990 and 2010 from 8% to 21% (Garcia, Aisenberg, & Harachi, 2012). Latino families and their children are the most

rapidly growing ethnic group in the public child welfare system (Ayon, 2009). Once Latino children are a part of the child welfare system, they have poorer outcomes in that they are less likely to be reunited with their biological parents. Instead of being placed with relatives (i.e., kinship homes), they are more likely to live in foster care (Ayon, 2009).

With all of the challenges and stressors involved with being a single parent, the additional stressors of being a minority, and the profound effects of parental stress on children, there is a critical need for social work interventions with Latina single mothers. These interventions should include improving access to medical and mental health care, increasing access to parenting education, and increasing the available community social supports. Unfortunately, barriers such as limited numbers of bilingual or bicultural staff (e.g., mental health workers, social workers, medical professionals, etc.), lack of culturally sensitive resources, distrust of institutions, fear of deportation, and lack of social supports in the community (Garcia et al., 2012; Vericker, Kuehn, & Capps, 2007) can limit access to a variety of services, including medical care, mental health treatment, housing assistance, and educational programs. One method of improving social supports could be the provision of a parenting education program specifically tailored to the needs and interests of single Latina mothers.

Background of the Problem

Latinos have been highlighted in the research as being an underserved population (Garcia et al., 2012). Latinos frequently receive services such as mental health treatment and case management that are grounded in theories and paradigms based on studies of Caucasians (Garcia et al., 2012). There is much literature surrounding social work and parenting education practices that revealed the inadequacy of applying parenting theories and principles based on research with Caucasian participants to Latino parents. While the research is clear that both Caucasians and

Latinos desire similar outcomes for their children (e.g., obtaining a good education, finding and maintaining employment, having families of their own, etc.), the methods by which they obtain these outcomes differ. Caucasian parents tend to be more democratic, offering their children greater independence and freedom at an earlier age. Latinos, on the other hand, tend to take a less individualistic approach and encourage dependence on family and respect for elders, and operate more strict households in accordance with their cultural practices (P. G. Cardona, Nicholson, & Fox, 2000; Ceballos & Bratton, 2010; Falicov, 2009).

Historically, research on Latinos and parenting has demonstrated Latino parents as being somewhat more controlling of their children, offering them fewer freedoms and fewer choices, and demanding obedience to their elders (Falicov, 2009). Initially, this was interpreted as having to do with culture. More recently, however, consideration has been given to the influence of the environment beyond the family (Ceballo, Kennedy, Bregman, & Quyen, 2012).

According to Ceballo et al. (2012), exploring context with regard to parenting practices points to the possibility that Latinos living in impoverished, violence-prone neighborhoods adopt a set of culturally meaningful specific parenting strategies. Ardelt and Eccles (2001) reported that minority parents living in impoverished neighborhoods where violence was prevalent tended to adopt a controlling parenting style in an effort to ensure their children's safety. A recent qualitative study in Detroit, Michigan, involved asking low-income Latino mothers about their parenting practices in the context of neighborhood poverty and community violence (Ceballo et al., 2012). The mothers responded with details of how they used control, restriction of activities, and monitoring to ensure their children's safety. In addition, they referred to culturally specific terms (e.g., educacion and estar pendiente) to describe their goals of educating their children and remaining aware of their children's need for protection and safety (Ceballo et al., 2012).

Parenting practices can not only be understood in terms of context, they can be viewed in terms of culture. The Latino population in the United States is diverse, as it includes individuals from 20 countries across North, Central, and South America, the Caribbean, and Spain (Bernal & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2009). "Culturally adapting" services and programs for Latinos has been the topic of some discussion in recent years and could be better accomplished with a greater awareness of the difficulties faced by Latino parents as presented in their own words. Gaining insight into the impact of poverty and culture by interviewing Latina mothers who are experiencing poverty can offer information about their parenting values and practices that can be used to shape parenting education and social work approaches. These approaches can then be uniquely tailored to meet the needs of Latino parents experiencing poverty, allowing for their integration into the strategies these parents are already using to raise their children. The diversity within Latino communities illustrates the need for research to understand the similarities and differences in Latino parenting practices and parenting styles to allow for the development of culturally attuned parenting education programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study was to explore the experiences and parenting practices of single Latina mothers meeting federal poverty standards and living in Reading, Pennsylvania, as well as to explore the supports they utilized to achieve their parenting goals. Using qualitative phenomenological methods, this researcher incorporated and refined the interview guide used in a related study by Ceballo et al. (2012). This examination into the experiences of single Latina mothers experiencing poverty was designed to offer insight into what aspects of parenting were most important to them, what influenced their parenting practices, and how parenting educators and social service workers can best assist this population.

This study was designed to help address the gap in the existing research on Latino participants (Aguilar, 2010; Bermudez, Zak-Hunter, & Silva, 2011; Bernal & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2009; Driscoll, Fischer, & Harvey, 2009; Falicov, 2009), with a focus on single Latina mothers. By gaining insight about parenting practices from Latina mothers, results can be used to enhance social work practice when engaged with families of this demographic.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences, including the parenting experiences, of single Latina mothers living in poverty to inform and improve social work practice. The specific research questions that guided the study were as follows:

1. What are the experiences of single Latina mothers living in poverty in Reading, PA?
2. What are the parenting practices of single Latina mothers living in poverty in Reading, PA?
3. How do single Latina mothers living in poverty understand and utilize supports in their environment to aid them in parenting?

The specific aims of the study were to:

- Identify and describe the challenges, strengths, and experiences of single Latina mothers living in poverty.
- Identify the environmental supports utilized by single Latina mothers living in poverty when parenting their children.
- Develop suggestions for ways to culturally adapt parenting education services for single Latina mothers living in poverty.

Role of the Researcher

Work Experience/Preliminary Data

I earned a master's of arts in counseling from Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA, in 2004. My 1-year MA internship at Signature Family Services in Reading, PA, provided me with specialized training in child welfare. As an intern, I worked in the field providing in-home parenting education, casework, and psychotherapy services. Given the high number of Latino families living in the city of Reading, many of the families with whom I worked were headed by single mothers. For 8 years I was the Director of Services for Berks County for Signature Family Services (SFS), a provider agency contracted to work with families referred by Berks County Children and Youth Services (BCCYS). SFS worked specifically with families where there was suspicion or confirmed reports of child maltreatment in the form of abuse or neglect. As the Latino population grew in the city of Reading, workers at SFS became increasingly familiar with this population. My work in child welfare, particularly working in the homes, provided me with inside knowledge and a better understanding of the challenges and experiences of single Latina mothers. This knowledge was critical in my ability to engage and recruit single Latina mothers for this dissertation study. The population serviced by SFS can be mistrustful of institutions and service providers, so I had to gain trust and establish rapport quickly by communicating my desire to help the family as opposed to being part of a bureaucracy that was going to make life harder for the participants.

Through my work, I have gained considerable insight into some of the challenges facing Latina mothers. Many of the Latina mothers with whom I have worked had greater difficulty accessing community resources and complying with the requirements issued by BCCYS to progress their cases. Lack of bilingual staff, illiteracy, lack of documentation, few social

supports, and discrimination were all barriers I witnessed to these women improving their family situations. Some of the Latina mothers to whom I provided parenting education disagreed with me when I mentioned the need to avoid spanking and the usefulness of "time outs" to discipline their children. For some of them, spanking was considered appropriate and was the way in which their mothers had disciplined them. Others did not spank, but thought issuing a "time out" when a child was experiencing tantrums or was upset was cruel, as upset is a child's sign he or she needs nurturing and affection. These same mothers explained to me their feeling as though the cultural traditions and methods their mothers (or aunts or grandmothers) had taught them were being called "wrong" and invalidated by me—a feeling they resented. These experiences prompted me to gain more information about the experiences of Latina mothers living in the City of Reading in the hope that the available services could be adapted to better meet their needs.

Latino Culture/Spanish

I studied Spanish for several years, both in high school and as an undergraduate student. I had ongoing practice speaking Spanish for over 2 decades, as my twin sister married a Costa Rican in 1992. Neither he nor his family spoke English at the time of their marriage, and I have visited Costa Rica several times since then and had them visit in my home. While English is the primary language spoken in my household, I am able to read, speak, and understand spoken Spanish. My familiarity with Spanish helped me better understand the population I studied throughout the course of this research. I was able to read the transcribed interviews in Spanish, though all interviews were translated into English and transcribed by a translator.

Definition of Terms

Culturally adapted program. A program that is not just translated, but that takes into consideration the cultural values, life experiences, and traditions of minority populations and makes adjustments to content accordingly (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009).

Culturally congruent program. "Cultural congruence" means essentially the same thing as "culturally adapted," though the latter term is opposed by some Latino researchers as they argue it indicates the majority culture has accommodated minorities out of benevolence. They find the term culturally adapted to be pejorative (Falicov, 2009).

Culturally sensitive program. A program translated from English to the native language of the population for whom the curriculum is intended and reviewed by native speakers of that population working in education or child welfare to ensure participants will understand the material (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009).

Hispanic. The term Hispanic originally meant a Spanish-speaking person from the Iberian peninsula (i.e., Spain; Lopez, 2013). More recently, the term has come to be used interchangeably with "Latino" (Lopez, 2013). Among those identifying themselves as either Hispanic or Latino, 50% did not express a preference for the use of either term, while among those with a preference, Hispanic was preferred at the ratio of 2 to 1 (Lopez, 2013).

Latino/Latina. The term Latino/Latina represents an individual of "multicultural origin with diverse use and expression of the Spanish language, diverse migration patterns, and diverse social and economic conditions" (Aguilar, 2010, p. 4). The term reflects a great deal of diversity as Latinos can be from at least 20 countries from the Caribbean to South America. Latino and Hispanic mean virtually the same thing (Hispanic is a political term used only in the United States).

Parenting education. "A process that involves the expansion of insights, understanding, and attitudes and the acquisition of the knowledge and skills about the development of both parents and their children and relationship between them" (National Parenting Education Network, 2013, p.1). A parenting education program enhances parents' knowledge and child-rearing skills with the objective of improving child development and reducing the maltreatment of children (Chang & Liou, 2009).

Parenting practices. Behaviors utilized to effect change toward specific socialization goals. For example, a parent can choose to enroll a child in after-school tutoring or help the child complete homework as a way of enhancing school achievement (Ceballo et al., 2012).

Single mother. A woman who is raising children independently due to being divorced, widowed, or never married (Aguilar, 2010).

Undocumented Latina mother. A Latina mother without documentation of her being a legal resident or citizen of the United States.

Significance of the Study

There is debate in the literature about the efficacy of adapting existing parenting education programs to consider cultural differences between Caucasians and Latinos (Bermudez et al., 2011). Data from this study are intended to enhance the knowledge of the impact of context and culture on the parenting practices of Latina mothers and impact the development of culturally adapted parenting education programs. This examination into the experiences of single Latina mothers was designed to offer insight into what aspects of parenting were most important to them, in what areas they believed they needed additional information, and how parenting educators and social service workers can best assist this population. Data from this study can be used to inform the development of culturally adapted parenting education programs for Latinos.

There is also a paucity of research with regard to Latinos and parenting (Bermudez et al., 2011; Bernal & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2009; Halgunseth & Ipsa, 2012), so results from the current study add to the limited knowledge in this area.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study involved an expansion and refinement of the theoretical framework of Darling and Steinberg's (1993) contextual model of parenting styles. In the 25 years prior to the development of this model, Baumrind's (1966) conceptualization of parenting styles (i.e., authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative) was the main method of describing parenting styles and practices. The *authoritative parenting* style (i.e., high emotional support, high standards, granting an appropriate level of autonomy, and clear two-way communication between parent and child) has been associated with high levels of academic and social competence in children (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). As researchers included minorities in parenting studies, there was a shift in the paradigm. While Caucasian children thrived under authoritative parenting practices, Asian and African American children appeared to do just as well living with parents who were more authoritarian (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In addition, recent research has shown Latinos do not fit neatly into Baumrind's (1967) typologies, and for Latino children, authoritarian parenting methods can be more beneficial, particularly for those families experiencing poverty and living in high violence neighborhoods (Ceballo et al., 2012).

In the contextual model, a parent's socialization goals have a direct impact on parenting styles and parenting practices (Ceballo et al., 2012). Instead of parenting typologies being based only on the behavior of the parent, in the contextual model, parenting styles include the emotional environment of the home and the ways in which parenting behaviors are demonstrated across a variety of parent–child interactions to communicate parents' emotional attitudes toward

their children (Ceballo et al., 2012; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Parenting practices are behaviors in which parents engage with the purpose of assisting in a child's socialization (Ceballo et al., 2012). Parenting styles (including environment) and parenting practices combine to form the context in which a child is raised. Researchers utilizing the contextual model seek to identify the aspects of context that most greatly influence outcomes for children.

Expansion of the model involved further development of the concept of environment beyond the emotional climate of the home into areas such as socioeconomic status, minority status, and the physical environment surrounding the family. Ceballo et al. (2012) laid the foundation for the expansion of Darling and Steinberg's (1993) model. The outcomes from the Ceballo et al. study indicated mothers deemed the use of specific strategies for parenting their children necessary because they lived in what they perceived to be dangerous neighborhoods. Based on the information revealed in that study, it can be argued that the environment outside of the home influences parenting practices. The current study was designed to explore the parenting practices and experiences of single Latina mothers living in poverty as a way of gaining more insight into the influences of living in a context of minority status, poverty, and single motherhood on the experience of parenting.

Organization of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter 2 contains the results of a literature review and includes a history of parenting education and a review of prominent parenting education programs. Also included are parenting theories such as Baumrind's (1966) typologies, emotion coaching, and parent developmental theory. The review of the literature continues with a description of the relevant aspects of Latino culture, Latinos and single parenting, the effects of poverty on parenting practices, evidence to support that Latinos are underserved, and the difficulties encountered related to enrolling Latinos

in parenting education programs. The chapter concludes with a review of parenting education programs developed for Latinos and the methods highlighted in the existing research as effective in making parenting education services culturally relevant to Latinos.

Chapter 3 presents the methods used to conduct this dissertation research. The chapter contains a description of the qualitative phenomenological research design used to understand the experiences of single Latina mothers in that role. Chapter 3 also contains descriptions of the participant selection process, procedures for data collection, procedures for data analysis and synthesis, and a description of the steps taken to ensure the results of the study would be trustworthy.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the study and includes a description of the themes and subthemes found during data analysis. Each theme is presented in detail and supportive information (including quotes) is provided for each theme. A composite description reflective of the characteristics and experiences of the participants in the study concludes the chapter.

Chapter 5 presents the findings as they pertain to the experiences, parenting practices, and conceptualization of support of the single Latina mothers participating in the study. This is followed by implications for program development and this researcher's reflections on the process of performing the study. The chapter continues with suggestions for the implementation of a parenting education program and concludes with a description of an existing faith-based support program for single mothers in the South Central PA area.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the inequalities and challenges facing single Latina mothers and their children. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to conduct an exploration into the parenting experiences of single Latina mothers living in a

violence-prone and impoverished area to inform the development of culturally adapted parenting education programs. This chapter also contained the research questions, the role of the researcher, key terms, and the significance of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides the results of a review of the existing literature related to the study topic and includes a history of parenting education and a review of prominent parenting education programs. Also included are parenting theories such as Baumrind's (1966) typologies, emotion coaching, and parent developmental theory. The review of the literature continues with a description of the relevant aspects of Latino culture, Latinos and single parenting, the effects of poverty on parenting practices, evidence to support that Latinos are underserved, and the difficulties encountered related to enrolling Latinos in parenting education programs. The literature review concludes with parenting education programs developed for Latinos and the methods highlighted in the existing research as effective in making parenting education services culturally relevant to Latinos.

Study Context - Reading, PA

Reading, PA, has been designated as the second poorest city in the United States for cities with a population of 65,000 people or more (Tavernise, 2011). A total of 87,990 people lived in the City of Reading in 2012, and almost 60% were Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Reading used to be home to multiple manufacturers that provided jobs for workers living in the area; however, plants such as those run by Lucent Technologies and the Dana Corporation (a car parts manufacturer) closed (Tavernise, 2011). Since 2008, more factory closings and layoffs have left the City of Reading with a poverty rate of 41% (Bruderick, 2013), with 60% of Latinos living in the city also being identified as living in poverty (City Data, 2014).

Refining Existing Research

Ceballo et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative study in Detroit, Michigan, which is denoted as a "sister" city to Reading, PA, as they are both former manufacturing-based towns with high

crime rates, high rates of unemployment, and city budgets on the brink of bankruptcy. City officials from Detroit and Reading met in November of 2012 to discuss strategies for revitalizing their respective cities as both were facing low employment levels, increasing numbers of city residents relocating to other areas, and business closures, all of which resulted in a loss of revenue for their cities. Detroit and Reading are also similar with regard to poverty rates (41% for Reading, 44% for Detroit; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011). Both cities are in the lowest 10% with regard to the safety rankings of all cities in the United States (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011).

Ceballo et al. (2012) interviewed Latina mothers living in Detroit to gain information in the mothers' own words about how their environment impacted the ways in which they parented their children. The current study was designed to expand upon the work of Ceballo et al. by gaining further information about the experiences of single Latina mothers who were living in poverty in Reading, PA. The information gathered in the current study focused on the parenting practices and experiences of these mothers as described by the participants during interviews.

Prior to an exploration of the parenting practices of Latinos, it is important to review the origins of parenting education and parenting theory.

History of Parenting Education

Federal organization and support of parenting education efforts began in the 1930s. Prior to the involvement of the federal government, parenting education efforts were small and somewhat unorganized. Programs were conducted through schools and hospitals in response to requests from parents in the communities for information regarding ideal child-rearing practices (Croake & Glover, 1977). In preparation for a Caucasian House Conference on Child Health and Protections, the Committee on the Family and Parent Education sent a questionnaire in April of

1930 to 2,533 organizations connected with the Office of Education identified as agencies that could be providing parenting education (Gruenberg, 1932). Of those questionnaires, 619 were returned and a total of 378 organizations reported conducting work consistent with parenting education (Gruenberg, 1932).

One of the outcomes of the 1932 conference was a large volume of reference material describing the types, content, and methods used in the various parenting education programs that responded to the questionnaires sent by the Committee on the Family and Parent Education (Gruenberg, 1932). An additional outcome was a list of goals desired to be achieved by the Committee on Family and Parent Education to assist parents in raising their children. The primary goals identified were for schools and colleges to provide instruction regarding "courtship, marriage, and parenthood" (Gruenberg, 1932, p. 151) and for the study of "family relationships, the processes of family life, as well as the economic and social factors operating on the family" (Gruenberg, 1932, p. 150).

The Caucasian House Conference (Gruenberg, 1932) also established the National Council of Parent Education, though funding to this council was cut in 1938 and it disbanded, leaving the parent education movement without a national organization to coordinate professional activities and guide the development of a nationwide parenting education program (Croake & Glover, 1977). As there was no national unified program or effort to provide parenting education, educators, social workers, and church leaders developed and offered programs to serve the particular needs identified in their communities. Parenting education efforts have continued since the disbanding of the National Council of Parent Education and have been sponsored by public and private agencies. Public agencies include schools, child welfare agencies, and hospitals. Private agencies include both for profit and non-profit programs

such as support groups, agencies contracted through local child welfare authorities, churches, and other community groups.

There is no single entity responsible for establishing requirements for parenting education programs. As a result, curriculum content, program delivery, staff training, and the ongoing professional development of staff working in parenting education are left to the discretion of individual providers. Historically, research surrounding parenting education has been described as "inadequate" (Croake & Glover, 1977, p. 153), "having constructs which are ill defined and ill measured" (Darling & Stenberg, 1993, p. 490), and "lacking methodological rigor" (R. Smith, 2010, p. 360). Recent researchers acknowledged that while there are many parenting education programs, none are based on an overall theoretical model regarding who parents are and how they develop in the role of parent (Mowder, 2005). As early as 1930 (Gruenberg, 1932), the process of parenting was identified as complex and involving a variety of individual, familial, biological, environmental, and social factors, making the development of effective parenting interventions and parenting education programs equally complex. It is likely that the minimal progress bemoaned by researchers in the area of parenting and parenting education is a result of the complex nature of parenting itself.

Modern parenting education programs are diverse, as some programs include content based on the beliefs and values of the program designer while others were developed based on the experiences of counselors, educators, or parents (Croake & Glover, 1977; Laborde, 2009; R. Smith, 2010). Methods of teaching vary and include groups, one-on-one, and in-home programs (Laborde, 2009). Generally, parenting education programs provide information regarding child development, personality and functioning, methods of discipline, enhancing parent–child

interactions, and theoretically-based approaches to parenting practices (Croake & Glover, 1977; Laborde, 2009; R. Smith, 2010).

Parenting Education Programs

There are literally hundreds of parenting education programs available throughout the United States (Laborde, 2009). The developers of some of the larger programs have formed the parenting education equivalent of franchises, where fees are charged to agencies desiring to use these programs. For the most part, these larger programs are backed by at least one or two outcome studies indicating their effectiveness in improving child behavior, reducing child maltreatment, enhancing the parent–child relationship, or other areas. Outcomes vary according to the purpose of the program, but the existence of well-studied parenting education programs is small as compared to the total number of programs available (R. Smith, 2010). Given the sheer number of parenting education programs, it would be impossible to describe them all. What follows are descriptions of some of the better-researched and more readily available parenting education programs.

The Incredible Years (TIY) parenting education program was developed by Dr. Carolyn Webster-Stratton and includes multiple programs for parents of children in the following age groups: birth to 1 year, 1 to 3 years, 3 to 6 years, and 6 to 12 years. The following information was obtained from the website for the program (www.incredibleyears.com). TIY uses a group format and groups usually range between eight and 15 participants. TIY has been used in hundreds of sites in at least 15 states (i.e., Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Kansas, Ohio, Oregon, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Washington). The program has also been implemented in Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Russia,

Scotland, Sweden, and Wales. More than 10,000 professionals worldwide have been trained to use this program. The focus of TIY is on strengthening parenting skills and increasing parental involvement in children's school experiences to promote children's academic and social skills. The objectives of the child training curriculum (provided in the school setting) include strengthening children's social and emotional competencies (i.e., understanding and communicating feelings, using effective problem-solving strategies, managing anger, and behaving appropriately in the classroom). TIY can be presented in a school setting and also includes a curriculum for teachers. The objectives of teacher training include strengthening teachers' classroom management strategies, increasing children's pro-social behaviors, and reducing children's classroom aggression. The teacher training program also helps teachers work with parents to support their school involvement and promote consistency between home and school. In all interventions, trained facilitators use videotaped scenes to structure the content of training sessions and stimulate group discussions and problem-solving. While there is extensive research demonstrating the effectiveness of this program, it is costly (i.e., $1,500 for program materials, $500 each year for consultation, $500 per leader for training, $500 per parent participant).

The Nurturing Parenting (NP) program is used for the treatment and prevention of child maltreatment. The following information was obtained from the program's website (www.nurturingparenting.com). Sessions can be offered in the home or in a group setting and the length of service provision runs from 12 to 48 sessions depending on the level of intervention needed (i.e., higher numbers of sessions are primarily used for families with children with severe behavioral or mental health conditions). NP is designed for parents with young children (birth to 5 years), school-aged children (5 to 11 years), and adolescents (12 to 18 years). For group

sessions, parents and their children meet in separate groups that run concurrently. The goals of the NP program are as follows: (a) to teach parents about the neurological development of children and about age-appropriate expectations; (b) to develop empathy and self-worth in parents and children; (c) to teach discipline strategies coming from a nurturing, non-violent approach; and (d) to enhance the communication skills of parents and children and establish healthy, caring relationships in families. The NP program was recently expanded to include a prenatal program, a program to be presented to Spanish-speaking clients, and a program for families where one or both parents are serving in the military. The costs of the program are reasonable and do not require extensive training. The NP program provides a training manual and video materials for instructors to be used with parenting education participants. It is highly flexible and adaptable for in-home or group sessions.

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is another nationally-known parenting education program. The following information was retrieved from the Parents as Teachers website (www.parentsasteachers.org). The PAT program is provided in one-on-one sessions conducted in the family home. PAT focuses on parents of children ranging from infants to 6 years old. Topics reviewed in sessions include child development, addressing problem behavior from a behavioral model, and the importance of reading to children and engaging in activities to stimulate development and enhance readiness for school. PAT has a strong focus on literacy and encourages parents to ensure their children's readiness for kindergarten. PAT is somewhat costly (i.e., $1,500 for an agency to be designated a PAT "affiliate," several hundred dollars to train each parent educator, and an annual renewal fee of $200 per educator).

