DROPOUT RISK FACTORS PREDICTING HISPANIC EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS' SELF-PERCIEVED POSSIBILITY OF GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the School of Education.

Chapel Hill
2007

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ABSTRACT

Diana B. Lys: DROPOUT RISK FACTORS PREDICTING HISPANIC EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS' SELF-PERCIEVED POSSIBILITY OF GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL

(Under the direction of Dr. Xue Lan Rong)

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions Hispanic eighth grade students have of school and schooling factors as they prepare to transition to high school. Findings from this study will help educators identify the problems and issues related to students' self-perceived possibility of graduating from high school.

Several factors, including high school and career aspirations, academic preparation, perceptions of teachers and instruction, school organization, perceptions of the social and cultural contexts, the home-school connection, and after school employment, were investigated. Socio-demographic, immigration, and academic variables were also studied. The additive model of acculturation, through the lens of school satisfaction, provided a framework for examining the factors, and their interrelationships related to Hispanic students' self-predicted ability to complete high school.

Survey questionnaires were used to collect data from 74 Hispanic eighth grade students. Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVAs, and multiple regression analyses. Results provided a more detailed description of the eighth grade Hispanic student population. Data analysis of students' self-perceived ability to graduate

from high school revealed significant gender differences. Four variables, gender, home language, having a sibling who dropped out of school, and after school employment, proved to be the strongest predictors of a student's perception of their possibility of completing high school.

Implications for practice and for research were discussed. Teachers, school administrators, and policy makers will find the results useful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My relationship with my advisor, Dr. Xue Lan Rong, has spanned twelve years and two degrees at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has been my mentor, my guide, my cheerleader, and my drill sergeant. It is with great respect that I express my gratitude to Dr. Rong for her tireless efforts and unwavering direction toward accomplishing this goal. Thank you. I would also like to express my appreciation for my committee members, Drs. Frank Brown, Barbara Day, Oliver Johnson, and William Malloy.

My family is the foundation upon which all of my success is built. To my parents, Joyce and Kim Lys, I thank you for instilling in me the drive to accomplish my goals, in spite of the obstacles that might arise. To my husband, Neil Morrison, I thank you for the loving support you have given me throughout this process. Without your support and encouragement it would have been very easy to let this dream go. Thank you for helping me to achieve this dream, and so many others. To my son, Ian David Morrison, I thank you for allowing me to work at the kitchen table and still be able to watch you and Daddy play.

I extend my sincere thanks to my former teaching colleagues who assisted in the survey administration for this dissertation and to my current colleagues who supported the completion of this dissertation and make work a pleasure.

Lastly, I have a photo of three of my former eighth grade students from our annual field trip. Years later I learned that two of the students did not graduate from high school. Their smiling faces, full of promise and enthusiasm, have sustained me through this process with the hope that it will lead to more high school graduations for future eighth graders.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ELL   English Language Learner

ESL   English as a Second Language

LEP   Limited English Proficiency

MEP   Migrant Education Program

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Communities throughout the United States value the education students attain in our public schools. Americans, therefore, are disappointed when students fail to graduate. In the past, dropping out was considered a failure of the individual, but today a new paradigm is emerging that views high school dropouts also as a product of their school's social and cultural environment (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999; Pallas, 2002; Rumberger, 1993). Today, students who choose to, or are forced to, drop out of school are somewhat different, culturally and linguistically, than students who were dropouts a generation ago. The increased enrollment of immigrant students in America's public schools is paralleled by a growing number of dropouts. Research literature suggests that previous dropout prevention initiatives may not yield equal success with the new immigrant student population, particularly with Hispanic students. Furthermore, more current research reveals that the transition between middle school and high school is a pivotal juncture for potential dropouts and deserves additional research to elucidate its complexities (Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Lee & Burkam, 2003). Educators must understand the immigrant student's experience in America's public schools, the importance of the transitions from middle to high school, their acculturation process in schools, and home and community relationships to be able to meet the needs of these students and to ensure these students graduate.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

From all over the world, immigrants and their families are arriving in the United States in pursuit of the American dream. Immigrants from Mexico and Latin America are one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States. In 2000, Hispanics accounted for 13% of the total United States population and it is estimated that by 2025 this group will comprise more than 20% of the total population (US Census Bureau, 2000). Throughout the United States, individual states are facing double and triple digit increases in their Hispanic populations. In North Carolina the population of Hispanics increased almost 400% between 1990 and 2000 (US Census Bureau, 2000). Today, there are nearly 530,000 Hispanic residents in North Carolina (US Census Bureau, 2006). The rapid influx of Hispanic immigrants has forced North Carolina's public schools to adjust to the changing state demographics in order to better serve the new arrivals in its classrooms. The number of Hispanic students served in North Carolina's public schools swelled more than ten times, from 10,031 students during the 1991-92 school year to 116,021 students during the 2005-06 school year (NC Public Schools, 2006). Yet, the Hispanic student population is unevenly distributed throughout the state with some counties having few Hispanic students but others with up to 20% of their student populations being Hispanic. In Woods County, North Carolina, 3079 Hispanic students made up 14% of the total students population during the 2004-05 school year (NC Public Schools, 2006).

Table 1.1

Student Populations and Dropout Events – 2004-2005

	North Carolina	Woods County
Total Student Population	1347177	26159
Total Hispanic Population	101380	3079
Hispanic Population %	7.50%	14.18%
Total Dropout Events	20175	325
Total Hispanic Dropout Events	1716	57
Hispanic Dropout %	8.51%	17.54%

Source. Event dropout data collected from the 2004-05 North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction Dropout Report.

While the population of Hispanic students in America's public schools has grown, so has the number of Hispanic students who fail to graduate from high school. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2000, 28.6% of Hispanic youths between the ages of 16 and 24 were considered dropouts as compared to 11.2% of all American youth in the same age group (NCES, 2000). During the 2004-05 school year, 20,175 dropout events occurred in grades 9-12 in North Carolina (NC Public Schools, 2006). Table 1.1 indicates that although they only comprise 7.5% of the total student population, more than 8.51% of the more than 20,000 dropouts were Hispanic students, (NC Public Schools, 2006). Hispanic students had higher dropout rates in Woods County than the North Carolina average. In Woods County, North Carolina, 57 of the 3079 Hispanic students in the district dropped out of school during the 2004-05 school year (NC Public Schools, 2006). In total, although Hispanic students comprised only 14.18% of the total student population, these 57 dropout

events accounted for 17.54% of the dropouts in the district, (NC Public Schools, 2006). While efforts to improve the overall dropout rates in North Carolina's public schools have shown gains in recent years, the findings of the Annual Dropout Event Report from the North Carolina Public Schools (2006) illustrate some of the challenges the state continues to face. Couple the above average dropout rates for most minority groups in the state with the fact that one-third of all dropout events occur during the ninth grade year and it is clear that educators must focus their attention on the middle school to high school transition.

The transition from middle school to high school can be a traumatic passage for students, particularly for immigrant students. The smaller, nurturing, team oriented environment of middle school is lost to the large maze of America's departmentalized high schools. Often, little is done to welcome new students to high school and to acclimate them to their new surroundings (Lee & Burkam, 2003). The rules and requirements of high school are new to these students and for many Hispanic students they are not explained in both English and Spanish. Minimum attendance requirements are not fully explained to Hispanic students and family expectations may prevent some students from meeting attendance requirements (Orellana, 2001). Graduation requirements may be glossed over as Hispanic students, often English language learners (ELLs), are herded into lower level academic tracks (Davison Aviles, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999). Traditional block scheduling replaces middle school's teams and team-oriented learning strategies, and while block scheduling may increase the course opportunities, it limits the interaction that students have with each other and school personnel (Davison Aviles, 1999; Noddings, 1994). Overall, the organizational structure of American high schools is unwelcoming and marginalizes students who are already at risk of dropping out of high school (Lee & Burkam, 2003). A growing body of

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research indicates that middle school, not high school, is the pivotal point in the dropout experience and preparing middle school students for the transition is critical in terms of how students make adjustment at their ninth grade (Daisey & Jose-Kampfer, 2002; Frymier, 1997; Rumberger, 1993; Lee & Burkam, 2003). Lan and Lanthier (2003) specifically cite the need for additional research on the transition period from middle school to high school and its complexities as a means of understanding the needs of students at risk of dropping out of high school.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate the perceptions Hispanic eighth grade students have of school and schooling factors as they prepare to transition to high school and the factors that may influence their self-perceived likelihood of graduating from high school. Findings from this study will help middle school educators identify the problems and issues related to students' self-perceived possibility of graduating from high school before students enter into high school. Middle schools, then, can help students prepare themselves for a smoother adjustment for high school academic life and reinforce the enthusiasm with which they anticipate the move. Adopting the additive model of acculturation as its theoretical framework, with the belief that acculturation is a more inclusive approach than classic assimilation for linguistic minority students, and using this model to assess student school satisfaction, this study looks for ways to understand what factors may best predict eighth graders' confidence in terms of high school completion.

Theoretical Framework

The additive model of acculturation, as described by scholars such as Gibson (1995) and Valenzuela (1999), seeks to aid immigrant students by embracing their heritage language

and culture and finding ways to incorporate elements of the culture of their adopted home. In the United States, educators may adopt the additive model by understanding different cultural values as they relate to home, school, and community and encouraging students to maintain the language and culture of their native land. The additive model does not attempt, as the subtractive model of acculturation would, to assimilate and to strip away the heritage cultures and languages of students as they enter and study in American schools. Rather, the additive model focuses on the entire student and the factors that may affect his/her success in school. The additive model, due to its inclusive nature and constructivist base, provides a framework for investigating the instructional, social, cultural, and individual factors related to the high dropout rates among Hispanic students (Cummins, 1993; Gibson, 1995). Considering that public schools are the main forum for introducing immigrant students to American society, it is essential that educators understand the acculturation process and incorporate additive strategies in their policies, procedures, and most importantly, in their classrooms.

The model developed to represent the theoretical framework is presented in Figure 1. The model was developed based on the work of Cummins (1993) and Gibson (1995). It represents the ways assimilation and acculturation theories interact in schools and are indicative of the adoption of either a subtractive or additive model. The adoption of the additive or subtractive model in schools will be revealed in how students perceive their schools and schooling and how satisfied they are in school. Schools that operate in a subtractive mode have students who are less satisfied in school and lack a sense of belonging in school (Valenzuela, 1999). Schools that adopt the additive model of acculturation embrace the diversity of their students, allow for the blending of cultures, and have students

who feel connected to and satisfied in their schools (Cummins, 1993; Gibson, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999).

Figure 1.1

Theoretical Framework Model

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┌─────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────┐
│   Assimilation  │ ◄─────► │  Acculturation  │
└─────────────────┘         └─────────────────┘
         │                           │
         ▼                           ▼
┌─────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────┐
│ Subtractive Model│        │  Additive Model │
└─────────────────┘         └─────────────────┘
          \                        /
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            ▼                    ▼
        ┌───────────────────────────┐
        │    School Satisfaction    │
        └───────────────────────────┘
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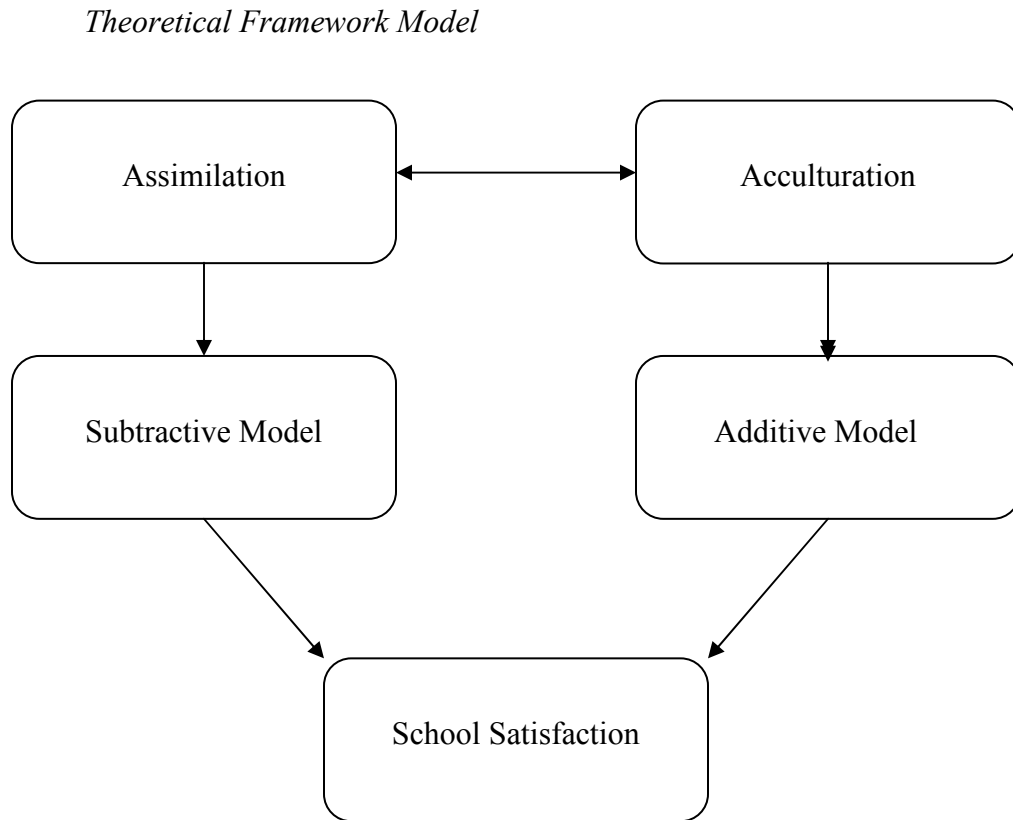
Source. (Cummins, 1993; Gibson, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999).

Research Questions

Three major research questions are asked and answered in this dissertation:

Research Question 1A: How do eighth-grade Hispanic students perceive their possibility of graduating from high school and what are their high school and career aspirations (Factor 1)?

Research Question 1B: Do the perceptions stated in Research Question 1A differ across gender lines?

Research Question 2A: How do eighth-grade Hispanic students perceive the six School and Schooling related factors pertinent to the self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school? These six factors include perceptions of academic preparation (Factor 2), teachers and instruction (Factor 3), school organization (Factor 4), social-cultural context (Factor 5), home-school connection (Factor 6), and after school employment (Factor 7).

Research Question 2B: How do eighth-grade Hispanic students perceive their academic backgrounds, home language, and extracurricular activities?

Research Question 3A: Which variables (socio-demographic, academic backgrounds, immigration, and extracurricular activities) and factors (F1-F7) stated in Research Questions 1A, 2A, and 2B significantly predict the Hispanic eighth graders self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school?

Research Question 3B: Which of the above-stated variables and factors are most prevalent in terms of predicting Hispanic eighth graders' self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school in the future?

Terms

1. School dropout – According to the State Board policy (HSP-Q-001) of North Carolina, a dropout is "any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another elementary or secondary school (NC Public Schools, 2006)." Dropout rates are controversial and of particular political interest. Pallas (2002) defines the three commonly used dropout rates: the event dropout rate, the status dropout rate, and the cohort dropout rate. This study will focus on event dropout rates, which report the number of students that "leave school before completion in a particular time period, typically a single year (Pallas, 2002)." The event dropout rate is often reported to allow for comparison over time.

2. Additive model of acculturation – The additive model of acculturation seeks to add the language and culture of the adopted country, here the United States, to the immigrant student's repertoire. The immigrant students' heritage language and culture is valued and true bilingualism and a blend of cultures is the goal (Gibson, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999).

3. Subtractive model of acculturation – Also termed by Gibson (1995) a replacement model of acculturation. Schools force immigrant students to relinquish their heritage languages and culture in favor adopting English and American culture. Little or no effort is made to maintain the heritage language and culture and it is valued, at best, only as a tool for teaching English and introducing America culture.

4. English Language Learner – A student identified as having Limited English Proficiency (LEP) status who may be enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

5. Hispanic – According to the US Census Bureau (2006), "Hispanics or Latinos are those people who classified themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories listed on the Census 2000 questionnaire -"Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano," "Puerto Rican", or "Cuban"-as well as those who indicate that they are "other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino." This study uses the term "Hispanic" based on the suggestion from the dissertation committee.

6. Acculturation – "Acculturation is the process of culture change and adaptation that occurs when individuals with different cultures come into contact (Gibson, 1995)." One culture is not replaced by the other and a blending of the two may occur.

7. Assimilation – "Assimilation, on the other hand, is the process whereby individuals of one society or ethnic group are incorporated or absorbed culturally into another. It implies replacing one's old identity with a new identity. At the individual level the former culture is lost (Gibson, 1995)."

8. Immigrant – "The term immigrant refers to the various categories of persons who have moved to this country for work or residence, including refugees, undocumented aliens, and migrant workers, as well as voluntary immigrants who arrive with permanent visas in hand (Gibson, 1995)."

9. Variable – A variable is an individual item from the survey instrument used in the data analysis.

10. Factor – A factor is defined in this study as a cluster of variables analyzed together yielding factor means and standard deviations.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to meet the needs of immigrant students and to ensure that they will graduate from high school, educators must understand the immigrant student's experience in America's public schools, including both the acculturation process and the transition from middle school to high school. Research literature reveals that the reasons for failing to complete high school are related to numerous factors. These factors include the socio-demographic variables, high school and career aspirations, academic preparation, perceptions of teachers and instruction, school organization, perceptions of the social and cultural contexts, the home-school connection, and after school employment. The additive model of acculturation provides a framework for examining the factors, through the lens of school satisfaction, and their interrelationships related to Hispanic students' self-predicted ability to complete high school. It is essential to investigate these factors at the point that eighth grade students face the transition from middle school to high school. While schools cannot resolve all of the issues relevant to Hispanic students' dropout problem, schools can provide support for Hispanic students by adopting an additive model of acculturation, monitoring their satisfaction with school, exhibiting more caring for these at-risk students, and addressing the factors that influence the decision to drop out of school.

The Additive Model of Acculturation

As the number of Hispanic students in North Carolina increases, our educational system struggles to adapt to its demographic changes. Programs that address academic

needs of Hispanic students at risk of dropping out, such as ESL programs and migrant education programs that focus adult migrant worker literacy, are positive steps, but not fully comprehensive. Tutoring programs, peer mentoring, and Saturday Academies are focused solely on the academic achievements of students and their success on high-stakes tests, like the North Carolina End of Grade and End of Course exams. However, Hispanic students also need other guidance and support for their social, cultural and linguistic needs. Acknowledging Hispanic students' home culture and community relationships also helps educators have a better understanding of the dropout related problems in a broader context. In summary, educators must understand the process of acculturation and how it affects student achievement.

During the past fifteen years the Hispanic dropout rate in American public schools has remained alarmingly high (NCES, 2000). While the population of Hispanics in America's public schools has grown, so has the number of Hispanic students dropping out of school. These alarming dropout rates erroneously focus attention on the individual characteristics of high school dropouts, not toward the deficiencies of the programs designed to assist at-risk youth (Pallas, 2002). In the past, dropping out of school was considered by society to be a failure of the individual student, but a new paradigm asserts each dropout event is also a product of the school environment (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999; Pallas, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). Learning situations where Hispanic English language learners are academically successful and satisfied often reflect an additive model of acculturation rather than a subtractive model. The subtractive model forces students to shed their heritage culture and language in an effort to quickly become Americanized (Cummins, 1993; Gibson, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999). In contrast, the

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additive model encourages schools to embrace the diversity in their student populations without sacrificing students' heritage culture and language (Cummins, 1993; Gibson, 1995; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). Application of the additive model to the school organization and the school social cultural environment creates a positive learning experience for Hispanic students that manifests itself in positive school satisfaction ratings.