Los Niños Bien Educados (LNBE) is a culturally adapted parenting education program developed by the Center for the Improvement of Child Caring (CICC). The program is the first

in the United States designed specifically for Latino parents and has been used for over 30 years (Alvy, 2013). Grants from the National Institute of Mental Health funded the development of the CICC's core program, the Confident Parenting Program, on which LNBE is based (Alvy, 2013). A portion of grant funding was also used to study Latino cultural values and parenting practices to assist in the development of a culturally adapted curriculum. To Latinos, the phrase bien educados (literally translated as well-educated) means being well-educated in a social sense, knowing one's place in the family, and showing respect to one's family and elders (Alvy, 2013). Cultural adaptations to the Confident Parenting Program included a lesson on acculturation adjustments, a lesson on traditional family roles, and the use of Spanish proverbs (i.e., dichos) to allow for the presentation of information in a way that is linguistically and culturally familiar (Alvy, 2013). LNBE was initially developed for parents of children ages 2 to 12, but has been used successfully with families having children from infancy through 18 years of age (Chang & Liou, 2009). It is a behavior-based program designed to teach parents to reinforce desirable behavior in their children and to appropriately address undesirable behavior without the use of physical punishment (Alvy, 2013).

LNBE is used nationwide, though there is very little research regarding its efficacy. On the program's website, the CICC (Alvy, 2013) indicates the ongoing use of LNBE despite a lack of outcome studies indicating its effectiveness for the following reasons:

- It is a behavioral parent training program and such programs have a great deal of empirical support.
- LNBE teaches child behavioral management skills, developed in the Confident Parenting Program, that have been researched and demonstrated to be effective.

- Programs addressing the cultural values and traditions of Latino American parents are extremely scarce, and with no other culturally adapted programs available, the need to implement LNBE was great.

It is worth noting that the Confident Parenting Program was studied and results were made available at the American Psychological Association Convention in 1973 (Alvy, 2013). However, the participants in the study were primarily Caucasian. Latinos participating in the study overall had poor attendance at the parenting education classes, making it difficult to say with any degree of certainty whether the "excellent results" reported by the curriculum's creators were applicable to Latino families. A qualitative research study of LNBE is included in an upcoming section of this chapter.

Parenting Theories

Baumrind's Parenting Styles

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, parenting education researchers focused on developing theories of parenting styles. Baumrind (1966) published an extensive bibliographic review of parenting research on which her theory of parenting styles was based. In this seminal work, Baumrind described three parenting styles—permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative—to account for the methods parents use in child-rearing. These parenting styles have been the subject of much research and formed the foundation of research in parenting education (Sorkhabi, 2005). Baumrind assumed normal parenting revolved around issues of control (Darling, 1999). Parents may differ in how much or how they attempt to control, but this theory assumes the primary role of parents is to teach, socialize, and influence their children. Baumrind's theory categorizes parents according to whether they are high or low in parental demandingness and responsiveness, creating the three parenting styles (Darling, 1999). Each

parenting style reflects different parental values, behaviors, and practices.

The *permissive parent* behaves toward the child in ways that are affirming, accepting, and non-punitive (Baumrind, 1966). The child is consulted with regard to household rules and explanations are given by the parent to the child for any limits imposed. Demands for responsibility and requirements for good behavior are minimal (Baumrind, 1966). The parent presents him or herself as a resource to the child to use as the child wishes, not as an active agent shaping or altering the child's behavior. The child is allowed to self-regulate as much as possible and is not encouraged to obey externally defined standards (Baumrind, 1966). The child determines goals without the parent coordinating the needs of the child and family. The parent makes no requirements that the child accommodate anyone else's needs (Sorkhabi, 2005). Permissive parents do not consistently provide organization, structure, or supportive control and are likely to ignore problematic behaviors (Sorkhabi, 2005).

Often viewed as the "polar opposite" of the permissive parent, the *authoritarian parent* attempts to evaluate, control, and shape the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a standard of conduct (usually an absolute standard; Baumrind, 1966). Oftentimes standards are theologically motivated (i.e., adherence to a set of religious principles or a code of conduct recommended by the parent's religious or theological beliefs; Baumrind, 1966). Obedience is considered a virtue, and punitive and forceful measures are used to counter the self-will of the child. The parent restricts the child's autonomy and assigns chores and household responsibilities to instill a sense of respect for work (Baumrind, 1966). The parent highly values the preservation of order in the home and does not allow any verbal "give and take" from the child (Baumrind, 1966). There is no negotiation and no compromise. Authoritarian parenting is inflexible and requires obedience to the parent's demands and meeting the parent's expectations regardless of

whether they are in alignment with the child's needs, weaknesses, and strengths. Authoritarian parents demand that the child meet socially desirable or family-centered goals without understanding the parents are responsible for helping the child achieve these goals (Sorkhabi, 2005). They are more likely to blame the child for setbacks and berate the child for failure. Authoritarian parents tend to intrude and control in ways that fail to differentiate areas in which the child can function well autonomously and where support is needed (Sorkhabi, 2005). They make inflexible demands and coerce the child into complying with demands that may not be logical or justifiable (Sorkhabi, 2005). The arbitrary and unreasonable nature of directives may be one of the reasons why reciprocity (i.e., verbal "give and take") is not a dynamic operating in this style of parenting. Authoritarian parenting demands obedience from a child consistently in a way that coerces the child to try to do what it is beyond his or her capacity to do, limits autonomy arbitrarily, and limits autonomy in ways that benefit the parent at the expense of the child (Sorkhabi, 2005).

Between the extremes of the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles is the *authoritative parenting* style. The authoritative parent attempts to use authority in specific situations and under specific circumstances (most often having to do with ensuring safety and proper socialization; Baumrind, 1966). The authoritative parent encourages verbal "give and take," shares the reasons for rules or limits, and is willing to discuss the child's reasons for not wanting to follow rules or adhere to limits (Baumrind, 1966). The authoritative parent enforces his or her perspective as the adult, but allows the child the freedom to express his or her opinion or assert a degree of autonomy (Baumrind, 1966). This type of parent uses reason, power, and shaping of the child's behavior to achieve objectives, basing decisions on what the parent believes serves the child's interests rather than on an external set of values imposed by a group

(e.g., religion) or on the child's desires. Authoritative parenting is characterized by mutual understanding, reciprocity, and flexibility, thereby enabling the parent to coordinate and balance the needs of the family with the needs of the child (Sorkhabi, 2005).

Authoritative parents pursue goals (e.g., socialization of children, academic achievement, etc.) by balancing different forms of control with different ways of supporting autonomy (Sorkhabi, 2005). They provide structure and support to assist the child in achieving goals while overcoming challenges such as setbacks and frustration. They give autonomy when the child demonstrates competence or makes a reasonable request for autonomy (Sorkhabi, 2005). They insist on compliance and redirect any child behavior that is self-defeating or counter to the needs of the family or society. This insistence is performed in a way that is firm but fair, and parents are able to justify their reasoning because their demands are in fact reasonable (Sorkhabi, 2005). The use of reason allows the child to view the parent's directives as necessary instead of arbitrary and issued only because the parent wants to exert power or control (Sorkhabi, 2005).

Expanding Baumrind's Typology

Maccoby and Martin (1983) added a fourth parenting style to Baumrind's typology—the *uninvolved parent* (also known as rejecting or neglecting). Uninvolved parents are neither responsive nor demanding. They do not provide structure in the home, do not monitor their children, are not supportive, and may reject their children or neglect parenting responsibilities (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Uninvolved parents are likely to do whatever is necessary to minimize the amount of time and effort they have to spend engaged in parenting activities. They also tend to keep the child at an emotional distance and respond in such a way as to reduce the child making demands (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Baumrind's (1966) typology of parenting operates along two dimensions: control

(demandingness) and warmth (responsiveness). Greenspan (2006) argued the authoritative parenting style idealized by Baumrind does not account for differentiated responses to occasions for discipline. His suggestion was to add "tolerance" to the factors of demandingness and responsiveness. *Tolerance* indicates the degree to which the parent can identify occasions when discipline is or is not required. Greenspan offered the example of a child saying "I hate you!" to the parent in response to being denied a want or being required to do something the child does not want to do. According to Baumrind's model, the authoritative parent would correct the child and establish him or herself as the parental authority. Greenspan suggested a better option is to acknowledge the child's upset and recognize the behavior (i.e., angry defiance) as being developmentally appropriate, resulting in the parent tolerating the behavior. He advised that a *harmonious* parent is better than an authoritative parent. A harmonious parent maintains warmth, tolerance, and enough control to ensure safety and teach proper socialization without becoming oppressive (Greenspan, 2006).

Emotion Coaching

In alignment with Greenspan's (2006) view of the harmonious parent is the parenting practice of *emotion coaching*, a form of parenting education that focuses on the emotional interaction between parents and children and encourages parents to teach their children social competence. *Emotional comp*etence (i.e., the ability to regulate emotions and understand their meaning) enhances social interactions and influences behavior. Deficits in emotional competence are frequently seen in children with social and behavioral problems (Havighurst, Harley, & Prior, 2004).

Emotion coaching teaches parents to be aware of their child's emotions, helps the child to label emotions, validate the child's emotions, and helps the child problem-solve (Havighurst et

al., 2004). Emotion coaching helps the child learn methods of self-soothing, inhibits negative affect, and focuses attention. Children who receive emotion coaching have stronger social skills, display more pro-social behavior, and have better cognitive abilities (Havighurst et al., 2004).

Dismissive or disapproving parental responses to displays of emotion are associated with increased aggression and poorer emotion regulation in children (Havighurst et al., 2004). Dismissive and criticizing responses teach children that emotions are not important and leave them feeling the emotion intensely, but with no ability to self-soothe or respond appropriately. Emotion coaching teaches parents to acknowledge the child's emotion at a low intensity and problem-solve with the child while maintaining limits on behavior (Havighurst et al., 2004). For example, when a child expresses boredom and disappointment about missing a favorite television program the child is allowed to articulate these feelings and the parent validates the feelings. Then the parent and child collaborate and problem-solve to address the boredom. Ideas can include such things as engaging in an alternate activity or watching an alternate television program. Research indicates teaching emotion coaching and supporting children's emotions can result in reductions in the intensity of negative emotions associated with behavior problems (Havighurst et al., 2004).

Parent Developmental Theory

In addition to parenting styles and emotion coaching, parenting theorists have explored the role of parenting as a developmental process for the parent. Mowder (1993, 1997, 2005) identified the need for a theoretical model regarding who parents are and how they develop in their parenting role. Unlike Baumrind (1966, 1967), Mowder (1993) identified parenting goals as being based in role identity rather than on the parent's degree of control. Mowder (2005) defined parenting as the:

> Continuous set of child rearing behaviors performed by a parent in the context of the parent-child relationship . . . The behaviors are part of a social interaction between the parent and child and are performed within a social context (i.e. the family, community, and culture). (p. 52)

According to Mowder (1993), parenting refers to behaviors performed by a group of individuals called "parents" for the purpose of fulfilling a role. If parents see the role of a parent as to primarily be a disciplinarian, they will focus on ensuring children always behave in acceptable ways and parenting behavior will center on discipline issues and issues of control (Mowder, Harvey, Moy, & Pedro, 1995). If parents see their role as primarily to nurture and love their children, their behavior will demonstrate this focus. Whatever the parent perceives his or her role to be, those beliefs provide the framework for parenting behaviors (Mowder et al., 1995). Parenting is primarily learned and "reflects parents' education, experience, and knowledge regarding parenting" (Mowder, 2005, p. 55). Parents learn about parenting from their own experiences as children in a relationship with their parents, observing other parents, their relationships with their children, family dynamics, and social and cultural factors (Mowder, 2005).

Mowder's (2005) parent development theory (PDT) posits that people conceptualize the role of "parent" based on their own prior experiences in a parent–child relationship, their feelings and thoughts about being a parent, and their knowledge and experience with regard to raising a child (Mowder, 2005). PDT provides a view of parenthood in which individuals develop unique definitions about what being a parent means; these definitions can change throughout the lifespan (e.g., prior to being a parent, during parenting, and after children have grown into adulthood; Mowder, 2005). The factors affecting changes in cognitions about parenting include

the individual's experiences, individual personality, education, becoming a parent, the parent–child relationship, and the child's individual characteristics and specific needs (Mowder, 2005). PDT states that over time, individuals' parenting cognitions are relatively stable but also flexible, meaning they can change as people encounter new information and experiences (Mowder, 2005). Parenting cognitions also have a direct correspondence to parenting behavior in that parents tend to engage in parenting behavior in a way that is consistent with their views about parenting and the parenting role (Fox & Brice, 2001).

Parents' perceptions of their role are also influenced by their growing, changing children (Mowder, 2006). For example, infants need continuous protection and care. As a result, the parenting role is full of physical caregiving activities such as feeding, cuddling, and diapering. As the infant matures into a toddler, preschooler, and school-age child, his or her developmental needs change and parenting involves such activities as encouraging autonomy or exploration.

According to PDT, parents perceive the parent role as including six primary characteristics: discipline, bonding, protection and general welfare, education, sensitivity, and responsivity (Mowder, 2005). *Discipline* involves establishing rules or setting limits. *Bonding* includes the love, affection, regard, and warmth parents demonstrate toward their children. *Protection and general welfare* includes ensuring children are protected from harm as well as providing for their basic physical needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter). *Sensitivity* reflects accuracy in identifying and responding to children's needs and *responsivity* is the degree to which parents respond to their children's needs (Mowder, 2006).

The parent role is a cognitive schema that starts developing in early childhood as children begin to identify various social roles (e.g., siblings, gender roles, friends) and continues developing throughout the lifespan. Mowder et al. (1995) found parents believe the importance

of each of the six characteristics of the parenting role (i.e., bonding, discipline, education, protection and general welfare, responsivity, and sensitivity) shifts with changes in children's developmental levels (e.g., infants/toddlers, preschoolers, school-aged, adolescents, etc.).

When considering the parent role, a parent's culture informs almost all aspects of parenting, including family roles, directing child behavior, family responsibilities, and the best strategies to use when parenting (Brotman et al., 2011; Mowder, 2005). Culture informs children, adolescents, and adults about their roles in the family. An individual's view of parenting can be influenced not only by his or her own background and experiences, but also by the child and factors related to the child such as age, personality, gender, and special needs (Mowder, 2005).

Latino Culture

As the Latino population has grown, the number of studies on children and families of Latinos has also grown, but at a level many researchers consider to be inadequate (Bermudez et al., 2011; Bernal & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2009; Halgunseth & Ipsa, 2012). Bernal and Domenech-Rodriguez (2009) searched all of the literature catalogued in the PsycINFO database and found the overall production of research referencing Latino children or families represented less than one half of 1%. The authors argued the existing knowledge base so rarely includes Latinos it has unknown validity and potentially limited relevance to Latino populations. Bermudez et al. (2011) agreed the literature that "elucidates the experiences of Latino parents" (p. 364) is limited and more is needed to ensure interventions meet the needs of Latinos. The following section describes facets unique to Latino culture and their relevance in studying parenting practices.

Familismo

Latino families stress the importance of family unity and family connections (Falicov, 2009). Latinos are committed to their families and rely on family members as part of their support group (Chang & Liou, 2009; Garcia et al., 2012). While it is true that some ethnic groups other than Latinos are also family-centered, *familismo*, or the value of putting family above all else, reflects a more cohesive support structure as compared to other ethnic groups in the United States (Chang & Liou, 2009; Falicov, 2005). Familismo reflects the interdependence of family members and "involves extended family members sharing the nurturing and disciplining of children, financial responsibility, companionship for lonely or isolated members, and problem solving" (Falicov, 2005, p. 234). Latinos value this network of interpersonal relationships that is sustained by reciprocity and feelings of loyalty and the network serves as a primary support system in times of stress (Celada, 2010).

One of the ways in which familismo can be observed is through Latino families attempting to live in close geographical proximity to family members or to extended family (Falicov, 2005). Another aspect of familismo is extended family support networks such as the *Compradrazgo* (i.e., being a god-parent, a pseudo-kinship assignment in Latin America; Chang, 2007).

Respeto

Respeto is another important belief in Latino culture (Aguilar, 2010; J. P. Cardona et al., 2009; Johnson, 2009) and is directly translated as "respect," but means much more. It is the "appropriate deferential behavior toward others on the basis of age, social position, economic status, and sex" (Comas-Diaz & Duncan, 1985, p. 465). Falicov (2006) pointed out the differences between respeto and respect, with the latter denoting detachment and self-confidence

within an egalitarian framework and the former denoting "highly emotionalized dependence and dutifulness, within a fairly authoritarian framework" (p. 48). Latino children are taught from an early age to obey and show respect to their elders (especially their parents), to obey other forms of authority, and to obey God (Chang, 2007). A person who demonstrates respeto for parents or other elders is considered to be well-educated in the Latino culture (Falicov, 2006).

Personalismo

Personalismo is the "mindset that values human relationships over formal rules and regulations. Warmth and familiarity in a relationship are central to the establishment and maintaining of it" (Montilla & Smith, 2006, p. 40). According to Johnson (2009), one of the main goals in Latino parenting is for children to learn interpersonal skills, including respect for authority and the ability to socially relate well to others. For Latinos, *una persona bien educada* (i.e., a well-educated person) refers both to an individual with formal education as well as to a person who has good social skills and interpersonal relationships (Chang, 2007). Personalismo emphasizes respectful, friendly personal relationships with communication that is high in warmth and low in disagreement (Falicov, 2009). According to Celada (2010), "This cultural value might lead to an understanding of Latinos as people-oriented rather than action-oriented" (p. 11).

Fatalismo

Fatalismo, or fatalism, reflects the Latino belief that happenings in life are under God's control, reducing the power an individual has to make changes in the environment (Celada, 2010). Spirituality and religion (most often Catholic) are important influences in Latino culture (Sue & Sue, 2002). Many Latinos have a strong belief in the use of natural healers, folk remedies, and the power of prayer as methods of remedying medical and mental health issues as well as resolving a crisis (Andres-Hyman, Ortiz, Anez, Paris, & Davidson, 2006). Studies have

shown Latina mothers attend religious services more frequently, pray more often, and use more religious coping as compared to Caucasian mothers (Aguilar, 2010; Dunn & O'Brien, 2009).

Motherhood in Latino Culture

For many Latinas, motherhood is one of the most important roles in their lives (Chang & Liou, 2009; Kutsche, 1983). Motherhood is romanticized in Latino culture and is associated with the "ideal" mother, the Virgin Mary (Duffey, 2000). Kutsche (1983) conducted 15 years of ethnographic fieldwork in New Mexico and reported that while both parents helped to raise their children, the mother was identified as the primary caregiver, especially in early childhood. Research indicates Latino children have closer relationships with their mothers than with their fathers (Chang & Liou, 2009). Researchers have speculated this may be the result of the Latino tradition in which the mother takes on the primary family responsibilities, leading her to develop very strong relationships with her children (Chang & Liou, 2009).

Latinos and Single Parenting

In the United States, single mothers as the head of household have become increasingly prevalent. The rates of single mothers are much higher among minority groups than for Caucasian women (Wildsmith, 2004). Present statistics indicate half of all women will be single mothers at some point in their lives (Snyder, McLaughlin, & Findeis, 2006). The current study was conducted in the City of Reading, PA, where U.S. Census Bureau (2012) data indicate that among Latinos, single mothers serve as the head of just under 30% of the total number of households. Multiple studies have indicated single mothers experience many stress-inducing challenges with regard to providing for and raising their children (Aguilar, 2010; Snyder et al., 2006; Zhan & Pandey, 2004). They often have increased psychological stress, less social support, and more difficulties in caring for their children (Aguilar, 2010). Latina single mothers

face additional challenges such as discrimination and stigmatization (Correa & Alvarez-McHatton, 2005). Correa and Alvarez-McHatton (2005) performed a qualitative study with single Latina mothers as the participants and found that due to discrimination and language barriers, the mothers had feelings of worthlessness. The mothers relayed feelings of helplessness, being overwhelmed, and feeling isolated.

Single mothers in general are more likely to earn incomes below the poverty standard and are far more likely to be represented among the poor (Aguilar, 2010). Single Latina mothers face the additional challenges that come with being an ethnic minority, which serves to increase the potential for negative outcomes for them and for their children (Aguilar, 2010).

Effects of Poverty on Parenting Practices

Throughout the literature regarding parenting practices, the association between poverty and inadequate, neglectful, and even abusive parenting practices has been documented extensively (Evans, 2004; Paxson & Waldfogel, 2003; Slack et al., 2003; J. Smith & Brooks-Gunn, 1997). In addition, there is an inverse relationship between income level and every form of child abuse and neglect (Slack et al., 2003). This by no means should be taken as evidence that all parents living in poverty are doomed to abuse or neglect their children, but instead points to the increased risk for children living in poverty and the need for social service organizations to provide parenting support to impoverished families.

Research on poverty and parenting suggests economic stress is connected to more hostile parenting practices such as the use of inappropriate physical punishment, harsh discipline practices, and higher levels of neglect (Paxson & Waldfogel, 2003). Paxson and Waldfogel (2003) examined nationwide data surrounding rates of child maltreatment from the National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) database from 1990 to 1996 and found

families living in poverty, particularly those with absent fathers, were associated with higher rates of child maltreatment.

Research into families living in poverty often examined the effects of poverty from an ecological perspective. *Ecological risk* reflects a combination of financial strain, housing problems, and neighborhood problems. These factors frequently occur together and are representative of the pervasive nature of poverty (Prelow et al., 2010). Prelow et al. (2010) utilized an ecological perspective to examine the effect of poverty on the parenting practices of 535 Latina mothers. They asked the mothers to assess perceived financial strain, neighborhood problems (e.g., violence in their neighborhood), housing problems (e.g., difficulty finding safe housing in good repair), social network support, and psychological distress (via the Brief Symptom Inventory). The researchers then measured maternal monitoring (i.e., supervision and frequent contact with children during the day), mother–child trust and communication, and maternal academic involvement. Results indicated higher levels of ecological risk were associated with fewer positive parenting practices. The researchers posited that psychological distress increased as ecological risk increased and affected parenting practices. The researchers pointed to the importance of intervention programs (e.g., parenting education) including components to help mothers access community resources designed to potentially reduce ecological risk, such as subsidized housing programs.

An interesting aspect of the Prelow et al. (2010) study was the finding that perceived levels of social support moderated the effect of ecological risk on psychological distress. Prelow et al. suggested the provision of group parenting education programs for Latina mothers could facilitate the development of social support networks and reduce the impact of poverty on parenting practices.

Slack, Holl, McDaniel, Yoo, and Bolger (2004) examined the influence of poverty and parenting characteristics on child neglect. The researchers examined the records of 583 families receiving welfare benefits in the Midwestern United States and found families in the most impoverished communities were at the highest risk of neglecting their children based on the number of reports of child neglect to Child Protective Services (CPS) in their region.

Helping parents who are experiencing poverty can be challenging if the professionals offering the help are unaware of the dynamics of classism (Appio, Chambers, & Mao, 2013). In a qualitative study examining the experiences of individuals living in poverty when they participated in mental health treatment, findings emphasized the importance of ensuring participants feel valued and respected (Appio et al., 2013). In addition, a strengths-based approach was encouraged to combat the shame experienced by those living in poverty (Appio et al., 2013). Further, helping professionals were cautioned against attributing difficulties with treatment compliance or psychological distress to the personal pathology of the clients (Appio et al., 2013). Living in poverty comes with a tremendous amount of stress (Evans, 2004; Prelow et al., 2010). Professionals who are unaccustomed to living under the kind of daily duress experienced by the individuals they are trying to help are advised to keep the impact of the stress of poverty in mind when working with families who are experiencing poverty.

Latinos as Under Researched and Underserved

Despite Latinos being the largest ethnic minority population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), they are under represented both in the research and in medical health, mental health, and community service delivery (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009). Bermudez et al. (2011) agreed literature that "elucidates the experiences of Latino parents" (p. 364) is limited. While there is a great deal of literature documenting the effectiveness of parenting education

programs with non-Latino Caucasian families, researchers have cautioned against assuming the evidence provided by those studies can be generalized to minority populations, such as Latinos (Bernal & Scharrón-del-Río, 2001; Chambless & Hollon, 1998; Eyeberg, 2005).

While the effectiveness of parenting education programs for Latinos has not been widely studied, research surrounding health disparities demonstrates Latino families underutilize evidence-based parenting programs and interventions (Flores et al., 2005). Identified barriers to the utilization of such services include a lack of culturally sensitive resources, distrust of institutions, fear of deportation, and lack of social supports in the community (Garcia et al., 2012; Vericker et al., 2007). In addition, while the number of Latinos nationwide continues to grow, the development, implementation, and dissemination of parenting education programs that are culturally responsive to Latino families remain limited (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2010; Garcia et al., 2012).

Limited access to services provided in a manner consistent with Latino values and practices is another area of concern. Garcia et al. (2012) conducted a study to identify the barriers Latino families experience in accessing *culturally congruent* services. The term culturally congruent was used in reference to service providers (e.g., mental health, parenting education, domestic violence counseling, etc.) with bilingual and bicultural staff whose programs enrolled and regularly provided services to Latino families in the community (Garcia et al., 2012). The researchers conducted focus groups at four Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) offices in Washington State in areas heavily populated by Latinos. Participants were caseworkers who had worked in child welfare for at least 6 months and who consistently worked primarily with Latino children and their families.

The focus group meetings were conducted using an interview guide and were audio-taped, transcribed, and coded (Garcia et al., 2012). In reviewing the interviews and coding the data, several themes were identified pertaining to the barriers Latino parents faced when attempting to engage in community-based services such as parenting education. The first barrier to adequate service provision was the lack of bilingual or bicultural staff. While most regions with a large Latino population had Spanish-speaking services available, availability was disproportionate to need, resulting in long waiting lists (Garcia et al., 2012).

Falicov (2009) identified language proficiency as crucial to establishing meaningful relationships with Latino clients. Limited English proficiency can impact whether Latino parents are aware of services or resources in their area that are able to support their roles as parents (Falicov, 2009; Garcia et al., 2012). Even if Latino parents were able to enroll in a parenting education program staffed by Spanish-speaking workers, service providers were often available only during typical business hours (i.e., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.), meaning parents with jobs have to sacrifice work hours and wages in order to attend (Garcia et al., 2012). In addition, bilingual staff did not necessarily mean bicultural staff, with the latter being optimal because they are knowledgeable about Latino cultural traditions and values. Poverty impacted participation in that Latino parents living in poverty could not afford transportation to or co-payments and fees associated with enrollment in parenting education or counseling services (Garcia et al., 2012).

Another barrier to participation in services was residency status (Garcia et al., 2012). Undocumented Latino immigrants were reluctant to access services for fear of immigration officials somehow being alerted. Even for Latinos who were legal residents, fear and distrust of authorities and institutions served as impediments to seeking services (Garcia et al., 2012). While the number of participants in the study was small ($N = 17$), the barriers identified mirrored those

found in a much larger study conducted at the University of California-Davis (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012).

In a study exploring the reasons Latinos are underserved, Aguilar-Gaxiola et al. (2012) found similar barriers to accessing services and identified barriers sourced in Latino culture. According to Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., Latinos are less likely to voluntarily seek help than are those from non-Latino groups, and when they do seek help is it usually only when things have reached a crisis point. This is important to note, as much of parenting education is preventative in nature, meaning it is designed to enhance parenting skills to prevent child maltreatment and to enhance parent–child interactions and relationships prior to a crisis.

Aguilar-Gaxiola et al. (2012) also identified three Latino cultural values that influence the delivery of services to Latinos: (a) familismo, (b) respeto, and (c) personalismo. Familismo is a cultural value focused on the contribution of extended family and the importance of prioritizing the needs of the family ahead of any individual need (Garza & Watts, 2010). Programs or services focused only on the "identified client," or in the case of parenting education, the parents only, may not be attractive to Latinos as one of their primary cultural values is the importance of the family as a unit. Respeto is a cultural value focused on the mutual respect between clients and providers (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012). It also includes understanding the hierarchy of the family in Latino culture with elders and males as the decision-makers and as having the most influence in the family (Garza & Watts, 2010). Personalismo relates to the importance of close, personal relationships (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012). Utilizing a person-centered approach emphasizing empathy, attentiveness, and warmth helps build strong relationships (Garza & Watts, 2010). In addition, using formal titles (e.g., *señor* and *señora*) shows respect and can convey an understanding of the client's culture (Garza & Watts, 2010). Services provided in an

environment where Latino parents experience all three of these Latino cultural values increases the likelihood that the parents will remain involved and successfully complete services (Falicov, 2009; Garza & Watts, 2010).

Another barrier to Latinos seeking mental health or other community-based services, such as parenting education, is a *cultural deficit perspective* (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012). Deficit thinking is common in institutions providing services to minorities and takes the position that Latinos are responsible for their failure to access or utilize available services because they do not put enough effort into seeking such services (Yosso, 2005). The cultural deficit perspective takes the view that minorities are in a position of lack due to some failure on their part to act. It also contributes to the attitude that minorities suffer less from discrimination than they do an unwillingness to adhere to the norms of majority culture (Yosso, 2005). Were they merely to conform to majority culture standards, they might find the disparity between themselves and those of the majority to be lessened. Deficit thinking plays a role in the limited amount of research investigating Latino parents' participation in prevention and intervention services such as parenting education and also limits policy and procedural changes that could serve to enhance the accessibility of services for Latinos (Yosso, 2005).

Problems with Enrollment and Participation

Poor enrollment and lack of attendance are common themes found throughout the literature pertaining to Latinos and parenting education programs. This can be found even among programs tailored specifically to meet the needs of this community. Hypotheses abound with regard to the reasons for poor attendance and high dropout rates and include long work hours (Bermudez et al., 2011), family commitments taking precedence over the needs of the individual (i.e., parent; J. P. Cardona et al., 2009), illiteracy in both Spanish and English (Chang, 2007), and

fears regarding residency status (Falicov, 2009). Migration patterns can also affect the enrollment and participation of Latinos in parenting education programs. Lichter and Johnson (2009) found a trend of Latinos moving away from "traditional gateway" (p. 497) cities or points of entry into the United States to new destinations based on employment opportunities. However, the trends were seen most among well-educated and skilled Latinos, while less educated populations tended to remain in the cities to which they initially immigrated (Lichter & Johnson, 2009).

Proven strategies to enhance attendance and reduce dropout rates have not yet come to light, though some research indicated the use of culturally adapted curricula for Latinos can result in better participation in parenting education programs. For example, Kumpfer, Alvarado, Smith, and Bellamy (2002) conducted research to determine the utility of culturally adapting a parenting education program. The researchers utilized the Strengthening Families program, a drug use prevention and parenting education program targeted at parents with children ages 10 to 14. The program was provided annually through schools, with standard versions utilized for the first 2 years and culturally adapted versions (for Latinos) utilized the next 2 years. Results indicated much better participation and retention rates for Latino parents when the culturally adapted program was utilized.

Despite awareness of the need to increase access to and use of community-based services such as parenting education, there are few evidence-based recommendations about how to modify these services to be more culturally attuned (Aguilar, 2010; Bernal & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2009; Eyeberg, 2005; Falicov, 2009). Several methods of improving services for ethnic minorities have been proposed, including modifying service delivery systems (e.g., employing bilingual staff), utilizing parenting education programs that are likely to be culturally

congruent, and creating new parenting education programs that incorporate Latino cultural values into the programs themselves (Rogler, Malgady, Constantino, & Blumenthal, 1987).

There is also disagreement in the literature about the efficacy of adapting existing parenting education programs to consider cultural differences between Caucasians and Latinos. Qualitative data indicate Latino participants report getting more information and enjoyment from participating in parenting education programs that take their cultural views and practices into account (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009). Quantitative studies offer mixed reviews, with some indicating a slight advantage for culturally adapted programs and others showing no advantage (Falicov, 2009).

Additionally, there is disagreement in the literature about whether it is sufficient to provide parenting education to Latinos in a format that is culturally sensitive or whether culturally adapted programs are more effective in teaching parenting skills and reducing the risk of child maltreatment (Kumpfer et al., 2002). The term *culturally sensitive* means the program was translated from English to Spanish and was reviewed by native Spanish-speakers working in education or child welfare to ensure participants will understand the material (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009). *Culturally adapted* programs are not just translated, they take into consideration the cultural values, life experiences, and traditions of minority populations (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009). One study that provided an example of how incorporating these cultural factors can be beneficial was conducted by Johnson (2009) to investigate a parenting education program for Puerto Rican mothers.

Johnson (2009) conducted a year-long ethnographical study to investigate a literacy enhancement and parenting education program in Chicago. The participants were Puerto Rican mothers. During the study, many of the participants offered feedback that middle class

Caucasians parent differently than lower to middle class Latinas. Participants discussed resenting being given strategies such as "time out," as they considered them "White lady ways" to which they could not relate (Johnson, 2009). Many of the mothers in attendance were raised in homes where physical punishment was used (e.g., the "chancla," a sandal or flip flop used for spanking) and believed it taught them respect (Johnson, 2009). Many had been taking care of children since they were children, as their mothers had to work and it was expected they would help care for their younger siblings. Because they had much child caretaking experience, some resented being told they needed to know the "right" way to parent (Johnson, 2009). The participants disagreed with the "best practices" movement. They were not interested in what data indicated worked for Caucasian parents. They reported knowing what worked for them and wanted parenting instruction that respected their knowledge and their culture. Further, they wanted to be acknowledged as "experts" on their children (Johnson, 2009). They desired validation of their struggle as poor, single mothers trying to "make do" with minimal resources and little support (Johnson, 2009).

Driscoll et al. (2009) conducted a survey study to examine the parenting values held by Latino immigrant mothers in the United States and focused on those values considered important to be a "successful" parent. The authors indicated there is a need to understand parenting values among ethnic minority groups in order to avoid a possible majority culture bias in the standards set for "appropriate" or "ideal" parenting practices (i.e., the "White lady ways" referred to in the Johnson, [2009] study). The authors took the position that most parenting education programs in the United States are based on Anglo-American values, so it is not surprising that parenting interventions with minority families have had mixed results (Driscoll et al., 2009).

The researchers surveyed 98 Latino immigrant mothers living in the United States with at

least one child between the ages of 1 and 12 years living in the Boston, MA, or Washington, DC, areas (Driscoll et al., 2009). The study was designed to answer two questions: (a) What are the parenting qualities that Latino immigrant mothers value most? and (b) How do Latino immigrant mothers' own parenting values differ from the values they believe to be most important for Anglo-American mothers? (Driscoll et al., 2009). The researchers hypothesized that immigrant mothers would endorse values that are relational (i.e., familismo) and that support parental authority (i.e., respeto). They further hypothesized that Latino mothers would report mothers of the dominant culture value low parental control and self-actualizing qualities (e.g., being creative, children being independent) more than do Latino mothers.

The participants completed a demographic form and the Parent-Centered Values Questionnaire (PCVQ). When it was developed, the questionnaire was written in Spanish (versus being written in English and translated to Spanish). Native Spanish speakers from a variety of countries were asked to review the questionnaire and provide feedback regarding the ease with which it could be understood by Latinos from different countries or different social classes (Driscoll et al., 2009).

It was discovered that close family relationships, the importance of being a good role model, and having firm control of children were highly rated (Driscoll et al., 2009). Specifically, they noted being loving, setting firm limits, and being honest as the most valued qualities. Participants indicated mothers in the dominant culture valued low parental control and having economic resources more than did Latino mothers. Specifically, participants rated having economic resources and giving freedom to their children as the parenting values they believed were most important to Anglo-American mothers (Driscoll et al., 2009).

The results of the study supported the notion that Latino parenting values may be more

consistent with an authoritative parenting style. The authors concluded it may be stressful for Latino mothers to live in a society where the dominant values differ from their own—particularly given Latinos' emphasis on family and community (Driscoll et al., 2009). They may desire support from their community in raising children, but being in the minority it can be difficult for them to find the support they seek (Driscoll et al., 2009).

One of the strengths of this study was participants came from 20 different countries. Despite participants in this study coming from a wide variety of Latino countries, values were similar across countries of origin. These results can serve to ease researchers' concerns about the inability to generalize across varied countries of origin (Driscoll et al., 2009).

Bermudez et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study with 20 Latina women that offered insight into the aspects of parenting education valued by Latinas. The women participated in a follow-up interview after completing a parenting education program. The parenting education program was a 14-week, 90-minute session program. All of the women were of Mexican descent, from the southwest United States, and were predominately lower to middle class income status.

Classes were offered in Spanish with Spanish reading materials (Bermudez et al., 2011). Time was allotted in each session for the participants to bring up any parenting problems or dilemmas they wanted to share with the group and to recount any positive interactions with their children. The parenting education program was strengths-based and focused on the enhancement of parenting skills. It also encouraged participants to share stories of parenting traditions or "rules" learned from their families of origin and how they impacted their parenting practices (Bermudez et al., 2011).

Participants were invited to a 1 to 2 hour individual semi-structured interview after the parenting classes were completed. They were asked, “What was your experience of participating in the parenting classes?,” “What was the most helpful or the best thing for you personally?,” “What could be done to improve the classes for you personally?,” and “What suggestions do you have to make these classes more useful to Latina mothers parenting without the support of their child or children’s fathers?”

Six themes were identified as describing the essence of the phenomenon for the participants: (a) participants gained knowledge regarding child-rearing practices, (b) class process was important, (c) participants gained an increased awareness of themselves as mothers, (d) participants’ experiences of the class varied, (e) the researchers’ experiences were meaningful and empowering, and (f) the interview process was meaningful and empowering (Bermudez et al., 2011). The participants indicated their level of comfort in class was increased because the classes were conducted in Spanish and with Latina facilitators. A few of the participants expressed appreciation for the program being strength-based, as in the past they had experienced mental health or child welfare professionals who pathologized their method of parenting, particularly with regard to the interdependence of family members and the use of multiple caregivers in the family for one child (Bermudez et al., 2011).

Parenting Education Programs for Latinos

There are two parenting education programs adapted specifically for use with Latinos—the NP’s Crianza con Cariño (literally translated to “growth with caring”) and a program developed from the Confident Parenting Program called Los Niños Bien Educados (LNBE; literally translated to “the children well-educated”). It is worth noting that a highly rated and well-researched parenting education program, TIY, purports efficacy with Latinos but does not

have a curriculum tailored specifically to that population. TIY suggests group leaders adapt lessons and exercises on an as-needed basis to meet the needs of participants.

Though these programs may assist single Latina mothers, there are limitations surrounding the efficacy and review of the programs. The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMSHA) National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices are the two official bodies responsible for evaluating human services programs (including parenting education programs) and determining whether there is adequate research to declare the programs to be evidence-based. The CEBC (2014) uses a system to rate programs on a scale from 1 (*multiple studies published in peer-reviewed journals*) to 5 (*the program proposes concerning practices that pose risks to children*). The CEBC uses a "not able to be rated" (NR) classification for programs that do not have adequate research to support their efficacy. The NP for school-aged children (5 to 12 years) was rated as a 3, meaning there is "promising research evidence" to indicate the program's effectiveness. While the CEBC noted there are no randomized controlled trials of the NP, several controlled studies published in peer-reviewed journals demonstrated the benefits of the program. The birth through preschool age program for NP has yet to be rated as it is still under review. The LNBE program was unable to be rated due to a lack of peer-reviewed research on the program. TIY was given the highest rating (i.e., 1) for its program overall, but this rating does not specifically take into account research conducted on the efficacy of TIY for Latinos. The NP for Spanish-speaking families and the LNBE program are culturally adapted programs and were developed specifically to take into account the traditions, experiences, and values of Latinos, but are limited in their generalizability because they have not yet been rated by the CEBC.

The NP is used for the treatment and prevention of child maltreatment. Sessions can be offered in the home or in a group setting and the length of service provision runs from 12 to 48 sessions depending on the level of intervention needed (the higher number of sessions primarily for families with children with severe behavioral or mental health conditions). NP is designed for parents with young children (birth to 5 years), school-aged children (5 to 11 years), and adolescents (12 to 18 years). For group sessions, parents and their children meet in separate groups that run concurrently. The goals of the NP are as follows: (a) to teach parents about the neurological development of children and about age-appropriate expectations; (b) to develop empathy and self-worth in parents and children; (c) to teach discipline strategies coming from a nurturing, non-violent approach; and (d) to enhance the communication skills of parents and children and establish healthy, caring relationships in families. The costs of the program are reasonable and do not require extensive training. The NP provides a training manual and video materials for instructors and to be used with parenting education participants. It is highly flexible and adaptable for in-home or group sessions.

LNBE is a culturally adapted parenting education program developed by the CICC. The program was the first in the United States designed specifically for Latino parents and has been used for over 30 years (Alvy, 2013). Grants from the National Institute of Mental Health funded the development of CICC's core program, Confident Parenting, on which LNBE is based (Alvy, 2013). A portion of grant funding was also used to study Latino cultural values and parenting practices to assist in the development of a culturally adapted curriculum.

To Latinos, the phrase bien educados (literally translated as well-educated) means being well-educated in a social sense, knowing one's place in the family, and showing respect to the family and to one's elders (Alvy, 2013). Cultural adaptations to the Confident Parenting Program

included a lesson on acculturation adjustments, a lesson on traditional family roles, and the use of Spanish proverbs (i.e., dichos) to allow for the presentation of information in a way that is linguistically and culturally familiar (Alvy, 2013). LNBE was initially developed for parents of children ages 2 to 12, but has been used successfully with families having children from infancy through 18 years of age (Chang & Liou, 2009). It is a behavior-based program that teaches parents to reinforce desirable behavior in their children and how to appropriately address undesirable behavior without the use of physical punishment (Alvy, 2013).

LNBE is used nationwide though there is little research regarding its efficacy. On the program website, the CICC (Alvy, 2013) indicates the ongoing use of LNBE despite a lack of outcome studies indicating its effectiveness for the following reasons:

- It is a behavioral parent training program and such programs have a great deal of empirical support.
- LNBE teaches child behavioral managements skills, developed in the Confident Parenting Program, that have been researched and demonstrated to be effective.
- Programs addressing the cultural values and traditions of Latino American parents are extremely scarce, and with no other culturally adapted programs available, the need to implement LNBE was great.

It is worth noting that the Confident Parenting Program was studied and results were made available at the American Psychological Association Convention in 1973 (Alvy, 2013). However, the participants in the study were primarily Caucasian. Latinos participating in the study overall had poor attendance of the parenting education classes, making it difficult to say with any degree of certainty whether the “excellent results” reported by the curriculum’s creators would be applicable to Latino families.

Making Parenting Education Programs Culturally Congruent

NP and LNBE are two well-known and relatively widely used parenting education programs designed specifically for Latino parents. Recent research, although it is limited to a few studies, offered potential strategies for the development of additional culturally congruent programs. J. P. Cardona et al. (2009) conducted a qualitative study to explore with Latino immigrant parents their perceptions about the relevance of culturally adapting an evidence-based parenting intervention. A secondary goal was to learn which aspects of the parenting education program participants believed should be included in the culturally adapted parenting intervention. The study included 60 participants from Latino community centers in the Midwestern United States. Data were collected via focus group interviews conducted in 11 individual group meetings, each lasting 90 minutes (each participant only attended once). The groups included men and women. Each session started with the question, "What themes should be included in a Latino parenting education program?" Follow-up and probing questions were developed as themes emerged from the early group sessions. These questions were used in the group sessions held as the data gathering continued throughout the study. The themes identified by the earlier participants included understanding the importance of family (familismo) and family roles. Parents discussed the fact that it was common for Latino children to be raised by the whole family (including grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) and stressed the increased interdependence of Latino family members as compared to the more individualized approach of the majority culture (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009).

Additional themes included instilling values in children reflecting Latino culture, especially teaching them how to be a part of the family first and an individual second (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009). Respeto (respect) emerged as an important value to emphasize in parenting

education. Participants discussed the importance of children respecting authority and being obedient to their elders as it was assumed the elders would know what was in the best interests of the family. All of the participants verbalized their desire to participate in parenting education to benefit their children, but also wanted a program that took their values into account (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009).

Generalizability of the findings is limited as participants came from a specific area in the Midwestern United States (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009). In addition, there was no examination of differences between parents based on their country of origin. A strength of the study was its size; 60 participants in a qualitative study is large and strengthens the validity of the findings. This study enhanced the understanding of the importance of incorporating Latino values into parenting education programs that will be used in Latino communities.

Self-Brown et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study with the participants being the providers of parenting education instead of parents in the program. The purpose of this study was to assess the types of cultural adaptations being made to an evidence-based behavior parent training program (BPT) by providers working with Latino families in the child welfare system and to explore the need for more systematic adaptations. Eleven BPT providers from six welfare systems participated in individual, semi-structured interviews.

BPT targets risk factors for child abuse and neglect and includes the provision of information to parents during home visits regarding health, safety, and parent–child interactions (Self-Brown et al., 2011). Providers from six states (i.e., Oklahoma, California, Colorado, Washington, Kansas, and Indiana) with field experience ranging from 6 months to 7 years were interviewed. All of the providers received referrals from child welfare agencies in their respective geographical areas. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews that included

questions about engagement strategies, adaptations, and modifications made during program delivery. Additional questions were asked regarding session structure and recommendations to other providers regarding cultural adaptation practices. Interviews were conducted via telephone and were transcribed. They were independently read and coded by three research team members. The themes identified in the interviews were as follows: (a) the importance of family engagement, (b) the importance of flexibility in service delivery, and (c) session and curricular adaptation to incorporate cultural values (Self-Brown et al., 2011).

Providers made several adaptations but did so on a case-by-case basis. For example, one provider stressed the importance of not bringing the actual curriculum into the home, but incorporating information into discussions with the families as the information pertained to their functioning at the time or to recent events in the home. In addition, providers noted families who had an extensive history with child protective services were more difficult to engage and required intensive effort in rapport-building, even more so for those families who had members without visas, "green cards," or citizenship (Self-Brown et al., 2011).

Service delivery required flexibility with regard to session logistics. In Latino families it is not uncommon for multiple relatives to participate in caring for the children. Providers made accommodations for this occurrence with specific families by scheduling sessions at a time when most of the caregivers could be present. Session and curricular adaptations were also made on a case-by-case basis. The primary session adaptation was extending the length of the session to include social exchanges beyond simple pleasantries (e.g., discussion about family, upcoming birthdays, holidays, etc.). Latinos value community and developing relationships. Providers who made this modification reported the belief that it enhanced engagement and made the families feel more at ease during sessions (Self-Brown et al., 2011).

None of the providers suggested systematic or "official" changes to parenting education programming, but suggested training for newly hired parenting education providers or providers not already providing case-by-case adaptation in order for them to better understand the needs and functioning of Latino families (Self-Brown et al., 2011). The strategy employed by the providers in this study was both a strength and a weakness. It was a strength in that the providers adapted the service provision to the perceived needs of each family. It was a weakness because it is uncertain how well the parent educators understood the needs of the families they serviced. Because the families themselves were not interviewed or studied, "successful" interventions were determined by the opinions of the providers, which could have been decidedly biased because the providers evaluated their own work.

As opposed to an "adapt as needed" approach, Martinez and Eddy (2005) evaluated a more systematic method of making a program culturally congruent. Martinez and Eddy studied the efficacy of a culturally adapted parent management training (PMT) program with a sample of 73 families with Spanish-speaking Latino parents of middle school-aged children identified as being at-risk for problem behaviors. PMT involves the use of didactic instruction, role-playing, and home practice to teach parenting skills in the areas of discipline, problem-solving, monitoring, and communication. Initial program development centered on parents of young children, though the program was later modified to include young adolescents and to address behaviors such as early drug use, academic difficulties, delinquency, and early sexual behavior. PMT for parents of youth reduced the likelihood of youth problems in the following areas: out-of-home placements, police involvement, number of days institutionalized, depression, substance use, and conflict with teachers or peers. Families were recruited through schools (flyers were

sent home with students) and community events. A total of 36 families were in the control group and received no project-related intervention services during the study (Martinez & Eddy, 2005).