Traditionally, schools have maintained a subtractive model of schooling which held the assimilation of immigrant students into American culture as its main goal. Gibson (1995) defines assimilation as "the process whereby individuals of one society or ethnic group are incorporated or absorbed culturally into another (p. 90)." Educators widely accept the process of assimilation after witnessing wave after wave of immigrant groups discarded their heritage culture and became Americanized. Since assimilation worked for certain immigrant groups at some time period in our history, educators assumed it to work for all immigrant groups at all times. Therefore, they gave little attention to the possible negative consequences of the rapid Americanization process. Straight-line assimilation models contend that as each generation becomes more Americanized they also become more economically successful than previous generations (Waters, 1994). While today's immigrant parents do want their children to be successful and fluent in English, many do not want their children to gain such competence at the expense of the heritage language, culture and closeness with family and community (Gibson, 1995; Lee, 2001). Practices such as government-sanctioned bilingual programs and the "English-only" movement of the 1990s, are examples of what Gibson (1995) describes as a subtractive model of acculturation. In such cases the value of the heritage

language relates to how well it facilitates the acquisition of English as the new language. Bilingual classes using the heritage language as an "instructional strategy" to develop English fluency fail to nurture the development of true bilingual and bicultural students. In practice, subtractive acculturation is analogous to a complete and rapid assimilation as it denudes the ELL's heritage language and replaces it with English.

In summary, the additive model favors acculturation over assimilation. The additive model acknowledges the growing pluralism in American society which the subtractive model ignores (Waters, 1994). Gibson (1995) defines the additive model as a way schools can introduce immigrant students to American culture and the English language without being conformist. Educators establish caring relationships with their students and encourage immigrant students to maintain their heritage language and culture while developing English as a second language (Noddings, 1994). Cummins (1993) adds that "educators who see their role as adding a second language and cultural affiliation to their students' repertoire are likely to empower students more than those who see their role as replacing or subtracting students' primary language and culture (p. 108)." Student empowerment through cultural transformation and cultural preservation will yield academic success for Hispanic English language learners and satisfied students (Lee, 2001). Furthermore, it is essential for teachers to acknowledge the dual frame of reference that ELLs bring with them to school (Gibson, 1995). ELLs see schooling through the dual frame of reference of their heritage culture and the new, American culture. Educators must adjust their approach and learn to appreciate the sacrifice and struggle the immigrant English language learner makes to fit into the complexity of

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American culture and its schools. Their efforts will be rewarded with school satisfaction surveys in which Hispanic students report feeling appreciated and supported in school.

Socio-Demographic Variables

Students' individual characteristics, such as age, nativity, and generational status may affect their success in school. While their population is increasing rapidly, other demographics factors illustrate the complexities of the Hispanic dropout population. Male Hispanic students drop out of school at higher rates overall, but in certain contexts, female Hispanic students are more at-risk (Mayer, 2004; Olatunji, 2005). Student age and nativity are important factors linked to dropout rates. Students who enroll in U.S. schools before age 14 or who have foreign-born parents are more likely to complete high school than students who enroll in U.S. schools after age 14 or are second or third generation Americans (Krashen, 1998; Lee, 2001; Wojtkewicz & Donato, 1995). Second-generation immigrant students may have more difficulties adapting to the new school culture than their first generation counterparts (Louie, 2001; Waters, 1994). First generation immigrant students tend to adopt an additive model of acculturation and are able to blend their heritage and adoptive cultures successfully whereas second-generation immigrant students often find their heritage culture in conflict with the subtractive forces in schools, such as the "English only" movement (Gibson, 1995).

Certain demographic factors, such as family structure, garner much attention in the attempt to identify students at risk of dropping out. In general, dropouts tend to come from low socio-economic backgrounds where parental education level is also low (Teachmen, Paasch, & Carver, 1996). Fewer print reading materials, in English or

Spanish, are found in Hispanic homes which may account for lower levels of school readiness (Krashen, 1998). Hispanic students tend to have large families and students from large families where an older sibling has dropped out of school are more likely to also drop out (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Teachmen, Paasch, & Carver, 1996). Furthermore, while supervision at home may be higher in Hispanic families because many mothers work in the home caring for children, the larger size of Hispanic families may lead to less quality time for each child (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). High mobility among Hispanic families is also considered a risk factor, as is their legal immigration status in the United States (Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Midobuche, 2001; Teachmen, Paasch, & Carver, 1996).

High School and Career Aspirations

While much research has focused on the demographic characteristics of dropouts, a growing body of research is examining the psychological factors involved in the decision to dropout of school. Low self-esteem is often associated with school dropouts (Juarez, 2001; Kovach & Hillman, 2002; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Wayman, 2002). In the subtractive model, a student's self-esteem may be at the mercy of the instructional methods used by teachers. The constant corrections that accompany the transmission model of instruction may contribute to low self-esteem and encourage the development of learned helplessness among Hispanic ELL who learn to expect the teacher to correct their errors in English (Cummins, 1993). Difficulty in developing competency in English may drive many Hispanic students from school. The pressure to pass mandatory assessments that are given only in English may further diminish a student's self esteem; for language

minority students it may seem impossible to acquire an understanding of academic English within as little as two years. Students who experience failure in school develop a sense of helplessness that impacts the level of effort put forth on future assignments. Low achievers that receive disingenuous attention from teachers tend to react negatively, blaming their poor performance on a lack of effort, and begin to disassociate with schooling (Juarez, 2001).

Motivation in school, or the lack thereof, is another psychological factor related to dropouts. Some immigrant students have an internal academic motivation that drives them to success. This intrinsic motivation may originate in their heritage culture or from their status as first generation immigrant students (Sui-Chi & Willms, 1996; Waters, 1994; Wojtkiewicz & Donato, 1995). However, for many Hispanic students at risk of dropping out of school, the motivation to succeed in school decreases over time. Lack of success on school assignments and the growing feeling of helplessness decrease motivation to continue trying in school (Juarez, 2001). Instructional methods that ignore the modalities and learning styles of potential dropouts further decrease motivation and interest in academics.

In contrast, successful immigrant students display a strong self concept and value personal attributes that lead to academic success. Kovach and Hillman (2002) report that a positive school self concept is the strongest indicator of academic achievement among certain minority university students. Students with a high ethnic identity place more value on individual development, task completion, and skill mastery than students with a low ethnic identity. Another study of successful Hispanic university students notes that both male and female students credit certain personal attributes for their academic

success (Valencia, 1994). Participants ranked persistency, responsibility, and attentiveness as the most important personal attributes for success in school. Successful minority students note the role motivation plays in their academic success. Valencia (1994) found that of five motivational variables, the desire for a better job and advanced study were found to be most motivating for successful Hispanic college students.

One way to support students' high aspirations as they transition from middle school to high school is to implement quality, comprehensive transition programs. Such programs support students through high school campus visits and summer bridge programs prior to the start of high school (Cushman, 2006; Mizelle, 2005). Linking middle school students and ninth grade students with older, mentor students has been shown to ease the transition to high school and support the skills needed for high school success (Cushman, 2006). Once in high school, students benefit from small, sheltered learning communities in which students develop strong relationships with peers and teachers, where their interests and aspirations are nurtured (Conchas, 2001; Gibson & Benijez, 2002; Mizelle, 2005; Cushman, 2006, McIntosh & White, 2006).

Perceptions of Teachers and Instruction

The instructional methods employed by teachers of Hispanic English language learners lend insight to the model of acculturation or assimilation adopted by the school. Instructional strategies are as diverse as the students they are intended to serve, but depending upon the model adopted, teachers of ELLs often do not employ differentiated instructional strategies. Subtractive models may incorporate more direct instruction than additive models that recognize individual talents and intelligences.

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Schools that adopt a subtractive model tend to view instruction through a singular pedagogy. Classrooms instruction in this model is teacher-centric and the maintenance of control is paramount. Cummins (1993) relates teacher-centric instruction to a transmission model of instruction where instruction is teacher controlled from the presentation of material to the assessment of mastery. The teacher is seen as the keeper of knowledge, leading students "towards the achievement of instructional objectives (Cummins, 1993, p. 111)." Direct instruction is viewed as the best way to teach English to ELLs in an effort to catch them up to their peers. Lecture, student worksheets, and objective assessments are the norm. Instruction focuses on the surface features of language, including spelling and decoding, rather than helping ELLs develop a deeper understanding of the English language (Cummins, 1993).

The additive model of acculturation offers Hispanic English language learners a more positive and well-rounded educational experience. In terms of language, the additive model is an ally of the English language learner. Whereas the subtractive model seeks to replace the heritage language of linguistic minority students, the additive model embraces it. Rather than use the heritage language as an instructional tool, true bilingual programs, such as some of the dual-language programs currently operated in several elementary schools in North Carolina, develop bilingual and bicultural students with verbal and written abilities in both languages (Gibson, 1995). The additive model also involves the culture of the Hispanic ELL. While many schools do not fulfill a true vision of multicultural education, the additive model encourages schools to preserve and, hopefully, enhance the cultural diversity of their student populations. Teachers can help Hispanic ELL by creating a learning environment that acknowledges and embraces

diverse cultural identities. "Students' school success appears to reflect both the more solid cognitive/academic foundation developed through intensive (first language) instruction and the reinforcement of their cultural identity (Cummins, 1993, p. 108)." The additive model provides students with culturally competent instruction and the opportunity to become comfortable and successful in American society without surrendering their heritage culture.

As a result, instructional methods flourish in schools adopting an additive model of acculturation. The additive model facilitates the use of dialogue to establish a caring teacher-student relationship (Cummins, 1993; Noddings, 1994). Dialogue establishes a trusting relationship between English language learners and their teachers, and from there a reciprocal teaching relationship can develop (Cummins, 1993; Freire, 1970). Reciprocal teaching models make teachers the facilitators of learning rather than the keepers of knowledge as in the subtractive model. Dialogue between teacher and student and among peers helps ELL to develop a deeper, more meaningful, understanding of the English language. Teachers in the additive model integrate language development throughout the subject areas in ways that motivate students to learn and empower them to set lofty learning goals (Cummins, 1993).