The culturally adapted program (i.e., Nuestras Familias) was developed with the help of five Latino family interventionists (e.g., social workers, behavioral specialists, etc.) who were provided training in PMT (Martinez & Eddy, 2005). Core components of the program were identified (i.e., elements of parenting education programs shown in the literature to be effective in enhancing parenting practices). Modifications were performed systematically on each of the core components of the program taking into consideration the theoretical relevance of the component (Martinez & Eddy, 2005). For example, the developers considered whether the use of contingent reinforcement to encourage pro-social behavior was appropriate in the context of Latino parenting. The developers then considered whether the method of teaching contingent reinforcement in the original PMT program was compatible with Latino culture and, if not, adapted the method to be culturally compatible. Nuestras Familias was then presented to focus groups of Latino parents to determine the cultural validity of the program. Minor modifications were made to the program based on the feedback provided by the focus groups (Martinez & Eddy, 2005).

Nuestras Familias was presented at a community center in 12 weekly sessions with 12 to 15 parents per group (Martinez & Eddy, 2005). Sessions were conducted in Spanish, lasted about 2.5 hours, and included almost an hour of time to share a meal and interact to build social support networks. Material was presented in a didactic format and included role-playing, dyads, and small group work. Participants were given a program notebook and encouraged to complete exercises in the home pertaining to the topics presented each week. During the week, session

leaders contacted parents by phone to review the past session material, offer support, and answer questions (Martinez & Eddy, 2005).

All group sessions were videotaped and reviewed during supervision meetings to ensure fidelity to the manual (Martinez & Eddy, 2005). Measures included structured parent interviews examining six dimensions of parenting (i.e., positive parental involvement, supervision, helping with homework, skill encouragement, appropriate discipline, general parenting) and an aggregate score of all categories. Information regarding aggression and eternalizing behaviors was gathered via the Child Behavior Checklist. Parents rated their children's school performance via 5-point rating scales by academic subject. Youth participating were given the Child Depression Inventory and a brief measure asking about the likelihood they would use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco if they were offered them by a friend. All measures were applied pre and post intervention (Martinez & Eddy, 2005).

Parents participating in the intervention demonstrated significantly higher aggregate parenting scores post intervention, but there were no significant differences between the intervention and control groups for individual parenting categories (e.g., supervision, helping with homework, etc.; Martinez & Eddy, 2005). There were no other significant differences between the intervention and control groups. Within the intervention group, there were significant differences between parents of youth born in the United States and parents of youth who immigrated with them. Discipline scores were lower for the parents and depression scores were higher for the youth of families where the parents were immigrants and the children were born in the United States. The authors linked this finding to prior research outcomes suggesting U.S. nativity for Latino youth is directly related to negative youth outcomes such as mental health problems, substance abuse, and antisocial behavior. They went on to say that "navigating

parent-youth differential acculturation" can be an added stress in the parenting process (Martinez & Eddy, 2005, p. 849).

While the study used multiple measures, all of the measures were based entirely on self-report or on parents' reports of their children's behavior and academic achievement. It is possible the parents had a biased view of their children's behavior or performance. It is also possible the parents gave enhanced reports of their children's performance to give more socially desirable answers. Ideally, a follow-up study comparing PMT and Nuestras Familias should be performed to determine whether cultural adaptations to the latter program affected fidelity and efficacy.

A few studies have demonstrated the utility of culturally congruent parenting education programs, but there is a lack of clarity regarding the most effective methods for creating programs to meet the needs of Latino parents. As compared to Caucasians, there is a much smaller body of research regarding Latino parents, and the research that exists is relatively recent. To date, with regard to strategies for making parenting education programs culturally congruent for Latinos, the research suggests the following:

- Parenting education programs should be facilitated by individuals who are bicultural and bilingual (Bermudez et al., 2011; Vesely, Ewaida, & Anderson, 2013).
- Parenting education programs should be strength-based and avoid pathologizing parenting practices related to the Latino culture (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009).
- Parenting education programs should teach parents ways to incorporate their cultural values into parenting practices that are aligned with present "best practices" in behavior management and parenting education (Martinez & Eddy, 2005).

- Parenting education programs should emphasize cultural competence on a continual basis, with the understanding that staff turnover and changes in program participants may shift the needs of the program over time (Vesely et al., 2014).

Summary

Chapter 2 provided the results of a literature review and included a history of parenting education and a review of prominent parenting education programs. Also included were parenting theories such as Baumrind's typologies, emotion coaching, and parent developmental theory. The review of the literature identified knowledge gaps with regard to parenting research utilizing Latino participants and the questionable validity of applying information learned from studies with Caucasian participants to Latino families. The review of the literature continued with a description of the relevant aspects of Latino culture, Latinos and single parenting, the effects of poverty on parenting practices, evidence to support that Latinos are underserved, and the difficulties encountered related to enrolling Latinos in parenting education programs. The literature review concluded with parenting education programs developed for Latinos and the methods highlighted in the existing research as being effective in making parenting education services culturally relevant to Latinos.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This study was designed to explore the parenting practices, experiences, beliefs, and values of single Latina mothers living below the federal poverty standard in Reading, PA. This study involved the use of the qualitative method of transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of the participants. *Phenomenology* is "the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures . . . of lived experience" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10) and phenomenologists are in agreement that it is the most appropriate research method to gain a thorough and detailed understanding of any human phenomenon (Heidegger, 1962; Husserl, 1970, 1973; Milacci, 2003; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenology "does not produce empirical or theoretical observations or accounts. Instead, it offers accounts of experienced space, time, body, and human relations as we live them" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 184). Phenomenological research combines "part and whole, contingent and the essential, value and desire" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 8). "It makes us thoughtfully aware of the consequential in the inconsequential, the significant in the taken-for-granted" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 8).

Philosophical Foundations

Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger are two philosophers who had the greatest influence on phenomenology as a research method (Milacci, 2003). Husserl is considered to be the founder of the modern phenomenological movement and transcendental phenomenology (Milacci, 2003). Heidegger developed the hermeneutic or interpretive approach to phenomenology, emphasizing the concept of understanding instead of describing (Milacci, 2003). Husserl was interested in what people know, while Heidegger focused on understanding being and the experience of being (Cohen & Omery, 1994). In terms of methodology, the

primary difference between the two approaches has to do with a concept called *bracketing* (Moustakas, 1994).

For Husserl, bracketing, also known as epoché (Moustakas, 1994), refers to suspending one's beliefs when examining a phenomenon in order to engage in a reflective process to allow the phenomenon to be studied and understood (Milacci, 2003). Moustakas (1994) suggested the researcher set aside preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to be studied in order for it to be seen in a new way. The purpose of bracketing is to allow the essence of the phenomenon to be understood and studied (Moustakas, 1994). Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology does not involve bracketing, as presuppositions add meaning to the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon (Milacci, 2003). For the current study, the researcher was in a different cultural, social, and economic position than the participants. To be able to shine the brightest light on the experiences of the participants, an approach utilizing bracketing was deemed appropriate to ensure the setting aside of values that could interfere with the analysis of the data.

In the interest of further ensuring the focus was on the relayed experiences of the participants, the transcendental (i.e., Husserlian) phenomenological approach seemed to be the best fit. Transcendental phenomenology serves to describe, rather than interpret, the experience being studied. Ceballo et al. (2012) recommended the use of qualitative methods to "more fully understand parenting practices as explained by mothers in their own words" (p. 806) and to focus on the descriptions of those practices, rather than interpreting them. Ojeda, Flores, Meza, and Morales (2011) agreed that allowing Latinos the opportunity to share their experiences in their own words is important and enables Latinos to honor the value of personalismo or interpersonal connection.

Qualitative methodology has also been identified as a way to "represent, involve, and benefit understudied populations" (Ojeda et al., 2011, p. 185). Latinos are understudied as compared to Caucasians (Aguilar, 2010; Bermudez et al., 2011; Bernal & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2009; Driscoll et al., 2009; Falicov, 2009). Further, with the exception of a few parenting education programs designed specifically for Latinos (e.g., Nuestras Familias and Los Niños Bien Educados), "best practices" in parenting education are based on theories established by research primarily done with Caucasian families (Bermudez et al., 2011; Bernal & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2009; Johnson, 2009).

In phenomenological studies, the research questions are sourced in a deep interest in a topic where the researcher's curiosity fuels the investigation. (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (1990) suggested "phenomenological research is a being-given-over to some quest, a true task, a deep questioning of something" (p. 31). Working in the field of social work for the past 10 years has grown in the researcher deep concern for Latina mothers in my community. That concern rose to its apex in 2013 when one of the single Latina mothers serviced by SFS was murdered. I worked with this mother directly and only a week before her murder she tried to excuse her absence from a scheduled visit with her children by saying she had been "held against her will" by some "bad people." I dismissed her story as just an excuse. A little over a week later, she was dead.

After this tragic loss I developed a deep desire to know more about the lives of single Latina mothers in the Reading community. Given my experience working in child welfare and the recent tragic loss of this mother, I decided to investigate the experiences of single Latina mothers living below the federal poverty standard in Reading, PA. Further, the current study was

designed to address a gap in the literature regarding Latina mothers and their experiences in general, and specifically their parenting practices.

Research Design

A phenomenological research design affords researchers the opportunity to examine and explore a phenomenon. “Phenomenology is committed to descriptions of experiences” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 58). The current study involved an exploration of the parenting practices, experiences, beliefs, and values of single Latina mothers living in poverty as well as the supports they used in parenting their children. Ceballo et al. (2012) identified phenomenology as an appropriate approach for generating knowledge regarding the parenting practices and beliefs of Latina mothers, as this method allows mothers to explain their beliefs and experiences in their own words. The focus of the current study was on understanding Latina mothers’ perceptions of the parenting practices they used in response to challenging conditions (e.g., poverty, unsafe neighborhoods, etc.), the goals and meanings of their parenting practices, and the supports they used to meet their parenting goals.

Bounding the Study

The three research questions used to guide the study were:

1. What are the experiences of single Latina mothers living in poverty in Reading, PA?
2. What are the parenting practices of single Latina mothers living in poverty in Reading, PA?
3. How do single Latina mothers living in poverty understand and utilize supports in their environment to aid them in parenting?

Selection of Participants

Participants in the current study were obtained via a purposive sampling format in that participants were intentionally selected for the focus of this study—single Latina mothers living below the federal poverty line in Reading, PA. The researcher has worked in the Reading community for over a decade and has established a network of contacts with a variety of social service agencies. Two agencies, Justice Works Youth Care (JWYC) and Baby University, were selected to serve as sources for referrals of participants for this study. JWYC is a provider agency contracted with both Berks County Children and Youth Services (BCCYS) and the Berks County Juvenile Probation Office (BCJPO) to provide case management and parenting education to families identified as being in need of those services by BCCYS or BCJPO. Baby University provides weekly parenting education classes to primarily single Latina mothers living in Reading, PA.

The researcher contacted the program directors of JWYC and Baby University by phone to inform them of the study and to discuss the qualifications for participation. A follow-up e-mail was sent to serve as a review of the information discussed by phone. The content of the follow-up e-mail included: (a) a brief summary of the purpose of the study, (b) the length and location of interviews, (c) a description of compensation for the participants, and (d) contact information for the researcher. Program directors were asked to refer potential participants to the researcher by providing the researcher's name and contact information.

Parent educators informed potentially eligible program participants about the purpose of the study and asked if they wanted to participate. Individuals indicating interest were provided with this researcher's contact information. Once contacted by the potential participant, the

researcher determined whether the individual was eligible to participate in the study via the use of a screening tool (Appendix A).

Inclusion criteria required participants to be of the female gender, age 18 or older, the mother of at least one child presently under the age of 18, single, and having a household income identifying the family as meeting federal poverty standards. Participants were unmarried and not presently living with a partner or the father of their child or children. All of the participants, with the exception of one, had all of their children living in the home with them. The participant who was an exception had adult children living in her home and her minor children were temporarily not in her custody. All of the participants spoke English, though one participant preferred to speak in Spanish. Consent forms were provided to participants in English or Spanish depending on their expressed preference. For the participant who preferred to speak in Spanish, a translator was present for both the initial and follow-up interviews. The participants were offered a $25 Walmart gift card as compensation after completion of the follow-up interview. This amount was chosen after peer review and consultation with the Berks Community Prevention Partnership (a social service agency in the Reading, PA, area that is responsible for conducting numerous research studies in the areas of parenting and parenting education).

The research mentions fear of deportation as a barrier to Latinos engaging in services (Garcia, et al., 2012). It is unclear whether some potential participants were deterred from participating in the current study due to that concern; however, the risk was less than might be anticipated, as according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), 32% of the Latino population in the City of Reading is made up of Puerto Ricans. Because Puerto Ricans have U.S. citizenship, fear of deportation should not have been a deterrent for their participation. Three participants identified as being Puerto Rican, one identified as Dominican, and two identified as Mexican.

JWYC and Baby University served as "gatekeepers." Ojeda et al. (2011) identified the use of gatekeepers as important when conducting research with Latinos. *Gatekeepers* are individuals who are well-known to the community being studied and who have knowledge of the language and culture of the participants (Ojeda et al., 2011). In addition, gatekeepers serve as a way for researchers to build trust, as if the gatekeeper is a trusted individual and vouches for the researcher, it can decrease some of the anxiety potential participants might have about being a part of a study. This was particularly evident in the role Amariles Rivera, the Director of Baby University, played in participant recruitment. Ms. Rivera worked closely with the participants referred to this researcher and more than one participant verbalized that Ms. Rivera's endorsement of the research study put the participant at ease with regard to participation.

Institutional Review Board Approval and Protection of Participants

Approval to carry out this qualitative research study was obtained from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board following the defense of the proposal in September of 2014 and after receiving approval from the dissertation committee. While the interview research design of this study involved minimal risks for participants, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to commencing the interview (Appendices C and E). Short forms were created to accommodate any participant who was illiterate in English and Spanish (Appendices D and F), but did not need to be utilized. A translator was present for the interviews held with the participant requesting the interviews take place in Spanish.

Participants were asked to participate in an initial 60 to 90 minute interview in their homes or in the office of Baby University in Reading, PA. The location of the interview was chosen by the participant. The day and time of the interview were also chosen by the participant. Interviews were conducted by this researcher. One participant requested a translator. The

translator was a bilingual social work professional. The researcher understands and speaks Spanish, but is not fully bilingual. The translator was present to ensure the researcher and participant understood each other throughout the initial and follow-up interviews. Interviews were digitally audio recorded using the "Voice Memo" feature on the researcher's password-protected iPhone. Recordings were then downloaded onto the researcher's password-protected computer and deleted from the iPhone.

Digital files of the interviews were sent to a professional transcription service. After transcription, the researcher contacted the program participants to review the content of the interviews and to obtain feedback from the participants to ensure the meaning of their stories was accurately understood. Each participant was given the opportunity to review the transcript of her first interview and was allowed to withdraw consent to use her recorded interview in the study. None of the participants requested to withdraw consent. The second interview was 15 to 30 minutes long, was digitally audio recorded, and took place in the homes of the participants, with the exception of one participant who requested to meet at Baby University for the second interview. At the time of the interviews, which were conducted between December of 2014 and March of 2015, all of the participants with the exception of one (Camila) lived with their children. Camila shared custody of two of her five children so they did not live with her full-time. The ages of the children of the participants ranged from a newborn to 17 years old. None of the children were interviewed, but some were present with their mothers when the interviews took place.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with two participants to determine the effectiveness of the interview questions in obtaining the information needed to gain a thorough understanding of the

phenomenon being studied. Semi-structured, audio recorded interviews were used to ask the participants questions about their experiences, parenting practices, and utilization of social supports in their environment. Initial questions were designed as *grand tour* questions (Leech, 2002, p. 667) as a way to guide participants to focus on the phenomenon that was the subject of inquiry. Leech (2002) described grand tour questions as the "single best question" (p. 667) for use in interviews. Follow-up questions included example questions that focused the participant on the subject being studied, but in a way that was more explicit. An example of a question is, "Could you describe a typical day, from the time you woke up until you went to bed?"

After the pilot study was completed, the researcher sent the audio recordings for transcription. After the transcriptions were received, the researcher read the transcriptions multiple times while listening to the recorded interviews. The researcher made numerical notations in the transcripts to indicate which of the research questions was being addressed by interview content. This method was used to ensure the interview questions (Appendix B) resulted in the participant answering with information pertaining to the research questions.

During both pilot interviews, participants made reference to what they wished social workers or parent educators knew about them or their situation. In addition, both participants offered information about advice they would give other single, Latina mothers experiencing poverty. This researcher thought the gathering of this information in the full study could offer further insight into the ways single, Latina mothers utilized supports in their environment (Research Question #3). As a result, two questions were added to the interview guide: 1) "If you could speak to a room full of social workers or parent educators, what would you want to say about your experience or about what could help other mothers like you? and 2)"If you could speak to a room full of single mothers like yourself, what would you tell them?". In addition,

these questions offered a direct way for participants to be asked about their experiences and for this researcher to communicate to them her desire to hear from them what they believed service professionals did not know. It was yet another way for this traditionally marginalized population to be given a voice and the opportunity to be identified as "expert" with regard to their own experiences. After the pilot study, the researcher felt better prepared to perform the complete study.

Data Collection

The method of data collection was interviews with single Latina mothers living in the City of Reading and identified as living under the poverty level. There were six participants. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and were audio recorded. Creswell (2007) suggests the use of a structured interview protocol, such as an interview guide, to ensure consistency across interviews. The interview guide for this study (Appendix B) was followed with appropriate prompts to gather details and provide depth to the information gained in interviews. All interviews were transcribed. For interviews conducted in Spanish, transcripts were translated into English in order to have a written record of the interviews in both English and Spanish.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) suggested the conceptual framework is created through the literature review and "becomes the centerpiece in managing the data" (p. 110). The conceptual framework of this study reflected parenting practices, the influences of culture and community on parenting, and the impact of poverty and single motherhood on the experiences of parenting. Coding of the data was organized inductively (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) and considered in light of the research on Latinos and parenting.

Data analysis began with this researcher posting the research questions in a prominent place on her desk while listening to the recorded interviews and reading the transcriptions (Milacci, 2003; Sites, 2008). Posting the research questions served to keep the data analysis focused on the purpose of the study and potentially decreased the chances this researcher was distracted by the interview content (Milacci, 2003). The interview questions were referenced multiple times during each data analysis session. The raw data consisted of 184 pages of single-spaced transcribed interviews.

According to van Manen (1990, p.79) phenomenological themes are the "structures of experience" and convey messages describing experience. It is the researcher's task to perform "theme analysis" to uncover the messages "embodied and dramatized in the …imagery of the work" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 78). Transcripts were reviewed and statements were highlighted that gave insight into how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This is a step Moustakas (1994) referred to as *horizonalization* (p. 97). The researcher wrote key words in the margins of the interview transcripts during analysis pointing to what was being described by the participant. For example, a participant described being molested by her mother's boyfriend. Next to the section of the interview, the researcher wrote the words "sexual abuse".

Then, "clusters of meaning" from these key words were developed into themes (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Creswell (2007, p. 235) defines this as a process in which the researcher clusters related events or concepts together into "meaning units". This researcher chose to use a strategy for organizing the data as proposed by Foss and Waters (2007, p. 85). The method involved writing each key word/concept/experience on a piece of paper and then sorting the pieces by putting similar words or experiences together. Each pile of key words/concepts/experiences was then labeled. For example, "family involvement with legal system", "witnessing violence as

child", "witnessing drug abuse as child" were all grouped together under the label of "troubled family of origin". When this researcher had difficulty sorting a particular word or concept, as it did not seem to "fit" with any other, it was set aside. All such "orphans" eventually found a home, as this "sorting" process was conducted multiple times before a cohesive picture reflecting the participants' narratives began to emerge.

The themes were used to write a *textural description* (i.e., a description of what the participants experienced; Creswell, 2007). Structural descriptions are also included. Creswell (2007) defined a *structural description* as "a description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (p. 61). These descriptions can be found throughout the themes and subthemes presented in Chapter 4. After the writing of textural and structural descriptions for each of the themes, a "composite description that presents the 'essence' of the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 62) was developed. This is also found in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

Quantitative research focuses on validity (i.e., the degree to which something measures what it claims to measure) and reliability (i.e., measurements are consistent over time; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). In contrast, qualitative research focuses on being trustworthy and uses the terms credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to assess the trustworthiness of a study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Credibility addresses whether the outcome of the research is credible and asks how well the choices made with regard to method are matched to the research questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Collaboration and the gathering of information from multiple sources are advised for enhancing credibility (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The researcher collaborated with the

Director of Baby University, Amariles Rivera, and asked for feedback with regard to the research methods prior to conducting the research. In addition, multiple interviews were conducted to ensure the data were gathered from a variety of sources. Participants varied in age, ranging from 22 to 36 years old, and came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Mexican.

Dependability determines whether the findings are consistent with the data collected and is enhanced by maintaining an audit trail (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). *Confirmability* is comparable to the idea of objectivity in quantitative research and ensures the findings are the result of the research rather than being due to the bias of the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 126). Both dependability and confirmability can be enhanced by the use of an audit trail. An *audit trail* is a detailed record demonstrating the evolution of the researcher's thoughts and decisions both in developing the study and in coding data. It includes outlines, notes from meetings, and feedback from peer reviews. This researcher has retained notes from advisor meetings, multiple outlines of the study as it evolved and progressed, and multiple drafts of all submissions as evidence of the decisions made at each step of the research.

In addition to credibility, dependability, and confirmability, trustworthiness is enhanced by *transferability*. In qualitative research, transferability corresponds to generalizability in quantitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Transferability allows the reader to determine whether the context of the research could transfer to another context and is enhanced by the use of thick, rich descriptions of the participants and the context of the research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). This researcher utilized detailed, in-depth descriptions and multiple, lengthy quotes to enhance the transferability of the study.

Another method of ensuring trustworthiness is member checking (Creswell, 2007). Member checking took the form of this researcher taking the transcribed interviews to all of the participants for their review to ensure their words were captured accurately. Meetings, discussions, and phone calls were conducted with the faculty advisor and committee members during data analysis and during the reporting process of the research to focus, advise, and redirect the researcher (Sites, 2008).

Limitations

Participants included six women living in Reading, PA, who were selected through criterion sampling. All of the women were recruited by parent educators from one of two programs, increasing the likelihood they had shared characteristics and may not be representative of all single, Latina mothers in Reading. Some of the characteristics they had in common could include being focused on improving their parenting skills because they were receiving parenting-related services. They were also willing to openly discuss their families and parenting practices as they volunteered to be a part of the study. The study was saturated with six participants and results are likely to be informative for similar communities such as those where the presence of single Latina mothers is somewhat high (in the City of Reading, 30% of Latino households are headed by single mothers). The City of Reading has a high rate of poverty (41%; Bruderick, 2013) and the Latino population is around 60% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Results from this study may be less applicable to communities with lower rates of poverty or a smaller population of Latinos. Results are also not expected to generalize to single Latino fathers or single mothers of other ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

This researcher did not observe the participants engaged in parenting and did not gather information to corroborate the histories described by the participants. The participants described

their perceptions of their experiences and parenting practices and it is possible these self-reports were biased. The participants were aware at the time of the interviews that this researcher was employed as an administrator for a case management and parenting education provider agency. It is also possible the participants would have shared differently had they been interviewed by someone they perceived to be more like them.

Strengths

One of the primary strengths of this study was the data came directly from the population being studied and used their words to describe their experiences. While it was impossible for this researcher to avoid all interpretation, care was taken to allow the participants' voices to be heard. This included utilizing quotes in Spanish instead of translating all of the quotes to English to ensure the heart of the participant was not "lost in translation." Measures were taken to ensure the participants were as comfortable as possible, including allowing the participants to choose where their interviews took place. This choice was also made as a way of allowing the participants to feel as though they were in control and to avoid them having to meet in an office setting where they might have felt intimidated or less comfortable. Allowing participants' voices to be heard is particularly important when conducting research among marginalized populations in order to avoid a mainstream perspective or a deficit-focused perspective. Another strength of the study is the quality of the data. The data were in-depth and rich, allowing the researcher to get a deep understanding of participants' perspectives. Further, the study was designed to address an area of the literature identified as understudied and was conducted in a way that allowed the participants to share their personal strengths and positive attributes, rather than being based solely on areas of lack.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of the qualitative research methodology that was used to investigate the experiences of single Latina mothers living in poverty in Reading, PA. The philosophical foundations of phenomenology were reviewed. The parameters of the study, including the participant selection process, were described. Data collection and analysis procedures were also described. Strategies for enhancing the trustworthiness of the study were reviewed. Limitations and strengths of the study were presented.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This phenomenological study was designed to investigate the experiences, including the parenting experiences, of six single Latina mothers experiencing poverty and living in Reading, PA. The themes are organized under each of the research questions and participant quotes are included to support each theme. In instances where meaning could be lost when quotes were translated from Spanish, the quote is included both in English and Spanish.