Reciprocal teaching also fosters the use of multiple intelligences strategies in an effort to develop the individual talents of ELLs (Gardner, 1993; Noddings, 1994). The additive model's inclusion of reciprocal teaching strategies provides Hispanic ELLs with instruction designed to meet all learning styles. Schools that focus on the linguistic and mathematical intelligences, to the exclusion of other intelligences, deny Hispanic students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning and knowledge in alternative formats. The

additive model would encourage teachers to play upon the individual strengths of each student. Allowing ELL students to express their knowledge and mastery of a topic in alternative assessments will empower students to take control of their learning. For Hispanic ELLs, reciprocal teaching methods and multiple intelligence strategies create a more positive learning environment for student success and happiness in school.

A more constrained curriculum has been linked to lower dropout rates for all racial/ethnic groups (Lee & Burkam, 2003). Researchers found limited course offerings to narrower the range of content teachers had to cover and allowed them more time to develop innovative instructional strategies that would appeal to all students, particularly those at-risk of dropping out of school. Additionally, reforms to curriculum and instructional methods should include the desire to motivate students to become invested in their learning. By implementing a more challenging curriculum and raising school and teacher expectations, the faculty at Wallace-Rose Hill High School also learned to teach in ways that motivated students to apply themselves, take more advanced courses in mathematics and science, and take on a senior project of the student's choice (Case study, 1999). "I know this assignment is tough, but my project is on a topic I chose. I don't mind working hard on it," reported one student at Wallace-Rose Hill High School. Students also received more detailed feedback from their teachers and credible feedback is essential to promoting self-efficacy and sustaining motivation.

Student perceptions of classroom instruction are also closely related to bias and racism in school. Teachers are often unaware of the cultural bias they project in school (Wayman, 2002). Students internalize this bias as neither the teacher nor school wanting them there (Delpit, 1995; Midobuche, 2001). Schools need to promote more cultural

sensitivity within the school climate and create a more multicultural learning environment (Gay, 2000). In Wayman's (2002) study, although the majority of students perceived that teachers liked all of the students the same, over 25% of participants "felt that teachers liked students of non-Hispanic white descent better then students of Mexican American descent." Students who perceive bias in schools and believe their teachers do not care about them are more likely to feel pushed out of school. Wayman's (2002) research supports the assertion that dropping out is the culminating result of dissatisfaction with the school environment and perceptions of teachers is a key element. This dissatisfaction is associated with the subtractive model. When the additive model of acculturation is adopted, teachers value students and their efforts in school and increases student achievement and test scores are seen as personal growth and development (Kratzer, 1996). The individual's well-being is linked to the well-being of the school and when students dropout, it is a failure of the school, not simply the individual.

School Organization

The adoption of the subtractive or additive model by schools is evident in the way a school is organized and how that organization affects students. Many schools with swelling immigrant populations employ remedial tracking and alternative programs as the primary method of serving the needs of ELLs. Schools track students in a subtractive, rather than additive manner. Tracking Hispanic students into ESL classes intended to boost their English language development may have the unintentional consequence of leading ELLs students to drop out of school. Schools may track Hispanic students, often by surname only, into remedial ESL classes isolate them in programs that do not meet

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their needs (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999). Hispanic students attempt to seek guidance and assistance navigating through American schools, but these remedial and alternative programs leave students to find their own ways. The movement of Hispanic students into such programs is suspect and may be correlated to increased dropout rates for Hispanic students (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999).

The subtractive model leaves its mark on school organization in less obvious ways as well. School policies, part of the organizational framework of schools, are usually codified only in English and are often not translated into other languages. Spanish-speaking, Hispanic students and parents are unaware of important school policies, such as attendance and graduation requirements, and the grave effect these policies have on students. Failure to notify Hispanic students of these policies is an example of Valenzuela's (1999) "subtractive schooling." Many students may feel uncomfortable approaching school counselors about attendance policies and graduation requirements and by the time students realize the consequences it is often too late to rectify the situation (Ochoa, et al., 1994). Students feel helpless, unable to make up missed work and catch up with their classes, and, as dreams of graduation begin to fade, many Hispanic students decide to drop out of school (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999). In this way the school organization subtracts opportunities from Hispanic students by not communicating school policies and graduation requirements.

The subtractive model further limits the academic development of Hispanic English language learners by tracking students into remedial classes that maintain a teacher-centric environment. Remedial classes purport to meet the needs of Hispanic ELLs, but do not provide the assistance that students need. One qualitative study

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indicated that many Hispanic dropouts reported that their English as a Second Language (ESL) classes left them on their own to find answers to questions about class material and school policies (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999). The self-paced and self-guided, remedial design of ESL classes denies Hispanic ELLs the support and guidance they need in school, and unfortunately for many Hispanic students, ESL classes are the only academic support they receive (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999). Tracking ELLs into remedial ESL classes also isolates minority students from the rest of the student population and may exclude them from experiences that could enrich their education, such as cultural events, intramurals, or other extracurricular opportunities (Noddings, 1994). Furthermore, many remedial ESL classes fail to incorporate differentiated instructional strategies that would capitalize on the innate talents and abilities of English language learners. In summary, a subtractive model of school organization negatively impacts student groupings, instructional programs, and extracurricular activities for all students.

By comparison, an additive school organization facilitates the success of Hispanic ELLs, and all students, by creating a supportive learning environment. Additive models of school organization provide a school structure that is caring and collegial (Conchas, 2001; Noddings, 1994). Successful programs for Hispanic ELL, like the Migrant Education Program (MEP) and Medical Academy, created a safe haven for ELL students within the larger school setting (Conchas, 2001; Gibson & Bejinez, 2002). Both programs sheltered students in a school within a school program built into the structure of the school. The schools utilized block scheduling to devote adequate time to the program for teachers and students to develop meaningful relationships. The MEP encouraged students to strive for higher level academic courses and develop relationships with other

students; all while supporting students as they ventured out from the MEP (Gibson & Bejinez, 2002). The program also encouraged students to maintain their heritage language and culture while developing their English language skills and peer relationships with students from diverse backgrounds (Gibson & Bejinez, 2002). The Medical Academy's focus on careers in the health professions gave students a joint purpose and sense of community (Conchas, 2001). From the safe haven of the Medical Academy, the scaffolding support of the program followed students beyond the program into other classes and school activities. The reassurance provided by these school-within-a-school programs acted as a safety net for Hispanic student who might otherwise be severely at-risk for dropping out of school. The growing trend toward instituting separate ninth grade academies seeks to provide the same type of support as students transition from middle school to high school.

The transition from a traditional middle school to a traditional high school in the United States requires students to acclimate to totally different school organization structures. Students often move from the comfortable confines of middle schools into larger high schools with impersonal, anonymous hallways and intensive block scheduling. Lee and Burkam (2003) found that smaller high schools (600 or fewer students) have been found to have lower dropout rates than large high schools (1,500 top 2,500 students). The instructional schedule of high school may negatively influence the quality of the instructional strategies employed by teachers. Some see block scheduling as an impersonal method employed by schools to intensify the curriculum, yet others see the benefit of such scheduling for Hispanic students. Schools that use block scheduling time for self-guided remedial instruction fail their at-risk students by denying them the

care and support they need to succeed academically (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999; Rumberger, 1993). Conversely, when block scheduling is used to create a school-within-a-school learning environment, such as a ninth grade academy or MEP, for Hispanic students, students are able to use the time to build support networks, work more closely with teachers, and develop a sense of belonging in school (Conchas, 2001; Gibson & Benijez, 2002; Vaznuagh, 1995). Hispanic students may find the scaffolding support provided by such programs comfortable and satisfying and it may help to lessen the effect of other, possibly detrimental, school policies such as attendance requirements, ability tracking, delayed schooling, high-stakes testing, and anti-social promotion measures (Conchas, 2001; Davison Aviles, et al., 1999; Ochoa, 1994; Our Nation, 1996).

Perceptions of the Social and Cultural Context

The social and cultural context encompasses a multitude of factors related to the social and cultural lives of students. It considers the interactions students have with their peers, involvement with other student groups and extracurricular activities, and their overall sense of belonging in schools. The acculturation model adopted by the school influences the social and cultural interactions of Hispanic students. Schools that adopt the additive model will be more inclusive of diverse cultures and have more satisfied students. The degree of positive or negative social interactions eventually impacts the Hispanic student's self-perceived possibility of completing high school.

The subtractive model tends to create a negative social environment for Hispanic ELLs. By removing the heritage language of ELLs in an attempt to assimilate students, the model also removes ELLs from the social interactions that accompany a positive

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learning environment. Conchas (2001) reports that ELL students in a general academic program failed to develop peer relationships outside of their ethnic group because their social learning environment isolated them from other students. Students who worked in isolated academic tracks also failed to develop peer inter-ethnic relationships across academic tracks because their programs were based more on a sense of competition than collegiality (Conchas, 2001). The lack of peer relationships for immigrant students may dissuade many Hispanic students from participating in extracurricular activities such as drama or athletics. Davison Aviles, et al., (1999) found that Hispanic dropouts were discouraged from participating in extracurricular activities by the cost or not having the "correct" clothes. Interestingly, those dropouts continued to encourage siblings and peers still in school to find ways to get involved in school, further acknowledging the importance of the sense of belonging and participation in school (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999).