Introduction of the Voices of the Participants

Six participants took part in this study: Isabella, 26 years old; Julieta, 30 years old; Valeria, 25 years old; Luz, 22 years old; Camila, 36 years old; and Alma, 25 years old (all names are pseudonyms). All of the participants were single Latina mothers living below the federal poverty standard in Reading, PA. What follows are brief descriptions given by the participants of their situations at the time of the interviews.

Isabella is a 26 year old mother of a 6 year-old boy, Juan. She works two part-time jobs and lives in a small, two-bedroom apartment in the City of Reading. Isabella maintains communication with Juan's father, but they are rarely able to agree with regard to Juan's upbringing and care. They are court-ordered to participate in counseling to minimize the impact of their separation on Juan. Isabella described how difficult it is to be the sole person responsible for Juan's upbringing and described how his father has the choice to limit his involvement with and responsibility for his son if and when he chooses. She is not offered an option as she is Juan's primary caregiver.

Julieta is a 30 year old mother of five children who range in age from 9 months to 9 years. Julieta works full-time and lives in a rented home in the City of Reading. The father of her eldest two children is in prison in the Dominican Republic after having been convicted of a crime in the

United States and being deported. The father of her youngest three children is minimally involved in their care, and according to Julieta, only comes to visit when he wants to be intimate with her or when he wants money.

Valeria is a 25 year old mother of two boys, ages 6 and 4. She lives in a shelter in the City of Reading where she has resided for the last 5 years. Valeria shares a single room with her two boys. There is a shared kitchen on the same floor as her room and a shared bathroom. Valeria reported being unable to work. She also reported having a mental health condition that requires medication and stated that if she earns too much money she no longer qualifies for the health insurance she needs to pay for the medication. Valeria does not have a high school diploma and stated this made finding a job that offers affordable health benefits difficult.

Luz is a 22 year old mother of an 18-month-old and a newborn. Her father was deported when she was just 5 years old and her mother was deported when she was 17 years old. As a result of her mother's deportation, Luz was unable to finish high school as she had to obtain a job immediately to provide for herself. She now resides in a shelter for impoverished pregnant mothers. She is not a legal resident of the United States. She is not presently working and wants to obtain her General Equivalency Diploma (GED) to be able to obtain a job that will allow her to provide for her children.

Camila is a 36 year old mother of five children. She has a history of drug and alcohol abuse and at the time of the interview was participating in outpatient treatment for substance abuse. Camila is unemployed and living in the home of a relative. Two of her five children visit her on the weekends as she shares custody of them with their father. The father of her eldest child has not been in contact with her since shortly after the child's birth. The father of her next two children shares custody of them with Camila. The father of the youngest two children was

recently incarcerated on drug charges. They have remained separated since his release. He is only allowed supervised visits with his children.

Alma is a 25 year old mother of two children, ages 5 and 7. She resides in the home of her mother. She is enrolled in college classes, which she attends in the evening while her mother cares for her children. She is unemployed, but works in her mother's home cleaning and cooking for the household as a way of "earning her keep." The eldest child's father does not have contact with Alma or the child. The younger child's father has minimal contact with his child and provides a small amount of financial support monthly.

Themes

The themes arising from the structural and textural descriptions are presented in this section. The themes are organized under each research question and supported by participant quotes. Interviews began with gathering information about the family of origin of each of the participants (e.g., what growing up was like for them, parenting models they had growing up, and how they described their families). The information gained in this part of the interview generally centered on histories of abuse, estrangement from family, and feeling isolated and judged. As the focus of the interviews shifted to parenting practices, the participants described wanting to do better for their children than was done for them. They also identified with the role of advocate for their children and discussed their views on discipline. The final third of the interviews concerned help—the help the participants wanted to receive and their suggestions for the provision of support to others like them in their community. Table 1 provides a list of the identified themes. The titles of the themes were created using the words of the participants themselves as a way of continuing to describe, rather than interpret, the content of the interviews.

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes

Research Question	Theme
Research Question 1: What are the experiences of single Latina mothers living in poverty in Reading, PA?	Theme 1.1: Fun? There was no fun.
	Theme 1.2: Struggle. It's always a struggle.
	Theme 1.3: So I guess my biggest thing was that my family all talked about me.
Research Question 2: What are the parenting practices of single Latina mothers living in poverty in Reading, PA?	Theme 2.1: I want her to have a whole different childhood than I had.
	Theme 2.2: Like I am your mother and I am also your friend.
	A: So yeah, I'd have to whup his ass . . .
	Theme 2.3: I'm here . . . being the mom that has to be the dad sometime because dad doesn't live here.
	Theme 2.4: You got to stay on the right path.
Research Question 3: How do single Latina mothers living in poverty understand and utilize supports in their environment to aid them in parenting?	Theme 3.1: When I needed help I didn't get it.
	Theme 3.2: When I need help it helps to talk to somebody here who knows me and knows my situation
	A: So they weren't blood, but it didn't matter because they were my family.
	B: If we could be there for each other…
	Theme 3.3: Faith gives me much peace.
	Theme 3.4: Don't ever use the word can't because you can.

Research Question 1

Three themes emerged from the interviews when participants discussed their experiences both as children growing up and now as parents to their children. The first theme was having a

family of origin where abuse and neglect were common. The second theme was the continuous struggle of the participants to meet their children's physical and emotional needs. The third theme was the experience of being the "black sheep" of the family and a lack of connection to their family of origin. Each theme is described below.

"Fun? There was no fun." – Valeria (Troubled Family Of Origin)

As participants spoke about their family histories, their stories were overwhelmingly full of difficulty, hardship, and struggle. For the majority of the participants, their struggles began in childhood. Many of the participants explained in detail their histories of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

The majority of the participants also discussed feeling as though they had to raise themselves because their caregivers were overwhelmed with the tasks of work and maintaining a home and simply did not have the resources to be able to give them the care and attention they needed as young children. Included in these stories were such things as having to care for younger siblings because a parent was unable to do so due to drug and alcohol use or navigating an additional burden of mental illness. Julieta reported being raised by her grandmother and living with nine other children (her brother and their eight cousins). In Julieta's family, her grandmother was the only adult available to care for the children as the parents of all of the children were addicted to illegal drugs and barely able to care for themselves. Participants also described witnessing traumatic events within their families. For example, Camila described having observed her mother attempt suicide more than once when she was a young child of 8 or 9 years old.

The participants described their caregivers as being very strict. They were raised in homes where the maternal figures (either their mother or their grandmother) were extremely

protective, which limited their opportunities and freedom as children. This protectiveness took the form of such things as locking them in the home and not allowing them to go outside to play with friends. Participants also described being assigned multiple household or child care tasks at a relatively young age. For example, Camila was responsible for preparing formula and feeding her infant brother in the middle of the night when she was barely a teenager. He was suffering from drug withdrawal and she described being frightened by his tiny, shrieking, shaking frame as she rocked him and attempted to get him to go to sleep. Isabella described being responsible for helping her younger siblings with their homework when she was in middle school. She was also responsible for cooking the evening meals and cleaning the home. Isabella stated the neighbors jokingly referred to her as "the slave girl" because she spent so much of her time engaged in household chores and child care tasks.

All of the participants were raised in single-parent homes themselves. Half of the participants were raised by their grandmother or another relative because their mothers were unavailable. A few of the participants shared that they had no happy memories and their childhoods were one long series of abuses and tragedies, and were full of difficulty. The story of two participants in particular stood out. The first was Valeria. She spoke about being in and out of foster care and about how when she did go home her father raped her repeatedly.

> I was raped by my dad, I was put in foster homes. My mom abandoned me when I was young, when I was like 11 years old, and never seen her sons. She told me that I was interfering her life because she didn't want me anymore so that was it. I was living with my dad from 11 till before I turned 12, and that was the time I was being raped by him.

The other story that stood out was told by Camila, who described a lengthy history in her childhood of observing her mother spiraling out of control as the result of an addiction to crack

cocaine. She was responsible for helping to care for her siblings and received very little care from her mother. In addition, her mother's boyfriend, "Carlos," regularly visited Camila's room at night and molested her while her mother was high and unaware of what was happening. After several years of this man's abuse, he left the family. Camila's mother blamed her for his having left. Carlos told Camila's mother he was "in love" with Camila and knew (due to Camila still being a child) that he could not have her, so he had to leave. Camila had tried to tell her mother on several occasions that Carlos was abusing her but her mother was not responsive and insisted Camila was making up stories to separate her mother and Carlos. Camila recounted the following:

> One day I came home from school and my mom's crying, and I'm, "What's wrong?" And she's, "It's all your fault. It's all your fault." I'm, "What?" She says, "Carlos is not coming back. He left me." I'm, "Why is it my fault?" "Because he said that he was falling in love with you. That's why he left." So I started crying. And I said to her, I was, "You choose a nigger over me?" I was, "I told you this stuff." This man would come into my room—and my best friend would come and stay with me because I was so scared to sleep in my room. He never sexually—excuse my mouth—never put his dick inside of me. But he used to come into my room and he would grind on me and stuff, and he would grind so hard, all this would be sore. And he would press on my headboard. And my bed was a wooden—it was wooden. He broke my footboard. He'd put his hands in me. And I would tell my mom. I was lying. She's thinking I'm making things up because I didn't want her to be with him.

"Struggle. It's always a struggle." – Isabella (Difficulty Meeting Their Children's Physical/Emotional Needs)

Participants described many struggles, including inadequate housing, lack of financial resources, and limited employment options. All of the participants lived in the City of Reading. While much is being done to improve conditions in the city, it is still a place where violence is common and affordable housing can be hard to find. Affordable housing tends to be somewhat older, broken down, and in poor repair. This was observed in the homes of the participants. Two of the participants (Valeria and Luz) lived in shelters. One of the participants (Camila) was living in the home of a relative. In all of the homes, necessities were visible but luxuries were sparse.

All of the participants described having a lack of financial resources. None of them was able to rely on child support as the whereabouts of the fathers were unknown or if they were known, they did not work regularly. Julieta had a full-time job and Isabella worked two part-time jobs. None of the remaining participants were employed. Camila was seeking work. She described a lack of good jobs and Reading's poor economic condition as being impediments to her being able to meet her children's needs. Luz was approaching the end of her third trimester of pregnancy and was unable to work. Valeria reported having a mental health condition that interfered with her ability to work. Alma received some financial support from her family because she lived in their home and essentially served in the function of a "housekeeper." Isabella described the difficulty of living life on a financial "edge" and having to decide where her limited funds would go to make sure her son's basic needs were met:

> By the time I pay the rent and the heat and the water, then the daycare. Like I don't know. Sometimes it is like I wonder where it all goes, you know? Like, why am I working all of the time and don't have nothing to show for it. Sometimes you decide to like not pay one

> bill one month because you know they ain't going to shut it off for just that one time, but then you get behind and like it just feels like all this stress.

Living in substandard housing or going without physical necessities was described by participants as difficult, but Camila found a little humor in one situation in particular when she was living in a home infested with rodents:

> I'm terrified of mice and [my baby's father] he used to tell me all the time like "they're more scared of you than you are of them." One time we lived on Wahl St. I just had my daughter and the mouse was coming up the step. There's a little bitty mouse and I was coming down to get the baby a bottle and I panicked so I slipped all the way down the steps with the bottle still in my hand but it was funny. I'm at the bottom of the steps and I'm just like "there's a mouse" and I'm screaming and crying. He's like "I didn't realize how scared you are. You don't understand like I said." It's funny now because I can laugh about it but at the time I was very upset. So I've had my ups and downs but sometimes I can laugh about things.

"So I guess my biggest thing was that my family all talked about me." – Camila (Being The "Black Sheep" Of The Family)

In addition to troubled family histories and financial struggles, all of the participants in this study spoke about feeling as though they were the "black sheep" in their families. They talked about feeling judged and feeling isolated from their families. They spoke a great deal about gossip and the destructive ways in which family members interacted with them, making them want to separate from their families of origin. The majority of the participants described their family members as gossips and as being unsupportive. There were multiple references to family members only contacting them when they needed money or help with something. A few

of the participants had absolutely no contact with their families of origin. The participants being outsiders in their own families is significant. These mothers were already marginalized by virtue of their experiencing poverty, their gender, and their minority status. Then they were further isolated and disadvantaged by a lack of family support in a culture where family is highly valued and in a society that expects Latina mothers to have such support.

> I have no family support, they are always judging me, always judging me, and I can't sit around people that sits there and judges me all the time. And besides, they don't help me, they are always criticizing or judging me. They don't help. (Valeria)

> I feel judged. Sometimes the mom of my daughter's dad asks her questions. She ask question about, "How your Mommy treating you? How is this?" and everything. Sometimes I think they judge me how I treat my daughter. I try my best to be a mom, but sometimes they criticize. (Alma)

While the participants expressed their feeling judged as being painful, Isabella shared her way of viewing criticism that served to keep her from feeling discouraged:

> I don't take criticism as it's supposed to be, I take it as acknowledgment. Like, "oh my God, okay, thank you. Like I appreciate it. Maybe that is something I need to know for me to be better one day." My godmother always say, like, when people say things to you, don't take it the wrong way. Don't take it the wrong way. Just say, "oh." Like look at it as a different outcome, like a different outlet to use.

Research Question 2

After discussing their families of origin and their experiences as single mothers, information was obtained regarding the participants' present parenting practices. Four themes

emerged when the participants discussed parenting practices. The first theme was wanting to give their children a better experience than they had growing up. The second theme was the effort and focus required to balance the roles of nurturer and disciplinarian. The third theme had to do with co-parenting and with navigating having to be both mother and father to their children. The fourth theme was about making good choices to avoid putting their children at risk of harm.

"I want her to have a whole different childhood than I had." – Luz (Wanting a Better Experience For Their Children)

The majority of the participants expressed having negative experiences as children themselves. As was already mentioned, many experienced physical, emotional, and even sexual abuse. All of the participants expressed the desire to do better in their parenting than was done to or for them. Valeria described going to great lengths to ensure her children's birthdays and holidays (e.g., Christmas) were enjoyable for them. She stated being unable to recall ever having celebrated Christmas or her birthday with her family of origin, so making these times special for her own children was very important to her.

All of the participants described being absolutely devoted to putting their children ahead of everything in their lives. They spoke about wanting to do better for their children than was done for them. They were focused on ensuring their children had everything they needed and multiple times referenced making sacrifices for the sake of their children. The majority of the participants spoke about things like skipping meals, doing without clothing, or taking lower paying jobs in order to avoid having to be away from their children too much. It seemed as though every decision they made was with their children's needs in mind.

Luz recalled spending a great deal of time by herself as a child because her mother worked two jobs and did not want her to leave the house without supervision. She was unable to play with neighborhood children and felt isolated. Luz expressed wanting to give her children the freedom to play and to make friends. Specifically, she mentioned wanting her daughter to be able to have "sleep-overs" and "make-up parties" with her friends when she reaches an age where such things are common. Camila mentioned having to wear "hand me down" clothes and feeling ashamed of that as a child, so she did all she could to make sure her children had new clothing and name-brand sneakers so they could be proud of their appearance.

Many of the participants recounted having an overall negative experience growing up, but Isabella mentioned a memory of her grandmother's remedy for any illness that she now found funny:

> Back then my grand mom didn't believe in going to the doctors. She was like, "you don't just take kids to the doctor's because they having a cough, you don't do that." She used to like have all these remedies like tea and Vicks. Like my grand mom was an expert at Vicks, anything hurt you, you put that Vicks rub on it and you were good. She figured Vicks or rubbing alcohol would cure anything.

All of the participants mentioned concern for their children's safety. Alma spoke about her perception that most Latina mothers are overprotective and agreed that at times, she was too:

> Latina moms are overprotective. My mom was. We are worried about them being hurt or doing something that is bad for them and can cause some problem for them. I am trying not to be that, but sometimes I can't help it because I am scared for them.

However, for these mothers, the dangers they feared were very real and present. Like many cities, the City of Reading experiences violence. Shootings, stabbings, and other violent

acts are not uncommon, especially in the poorer areas of the city. All of the participants spoke about their concern of keeping their children "off the streets." They described seeing themselves as responsible for their children's safety, but not wanting to suffocate them, which they thought might result in their children rebelling. Camila described her method of trying to keep her children in the home and off the streets:

> When X-Box came out, I bought it. PlayStation came out I bought it. Because I didn't want them to be outside. So I bought the game consoles and that and this, and make sure they had a pool in the backyard so they weren't running the streets.

Camila used the latest form of entertainment to make her home popular with her children and their friends in order to keep them close. She went on to describe her reasoning for doing so:

> When I grew up, Bloods, Crips, you were fake out here in Reading. There was no Bloods and Crips out here. It's different now. When I grew up, you fought, used the hands to fight. Right now, these niggers are going to shoot.

Julieta reported using a similar strategy, planning activities for the weekends for her children and making sure they were happy to be at home to avoid boredom and to keep them from wandering off where they might find trouble.

In addition to keeping their children safe, the participants discussed the importance of being advocates for their children. Multiple participants had children identified as having special needs (e.g., ADHD). Isabella talked about her desire to be an advocate for her son. He was diagnosed with ADHD and she did not want to have him take medication, desiring to try behavioral interventions first. She talked about her own learning disabilities growing up and about how she was determined to do better for her son than was done for her:

> I didn't have an advocate, nobody spoke for me I was basically there by myself with the teachers. When we were in school we didn't have our parents that were there to back us up consistently. We didn't have an advocate. And I don't want—I'm going to be his advocate. I don't care what it takes, but he's going to be successful.

Over half of the participants expressed having learned how to be a parent by avoiding what was done to them. For example, if they experienced physical abuse as a child, they avoided being overly harsh in their discipline practices with their children. Over half of the participants also expressed the desire to achieve a balance in their role as a parent between being overly harsh and using too much discipline, and being too lax.

> I parent them the way I wanted to be parented when I was younger and a little bit more better. You can't be too strict because that make the kid go crazy and want to run away and stuff, you know? Because they see you being strict, and then they see one mom being cool, and it's like why my mom is not like that, you know? So you got to show them that you being cool, but you also gotta do what you gotta do, you know? (Julieta)

"Like I am your mother and I am also your friend." – Julieta (Balancing Nurturing And Discipline)

When asked about discipline practices, many of the participants struggled at first to know how to answer. In discussing discipline with them, it seemed as though they viewed discipline less from a behavioral aspect and more from the perspective of it being part of their role as a mother and an intimate part of their relationships with their children. Throughout the interviews, a recurring theme was the desire to be the authority to their children, but never at the expense of the relationship.

> When I say no, it's no, you know what I mean? When I tell you sit down, it's sit down. Stop, it's stop. I'm the mom and you're the child. It's no way we're gonna switch that role. That's how I and my mom was. But my mom did it, it was different because I was—at one point I was scared of her. I don't want my daughter to be scared of me. (Luz)

All of the mothers seemed very concerned about finding a balance between being too harsh and being too lenient. On the one hand, they wanted their children to listen to their guidance, but on the other they did not want to alienate themselves from their children and leave them to the streets. Isabella described the need to find this balance:

> I'm strict, but I'm only strict because I want the best for him. It's not that I'm trying to be cold hearted, but I am hard on him because if I loosen up then he's going to take advantage of it. You know, I have to be like a boss sometimes, not a mom. But sometimes I think if I'm too hard, then how is he going to feel, you know?

Camila mentioned concern that being too strict was one of the reasons why her eldest child, now an adult, became gang involved. He spent much of his late adolescence in juvenile correctional institutions as a result of this gang involvement. She questioned whether or not her being unable to find a balance between being too strict and being too lenient was the result of his seeking his "family" in a gang, resulting in multiple arrests.

"So yeah, I'd have to whup his ass . . . " – Camila (Physical punishment.)

All of the mothers mentioned being aware that the use of physical punishment was not ideal; however, when they were at the end of their rope, they admitted to its use. Camila described having used physical punishment quite frequently with her eldest child when he was very young. She also reported stopping this practice with her second child because she referred

to herself as being "heavy handed." Camila realized she struck her children very hard—too hard. She recounted one incident where she went to spank her second eldest child and he literally flew across the room. She was so frightened by this experience and by the degree of her anger that she made a commitment to never hit her children again. She reported having maintained that commitment through raising of the remainder of her children, but expressed that sometimes she felt like she lost her "edge" when she did so. She expressed that using privilege revoking (e.g., not allowing television, "grounding" to the home, or not allowing video games), especially when the children were adolescents, was often ineffective. Camila reported that more than once when she attempted to discipline her adolescent children they just walked out of the house and returned when they chose. Her fear of them being "in the streets" tempered her desire to set firm limits and sometimes resulted in her allowing her children to get away with more than she thought they should.

Valeria reported the only way to get her children to listen to her was through physical punishment, but she expressed it as being a last resort. Valeria reported having been physically abused as a child and expressed not wanting to be abusive toward her children, but still having to control their behavior. Valeria saw her choice to use physical punishment as being a good mother because she was teaching her children to behave. For her to forgo its use would mean her children would be ill-behaved and she would be seen as a "bad mom."

> I would take away their toys. I would put them in time out and I will—they don't watch TV. They are punished like that and if they need a spanking because I am constantly repeating myself, repeating myself, giving them chances and if they don't—if I blow up, they get a spanking. (Valeria)

Valeria admitted not having the tools to be able to gain control of her children without the occasional use of physical means. Another participant, Alma, reported attending parenting education classes specifically to learn non-physical methods of discipline. She used to spank her children, but when she came to live with her mother, her mother advised her against the practice.

All of the participants referred to their caregivers as having instilled fear in them as children and this fear kept them in line. As they described stories of things like having been hit in the head with a hairbrush for failing to sit still while getting braids (Isabella), or having to kneel bare-legged on a pile of uncooked rice as punishment for talking back (Camila), the participants seemed to both acknowledge the harshness of these approaches and yet valued their effectiveness. They spoke of them with a blend of nostalgia and recognition of the methods being less than ideal.

"I'm here . . . being the mom that has to be the dad sometime because dad doesn't live here." – Isabella (Co-Parenting and Absent Fathers)

The majority of the participants discussed their struggle to establish themselves as the authority figure to their children, particularly with regard to co-parenting. They also described difficulty in addressing the needs of their male children with regard to development and sexuality. Isabella mentioned the difficulty of being consistent with regard to discipline because her son's father, who he visited on weekends, failed to discipline him at all. In addition, another participant, Alma, lived with her mother—the children's maternal grandmother. In this situation consistent discipline was also difficult, as the children's grandmother frequently wanted to spoil them. The majority of the mothers mentioned that the lack of a partner or a male role model in the home further complicated disciplinary matters. Multiple times, mention was made of the young boys parented by these mothers as being handicapped by the fact that no male was present

in the home to offer them guidance or male authority. The mothers expressed that in their culture men are often the authority figures, and opined that their young boys would more readily listen to a male. Valeria stated, "Well, disciplining, it's kind of hard because I am not a male figure, and I know if a male was around they will be like more okay . . . they barely listen to me."

The lack of a male presence in the home was also described as a source of anxiety for some of the mothers beyond disciplinary issues. In the case of having male children, the anxiety was about explaining things such as body changes in puberty or about how to treat women. Isabella expressed her anxiety about getting into a serious relationship with a man because when she had been in a relationship with her child's father, he was physically abusive and their son witnessed the abuse. She was concerned that if she chose another man he might also be abusive, or her child's father could become jealous and cause further conflict between them.

The majority of the participants viewed involvement with men as being more trouble than it was worth. Alma repeatedly verbalized her belief that she did not "need a man to know how to take care of my kids." She joked that because she was the one strong enough to bring the children into the world through much pain in labor, she was certainly strong enough to raise them without a man's help. At the same time, she expressed the opinion that it was probably easier for her daughter than for her son to be without a male figure in the home:

> For him [my son] it is sometimes harder for me to say "no." For her [my daughter] I think it is easier her dad is not here than it is for him; because she is a woman. And maybe for him I understand him as his mother, but I cannot tell him things that happen to me as a man.

Camila shared the same concern and relayed a story about the time her youngest son had his first erection and asked her about it. She was too embarrassed to talk to him and walked out of the

room. His older brother was not living in the home at the time, and she verbalized feeling embarrassed and saddened by her inability to guide her son through this stage of his development. She expressed regret at being unable to help him and noted that it made her feel inadequate for the task of raising him without his father.