When teachers and administrators in schools applying subtractive models do not take significant steps to include Hispanic students in extracurricular activities, students very often feel alienated and isolated, like they were "forced out" of school (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999). Hispanic dropouts reported feeling as though schools did not care about them and that teachers and administrators had low expectations for their academic success (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999; Valenzuela, 1999; Wayman, 2002). Ochoa (1994) identified feelings of unhappiness and not belonging in school as factors related to high Hispanic dropout rates. Failure to provide ELLs with social support in school may point students toward relationships that fill this void. As a result of the poor social and cultural support, Hispanic students may seek out supportive peer relationships outside of schools,

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possibly dropping out of schools and joining gangs (Suarez-Orozco& Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

Rooted in the school social and cultural environment, and noted as psychological factors related to dropping out of school, are locus of control and bias and racism. Research literature indicates that dropouts have an external locus of control and may feel helplessness to improve their academic situation (Lan & Lanthier, 2003). Students in a San Diego dropout prevention program describe having little control over their time in and out of school (Ochoa, 1994). Participation in gangs and working long hours in after-school jobs may bring students a sense of control over their lives that they do not find in school (McNeal, 1997; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). Compounding external locus of control issues is the bias and racism minority students experience in school. Cultural conflicts in the schools manifest in many ways, from the ways teachers interact with student, to the language the teacher uses in class (Delpit, 1995; Midobuche, 2001; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). Bias in school need not be directly aimed at minority students, but only perceived to exist, for students to feel its impact (Wayman, 2002). Any bias present in school, from teachers, administrators, or other school officials, may negatively affect a student's psychological well-being in school.

Schools adopting an additive model of acculturation promote a bias-free learning environment, support the development of peer relationships and provide support for Hispanic English language learners in the school social environment. To encourage the development of peer relationship, schools in the additive model first invest in the teacher-student relationship. Successful and caring teacher-student relationships are essential to developing the happiness and sense of well-being for all students (Cummins, 1993;

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Gibson & Bejinez, 2002; Noddings, 1994). When teachers express caring and have high academic expectations for English language learners, students perceive the caring and their teacher's support improves their happiness and sense of belonging in school (Ochoa, 1994). Students who feel valued as part of the school social community by teachers and peers exhibit increased personal growth and academic achievement, are more satisfied at school, and are more likely to perceive their ability to graduate from high school with enthusiasm and optimism (Kratzer, 1996).

The friendly and caring school social environment is also promoted for Hispanic ELL in the additive model by providing scaffolding support as part of the structural elements in the school's organization, including ninth grade academies. Conchas (2001) describes a school within a school program for students at a racially diverse high school that met the needs of its Hispanic ELLs while allowing all students to experience academic success. The program's design emphasized positive teacher-student relationships and a learning environment that favored collegiality over competition (Conchas, 2001). ELL students were encouraged to work with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and developed friendships as a result. Students in the program were also united by a common vision of future career paths and the sense of community that developed within the program. The structure of the program fostered academic achievement and the development of peer relationships, both of which are positive factors in reducing the rate of high school dropouts.

Home-School Relationship

In terms of the home-school relationship, the additive model is more inclusive of the ways in which immigrant parents support their children's education. Schools that adopt an additive model are more willing to incorporate immigrant views of schooling into their own. Rather than expect immigrant parents to interact with schools in the same manner as American parents, the additive model encourages schools to broaden their definitions of parental involvement. Immigrant parents value the work students do in school differently than American parents. Hispanic families see work as a contribution to the family, through caring for family members or helping the family business, and completing school work is an extension of these values (Orellana, 2001). Between immigrant parents and children a reciprocal sense of duty exists and drives students to succeed in school. Hispanic parents view their job as providing a home and a good life for their children and the children are expected to perform well in school (Louie, 2001). Schools that adopt an additive model identify these reciprocal relationships and value the contributions that immigrant parents make to their children's education. The more connected a family is with the school, the more likely a student is to be optimistic about their ability to complete high school. (Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1996).

The subtractive model also influences the home-school relationship that develops with the families of immigrant students. The home-school relationship is an important factor in determining if Hispanic ELLs decide to drop out of school. Schools that view the home-school relationship through a subtractive lens may not identify and value the ways that immigrant families support their children's education. Immigrant families may require children to work at home, either watching younger siblings or working in the family business, to support the family. In turn, families provide their students with a

strong foundation for academic success, including a good home, clothing, and food (Orellana, 2001). Yet, American schools want to assimilate immigrant parents and have them participate in school in the way American parents do. When immigrant parents do not volunteer, are unable to be class mothers, do not work at fundraisers, or fail to join the PTA and chaperone class field trips, school officials assume that they do not care about their children's education (Gibson, 1995; Lopez, 2001). The subtractive model devalues the impact and influence immigrant parents can have on their children's education, leads to dissatisfied students and parents, and creates an unwelcoming atmosphere for immigrant parents when they do engage in school activities.

Many community factors impact the decision for Hispanic youth to drop out of school. Some immigrant communities view education differently than Hispanic immigrants. Louie (2001) found that parents of Chinese American students placed high educational expectations upon their children, expressing a reciprocal sense of duty that demanded that children perform well in school to honor the family. When immigrant students sense that their new communities do not embrace them, they respond by seeking a place to belong (Midobuche, 2001, Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). Gangs are often quick to welcome the new members (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). The residential segregation found in many Hispanic communities may exacerbate this affiliation (Wojtkewicz & Donato, 1995). School and community leaders would better serve their Hispanic students by providing and encouraging positive activities and affiliations for students. Again, the more connected a student and family are to the school and community, the more likely it is that the student will succeed (Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1996).

After School Employment

Older Hispanic students may also feel the pull of employment to aid their family. In Hispanic families, work outside of the home is considered a contribution to the family (Orellana, 2001). While working less than twenty hours per week may be manageable for these students, working more than twenty hours, in certain job sectors, places Hispanic students at clear risk of dropping out of school (McNeal, 1997). Teenage employment has been found to lead to increased dropout rates, particularly for female Hispanic students (Olatunji, 2005).

In Hispanic families, work in and outside of the home that contributes to the well-being of the family is greatly valued and schooling may or may not be a part of the equation (Orellana, 2001). Ideally, high school employment should be limited to certain job sectors and limited to no more than twenty hours per week in order to allow students to concentrate on school work and still participate in extracurricular activities (McNeal, 1997). Some Hispanic youth find a sense of belonging outside of the family and school by seeking employment or membership in gangs (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

Critique of the Literature

While the research literature on high school dropouts is rich in its examination of national data, it fails to put a local face on the dropout crisis. Many researchers (Rumberger, 1995; Lee & Burkam, 2003; Lan & Lanthier, 2003) analyzed large national data sets to arrive at their conclusions concerning dropout risk factors. These risk factors

may help local school districts to identify potential dropouts in their schools, but other more localized indicators may be overlooked if school leaders fail to examine their own student populations. Family and demographic risk factors identified nationally may lose their applicability at a local level and fail to help schools keep students on track to graduate. Researchers (Balfanz & Legters, 2004) are now focusing on "constellations of school based predictors that educators can use to construct early-warning systems and head off dropout problems (Viadero, 2006)." This study aims to bring nationally identified risk factors to the local level and suggest ways that school systems can identify potential dropouts earlier and provide them more academic and social support.

Additionally, many studies (Rumberger, 1995; Lee & Burkam, 2003; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Olatunji, 2005; Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1996) are limited by their datasets to identifying dropout predictors at tenth grade, and lose applicability when addressing earlier grades, including ninth grade and middle school. Many students in these samples dropped out before they could be included in the study because they dropped out before ninth grade or before entering tenth grade (Lee & Burkam, 2003). Several researchers (Daisy & Jose-Kampfer, 2002; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Lee & Burkam, 2003) cite the need for additional dropout research before tenth grade, preferably before the transition to high school, when meaningful interventions may still be implemented. The inability to identify specific dropout risk factors for middle school students requires localized assessment of student perceptions of school and schooling (Rumberger, 1995). This study seeks to assess the perceptions of students about to enter high school, to gauge their enthusiasm and aspirations, and fill the gap in the literature about dropout risk factors before the tenth grade.

Another critique of the current dropout research is the lack of diversity it possesses. Dropouts represent all racial and ethnic groups, yet many research studies that utilize national data sets treat dropouts as a homogeneous group, their common trait being that they did not graduate. It is essential to disaggregate the data of dropouts to determine if certain nationally identified risk factors disproportionately affect certain groups of students. Few patterns emerge when looking at dropout data across racial/ethnic groups. Additional research is needed to determine the dropout risk factors that influence various ethnic groups. The goal of this study is to determine which school and schooling factors exhibit significant influence on Hispanic eighth grade students and add to the research literature about this ethnic and age group.

Lastly, while some dropout researchers treat all dropouts the same, other smaller qualitative studies have focused small, localized populations of minority students and their experiences in school. These studies (Valenzuela, 1999; Davison Aviles, et al., 1999; Orellana, 2001; Conchas, 2001) provide rich details of the intricacies of schooling and the minority student experience, yet they lack some generalizability to communities in different regions of the United States. This review of the research literature failed to locate any studies conducted in the southeastern region of the United States on the issue of Hispanic dropouts. Most studies were conducted in the western part of the United States with students of Chicano and Hispanic heritage. These immigrant populations are different than North Carolina's immigrant population in terms of ethnicity, nativity, year of entry, generational status, and socio-economic status. This research seeks to address dropout factors as they influence the different ethnic groups and be reflective of the changing changed racial and ethnic composition of central North Carolina.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter depicts the research methods and procedures of the study. It is divided into sections regarding the purpose of the study, the research questions, population, sample and data collection, instrumentation, data analysis, and limitations of the study. The sections about the purpose of the study and research questions outline the goals and objectives of the research. The population section identifies the targeted student population, which is followed by a description of the sample and data collection procedures. The instrumentation section summarizes the creation of the survey instrument and its internal consistency. The data analysis section describes the statistical methods used to address the research questions. Lastly, the limitations of the study are addressed.

Purpose

The research literature pertaining to the Unites States' dropout issues indicates several factors hypothesized to be potential dropout predictors. The presence of these factors in a middle school population may indicate a higher likelihood of dropping out of school as the students' transition from middle school to high school. These factors relate to individual socio-demographic backgrounds, high school and career aspiration, academic backgrounds and preparation, the students perceptions of teachers and instruction, school organization, school social and cultural contexts, the connection between home and school life, and after school employment. Using the framework of the

additive model of acculturation, through the lens of school satisfaction, this study sought to investigate how middle school students perceive these relevant areas as they prepare to enter high school and if any of these areas (factors) better predict their self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school.