The mothers of young girls expressed concern that their daughters might seek out male attention for the wrong reasons—that they might enter into a relationship trying to fill a void that not having a father left in them. Both Julieta and Luz expressed this concern. Julieta described having seen young girls in her neighborhood who were already pregnant, despite being only 15 or 16 years old. She hypothesized that their condition resulted from engaging in relationships where they were seeking male attention because she knew the girls came from single-parent homes. Luz spoke from her own experience and said:

> Not having a father figure in her life. I'm afraid she will do the same choices as I did—look for affection in the wrong men just to feel that father love that men—that men attention. It's something that really screws up girls a lot. Because either they go for older men, the wrong men, an abusive man. I don't want her to do that.

"You got to stay on the right path." – Julieta (Making Good Choices)

In addition to discussing discipline and the difficulties of not having a male role model for their children, the majority of the participants made reference to the need to put forth effort to "stay on the right path." They described the "path" as being one of getting and maintaining legal employment, avoiding the use of illegal drugs or dependence on alcohol, and avoiding involvement in intimate relationships with men that might take their focus off of their children. All of the participants mentioned the challenges of avoiding making wrong turns. They described being a single mother as a stressful and often lonely endeavor. The use of drugs or alcohol as a

way to cope was described as common in this cohort, but for all but one of the participants it was not an option. At the time of the interviews, Camila was in recovery from an addiction to cocaine. She reported her prior drug use was a way to escape the stress of being her children's only caregiver. She was relied on to provide all of the income, all of the emotional support, and all of the discipline required to raise her children and used drugs as a way to gain some relief from that stress. Other mothers who were interviewed expressed their avoidance of the use of alcohol or drugs more from fear, having seen mothers in their community become addicted and lose their children to foster care as a result.

> It's hard to live in my situation but I manage. I manage. I go to therapy and have my meds. I continue doing that because I love my kids and my kids need me in their lives, and I need to be here for them. I seen other moms go out and do their own thing—drinking and partying and that and I can't do that and leave my kids like that. (Valeria)

All of the participants mentioned the importance of being a good example to their children. They expressed that this good example included working for what they wanted or needed rather than "taking handouts." Isabella described working two jobs was a source of pride for her, as she had seen her sisters and other relatives "live off the government" for "years and years." Julieta described wanting to teach her children the value of hard work and instill in them the belief that they "can have it if you wanna work to get it." She expressed her desire to show her children that the "easy way out" often turned out to be a harder way:

> You got to stay on the right path and put your energy into positive things. You don't want your kids seeing you do the wrong things. It can be easy but it turn hard fast if you get caught up in it, you know? What your kids gonna do you end up in the street shot up or someone come after you or you in jail cause you sellin'?

Research Question 3

After discussing present parenting practices, information was gathered regarding where participants went for help when they needed it and their perceptions of the support services available in their community. Discussion continued with their ideas for what they would find helpful in the future and the kind of help they would like to receive. Four themes emerged in this part of the interviews. The first theme centered on what was not helpful to these mothers when they sought help in the past, including a loss of dignity, program requirements that made obtaining help difficult, and a lack of trust in those providing the help. The second theme was the participants' desire for help to come in the form of community and included their having created a "family of choice" for support and their belief that getting together with other mothers in their situation would be helpful to them. The third theme was the role of faith as a source of support. The fourth and final theme was maintaining an optimistic outlook as a method of coping.

"When I needed help . . . I didn't get it." – Julieta (Loss Of Dignity/Experiencing Shame/Lack of Trust of Professionals)

When discussing the supports the mothers in the study used or found helpful, much of the discussion started with speaking about what was not helpful for them. The following paragraphs describe in detail the reasons the participants gave for characterizing community supports or social programs as not being helpful. They include a loss of dignity when seeking help, the "solutions" offered by programs being impractical, and a lack of trust in the individuals offering help.

The participants were asked about whether or not they used supports such as food banks, utility assistance, housing assistance programs, or if they had reached out to social workers (either as part of a non-profit organization such as Catholic Charities or a public source of

support such as BCCYS). Many of the participants mentioned feeling as though they lost their dignity when they went somewhere for help. Camila mentioned never wanting to go to food banks, as she found the experience embarrassing and demoralizing. She spoke about the desire to receive help in a way that allowed her to maintain her dignity:

> I'm not too happy about standing in a food bank line. I haven't brang myself to that . . . that's mean to make us stand outside. You don't want people to know that you're struggling. Yeah, that's mean. I just find that mean. I'm not going to the food bank. I'm not standing in a line outside where people will see me like that.

Beyond a loss of dignity, participants reported that the help that was available was impractical. For example, Luz was eligible to participate in a program that would allow her to earn her GED in order for her to get a job where she would earn enough to support herself and her children. However, she was required to work in order to qualify for the program and she had no one available to babysit. In addition, she was late in her second pregnancy and did not have independent transportation. During her interview, she mentioned how hard it would be for her (once she had her second child) to go anywhere on the bus with her children. She would need to bring a double stroller and two separate car seats, along with a diaper bag with supplies. She joked about not having enough hands to carry everything she would need just to leave the house.

Julieta spoke about being made to feel like she was a "bad mom" when she sought help from BCCYS when her son was having behavioral problems. He was acting out both at school and at home—sometimes violently—and she had younger children in the home she needed to protect. Julieta knew her son needed more help than she could give him, but when she asked for help she felt like she was treated "like a bad mother" in that she was required to go through multiple evaluations (e.g., domestic violence, mental health, etc.) and the focus was on her

instead of on her child. She described the experience as humiliating and described feeling as though she was under a microscope. She felt as though she was being blamed for her son's behavioral problems:

> When I asked for help with my son for his behavior I didn't get it. It was like they want to call me a bad mom because I asked for help or something. Gave me all of these appointments. I can't get to appointments and work and take care of my kids. They all need stuff. You can't just put one ahead of the others because he has problems. I want to help him but when I ask for help they just give me more things to do and make like it has to be something wrong with me.

She went on to say she felt trapped—if she did not follow BCCYS requirements, she would be labeled a "bad mom," but following the requirements was next to impossible. She had no time to participate in mental health evaluations and domestic violence counseling (both of which were recommended as part of her "Family Service Plan") because she was working full-time, had four young children to care for, and no one to supervise them while she attended these required appointments. Julieta verbalized feeling "stuck" between wanting to do everything she could for her son and needing to continue to do what she needed to do to care for her other children. She wondered aloud why so many demands were placed on her when she had not neglected or abused her child and was just trying to get him help. She expressed frustration with "the system" and her belief that "they" were trying to "beat her down" to "prove" she was unfit.

Housing programs were another topic that came up when discussing what was not helpful. Subsidized housing (i.e., Section 8) has a 2-year waiting list. Two of Camila's children were not in her care full-time and would not be until she obtained housing. She mentioned they would probably be grown by the time she made her way up the housing list. Camila was aware

she could get emergency housing if she went to a shelter, but a past experience in the local housing shelter left her "bitten up by bugs" and "made me so depressed I'd rather be dead than go back."

Valeria also found herself in a "catch 22" with regard to social programs that were "there to help." She has a mental health condition that requires her to take medication in order to function and parent her children. She is not a high school graduate and has been unable to find work where she would be eligible for health insurance. Without insurance, she could not have access to medication. As long as she is without a job, she is eligible for medical assistance (funded by the state). It seems of little use to her to find work if she will not have medication, but as long as she remains unemployed, she and her children will remain in the shelter. In addition, she receives some child support from her children's fathers. It is sporadic, but is just enough to make her ineligible to receive subsidized child care. This is also an impediment to her obtaining work.

While a lack of practical solutions was a barrier to seeking help, so was the participants' reluctance to seek help due to a lack of trust. The majority of the mothers participating in the interviews expressed the belief they only had themselves to rely on. Their families of origin could not be trusted to help because these mothers were already viewed as "black sheep" and frequently only heard from family members when they needed something from them. Half of the participants mentioned not being able to trust social workers or community workers. In part, this lack of trust stemmed from the participants' beliefs that the only people who really understood them and could help them were people who were like them. Additionally, they mentioned having been let down in the past by helpers who promised to improve their situation and under delivered. Camila put it this way: "You can go see a counselor and yeah, they got a degree and

they're gonna give you their opinion, but don't nobody know what it's like unless you've been there." Other quotes were as follows:

> You don't know who you can trust. They don't really know about you and at the end of the day they go home to they house and they white picket fence and leave you where you're at. What do they know about helping you? Or they say they gonna help and do nothing. (Julieta)

> Some places you go, they're quick to judge you. They do not know what your home life is like. They do not know how hard you work to be a good mom. They don't know how much you struggle every day. (Isabella)

The above quotes point to three similar sentiments. The first is the help being offered is not coming from someone's personal desire to be helpful, and therefore cannot be trusted. There was an underlying belief that institutions and the people who work for them are not personally interested in making the lives of these mothers better. Next, these mothers expressed the belief that if they sought help they would face the same judgment they already received from their families. They had been shamed by their families and felt ashamed when they could not take care of themselves and their children without help. Third, the participants expressed not being understood by the people who were supposed to be helping them. It is worth noting that all of the participants spoke about the desire to be independent and their distaste for receiving "handouts." Isabella mentioned being eligible for welfare benefits (cash assistance) prior to her obtaining employment but she declined them because she just could not stomach the idea of "being a welfare mom." Julieta expressed her desire for independence by saying the following:

> I don't ask nobody for help or nothing. Like I don't ask my family, I need diapers, I need clothes. I will just work harder and harder until I get it. That'll give me my motivation to

> try harder and harder. I gotta be the role model towards my kids. They look up to me and see me working hard to get what they need.

It was very telling that the majority of the interviewed mothers did not mention specific social service programs or community programs as being helpful to them, though a few did. Luz was living in a shelter at the time of her interviews and reported finding the program to be supportive and helpful. Alma mentioned seeking out a parenting education program that she found helpful. Outside of these two references, across the 12 interviews there was little mention of any programs or community supports regularly utilized by any of the participants.

"When I need help it helps to talk to somebody here who knows me and knows my situation." – Luz (Personalismo)

When describing what would be helpful to them, all of the participants emphasized the importance of the help coming from people who knew them or from people who knew what it was like to be in their situation. They expressed a desire to be seen as individuals with hopes, dreams, and needs.

> It is like no one takes no time to talk to me. Sometimes I get an attitude when I get real depressed and no one says, "Why you have so much anger, talk to me." They would be like, "oh, she has her attitude, then goodbye." That is how it has always been in my life. I never had nobody stay and be there for me and listen. (Valeria)

> It would help if you try to understand them [single mothers] more and put yourself in they shoes and see how you would feel if you were a single mom in the predicament that whoever it is, you know. And I'd say that's the way you'd help them a little bit more, you

know, looking at it like that and, you know, not be too friendly, but get to know them. (Julieta)

The participants talked about wanting to be known and respected instead of looked down on. They expressed being able to seek help from people who were not blood relatives, but who felt like family to them. The participants also expressed it would be helpful to give and receive support from other single mothers.

"So they weren't blood, but it didn't matter because they were my family." – Isabella (Creating a family of choice).

With the exception of one participant (Alma), none of the mothers had relationships with their families. The majority of the participants discussed having created a "family of choice," meaning they were able to find people within their community or workplace who provided them with emotional support. They found supportive individuals in their lives who they considered family, even though these individuals were not actually family. In Camila's case, her "family" was her neighbors and the people with whom she sold drugs. Despite the risky and illegal nature of that endeavor, she described having very close friendships with these individuals. She also described the way in which these individuals looked out for her children, and helped her care for her children when they were very young. During her interview she identified several individuals as her "brother," "sister," or "cousin" and then would explain that they were not blood relatives, but people who were closer to her than family and so had earned the assigned titles.

Isabella talked about forming very close relationships with two women. One was someone she referred to as her "godmother," who she met through a community program and the other was her therapist who had been working with her since she was 14 years old. Isabella said she knew that her therapist had "crossed boundaries" by being so close with her and giving her

so much help, but she also expressed she did not know how she would have coped over the last several years without her therapist's help:

> I had amazing support in my therapist was always there for me. She went over so many boundaries. I mean boundaries that she should never have gone over, like from the time I was in high school like she went to my graduation, she was there for my prom, you name it, she was there. Birthdays, she gave me things I needed sometimes. She just did it because she cared.

Julieta described her friendship with a young mother who lived close to her. This mother was willing to babysit for Julieta on occasion so she could have a night out to herself:

> And I go off like an hour or two, and then I come back. Sometimes she'll sleep on the couch and I pay her, whatever. Sometimes I don't even have to pay her. And we just—when I come in, we'll watch a movie, whatever movie she watching. I fall asleep right here, or she fall asleep here. And that's it. But I do have my time.

"If we could be there for each other . . . " – Luz (Personalismo). Discussion of what was not helpful to the participants invariably led to questions about what would be helpful to them as single mothers living in poverty. What did "help" look like to them? The majority of the participants responded with answers that reflected a desire to build community.

> If you're me and I've been through it, I can't tell you what to do but I can tell you how I felt and survived it. I think a lot of people come into our lives and they'll tell you, "oh, I understand how you're feeling," you have no fucking clue, none. For me it's different, I don't need a license to sit there and tell somebody I've been there or just sit there and talk to these kids and know, how that crack head parent and go through some of the stuff I

went through and say, “listen, that might not have been the same situation but I feel your pain because I’ve been down that road.” (Camila)

They spoke about having a safe space where they could come together and bring their children to visit with each other. Camila suggested it would be a place where they could share a meal, as she identified meal sharing as a way to build friendships. It also served the practical function of being one less meal they would have to cook for their children if it was something they all took turns doing or if they each brought a portion of the meal to the gathering.

The participants mentioned how helpful it would be to have a place where they could “swap mom stories” and get advice about navigating the various developmental stages of their children. Having a network of other single Latina mothers in their area could provide them with child care assistance or help them gain information about particularly supportive individuals at the various agencies or community centers where they might go for help.

Additionally, being a part of a community of single mothers would afford them the chance to offer praise and encouragement to each other, something multiple participants mentioned as being lacking in their lives. The majority of the participants felt criticized and judged (i.e., the “black sheep” of their families) and had few people offering them words of encouragement or pointing out what they were doing well.

All of the participants mentioned how much they wanted to help other mothers who are in a similar situation. It seemed as though for those who brought up the idea of a “gathering” of single mothers, this was also in part the reason behind it. They would be both getting help and giving it. Throughout several interviews, participants recounted times when they had opened their homes to a friend in need or had loaned money they really could not spare in order to help someone out who they cared about. In each case, the pride of this action was visible on the

participant's face. It was clear that being able to help someone else made the "helper" feel better, even if her situation had not changed.

Isabella told a story about helping a coworker get a winter coat for herself and her children. The coworker had no money for the coats and Isabella took a gift card she had been given for a local retailer and used it to defray some of the cost of the coats. The rest of the cost she paid herself. Her eyes welled up with tears when she remembered the gratitude her coworker expressed for the coats as she shared the following:

> When I help someone I get the better part of the deal because I feel like there is nothing in this world like helping someone. When it comes to seeing people lack and just anything they need and if I have it, I'm going to be of course, I'm going to give it.

The mothers described feeling a loss of dignity when seeking help from institutions, but regaining their dignity and self-respect when they were able to help others. They also discussed that getting together with other mothers like them could help relieve some of the isolation they felt.

"Faith gives me much peace." – Alma (Spirituality/Fatalismo)

In addition to finding help in relationships and in community, some of the participants described the strength they received from their spiritual or religious beliefs. The majority of the participants expressed some type of belief in God. Half of the participants mentioned God as directly intervening in or directing their lives. Luz described seeing the conception of both of her children as being a gift from God, even though she did not plan to have either of them:

> God gives us our babies as a gift. I was meant to have my baby boy because if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be able to come here. I wouldn't be able to come to the shelter because you're only allowed to be here if you're pregnant. So, by me being pregnant,

> being able to come here, I received so many blessings that I would have never received back at home where I was at. He was my gift from God, a way out of where I was at to better places . . . God has a plan for everybody and everything.

Valeria spoke about God serving as her confidante and source of strength. She has a history of depression and expressed that her ability to get through some of her most difficult times came from the strength she received in prayer. Valeria admitted there were times she would lay in bed at night, crying as she prayed, but described feeling a sense of peace even when overwhelmed by sadness. She expressed confidence in God's dependability and consistent presence in her life and in the lives of her children: If I go through something, I pray to God and God answers me. That's how I do it. He shows me the way or he gives me signs or God always answers me like I always go to Him—always.

Alma spoke eloquently about God and her belief in His goodness and provision for her and her children. She verbalized relying on God's intentions for her protection and betterment, even if she was unable to see the good in the situation at hand. It was clear her faith was very important to her and was a source of strength during times of difficulty:

> Entonces creo que para mi punto de vista, que Dios sabe lo que hace. Que Él sabe lo por qué lo hace y todo tiene un motivo. Y así como que yo soy así que Dios sabe por qué lo hace y le entiendo su punto de vista. Y no puede decir, "Yo quiero esto, esto y lo otro." Y Dios dice, "No, esto es lo que necesitas. No necesitas más."
>
> [So from my perspective, God knows what he is doing. He knows why He does things and everything has a reason. So I am the way I am because God wills it and I understand His point of view. I cannot say, "I want this, and this, and that." when God says "No, this is what you need, you don't need anymore."]

In addition, Alma described her belief in her value and the value of all mothers as being something designated by God and as such their value is undeniable. Alma spoke repeatedly about her belief that she and other single mothers are strong and capable. When she spoke these words, her eyes were filled with pride: Una mujer vale demasiado, que no es un cero a la izquierda sino es un mas y Dios nos creo para hacer muchas cosas y sobretodo madres para sacar adelante nuestros hijos. [A woman has great worth—she is not just a place-holder—she is so much more—God created us to do many things and especially mothers—to bring up our children.]

Despite the high degree of belief in God among the participants, none mentioned receiving help or support from a church or other faith-based organization. In fact, Isabella mentioned she recently had to leave her church because the leadership there was repeatedly asking her to volunteer even though they were aware she was a single mother working two jobs with little time to spare. In addition, only a few participants mentioned attending church regularly. For some, it was a matter of not having time. For others, their faith was more individual and they did not feel the need to attend church or "be religious" to believe in and have a relationship with God.

Camila expressed ambivalence toward God and questioned the degree of God's "intervention" in her life. From her point of view, if God was supposed to intervene in her life he had failed:

> I mean do I believe in—yeah, I believe in God, for sure but do I think he's up to making miracles? No, I don't. I feel like you know, I make my mistakes; I'm the one who has to fix them. I just feel like he's also failed if there really is a God up there, he's also failed me, too.

“Don’t ever use the word can’t because you can.” – Isabella (Optimism/Hopefulness)

Whether or not a participant believed in God, all expressed the belief in themselves to do whatever was necessary to ensure their children’s well-being and success in life. All of the participants expressed being hopeful that despite their challenging circumstances, all would be well in time. Luz expressed the importance of gratitude in helping her face her circumstances with a positive outlook when she shared the following:

> Some people drown in a cup of water and I say that because some people, “oh, my God, I hate my life because I don’t have a phone, or I hate my life because I don’t have the latest shoes or nice outfits.” That’s not everything, at all. How about thank you God I have a place to stay or thank you God, I am gonna eat today? It is all how you see it, you know?

During the initial interviews, participants were asked if they were afforded the opportunity to talk to other mothers like them, what would they say? Many offered words of encouragement and hope that reflected their belief in themselves and the optimism with which they faced the future. Many of the participants had histories of abuse and poverty. They also lacked material possessions and, in some cases, emotional resources, yet they retained a positive attitude and enduring optimism. Below are some of the highlights of what they shared as encouragement for other single mothers like them:

> Don’t give up. Things change. Life changes. You never know what tomorrow will bring and I say that because you can be in a shelter today and in a mansion tomorrow. God works in mysterious ways. (Luz)

> Like there’s tons of people out there going through struggles. But these people have become, you know, art—there’s illustrators, big time lawyers and doctors. And I’m like, oh my God, this is not the end. Like you have—just don’t ever give up. And I tell my son

> that every time. Like, don't ever use the word can't, because you can. It's never you can't. And I tell my sisters, I'm not going to be about that, I can't. We're going to—we can do this, you know. (Isabella)

> Try your best, and don't let the negatives stop you from doing positive. And use all your strength on positive ways, all the strength you have, all the stuff that you build and all the struggle you do. Just look at it, and turn it around for the better. (Julieta)

Vijcala (Vee-CAH-lah)

The descriptions and information provided by the participants can be drawn together to form a composite "mother" using the most common aspects of their experiences. Using the first initial of each name (Valeria, Isabella, Julieta, Camila, Alma, and Luz), I decided to call her "Vijcala" (with the last "a" added to give the name a feminine touch). Vijcala experienced a family of origin that was at times merely neglectful and at other times abusive. She has a history of poverty and uncertainty, and rarely knew from one day to the next whether she would have what she needed. Now an adult with children of her own, the uncertainty continues. She spends each day evaluating which problems must be solved immediately and which can be postponed without creating a crisis. For the most part, Vijcala fends for herself. She is aware that her family sees her as the "bad branch" of the family tree and is determined to prove them wrong. She sees other Latina families where the members all take care of each other and while she sometimes wishes it were true for her, more often than not she uses her frustration with them as fuel—motivation to keep pressing on.

Vijcala is determined to ensure her children have a better life than she did. She works hard to maintain a balance between the need for discipline and keeping a close relationship with her children. She makes sure they know she is in charge, but also tucks them in at night, tickles

them, and tells them stories, even when she is exhausted from a long day at work. She makes holidays and birthdays as special as she can, letting her children know that family matters and they matter. Vijcala is committed to putting her children's needs first. She is committed to finding and maintaining legal methods of earning income and avoids casual involvement with men that could negatively impact her children.

Vijcala is more than willing to take care of herself without help because she has gotten used to doing so over the years. Her experiences with "traditional" help systems such as food banks, housing programs, and child welfare have left her feeling uncertain about the usefulness of any them. When she sought help in the past, she felt stripped of her dignity and felt dehumanized. She was confounded by the contradictory rules and policies across agencies and found the best way to get along was to just work harder on her own. She is willing to offer another person help who needs it, and, in fact, finds great satisfaction in helping others. Vijcala would like to be a part of a community of mothers like her where she could both be supported and be supportive of others. She does not want handouts, but wants to know she is not alone in her struggles. She believes a shared burden is easier to carry. Vijcala has a profound faith (although much of it is outside of religion) in that she trusts that God loves her and has a plan for her life. She finds much strength and peace in this belief. She lives with a sense of confidence in herself and a deep-seated optimism that is resolute—even in the face of daily struggles.

Summary

This chapter contained the results of the study based on the data obtained in the interviews conducted with the study participants. Themes pertaining to each of the research questions were reviewed and described in detail with participant quotes providing support for the identified themes. Thematic content described the participants' experiences growing up and their

experiences now as parents. Content also described the participants' present parenting practices and parenting struggles, including navigating the absence of a male role model for their children. Finally, content pertaining to what the participants did and did not find helpful in terms of community support and their descriptions of the ideal form of help for them was reviewed.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This study involved the use of a transcendental phenomenological approach to examine the experiences of single Latina mothers experiencing poverty and living in Reading, PA, to better inform parenting education practice. Living in poverty, including the stressors of inadequate housing and limited social support, has documented deleterious effects on both parents and children (Aguilar, 2010; Evans, 2004; McLoyd, 1998; Paxson & Waldfogel, 2003; Shea, 2000). With all of the challenges and stressors involved with being a single parent living in poverty, the additional stressors of being a minority, and the profound effect this parental stress may have on children, there is a critical need for social work interventions, including parenting education, with single Latina mothers. However, Latinos have been identified in the literature as under researched and underserved in the area of parenting education (Bermudez et al., 2011; J. P. Cardona et al., 2009). The current study was designed to fill this gap in the literature to inform program development in the area of parenting education specifically pertaining to single Latina mothers who are experiencing poverty. Implications of the findings, along with directions for future research, are discussed in this chapter.

Six single Latina mothers who were experiencing poverty and living in Reading, PA, were interviewed as part of this study. Data were approached utilizing a transcendental phenomenological framework. One of the goals of this study was to ensure the voices of the participants were heard because the population being studied is one that is at a high risk of marginalization (Ceballo et al., 2012; Falicov, 2005). Interviews revealed experiences with their families of origin, parenting practices, and contact with service systems. Some findings were consistent with the literature, whereas others were novel. Specific findings and their implications are discussed in this chapter.