Three major research questions are asked and answered in this dissertation:

Research Question 1A: How do eighth-grade Hispanic students perceive their possibility of graduating from high school and what are their high school and career aspirations (Factor 1)?

Research Question 1B: Do the perceptions stated in Research Question 1A differ across gender lines?

Research Question 2A: How do eighth-grade Hispanic students perceive the six School and Schooling related factors pertinent to the self-perceived possibility of graduating from high school? These six factors include perceptions of academic preparation (Factor 2), teachers and instruction (Factor 3), school organization (Factor 4), social-cultural context (Factor 5), home-school connection (Factor 6), and after school employment (Factor 7).

Research Question 2B: How do eighth-grade Hispanic students perceive their academic backgrounds, home language, and extracurricular activities?

Research Question 3A: Which variables (socio-demographic, academic backgrounds,
immigration, and extracurricular activities) and factors (F1-F7) stated in Research
Questions 1A, 2A, and 2B significantly predict the Hispanic eighth graders self-perceived
possibilities of graduating from high school?

Research Question 3B: Which of the above-stated variables and factors are most
prevalent in terms of predicting Hispanic eighth graders' self-perceived possibilities of
graduating from high school in the future?

Population

The Woods County Schools district is a public school system located in the
Piedmont region of North Carolina. The county has several large towns, including
Edwards, Herrington, and Latham, the county seat. Bisected by Interstate 95, the rapid
growth and development on the western side of the county continues in sharp contrast to
the slow development of the more rural and agrarian eastern side. During the 2004-05
school year the system enrolled more than 26,000 students, including more than 3,000
Hispanic students (NC Public Schools, 2006). Currently, there are 2,169 students
enrolled in the eighth grade in the Woods County Schools, 287 of those students are
Hispanic.

The target population for this study included all eighth grade students in the
Woods County Schools. The rationale for surveying all eighth grade students in the
Woods County Schools, excluding those students in exceptional children's program not
pursuing a traditional high school diploma, was to ensure that a significant number of

minority students participated in the study and to provide a fuller picture of the eighth grade student body and their perceptions of school and schooling as they relate to the dropout factors.

Table 3.1

Eighth Grade Student Population by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, Woods County Schools, 2006-07

	Males	Females	Total
White	682	685	1367
Black	221	214	435
Hispanic	144	143	287
Multiracial	26	37	63
Asian	6	4	10
American Indian	7	0	7
Total	1086	1083	2169

Source. Data collected from Woods County Schools, Membership by Grade/Ethnic/Sex Code, October 3, 2006.

Woods County Schools has actively sought to improve its dropout rate. Dropout prevention coordinators and school counselors specifically assigned to identify and support at risk students are currently in place. Other school systems in North Carolina with similarly sized student populations, such as Alamance-Burlington Schools, Buncombe County Schools, New Hanover County Schools, Onslow County Schools, and Robeson County Schools, have experienced similar challenges in reducing their event dropout rates. Table 3.2 indicates that during the 2004-05 school year the school system's event dropout rate for grades seven through twelve fell below the state average for the first time since 2000. Recently reported graduation rates rank Woods County above the North Carolina state average in terms of the number of high school freshman who graduate in four years; in Woods County Schools 74.5% of students graduated in four years as compared to 68.1% for the state average (Hui, 2007).

Yet, closer examination of the district's dropout figures revealed more specific areas of concern. Like many school districts in North Carolina, Woods County Schools experienced a sharp rise in the number of students who dropout of school during the ninth grade year. Table 3.3 presents the dropout events reported during the 2004-05 school year for grades seven through nine in Woods County Schools. The 158 dropout events in these grades represented 44 % of all Woods County Schools dropout events during the academic year. Nearly half of all dropouts in Woods County never truly begin their high school experience, further evidence for the need to assess student perceptions of school and schooling prior to the ninth grade year.

Table 3.2:

Five Year Dropout Event Rate Comparison Grades 7-12

	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Woods County	4.09	4.23	3.67	3.43	3.08
Alamance-Burlington	4.02	3.54	3.66	3.53	3.75
Buncombe County	3.94	4.01	3.38	3.63	3.51
New Hanover County	3.71	3.37	3.38	3.66	3.66
Onslow County	3.73	3.55	2.99	2.90	3.07
Robeson County	7.23	5.21	5.59	5.43	4.80
North Carolina	3.86	3.52	3.23	3.29	3.23

Source. Event dropout data collected from the 2004-05 North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction Dropout Report.

Table 3.3

Dropout Events, Grades 7-9, by Grade Level, 2004-05

School	Number of Dropout Events		
	7th	8th	9th
Middle Schools	Grade	Grade	Grade
Middle School A	0	1	0
Middle School B	0	0	0
Middle School C	2	1	0
Middle School D	1	2	0
Middle School E	1	1	0
Middle School F	2	0	0
Middle School G	0	0	0
Middle School H	0	2	0
Middle School I	0	0	0
Middle School J	0	0	0
Middle School K	3	2	0
Middle School L	0	6	0
Middle School M	2	5	0
High Schools			
High School A	0	0	22
High School B	0	0	9
High School C	0	0	5
High School D	0	0	40
High School E	0	0	12
High School F	0	0	20
High School G	0	0	18
Total	11	21	126
Total Dropout Events, Grades 7-9			158
Percentage of all WCS Dropout Events			44%

Source. Event dropout data collected from the 2004-05 North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction Dropout Report.

Strong patterns emerge when the event dropout data in Woods County Schools is disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender. Table 3.4 indicates the number of dropout events by race/ethnicity and gender for grades seven through nine for the 2004-05 academic year. Dropout event data from grades seven and eight confirm that while the actual numbers are very low they can be translated into high dropout rates for some groups. Closer examination of seventh and eighth grade Hispanic middle school students, male and female, indicated a dropout rate above two percent. Ninth grade data indicated that African American males, Hispanic males, and Hispanic females are most at risk of dropping out, with ninth grade dropout rates of 11.3%, 16.4%, and 11%, respectively. Furthermore, calculations of the event dropout rate for all students in grades seven through nine indicate that African American males and Hispanic students of both genders have the highest dropout rates. While this study surveyed students from all race and ethnic groups, special focus will be placed on Hispanic students because an alarming 6.8% of Hispanic males and 4.5% of Hispanic females drop out between grades seven and nine. Similar patterns of event dropout rates are anticipated in grades seven through twelve for all racial/ethnic and gender groups. Table 3.4 substantiates the need to target eighth grade students and survey them about their perceptions of school and schooling and the self-perceived possibility of dropping out.

Table 3.4

Dropout Events, Grades 7-9, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2004-05

School	Number of Dropout Events					
Middle Schools	White Males	White Females	Black Males	Black Females	Hispanic Males	Hispanic Females
Total Students, Grades 7-8[a]	1392	1311	504	431	277	238
Middle School A	1	0	0	0	0	0
Middle School B	0	0	0	0	0	0
Middle School C	1	0	0	0	1	1
Middle School D	0	0	2	0	1	0
Middle School E	1	0	0	0	0	1
Middle School F	0	1	0	1	0	0
Middle School G	0	0	0	0	0	0
Middle School H	1	1	0	0	0	0
Middle School I	0	0	0	0	0	0
Middle School J	0	0	0	0	0	0
Middle School K	0	1	0	0	2	2
Middle School L	1	0	1	0	3	1
Middle School M	3	0	2	2	0	0
Total 7-8 Event Dropouts	8	3	5	3	7	5
% of All WCS Event Dropouts	2.2%	0.8%	1.4%	0.8%	2.0%	1.4%
Dropout Rates, Grade 7-8	0.06%	0.02%	1.0%	0.07%	2.5%	2.1%
High Schools						
Total Students, Grade 9[a]	755	637	257	199	122	92
High School A	8	3	2	2	3	3
High School B	3	3	0	0	1	2
High School C	1	2	1	1	0	0
High School D	9	4	11	6	9	2
High School E	5	0	7	0	0	0
High School F	9	2	4	1	3	1
High School G	6	3	4	0	4	2
Total Ninth Grade Dropouts	41	17	29	10	20	10
% of All WCS Dropout Events	11.5%	4.8%	8.1%	2.8%	5.6%	2.8%
Dropout Rates, Grade 9	5.4%	2.7%	11.3%	5.0%	16.4%	11%
Grade 7-9 Summary						
Total Student Pop., Grades 7-9[a]	2147	1948	761	630	400	330
% of Total Student Population	8.2%	7.4%	2.9%	2.4%	1.5%	1.3%
Total Event Dropouts, Grades 7-9	49	20	34	13	27	15
% of Event Dropouts, Grades 7-9	38.6%	15.7%	26.8%	10.2%	21.3%	11.8%
Dropout Rates, Grades 7-9	2.3%	1.0%	4.5%	2.1%	6.8%	4.5%

[a] Notes. Enrollment data collected from Woods County Schools Membership Count on December 14, 2004. Event dropout data collected from the 2004-05 North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction Dropout Report.

Sample and Data Collection

       This study sought to survey all eighth grade students in the Woods County Schools in order to determine how these students perceive school and their possibility of dropping out. The sampling frame was provided by the Woods County Schools student information management system and additional detail was provided by the middle school principals following a presentation at one of their monthly meetings. Although it is a convenient sample, it provided an available target population for the researcher. The inquiry about conducting the research project was approved by the central administration of the Woods County Schools. The researcher then approached the middle school principals and presented the project at a monthly principals meeting. The principals were asked to participate in the study and to share the project with their eighth grade teachers. The middle school principals assisted by providing lists of eighth grade homeroom teachers and their total class enrollments.

       Using the homeroom information provided by each middle school principal, packets of survey materials were prepared for each homeroom teacher and delivered to the school contact designated by the school principal. Homeroom teachers were asked to distribute the contents of the packets to students in their homerooms. The packet included the Parental permission letters for students to take home to their parents. The packet also included the Student Assent Form for student to complete. After the consent process was completed, survey questionnaires were then delivered to each homeroom teacher to administer. Only those students who and whose parent both gave consent were allowed to answer the survey questionnaire. Parental consent and student assent letters are presented in Appendix A. Completed survey questionnaires were collected from the

45

homeroom teachers by the researcher and responses entered in SPSS Version 13.0 for data analysis.