The following sections describe the significance of the findings of each research question within the context of the literature pertaining to Latinas and parenting. The discussion follows with implications for practice, including suggestions for program development and social work practice. It continues with the researcher's reflections on the study and suggestions for the implementation of a parenting education program in the City of Reading. The chapter concludes by highlighting an existing local faith-based program for single mothers that may serve as a model for other programs and by offering directions for future research. A summary of the study is provided at the end.

Significance of Findings

Research Question 1

What are the experiences of single Latina mothers living in poverty in Reading, PA?

Troubled families of origin ("Fun? There was no fun."-Valeria).

Almost all of the participants in this study reported coming from families where interactions were unhealthy and abusive, where violence was witnessed regularly, and where there were struggles with intergenerational poverty. Drug use, mental illness, and domestic violence left families broken and in conflict. The participants shared having limited or no support from their families at the time of their interviews. The same factors that contributed to family dysfunction tended to be barriers to the provision of healthy and ongoing social support as well. The majority of the participants did not live close to their families of origin and, in some cases, had no contact with their families after reaching adulthood. Reasons for separation from their families varied, but for the most part were voluntary and resultant of the desire to move away from families they found to be unresponsive to their needs.

Latino families tend to stress the importance of family unity and family connections (Falicov, 2009). For Latinos, the value of familismo reflects a more cohesive family-based support structure as compared to other ethnic groups in the United States (Chang & Liou, 2009; Falicov, 2005). In addition, research indicates Latino families generally tend to live in close proximity to extended family to enhance family support networks (Falicov, 2005). Based on the literature, the single Latina mothers participating in this study would be expected to have a significant amount of family support; however, this was not the case for all but one of the participants. It is possible that the expected dynamic of close family relationships was unmet resultant of the patterns of intergenerational poverty described by the participants in this study.

Among Latinos, the values of familismo and respeto denote the individual's responsibility to and role in the family, but there is also an implicit understanding of the support found in the family system when members are in their "proper place" in the family. For many of the participants in this study, their cultural view was one that included the unconditional support of their family network, but this was not realized in their familial relationships. It is possible that for Latinas, who are raised believing in the importance of family above all else, this lack of family support would be particularly painful; perhaps even more so than for single mothers who were raised in a more individualistic culture, such as that found among Caucasians.

Being the "black sheep" ("So I guess my biggest thing was that my family all talked about me. – Camila).

The participants also mentioned feeling as though they were "black sheep" and were gossiped about and judged by family members. Further, all but one reported not having the support of the families of their children's fathers. This experience of being judged and ostracized was present despite the prevalence of single motherhood among minority groups and in the City

of Reading, in particular, where 30% of Latina mothers are single mothers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Lack of family support is important to acknowledge. Correa and Alvarez-McHatton (2005) found Latina single mothers had feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, and isolation primarily related to discrimination and language barriers. It is reasonable to expect the participants in the present study experienced similar barriers, only adding to the pain of being isolated and judged by family members.

Difficulty meeting children's physical/emotional needs ("Struggle. It's always a struggle."- Isabella).

In addition to strained family relationships, study participants described experiencing continuous stress resultant of a lack of financial resources. Related issues included unemployment, lack of health insurance, shortage of food or other necessities, substandard housing, unsafe communities, and receiving little financial or parenting support from their children's fathers. Prelow et al. (2010) described these conditions, commonly associated with living in poverty, as placing families at "high ecological risk" of having parenting practices negatively affected (e.g., increased use of physical punishment, poorer supervision practices, etc.). Participants in the current study both reflected and contradicted the findings of the Prelow et al. study. Their use of physical punishment was a reflection of the Prelow et al. findings and is discussed further in the section on parenting practices. However, the participants provided a contradiction with regard to their level of daily involvement with their children. Unlike the parents in the Prelow et al. study, the participants in this dissertation study reported being very involved with their children and provided multiple examples and detailed stories of how they made decisions based entirely on the welfare and needs of their children. It is worth noting that this dissertation study utilized a convenience sample that was relatively small. The small number

of participants could account for the differences between the level of involvement reported with their children as compared to the Prelow et al. study.

Many of the participants in the current study described experiencing abuse as children. This included sexual abuse, observing drug use in the home, witnessing violence in the home, physical abuse, physical and emotional neglect, lack of supervision, and being forced into a parenting role at a young age (i.e., having to take care of much younger siblings). Multiple participants described hardships experienced as the result of growing up in poverty, including not having enough to eat or having inadequate or ill-fitting clothing. An unexpected finding was that despite their own childhood history of abuse, being ostracized by their families, and experiencing chronic poverty-related strain, the study participants maintained a sense of optimism about their and their children's futures. This is discussed in more detail in the section pertaining to spirituality.

While the participants lacked support from their biological relatives, many created a "family of choice," meaning they selected individuals geographically close to them (e.g., coworkers, neighbors, friends, etc.) as supports for them and their children. Occasionally, these individuals became so close to the family that they were identified as relatives (e.g., "cousin," "brother," "aunt," etc.) without being related by blood. This practice was not something identified in the literature as being specific to Latino families or to families experiencing poverty. The creative way in which the mothers in the current study managed to find and maintain their own support system represents a strength and protective factor. Prior research suggests enhanced social networks can help to reduce the stress experienced by those living in poverty (Evans, 2004). There was no clear pattern in the individuals chosen by the participants to be supports. Some were male, some were female, some were coworkers, and others were

neighbors. Support provided included financial assistance, aiding in child care, and offering advice or emotional comfort in times of extreme difficulty.

Research Question 2

What are the parenting practices of single Latina mothers living in poverty in Reading, PA?

Some of what was revealed about the parenting practices of the single Latina mothers participating in this research study was consistent with the literature, particularly with regard to the effect of context on parenting, maintaining control over their children and the conditions under which physical punishment was used, and the importance of being a good example to their children.

Understanding parenting behavior within context proved to be a salient feature of this study. Multiple participants reported utilizing specific parenting strategies due to living in neighborhoods the mothers perceived as violent and dangerous. Strategies included buying entertainment systems to ensure their children stayed at home or planning for activities and outings on the weekends to keep children occupied and "off of the streets." The participants admitted acting in ways that could be seen as overprotective at times, but saw it as necessary to ensure their children's safety. This is consistent with parenting research. Ardelt and Eccles (2001) and Ceballo et al. (2012) reported minority parents living in impoverished neighborhoods where violence was prevalent tended to adopt a parenting style that was highly directive in an effort to ensure their children's safety.

Balancing nurturing and discipline ("Like I am your mother and I am your friend."- Julieta).

Participants in the present study expressed struggling with knowing how much control to exert over the lives of their children, particularly adolescent children. As their children matured, the potential risks to them increased and included gang involvement, drug use, and unwanted pregnancy. The participants acknowledged their desire to keep their children safe from harm, but expressed fear that being too directive would result in their adolescent children rebelling, leaving them worse off than if the mothers had allowed more freedom. The Latino value of respeto came to the forefront during discussions about parenting practices. Latinos tend to take a less individualistic approach and encourage dependence on family, respect for elders, and more strict households in accordance with their cultural practices (P. G. Cardona et al., 2000; Ceballo et al., 2012; Chang, 2007; Falicov, 2009). This was observed in the participants in that frequent mention was made of their deliberate efforts to teach their children the parent was in charge and deserved obedience and respect. At the same time, this authority was tempered with love and concern. The participants demonstrated awareness of the need to maintain a balance between allowing their children too much freedom and being too directive or extreme in limit setting.

Physical punishment ("So yeah, I'd have to whup his ass…- Camila).

Tying into the issue of limit setting and teaching respect is the use of physical punishment. All of the mothers in this study admitted to utilizing physical punishment at some point, and in at least a few cases it escalated to the point where the children were at risk of harm. For example, in her interview, Camila admitted once hitting her young son so hard he was thrown across the room. Multiple participants reported that the use of physical punishment was a "last resort" and implied it occurred when they were under duress. The use of physical

punishment as a response to stress is consistent with research in the area of parenting. Prelow et al. (2010) and Paxson and Waldfogel (2003) found parents in families experiencing poverty and considered to be at "high ecological risk" (e.g., minimal family support, limited resources, poorer neighborhood, etc.) were at greater risk of using harsh discipline practices.

Making good choices ("You got to stay on the right path."- Julieta).

Participants in the present study talked about "staying on the right path" as a way of showing their children how to successfully navigate their way through life and avoid legal troubles or violence. They also discussed the importance of ensuring their children knew the parents were in charge and the struggle to balance being too hard with being too much of a friend. Overall, the participants in the present study emphasized parenting as being less of a behavior and more of a relationship. They spoke of wanting to stay close to their children, maintain communication with them, and communicate that they understood their children's world. Even though all of the participants acknowledged the importance of discipline, they believed the relationship with their children needed to take precedence. Driscoll et al. (2009) found that Latina mothers valued the importance of being a good role model and having firm control of their children as compared to Caucasian mothers who valued having economic resources and giving freedom to their children. The difference in the importance of modeling and control between Latina and Caucasian mothers is noteworthy, especially when considered in the context of providing parenting education, and is addressed in the implications section of this chapter.

Research Question 3

How do single Latina mothers living in poverty understand and utilize supports in their environment to aid them in parenting?

A primary finding in this dissertation study was the participants' reliance on spirituality in some form (both inside and outside of religion). Another coping strategy revealed during the interviews was the maintenance of optimism and hopefulness. Participants described a lack of personalismo in their relationships with helping professionals and distrust of helping professionals as reasons for sometimes choosing not to seek help from community resources. Participants also identified experiencing shame when seeking help and cited this as a reason for avoiding social programs.

Spirituality/fatalism ("Faith gives me much peace."- Alma). The majority of the participants in this study expressed a reliance on spirituality as a source of support. Half mentioned a belief in God and also expressed the belief that God was serving in a guiding and protecting capacity. A few of the participants mentioned being raised Catholic, but only one indicated she attended Mass regularly. For the participants who did not mention God directly, they conveyed the sense that they believed there was a spiritual force at work in the world. This view that some "force" was in control and was also benevolent seemed to help the participants maintain a sense of optimism about their and their children's future. These results are consistent with research regarding spirituality and religious beliefs among Latinos. Spirituality has been identified as an important aspect of Latino culture, and fatalismo, or the belief that happenings in life are under God's control, in particular is a belief held by many Latinos (Aguilar, 2010; Dunn & O'Brien, 2009; Sue & Sue, 2002). It is possible the participants' spiritual beliefs served as buffer against the strain of living in poverty. The degree of optimism expressed by the study participants was striking. Many of the participants were living in what could be considered "substandard" housing, with minimal furnishings, in reportedly dangerous neighborhoods, while

struggling to keep the bills paid and food in the refrigerator, and yet they expressed complete confidence that things would improve for them and for their children.

Optimism/hopefulness ("Don't ever use the word can't because you can- Isabella). Throughout the interviews, despite describing experiences of abuse and having to endure the strain of chronic poverty, all of the participants conveyed a sense of optimism about their and their children's futures. Many of the participants used memories of events they now found funny as a way of keeping a positive outlook. Late night encounters with "dangerous" mice and the use of Vicks VapoRub as a cure-all brought smiles during the interviews and seemed to serve the function of adding balance to stories that were, for the most part, full of struggle and pain. Gratitude was also identified as a coping strategy and a method of maintaining optimism for at least one of the participants. Additionally, when asked what they would like to say to mothers like them, instead of relaying messages about how dire their situation was, each of the participants offered words of encouragement and hope to other single Latina mothers.

Personalismo ("When I need help it helps to talk to somebody here who knows me and knows my situation- Luz).

The participants in this study expressed their reluctance to seek help or utilize social supports in their community due to a lack of support for the value of personalismo in the places where help could be found. Personalismo refers to the importance of close, personal relationships and infers time will be taken to get to know someone as a way of establishing a solid foundation for the helping relationship (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012). Differences in social class between helping professionals and those seeking help can also be a barrier to establishing personalismo (Appio et al., 2013). The lack of personalismo in relationships with helping professionals or

institutions has been identified as a contributing factor to rates of poor participation among Latinos in parenting education and other social programs (Flores et al., 2005; Garcia et al., 2012; Vericker et al., 2007). The desire for help to come in the form of community is also supported in the literature, as qualitative research points to the desire of Latino parents to receive parenting education in a format that allows them to both give and receive support to other parents like them (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009; Johnson, 2009).

Lack of trust of professionals ("When I needed help I didn't get it."- Julieta).

Participants in the present study expressed their distrust of professionals and their feeling as though those different from them could not understand them. For example, Camila mentioned a Caucasian social worker who she perceived to be from the suburbs as offending her when the social worker told her she "knew how she felt." Camila expressed there was no way the woman could know and she was not about to rely on her for help, given her apparent ignorance. Julieta mentioned how much more helpful it would have been to her if the social worker who came when her son was having behavioral problems would have taken the time to get to know her and her children before issuing mandates about participation in evaluations or further services, such as counseling. She expressed feeling as though the worker did not take the time to get to know her and made too many assumptions about the kind of person and mother she was. In this way, it appears the lack of focus on developing relationship (personalismo) contributed to a failure for trust to develop between this mother and her caseworker. Research (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012) emphasizes the importance of helping professionals conveying understanding of Latino values such as respect, familismo, and personalismo in their interactions with Latinos as the best way to establish trust with this population.

Experiencing shame when seeking help ("When I needed help I didn't get it- Julieta).

The participants in this dissertation study described multiple ways they felt shamed or devalued when seeking help. For example, Camila expressed her embarrassment at having to stand in line outside the food bank, visible to passers-by who would know why she was there. Other participants described complex (and sometimes contradictory) program "rules" that made it hard for them to get the help they needed. As they described these barriers, they conveyed feeling as if the help being offered was too costly in terms of their dignity. Multiple participants described helping professionals as people just doing their jobs but not really caring about the individuals coming to them for help. The participants did not elaborate as to whether or not their discomfort with seeking help was related to concern about discrimination or if it had to do with their socioeconomic status (i.e., living in poverty). Suggestions for program development with regard to cultural congruence and providing services to those living in poverty in ways that maintain their dignity are offered in a later section of this chapter.

Overall, there were general patterns among the responses supporting Latino values identified in the research literature (e.g., familismo, respeto, fatalismo, etc.). Despite these similarities, it is important for professionals working with the Latino population to take into account the inevitable variability that will be found from one individual to another with regard to such values. There were notable differences found in this study. For example, participants tended to not have strong or positive family support. At the same time, they very much valued their family (referring to themselves, their children, and their "family of choice") and verbalized the desire to teach their children about the importance of loyalty to family. There were also individual differences with regard to spirituality, with some of the participants expressing faith in God, some only expressing belief in some force greater than themselves, and one participant

questioning the existence of God at all. It is inevitable that there will be individual differences with regard to values, making it even more important for helping professionals to take the time to get to know the needs and values of the families they propose to help.

Implications

The purpose of this dissertation study was to inform parenting education and social work practice with regard to providing appropriate services for single Latina mothers. What follows are some general considerations for parenting education programming and social work practice for this population, followed by a more detailed proposal for the development of a parenting education group in the Reading, PA, area.

Considerations for Parenting Education Programming

Lack of family support. An important finding in this study was the lack of family support among the participants. As someone who worked in child welfare for over a decade prior to conducting this study, this researcher would have assumed most single Latina mothers have a great deal of family support. Finding out this was not the case for the six participants in this study highlights the importance of helping professionals taking the time to ask questions about the supports available to the families they are working with to avoid making assumptions about the help that is or is not available to a given family. Such supports could include a "family of choice," as was described by the participants in this study. This "family" was a small group of people the mothers could count on for help with child care, necessities, or emotional support. This researcher suspects the participants' lack of connection to their family of origin was related to the severe degree of dysfunction within those families as described by the participants during their interviews.

Importance of developing community. The participants in this dissertation study expressed the desire to give and receive support with regard to parenting in a group of women to whom they could relate (details regarding the creation of such a group follow in another section of this dissertation). Participants suggested a parenting education group for single Latina mothers would be helpful to them and would offer them a place where they could feel understood, valued, and appreciated. They also expressed such a group would give them a chance to help other mothers struggling like them, and offered detailed stories about times they were able to help someone else and the positive impact this had on their sense of dignity and agency. The participants in this study specifically mentioned what they found most helpful was when help came from people who knew them, knew their situation, and knew their children. Research into families experiencing poverty points to the importance of intervention programs (e.g., parenting education) facilitating the development of social support networks that might mitigate the effects of poverty and improve parenting practices overall (Prelow et al., 2010). Qualitative research also supports a community development model (Delgado-Gaitan, 2005) and has shown that when Latina women are able to gather together and talk about their life experiences, they often find "courage and strength in themselves and each other" (p. 261).

Parenting as identity. Parenting education research is clear that programs will not succeed without good attendance and the best-attended programs are those where the participants feel supported and validated (Aguilar-Gaxiola et al., 2012; Delgado-Gaitan, 2005; Johnson, 2009). There is also support in the literature for ensuring parenting education programs for Latinas take their culture, history, and parenting styles into account (Johnson, 2009). Historically, parenting education research and program development centered on parenting behaviors and learning new parenting "skills," or a set of behaviors assumed to improve

outcomes for children parented by individuals utilizing those skills. However, the mothers who participated in this study did not describe parenting in terms of "behavior," but more as being a part of who they were. This is important information to parenting educators. It helps explain the distaste for parenting interventions expressed by some Latina mothers participating in behavior-based parenting education programs and their reluctance to attend such programs. In the Johnson (2009) ethnography, single Latina mothers described feeling insulted when asked to change their parenting practices to be more in line with what were considered "best practices" in parenting education at the time. If, as the participants in this dissertation study described and the Johnson ethnography implies, Latina mothers view parenting less as a set of behaviors and more as a part of their identity, suggestions that their parenting needs to change could feel like an invalidation of their personhood and result in a high degree of resistance and defensiveness.

Incorporating Latino values into parenting education can reduce defensiveness and resistance when working with Latino families (Johnson, 2009). For example, the Latino values of familismo and respeto underscore the importance of the family (collective) over individual needs. The majority culture in the United States tends to value individualism and sees dependence on family or putting collective needs ahead of individual needs as being "enmeshed." The utilization of a culturally congruent parenting education curriculum can also be a helpful way to ensure the lessons presented are in alignment with the values of Latino families. Further, program facilitators should engage in discussions with program participants as parenting skills are presented regarding ways in which such skills could be utilized in a manner that will complement Latino values. This could be an important component in ensuring the participants feel as though their culture is included in the program.

Remembering context in parenting—The impact of race and class. It is essential for parent educators to consider context when presenting parenting education information. The participants in this dissertation study explained in detail how their parenting choices were guided by their living in what they perceived to be unsafe and violence-prone areas. The mothers in the study described having to be more controlling than they otherwise would be and engaging in what might be perceived as "spoiling" their children (e.g., buying the latest entertainment systems and video games) as strategies for ensuring their children remained safely in the home. They also described how the stressors of poverty and single parenting contributed to their use of physical punishment when they felt as though they had no other option or reached the "end of their rope." While a parenting education program can offer suggestions for how parents can manage their children's behavior, context may affect the degree to which parents apply those suggestions. For example, a program might contain the suggestion that there is a need for mothers to "take a break" from caregiving by allowing the child's father to take on the caregiving role for awhile. In the case of the mothers in this dissertation study, that would be impossible. Alternatives would need to be presented and discussed for ways the mothers could follow this suggestion. As was emphasized by Ceballo et al. (2012), context plays a large role in parenting practices and parenting decisions. Parent educators need to be mindful of the importance of considering the context of the lives of their participants to avoid making judgments about the parents' choices in attempting to address behavioral matters.

Strategies for parent educators include such things as being respectful and collaborative. Remembering the importance of getting to know program participants and learning about their families (personalismo) is another way of reducing defensiveness and encouraging participation. Qualitative research indicates Latino parents participating in parenting education programs want

to improve their parenting practices, but prefer to be approached as "fellow experts" when discussing their children rather than the facilitator assuming the role of "expert" (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009). In addition, research points to the need for parenting interventions to be culturally relevant, pointing to the importance of using a culturally congruent program designed specifically for Latino families (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009; Ceballos & Bratton, 2010; Martinez & Eddy, 2005). Research also indicates parents are aware that some of the strategies they use are not ideal (e.g., physical punishment) and are willing to learn alternatives if such alternatives are presented in ways that are practical and if the facilitator demonstrates understanding and respect (J. P. Cardona et al., 2009).

Beyond cultural differences, recent research has brought to light the impact of poverty on interactions with helping professionals and the need for such professionals to be sensitive to the effects of living in poverty on a person's functioning (Appio et al., 2013). Individuals experiencing poverty combat feelings of shame related to discrimination and disenfranchisement so it is important to ensure programs support the participants' strengths (Appio et al., 2013). For example, in this dissertation study, the participants were resourceful, planned ahead, and used humor and optimism as coping strategies. They demonstrated resilience, determination, and a willingness to help others in their community despite being in need of help themselves.

Any program working with individuals experiencing poverty should provide an opportunity for program participants to express their basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, medical care, etc.) and then provide assistance in meeting those needs. This could include such things as referrals to other community resources (e.g., food banks, housing programs, etc.) or even serving as an advocate for program participants if they are unable to obtain the help they need without advocacy (Appio et al., 2013). Given that the participants in this study expressed

finding community resources unhelpful, consideration should be given to community programs regularly seeking feedback (perhaps in the form of focus groups) from the population they are serving to determine what aspects of their service provision are or are not helpful and making changes based on that feedback (Celada, 2010).

Considerations for Social Work/Human Services Agencies

While the preceding suggestions related to parenting education specifically, the following general program suggestions can be considered for all forms of human services work, including social work and any community-based program servicing diverse populations, including minorities or other typically marginalized populations such as individuals experiencing poverty.

First, it is important for social workers to be well informed about the community they are serving. In the case of this study, the population of focus was Latinos. Human service professionals should take the time to educate themselves about Latino culture. They should seek out information pertaining to Latino values and develop strategies for providing services in ways that make Latinos feel at ease. For example, a therapist might learn about the value of personalismo and take more time to get to know a Latino client prior to delving into the issue bringing the client to therapy.

Second, human service agencies servicing high numbers of Latino families need to do all they can to hire and train bicultural and bilingual staff to ensure Latino clients always have the opportunity to use whichever language (English or Spanish) they feel most comfortable using. In addition, agencies need to make sure all written educational materials or forms are available in both Spanish and English.

Third, human service professionals should develop a sense of "cultural humility" and curiosity about minority families instead of assuming the role of "expert" or passing judgment on

the way a family functions (Falicov, 2009). This curiosity should also extend to human service professionals' own understanding of their beliefs about culture through performing a cultural "self-assessment" by examining one's origins, experiences, and beliefs and how all three affect interactions with minorities.

Fourth, human service professionals should seek information from minority community members regarding ways to make offered services more accessible and useful to those community members. Implementation can include advisory boards or focus groups whose input is regularly sought to minimize institutionalized racism and reduce or eliminate barriers created by culturally-blind policies.

My Reflections

An option when presenting the findings in qualitative research is for the researcher to acknowledge the impact participating in the study had on herself (Piantanida & Garman, 2009). What follows are my thoughts and impressions as I conducted the study and what I would advise for my colleagues working in child welfare.

I am able to admit that, in part, I chose to pursue this line of inquiry into the lives of single mothers out of a sense of guilt. I worked directly with a single mother who was murdered and felt somehow responsible for her death. I recognized the guilt as being irrational—I had nothing to do with that young mother's murder and I could not change the fact that she was murdered, but I could attempt to figure out how to help other mothers like her. I felt that as social workers we were "missing the boat"—we were not getting to the heart of these women and finding out how to meet them at their point of need. I had dismissed this mother's voice. I wanted a second chance. A chance to listen to the voices of other single Latina mothers living in

poverty in Reading and even more than that—to give them a chance to be heard by the academic and social work communities.

During my interviews with the study participants, I expected to find women who were stressed out, angry, tired, and overall just at their limit. What I found instead were devoted mothers who cared deeply for their children and who were able to find the inner strength to do what needed to be done each day. For the most part, they were full of hope and optimism, and held the belief that they would be successful and their children would be successful far beyond what they had been. After each interview, I found myself walking away astounded at the grace and courage each of the participants had shown to me. I was inspired by them. They showed such courage and willingness from the beginning to be open and honest with me at a level that, quite frankly, took me by surprise.