Two data collections were conducted in twelve Woods County middle schools. Four hundred and four eighth grade students participated in the study, approximately 20% of the eighth grade student population in the Woods County Schools system. However, if the special education students and students who were absent on that data collection days are taken into account, the participation rates will reach 25%, an acceptable average return rate for a survey study (Kalton, 1983). This slightly lower response rate may be attributed to several possible factors, including the time of year of the survey administration and the considerably high everyday absence rate among the eighth graders in many schools, and possibly the manner in which the project was relayed by the principals to their faculties.

In total, 404 students returned parental permission forms and student assent letters, and subsequently completed the survey questionnaire. Student demographic and academic data were gathered on the survey instrument in addition to student perceptions of school and schooling as related to the seven factors pertinent to the self-perceived likelihood of completing high school. Of the 404 participants in the study, 18% (n = 74) identified themselves in the Hispanic racial/ethnic group. Because this study focuses specifically on Hispanic students in regard to their perceptions of school and schooling, the cases in which students identified themselves as Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander, African American or Black, or White were excluded from the data analysis.

The decision to survey all eighth grade students and to then exclude all non-Hispanic cases was made to avoid the potential problems that might arise by targeting

Hispanic students only. The research literature reveals that many Hispanic students already perceive unfair treatment in school and society due to their families' immigration status, language, and ethnicity and segregating Hispanic eighth grade students for this study might lead to skepticism or even negative perceptions of teachers and administrators (Wayman, 2002; Delpit, 1995; Midobuche, 2001; Gay, 2000; Kratzer, 1996). Additionally, while the survey instrument does not ask students about their legal immigration status, it does inquire about nation of birth of the participants and their parents. If only Hispanic students had been targeted for this study it may have led the students to be suspicious about the intentions of the study and led to more students opting not to participate in the study or providing untruthful responses. Sample characteristics for the Hispanic cases are presented in Table 4.2 in Chapter 4.

Instrumentation

The instrument was designed to gather student demographic data and to address how middle school students perceive school and schooling. Parts of the instrument format and content related to student perceptions were gathered from Ochoa (1994) and Davison Aviles, et al. (1999). Input on the layout and wording of the instrument was received from experts in research methodology and statistics (C. Maahs-Fladung, personal communications, Fall 2006). Additionally, the Student School Satisfaction survey for the Woods County Schools was compared to the new instrument to identify any items that overlapped between the two instruments.

The instrument was used specifically to assess how eighth grade Hispanic studnets perceive their possibility of graduating from high school, including their

individual academic preparation and future aspirations, perceptions of teachers and instruction, perceptions of school organization, perceptions of the school social and cultural environment, the home-school connection, and after school employment. These seven areas along with student socio-demographic characteristics, academic background, immigration related variables, and extracurricular activities have been identified through established national research literatures. The first section of the instrument included forty-five items designed on a five-point Likert scale. The second section of the instrument gathered student demographic and academic data, including home language, grades, time spent on homework, and extracurricular activities. The complete instrument is presented in Appendix B.

Instrument Reliability

First, item 14 was designated to create a variable measuring students' self-perception of the possibility of graduating from high school. Item 14 stated, "I worry that I will not graduate from high school," yielded average scores of 3.027 (n=74 and SD = 1.443).

The items used to determine students' perceptions of school and schooling were grouped into seven factors. The internal consistency of the instrument was $\alpha = 0.862$. Reliability statistics for each of the eight factors are indicated in Table 3.5. The reliability coefficients for the factors ranged from 0.520 to 0.738 indicting that the factors have sufficient internal consistency and create a reliable instrument for the purposes of this study. Five items, 7, 8, 17, 27, and 40, were removed from the data analysis because the internal consistency test indicated that they were not related well to the other survey items in general, and therefore, should be excluded from the statistical

analysis. The rest of the items were clustered into seven factors and details for these factors are given below.

The high school and career aspirations factor (F1) addressed how students look toward the future and see their potential success in high school and future career paths. A sample item for this factor is "Graduating from high school is a priority for me." An acceptable Cronbach's alpha of 0.675 (M = 3.971, SD = 0.647) was reported for the internal consistency of the seven items that make up this factor.

The individual academic preparation factor (F2) related to the students perceptions of their academic accomplishments. The reliability of the four items that comprise this factor was acceptable (α = 0.520, M = 3.800, SD = 0.578). A sample item from this factor was "I am challenged by my school work."

Classroom instruction and teacher support was measured by the perceptions of teachers and instruction factor (F3). Five items were grouped to create this factor. The internal consistency of the factor was acceptable (α = 0.738. M = 3.397, SD = 0.768). A sample item from this factor was "My teachers believe in me."

Attendance policies and class scheduling are two of the issues addressed in the perceptions of school organization factor (F4). The nine items that form this factor yield 0.642 for the Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency (M = 3.485, SD = 0.545). A sample item from this factor was "Punishment for breaking school rules is applied fairly at my school."

The perceptions of school social and cultural environment are assessed in the next factor (F5). Sample items from this factor included "The cultures of different groups in school are discussed in my classes," and "I have friends at school." A Cronbach's alpha

of 0.566 (M = 2.932, SD = 0.644) was reported for the internal consistency for the six items that comprise this factor.

The home-school-community relationship factor (F6) was examined next. The six items in this factor measured the connectedness of the students' home and school lives. The internal consistency of this factor was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.650$, M = 2.896, SD = 0.689). A sample item from this factor was "My parents visit my school often during the year."

The final factor (a single item) addresses the after school employment in which many students engage. The main item for this factor (F7) is "I need to earn money to help my family financially." Survey responses yielded an average score (M = 2.667, SD = 1.205).

The details for each factor, including individual item frequencies, means and standards deviations, and reliability coefficients, are included in a table labeled as Appendix C.

Table 3.5

Instrument Factor Reliabilities

Factor Name	Factor Code	Items Included	Items Reversed	Factor Mean	Factor SD	Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)	Reliability ANOVA
High School Graduation - Item 14	DV	14	14	3.027	1.443		
High School & Career Aspirations	F1	11, 20, 25, 29, 30, 34, 39	34	3.971	0.647	0.675	$F = 4.590, p < 0.001$
Academic Preparation	F2	2, 6, 41, 42	6	3.800	0.578	0.520	$F = 17.261, p < 0.001$
Perceptions of Teachers & Instruction	F3	1, 4, 10, 13, 35		3.397	0.768	0.738	$F = 3.592, p=0.007$
School Organization	F4	3, 12, 19, 21, 22, 24, 43, 44, 45		3.485	0.545	0.644	$F = 15.949, p < 0.001$
Perceptions of Social-Cultural Context	F5	5, 9, 15, 16, 18, 26	5	2.932	0.644	0.566	$F = 6.107, p < 0.001$
Perceptions of Home-School Connections	F6	23, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38	23	2.896	0.689	0.650	$F = 21.262, p < 0.001$
After School Employment	F7	28	28	2.667	1.205		

Data Analysis

Survey responses were entered in SPSS Version 13.0 for data analysis.

Simple descriptive statistics were used to describe socio-demographic characteristics of the sample of Hispanic eighth grade students in Woods County Schools.

Research Question 1A, "How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive the possibility of graduating from high school and what are their high school and career aspirations?" will be answered with descriptive statistics.

To address the research question 1A, "How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive the possibility of competing high school?" descriptive statistics were used to report the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of the self-perceived possibility of graduating high school dependent variable (DV) and mean of the high school and career aspirations factor (F1).

Research Question 1B, "Do the perceptions stated in Research Question 1A differ across gender lines?" will be addressed with one-way ANOVAs.

As a second part of this Research Question, one-way ANOVAs were used to determine if the perceptions of the transition to high school differ across gender groups.

Research Question 2A, "How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive the seven factors pertinent to the self-perceived possibility of graduating from high school?" will be answered in this section with descriptive statistics, minus the High School and Career Aspirations Factor which was reported for Research Question 1A.

The second Research Question addressed how eighth grade Hispanic students perceive the factors determined to be related to the decision to drop out of school and their home language, academic, and extracurricular activities. To address the Research Question, "How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive the seven factors determined

to be related to the decision to drop out of high school?" the mean and standard deviation of each factor are reported.

Research Question 2B, "How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive their academic backgrounds, home language, and extracurricular activities?" will be answered with descriptive statistics..

To address this Research Question item frequencies and means are reported. A language factor mean is also calculated from three items answered by language minority students in the sample.

Research Question 3A, "Which factors exhibit a significant impact on the perceived possibilities of graduating from high school?"

Research Question 3B, "Which of the variables and factors stated in Research Questions 1 & 2 are most prevalent in terms of predicting Hispanic eighth graders' self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school in the future?"

The third Research Question examines which variables and factors exhibit a significant impact on the decision to drop out of school and which of those variables and factors are most prevalent in the sample population. Multiple linear regression analysis is employed to determine which variables and factors may be significant predictors to the self-perceived likelihood of graduating from high school among the eighth grade Hispanic population in the Woods County Schools.

In terms of sample size for multiple regression, a larger sample will certainly increase the statistical power, however, according to the 5 to 1 rule (the minimum sample size should have at least five times as many participants as predictors in multiple regression), the sample size used in this study is far larger than the basic requirement (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2006).

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Limitations of the Study

This study will yield valuable insights for dropout prevention for middle schools in central North Carolina. By surveying middle school students' social, psychological, emotional, and academic preparation for high school this study will help to identify school or system-based predictors of dropouts during this pivotal transitional period. However, since this study is not based on random sample, the findings from this study may not be generalizable to populations with different characteristics from the one used here. Readers who try to apply the findings of this study to the policy making and changes in school curriculum and operational systems in their own school districts may need to compare the social-demographic characteristics of the sample in this study and to their own.