As I think about what I have learned throughout the course of preparing for and conducting this study, the most impactful thing I learned was about privilege. After having worked in child welfare for several years in an area that is heavily populated by minorities, this study helped me learn about the reality of privilege for the first time. Prior to the death of my client, I had not considered the life and death impact of poverty and marginalization. I had not taken the notion of privilege seriously. I knew very little about the degree to which minorities and those experiencing poverty are marginalized in today's culture. As I reviewed the literature I came to the awareness of how little Latinos were studied compared to Caucasians and then discovered much of the parenting education information the provider agency I worked for was holding as "the gold standard" was based on dated, biased information designed for Caucasian, middle class, two-parent families. I then met with Latina mothers who shared their stories of feeling like outcasts and social detritus, treated more like numbers than people when they went

for help, and feeling like they were blamed for their situations instead of being helped because of them.

As I was conducting my research, I had the opportunity to present information about culturally congruent human services programming at a small conference attended by local human service professionals. I was excited to consider the possibility of changing the programming to meet the needs of Latino families in the area and shared my ideas with local colleagues. I talked about the impact of privilege on how we deliver services and the importance of making changes to programming that would be more helpful to Latino families. For the most part, my presentation was met with enthusiasm; however, there was a loudly dissenting minority who treated the idea of privilege as though it was merely a theory instead of fact. When I consider what I learned, I cannot help but think about the depth of my own ignorance prior to beginning this journey and the ignorance that remains in my professional community despite working in a field (social work) that is traditionally the "champion of the marginalized."

I think every doctoral student holds the dream that at some point in the dissertation process his or her study will be "the one to change the world." I do not expect to be able to make sweeping changes in the world, the nation, or even the State of Pennsylvania. I would settle for improving parenting education practice in Berks County—particularly in Reading, PA—by encouraging parenting education providers to utilize culturally congruent practices for Latinos. What follows is my proposal for such a program in the City of Reading.

What Can We Do to Help? – Reading, PA

Having identified what participants in this dissertation research described was not helpful (e.g., making assumptions, failing to understand culture and context, etc.), I thought it worthwhile to create a proposal for a parenting education program for single Latina mothers in

Reading that would be helpful, based both on existing research and on the suggestions of the study participants.

For the purpose of limiting the scope of this initial program and to address the need for program funding, it is proposed that participating families be referred by BCCYS and the program be implemented by an existing parenting education provider in Berks County. At present, BCCYS prefers to fund parenting education services in an individualized (as opposed to group) format. The advantage to this lies in the provider's ability to customize lesson presentation in accordance with the specific needs of the family. Generally, parenting education providers can offer families information regarding community supports to help meet their physical needs, but the provision of this information is on a case-by-case basis and is determined by the knowledge of the individual parenting education providers rather than being part of a cohesive, consistent program.

Group parenting education could offer multiple advantages not presently available to the families being offered individual parenting education. First, parenting education groups could provide social support. The participants in the current study repeatedly expressed their desire to connect with other mothers who were like them and who they perceived would understand their struggles. Group parenting education programs could meet this need. The participants in this study repeatedly expressed feeling judged and feeling ashamed. Being able to be a part of a group that could both validate their feelings and let them know they are not alone could help reduce the psychological impact of the stressors they face daily. Additionally, parenting education held in the group format would be more cost-effective and require far fewer trained staff as compared to individual sessions for each family.

Because the focus of this study was single Latina mothers, the pilot group program would be for this population as well. Given that one in three Latino households in the Reading, PA, area is headed by a single mother (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), there should be an adequate number of individuals eligible to participate in the program, even with the qualification that the family be referred by BCCYS. It is anticipated the group would include eight to 10 mothers. The parenting education program would be held once per week for 15 weeks and would be a closed group, meaning no new members would be added after the second week. The pilot group would be facilitated in Spanish with Spanish workbooks and written materials. This would require the parenting educator to be bilingual. Ideally, the parent educator would also be bicultural, although this would be dependent on the availability of such a candidate as they are in high demand. As the program grew (and hopefully it would), English-speaking and Spanish-speaking groups could be held in separate rooms.

In terms of the choice of curriculum, the Nurturing Parenting (NP) program's Crianza con Cariño for families with children ages 5 to 11 would be the choice of this researcher. There are two Crianza con Cariño programming options (birth to age 4 years and 5 to 11 years), with the latter being the shorter (and therefore less costly) option. It is possible that after a successful pilot program additional programming options could be added.

Most of the parenting education providers in Berks County are already using some version of the NP and their staff are already familiar with the philosophy and tenets of this program. The Crianza con Cariño curriculum was designed specifically for Latinos and outcome research has indicated its efficacy in improving parenting skills for Latino parents participating in the program (Bavolek, Keene, Miranda, & Radcliff, 2013; Montañez, Devall, & VanLeeuwen, 2010). The process of developing the curriculum included collaboration with a variety of human

services experts in the Latino community to ensure program development went well beyond mere translation and took into account the needs and values of Latino families (Bavolek et al., 2013. In addition, the countries of origin of the Latino advisors varied to ensure the curriculum could be utilized with families from a variety of origins (Bavolek et al., 2013. After a successful pilot program, it is possible an additional Crianza con Cariño program for parents of infants to children 5 years old could be implemented.

The Crianza con Cariño program teaches alternatives to hitting or yelling, replaces abusive behaviors with "nurturing" behaviors (e.g., empathy, gentle touch, and non-physical discipline), teaches appropriate role and developmental expectations, teaches ways to enhance family communication and awareness of needs, and promotes healthy physical and emotional development (Bavolek et al., 2013. Sessions for Crianza con Cariño are usually 2.5 hours in length and include curriculum programming for children. While the mothers are participating in the weekly lesson, their children participate in a separate group. Both groups are led by trained facilitators. As the NP is already in use in Berks County, it is unlikely the sponsoring parenting education provider would need to train additional staff. However, if such training were required, it is available through 3-day training sessions held by NP throughout the United States. In addition, NP provides a large array of videos and other training materials on its webpage (www.nurturingparenting.com) at no cost.

The parenting education group could meet in a rented space in a church or other community building on a weekly basis. Ideally, the space would be equipped with a kitchen and eating area where the mothers could either prepare or bring a meal to share with other group members. Camila, a study participant, suggested meal sharing as a way to build community. Meal sharing was also used in a group parenting education program for Latinos as a way to build

community (Martinez & Eddy, 2005). It might be a financial or logistical hardship for participants to buy or bring food weekly, so the sponsoring parenting education provider should be willing to provide food for most sessions after seeking the preferences of the program participants.

In addition to providing parenting education, the program would offer participants the opportunity to come together for the purpose of giving and receiving support to and from each other. The majority of the mothers interviewed for the current study expressed their desire to help other mothers in their situation. They also expressed getting support from women like them would be helpful and would not leave them feeling judged.

Montañez et al. (2010) suggested several strategies to retain group members. First, the parent educator facilitating the group sessions should mail postcards each week to thank participants for coming and to inform them of the topic for the next class. Next, the parent educator should call each group member the day before a scheduled session to encourage attendance. Montañez et al. also suggested holding a "graduation" ceremony with small gifts for the families and certificates of completion.

At the conclusion of the 15-week program, feedback would be sought from participants regarding the aspects of the parenting education program they found helpful and any changes they might suggest for future programs. In accordance with the suggestions made by Appio et al. (2013), the program would make every effort to meet the physical needs of the participants. This would be accomplished by the sponsoring provider agency assigning two caseworkers who would be available to program participants to assist them in navigating community resources or to serve as an advocate for them in gaining any help they might need. BCCYS would fund the

cost of any casework services provided to the program participants. Casework sessions could take place in the homes of the participants and at their convenience.

A proposed parenting education program for single Latina mothers was just described. Another type of program beyond parenting education that might be helpful is a faith-based support group for single mothers. An example of such a program is described in the following section.

Offering HOPE

The majority of the participants in this dissertation study who mentioned being involved in some way at a local church did not describe such involvement as being particularly helpful to them. As the student at a religious institution and as someone who identifies as Christian, I thought it worthwhile to offer suggestions for ways the Christian community could support single Latina mothers living in poverty.

I was recently made aware of a support group for single mothers sponsored by a church in Ephrata, PA, approximately 30 minutes outside of the Reading, PA, area. The group meets biweekly and is supported by the church. It is called Helping Out Providing Encouragement (HOPE) and was started by a single mother who was a member of a church who "felt called" to begin a program for mothers like her (C. Germaine, personal communication, July 21, 2015). Program sessions include information about parenting education, budgeting, creating and maintaining healthy relationships, and information about community resources available to provide support to the mothers participating in the program. Programming also includes time for social support, prayer, and Bible study. Child care is provided at no cost for each meeting by volunteers who are church members. In addition, a separate program is held at a local women's domestic violence shelter to provide support to single mothers in that setting.

HOPE partnered with its sponsoring church to provide practical assistance to the mothers in the program. For example, if one of the program participants has a leaky faucet, a volunteer from the church comes to the home and makes the repair. In addition, church members donate items such as blankets, shoes, clothing, and other necessities to program participants. On the agenda for 2016 is a conference devoted to providing encouragement and support to area single mothers. In addition, HOPE will be adding a mentoring program between male church members and the male children of the mothers participating in HOPE. When describing the program, HOPE's Director, Cristin Germaine, explained the partnership with the church was essential and she doubted the group would have been successful without such a partnership. While single mothers can offer each other social support and community, they have few financial resources and many time constraints that limit the kind of help they can offer. Partnering with the church members allows for connections with individuals with more resources who are willing and able to provide practical help to single mothers in need. For the present, HOPE is a small organization with less than a dozen active members, but is making a significant impact in the church sponsoring the program and in the Ephrata community. It serves as a good example for a way Christian churches could provide practical help and community to single mothers.

Suggestions for Further Research

Throughout the literature regarding Latinos and parenting practices, education, and programs, there were repeated calls for more research with this population in order to continue to develop interventions and programming suited to the needs of Latinos (Bermudez et al., 2011; Bernal & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2009; Halgunseth & Ipsa, 2012). What follows are some specific suggestions for research, particularly with regard to single Latina mothers.

- Montañez et al. (2010) performed a quantitative examination of the effectiveness of the Crianza con Cariño program. The proposed parenting education program in this dissertation could serve as an opportunity to replicate this study in the Reading, PA, area.
- The majority of the participants in the current study mentioned a belief in God. Further qualitative study addressing the role of spirituality and coping for this specific population would be of interest. Present research points to the importance of spirituality for Latinos, yet there were significant differences in how this manifested in the small sample for this dissertation study. Exploration into the various understandings and utilizations of spirituality by single Latina mothers could offer insight into the dynamics resulting in these observed differences.
- In part, this dissertation study involved an examination of the perceived helpfulness of community resources in the City of Reading for single Latina mothers. During that discussion, several participants mentioned involvement with child welfare caseworkers (BCCYS caseworkers, in particular). More in-depth interviews with mothers with a direct and specific focus on their contact with BCCYS and what they found helpful or not helpful in their interactions with that agency could offer insight into whether or not and in what ways casework services at the county level could be improved.
- The participants in the current study demonstrated hopefulness and optimism despite experiencing multiple stressors and having limited resources. Qualitative research investigating the source of optimism and hopefulness in this population could provide insight into intervention strategies to help other single mothers.

- Historically, BCCYS has been reluctant to fund group parenting education, stating that outcomes for families receiving in-home, individual parenting education are better. It would be worthwhile to determine if this is, in fact, the case. The Crianza con Cariño program can be provided in a group or individualized format and would offer an opportunity to examine the comparative effectiveness of these formats. Outcomes of interest might include such things as the length of time families remain open with BCCYS after receiving services, whether or not a family is referred again to BCCYS after participating in the program, rates of placement into foster care or the need for intensive services after program participation, and others.

Summary

This dissertation study originated as a way of responding to a disproportionate amount of parenting education literature being focused on Caucasians, with the results of those studies being applied when creating parenting education curricula for minority groups, such as Latinos. This dissertation study was designed to examine the phenomenon of being a single Latina mother living in one of the poorest cities in the United States. The phenomenon was explored via the use of semi-structured interviews seeking information regarding the experiences, parenting practices, and perceptions and use of community supports by the single mothers participating in the study. The purpose of this research was to inform parenting education and social work practice, and adjust aspects of service provision to be in better alignment with the needs identified by the study participants.

Many of the findings of this study supported present parenting education research with regard to Latina mothers. For example, the participants in the current study described being highly directive of their children as a way to ensure safety, including manipulating their

household environments (e.g., provision of entertainment systems) to increase the likelihood their children would not be "running the streets." Participants' responses also supported research indicating the use of physical punishment most often occurred when they were under duress and that the stress related to living in poverty affected their use of this type of punishment as a "last resort." The importance of spirituality as a support was also confirmed, but there was great variability in how it manifested for the participants, making further study of this aspect of Latino parenting worthwhile.

At the same time, new information came to light as a result of this dissertation study. First, despite the expectation that participants would have a significant amount of family support, as this is often identified in the literature as being the case for Latino families, all but one of the participants in this study had none. Many of the participants demonstrated resourcefulness in creating a "family of choice" as a way of obtaining the support their biological families were either unable or unwilling to provide. In addition, in contrast to some of the research regarding the impact of poverty on parenting, the participants in this study were very involved with their children and cited their children as their focus rather than being a source of stress or distraction. A further finding of interest was the sense of optimism and hopefulness maintained by all of the participants despite their experiencing various types of abuse and hardship as children and continuing to experience multiple difficulties and hardships as adults.

Also noteworthy were the experiences of attempting to utilize community supports described by the participants. Their revelations regarding experiencing shame and a loss of dignity when seeking help, the lack of personalismo or willingness of the "helper" to get to know them, and the complexities of navigating a support system that serve to obstruct the path to help rather than provide it offered insight into the need for changes in how social supports are offered

to this population. The participants offered the suggestion of giving help to and receiving help from one another in the form of a parenting support group. The idea of reciprocal support reflects the findings of only one other study and is therefore worthy of further exploration.

The debate regarding the usefulness of cultural congruence as applied to parenting education curriculum development remains, but the words of the participants in this study make it clear that at least for them, they prefer to engage with helping professionals who take the time to get to know them, who offer help in ways that maintain their dignity, and who demonstrate knowledge of and willingness to apply Latino values when providing services to this population.

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Appendix A: Screening Form

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Age:

Single: Y N

Identifies as Latina: Y N

Immigrant: Y N

If Y, Country of Origin:

Number of and ages of children living in the home:

Total Number of Household Members:

Annual Income:

Appendix B: Research Questions And Interview Questions:

1. What are the experiences of Latina mothers in Reading, PA?
    a. What brought you to Reading, PA?
    b. What is a typical day like for you? (prompts: when does it start? End? Daily routine?)
2. What are the parenting practices of Latina mothers in Reading, PA?
    a. How did your parents parent you? (prompts: What did you do for fun; How did your family deal with problems; What kind of discipline did your parent use; Who did your parents turn to if they needed help)
    b. Describe your family for me.
    c. Tell me what your family does for fun.
    d. What things are difficult for your family?
    e. Who or what affects your child the most? (prompts: positively, negatively, neighborhood, family, church, peers, gangs, school)
    f. What/who has the most positive impact on your child?
    g. What/who has the most negative impact on your child?
    h. What are the most important things your child can learn?
    i. Describe how you parent your children. (prompts: rules in the home? setting limits?)
3. How do Latina mothers understand and utilize supports in their environment to aid them in parenting?
    a. When you experience difficulties and problems, tell me what you do to get help? From whom do you seek advice?
    b. What role does your family play in supporting you as you parent?
    c. What barriers are there to you getting help when you need it? (prompts: language, employment, child care)
    d. If you could speak to a room full of social workers or parent educators, what would you want to say about your experience or about what could help mothers like you? *

e. If you could speak to a room full of single mothers like yourself, what would you want to tell them? *

*added after pilot study

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form (Long)

Project Title: An Investigation of the Experiences of Single Latina Mothers in Reading, PA

Thaeda Franz, Principal Investigator
Counseling Department
Liberty University

I, _____, agree to be interviewed as a participant in a research project entitled: "The Thoughts and Experiences of Single Latina Mothers in Reading, PA" being conducted by Thaeda Franz as an authorized part of the education and research program of Liberty University.

Purpose: I understand that the purpose of this study is to allow single, Latina mothers to describe their thoughts and experiences of living and parenting in Reading, PA. The study seeks to better understand the experiences of this population in order to decrease barriers they encounter and to increase effective support. The goal of this study is to allow these single, Latina mothers to guide the practice of social work and parenting education practice to better meet the needs of this population.

Procedure: I understand that the investigator will conduct a 1 to 1 1/2 hour semi-structured interview of me and the session will be audiotaped. A translator will be present so I may choose to conduct the interview in Spanish or English. I understand the translator will keep all information disclosed in the interview confidential. I also understand that a transcriptionist will be employed to transcribe the interview recordings and that a follow-up e-mail, phone, or face to face interview of not more than 1/2 hour will be requested of me.

Consent: I understand that neither my name nor any other personally identifying information will be attached to my interview and that the code sheet linking my personal identity information with my data will be kept in a locked and protected location in the investigator's office. I also understand that the interview tapes will be kept in a locked and protected drawer in the investigator's office, that only the investigator will have access to the tapes.

Further, I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary, involves no risk to my physical or mental health beyond those encountered in everyday life, and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without consequence. If I choose to withdraw after participating in an interview I understand the recording of that interview will be destroyed. I also understand that I may decline to answer any specific question asked of me, that my participation in this study is confidential and that only the researcher listed above will have access to my identity and the information associated with my identity. I further understand that for any correspondence conducted by email, confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically I understand that no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties.

I understand I will be offered a debriefing session after the follow up interview in the event I need to further discuss my feelings about the topics raised during the interview process.

I am aware I will receive paid compensation in the amount of a $25.00 pre-paid Walmart gift card once I have participated in the follow-up interview.

Questions: I understand that the information given to me along with any questions I might have had related to this study have been satisfactorily answered. I also know that if I have any additional questions about this research project, I may contact:
Mrs. Thaeda Franz – --- --- ---- or by email at

Or her advisor:
Dr. Jeanne Brooks

I also understand that should I have any questions regarding my rights as a participant in this research, I may contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email: irb@liberty.edu.

By signing this form I certify that I am 18 years of age or older.

Please check one of the following:
___ I give my permission to be audio taped.
___ I do not give my permission to be audio taped.

_____
Participant Signature Date

Researcher: I certify that the informed consent procedure has been followed and that I have answered any questions from the participant as completely as possible.

_____

Appendix D: Formulario De Permiso (Largo)

Títilo del proyecto: Un investigacion de las experiencias de las madres solteras latinas en Reading, PA

Thaeda Franz, Investigadora principal
Departmento de orientación
Liberty University

Yo, _____, estoy dispuesta a ser entrevistada como una participante para un proyecto de investigación titulado: Los pensamientos y experiencias de madres solteras latinas en Reading, PA que será conducido por Thaeda Franz como una parte autorizada de la educación e investigación de Liberty University.

Propósito: Comprendo que el propósito de este estudio es para permitir madres solteras latinas describir sus pensamientos y experiencias como residentes y madres de Reading, PA. El estudio busca una mejor comprensión de las experiencias de esta población para minimizar las barreras se encuentran y para aumentar el apoyo efectivo. Este estudio tiene como meta crear una nueva guia para los trabajadores sociales en cuanto los servicios de educación y apoyo que está dirigida para mejor servir a esta población.

Procedimiento: Entiendo que la investigadora hará una entrevista estructurada de 60 a 90 minutos , la cual será grabada. Una traductora estará presente para permitirme hacer la entrevista en inglés o en español. La traductora mantendrá toda la información divulgada como confidencial. Habrá un transcriptor que anotará la entrevista completa y cualquier llamada o entrevista de seguimiento que sea necesario que no excederá los 30 minutos adicionales a la entrevista principal.

Permiso: Comprendo que ni mi nombre ni cualquiera información personal que puede ser usada para identificarme será guardado junto a mi entrevista. Si decido retirarme después de participar en una entrevista entiendo la cinta de la entrevista será destruido. La hoja de datos que contendrá mi código y nombre e información personal será guardada dentro de un gabinete con llave ubicado en la oficina de la investigadora. Las cintas de audio que contienen las entrevistas también estarán guardadas en un lugar seguro dentro de la misma oficina. Solo la investigadora tendrá acceso a las cintas de audio.

Además, acepto que mi participación en esta investigación es completamente voluntario, no involucrará ningun riesgo a mi salud mental ni física más allá de lo que experimento en mi vida diaria y podré salir de la investigación em cualquier momento sin consecuencias. También entiendo que tendré el derecho de no contestar preguntas específicas durante la entrevista. Solo la investigadora tendrá acceso a mi identidad e información personal. Acepto que cualquiera correspondencia conducida por correo electrónico mantendrá el mismo nivel de privacidad permitido por la tecnología utilizada. Entiendo que no se podrá garantizar privacidad si la información es interceptada por teceros por internet.

Comprendo que una sesión adicional será ofrecida después de la entrevista principal si necesito discutir mis emociones o sentimientos acerca de la materia conversada en la entrevista.

Entiendo que recibiré una compensación pagada por un monto de $25 via una tarjeta pre-pagada de Walmart la cual será entragada a la hora de finalizar la entrevista de seguimiento.

Preguntas: Acepto que la información que me han brindado inclusive las dudas que me han aclarado me dejan con una comprensión completa de este estudio. Entiendo que cualquiera pregunta o duda que tengo durante el transcurso del estudio serán contestadas con la mayor brevedad posible y puedo contactar la investigadora Mrs. Thaeda Franz --- --- ---- o por correo electrónico

O su profesora:

Dr. Jeanne Brooks

Comprendo que si tengo más dudas o preguntas pertinentes a mis derechos como articipante en esta investigación, puedo contactar al Institutional Review Board 1971 University Blvd Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 o correo electronico: irb@liberty.edu

Al firmar este documento confirmo que soy mayor de edad (18 años en adelante).

Favor de marcar uno:
___ Le doy mi permiso para ser grabada por audio.
___ No le doy mi permiso para ser grabada por audio.

_____
Firma de la participante/ Fecha

Investigadora: Certifico que el procedimiento del permiso informado ha sido completado y he respondido a todas las preguntas de la participante completamente.

_____
Firma de la investigadora/ Fecha

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form (Short)

An Investigation of the Experiences of Single Latina Mothers in Reading, PA
Thaeda Franz
Liberty University
PhD Counseling

You are being asked to participate in a research study.

Before you agree, the investigator must tell you about (i) the purposes, procedures, and duration of the research; (ii) any procedures which are experimental; (iii) any reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, and benefits of the research; (iv) how confidentiality will be maintained.

You may contact Thaeda Franz at --- --- ---- any time you have questions about the research. The researcher's faculty mentor is Dr. Jeanne Brooks and you may contact her at --- --- ----.

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, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop.

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

_____ _____
Signature of participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of witness Date

Appendix F: Formulario De Permiso (Corto)

Permiso para participar en la investigación

Una investigación de las experiencias de madres solteras latinas en Reading, PA

Thaeda Franz
Liberty University
PhD Counseling

Nos interesa saber si quiere participar o no en un investagación.

Antes de dar su permiso, la investigadora tiene que explicarle: (i)el propósito, loa razón, procedimientos y duración de la investigación; (ii) cualquier procedimiento que sea experimental; (iii) posibles riesgos molestias y beneficios del estudio; (iv) cómo la confidencialidad será mantenida.

Puede contactar a Thaeda Franz al --- -- ---- en cualquier momento para aclarar dudas. La mentora de ella es Dr. Jeanne Brooks y Ud. la puede contactar al --- --- ----- (jupchurch@liberty.edu).

Si Ud. tiene preguntas o preocupaciones acerca de este estudio y quisiera hablar con alguien además, sirvase llamar al Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 o por correo electrónico al irb@liberty.edu.

Su participación en este trabajo de investigación es voluntario y en ningun momenta estará penalizado o perder beneficios si por alguna razón Ud. rehusa participar o decide no terminar el estudio.

Al firmar este documento afirma que el estudio y la información arriba ha sido explicado a Ud. de forma oral y Ud. participa voluntariamente.

_____ _____
Firma del participante Fecha

_____ _____
Firma del testigo Fecha