Furthermore, the sample size used in the study may not be large enough to yield findings that can be generalized to the large Hispanic student population. The Hispanic student population is unequally distributed throughout the middle schools in Woods County and the majority of Hispanic paticipants in this study came from a handful of schools. Therefore, the school experiences reported in this dissertation may be limited to the schools they were attending, and may be different than their peers at other middle schools in the same school system.

Lastly, the sample used in the study was a self-selected sample. Students had the option of not participating in the study. Different results may have been found if the study had been compulsory for all eighth grade students in the school system.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study is to report the results from assessing eighth grade Hispanic students' perceptions of school and schooling and other related variables to determine how those perceptions related to their self-perceived possibility of graduating from high school in the future. Table 4.1 provides a tangible description of how Research Questions One to Three will be answered in this chapter.

Table 4.1 continued

Chapter 4 Organization

Page No.	Section and Subsection	Analytical Methods	Research Question No.	Research Question Answered
p. 58	Part I	Descriptive Statistics	Description of sample characteristics	Socio-demographic characteristics of eighth grade Hispanic students
p. 63	Part II	Answer Research Question 1		
	Subsection A	Descriptive statistics	Research Question 1A	How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive the possibility of graduating from high school and what are their high school and career aspirations?
	Subsection B	One-Way ANOVA	Research Question 1B	Do the perceptions stated in Research Question 1A differ across gender lines?
p. 70	Part III	Answer Research Question 2		
	Subsection A	Descriptive Statistics	Research Question 2A	How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive the seven school & schooling related factors pertinent to the self-perceived possibility of graduating from high school? These seven factors include: F1: High school and career aspirations (reported for Research Question 1A) F2: Academic preparation F3: Teachers and instruction F4: School organization F5: Social-cultural context F6: Home-school connection F7: After school employment
	Subsection B	Descriptive Statistics	Research Question 2B	How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive their academic backgrounds, home language, and extracurricular activities?

Table 4.1

Chapter 4 Organization

Page No.	Section and Subsection	Analytical Methods	Research Question No.	Research Question Answered
p. 93	Part IV	Answer Research Question 3		
	Subsection A	Multiple Regression	Research Question 3A	Which factors significantly predict the Hispanic eight-graders self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school? (Socio-Demographic variables)
	Subsection B	Multiple Regression	Research Question 3A	Which factors significantly predict the Hispanic eight-graders self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school? (Immigration-related variables)
	Subsection C	Multiple Regression	Research Question 3A	Which factors significantly predict the Hispanic eight-graders self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school? (Academic Background variables)
	Subsection D	Multiple Regression	Research Question 3A	Which factors significantly predict the Hispanic eight graders self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school? (School & Schooling related factors)
	Subsection E	Multiple Regression	Research Question 3B	Which of the above-stated factors are most prevalent in terms of predicting Hispanic eighth graders' self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school in the future?

Part I. Descriptive Statistics Results for Socio-demographic Characteristics of Eighth Grade Hispanic Students

Gender

Of the participants (n = 74), Hispanic males represented a smaller proportion of the sample (n = 26, 35.6 %) than Hispanic females (n = 47 cases, 64.4 %). One missing value was reported.

Age

Most eighth grade students range in age from twelve to fifteen years of age. In this sample (n = 74), 24 participants (32.4 %) indicated their age was between twelve and thirteen years, 50 participants (67.6 %) indicated their age was between fourteen and fifteen years, and none of the participants indicated their age was between sixteen and seventeen years. Approximately two-thirds of all male (n = 18, 69.2 %) and female participants (n = 31, 66.0 %) were between fourteen and fifteen years old, while one-third of all male (n = 8, 30.8 %) and female participants (n = 16, 34.0 %) were between twelve and thirteen. Also noteworthy, the average age for eighth graders is 13, so Hispanic eighth graders are slightly older than the average eighth grade student population.

Nativity

The Hispanic students in the sample were almost evenly divided between those born in the United States (n = 35 participants, 47.3 %) and those born outside of the United States (n = 39 participants, 52.7 %). Student nativity according to gender groups was also evenly divided as approximately half of the male participants (n = 13, 50.0%) and the female participants (n = 22, 46.8%) reported being born in the United States. However, the overwhelming majority of participants (n = 73) indicated that their parents

were born outside of the United States. The survey participants reported that 87.7 % of

their mothers (n = 64) and 87.7 % (n = 64) of their fathers were born outside of the

United States. Only 12.3 percent of mothers (n = 9) and 12.3 percent of fathers (n =9)

were born in the United States.

Of those students who indicated they were born outside of the United States, the

majority reported beginning school in the United States before the age of seven (n = 32,

43.2%). Thirteen students (17.6 %) reported enrolling in American schools between the

ages of eight and nine. Eight participants (10.8 %) began schooling in America between

the ages of ten and eleven. Two students (2.7%) enrolled in American schools between

the ages of twelve and thirteen. Only one student (1.4 %) reported beginning school in

the United States at the age of fourteen or older. Eighteen participants (24.3%) did not

respond to this item.

Siblings

The participants reported the total number of siblings in their families. The

average number of siblings in the participants families is 4.97 (SD = 1.585). None of the

survey participants reported being an only child or having only one sibling. Frequencies

for participants reporting more than one sibling were: two siblings (n = 1, 1.4%), three

siblings (n = 14, 19.2%), four siblings (n = 12, 16.4%), five siblings (n = 22, 30.1%), six

siblings (n = 13, 17.8%), seven siblings (n = 8, 11.0%), and eight or more siblings (n = 3,

4.1%).

In addition to reporting the total number of sibling, survey participants were also

asked if they had a sibling who had dropped out of school. Seventy-three participants

responded to the item. Twenty-eight students (38.4 %) indicated they did have a sibling

who had dropped out of school. Forty-five students (61.6 %) responded that they did not

have a sibling who had dropped out of school. A larger percentage of male participants

reported having a sibling who had dropped out of school (n = 11, 44.0%) than female

participants with a sibling who had dropped out of school (n = 16, 34%).

Free and Reduced Lunch Status

Free and reduced lunch status is often used as an indicator of socio-economic

status for students. Of the 74 participants in the survey, the majority indicated that they

received free or reduced lunch at school (n = 62, 83.8 %). One-sixth of the participants

indicated that they did not receive free or reduced lunch at their schools (n = 12, 16.2 %).

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Item	Item Description	N	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		74		
	Male		26	35.6%
	Female		47	64.4%
Age		74		
	12-13 Years Old		24	32.4%
	14-15 Years Old		50	67.6%
	16-17 Years Old		0	0.0%
Student Nativity		74		
	Born in the USA		35	47.3%
	Born in another country		39	52.7%
Age at which student began school in the USA		74		
	Younger than 7		32	43.2%
	8-9 Years Old		13	17.6%
	10-11 Years Old		8	10.8%
	12-13 Years Old		2	2.7%
	14-15 Years Old		1	1.4%
	No Response		18	24.3%
Maternal Nativity		73		
	Born in the USA		9	12.3%
	Born in another county		64	87.7%
Paternal Nativity		73		
	Born in the USA		9	12.3%
	Born in another country		64	87.7%

Table 4.2 continued

Descriptive Statistics of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Item	Item Description	N	Frequency	Percentage
Number of Siblings		73		
	None		0	0.0%
	One		0	0.0%
	Two		1	1.4%
	Three		14	19.2%
	Four		12	16.4%
	Five		22	30.1%
	Six		13	17.8%
	Seven		8	11.0%
	Eight or more		3	4.1%
Have a sibling who dropped out of school		73		
	Yes		28	38.4%
	No		45	61.6%
Receive Free or Reduced Lunch		74		
	Yes		62	83.8%
	No		12	16.2%

Part II. Results for Research Question 1

Subsection A: *Research Question 1A, "How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive the possibility of graduating from high school and what are their high school and career aspirations?" will be answered.*

The first Research Question sought to determine how eighth grade Hispanic students perceived the transition to high school and the possibility of not completing high school. To address this research question students considered how they realistically estimated their possibility of graduating from high school.

Item 14 in the survey instrument was designated to measure how students perceive their possibility of graduating from high school. Scores for this item were reversed and item frequencies are presented in Table 4.3. Item 14, "I worry that I will not graduate from high school," yielded an average score of 3.027 (SD = 1.443) for the High School Graduation variable (DV). The frequencies for this variable indicate that 38% of Hispanic students worry about not graduating from high school but only 42% of them do not worry about graduating from high school.

Table 4.3

Survey Results – Item 14 – "I worry that I will not graduate from high school."

			Item Ratings				
N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
74	15	16	15	12	16	3.027	1.443
	20.3%	21.6%	20.3%	16.2%	21.6%		

Research Question 1A also addressed the factor related to High School and Career Aspirations (F1). This factor included items directly related to how eighth grade Hispanic students perceive their academic future in high school and beyond and career possibilities. Survey items 11, 20, 25, 29, 30, 34 and 39 were grouped in this factor. Scores for item 34 were reversed. Mean scores (with standard deviations in parentheses) for these items are 4.014 (1.165), 4.203 (0.876), 4.027 (1.205), 4.014 (1.153), 3.865 (1.090), 3.486 (1.263), and 4.189 (0.975), respectively. Individual item frequencies and means are presented in Table 4.4. When grouped together, the F1 factor mean was 3.971 (SD = 0.647).

Table 4.4

Survey Results - High School and Career Aspirations Factor (F1)

Item	N		Item Ratings				Mean	SD
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
High School and Career Aspirations Factor (F1)							3.971	0.647
11. I am excited about going to high school next year.	74	5	3	10	24	32	4.014	1.165
		6.8%	4.1%	13.5%	32.4%	43.2%		
20. Graduating from high school is a priority for me.	74	1	0	16	23	34	4.203	0.876
		1.4%	0.0%	21.6%	31.1%	45.9%		
25. Dropping out of school is not an option for me.	74	5	4	10	20	35	4.027	1.205
		6.8%	5.4%	13.5%	27.0%	47.3%		
29. I want to go to college.	74	3	6	12	19	34	4.014	1.153
		4.1%	8.1%	16.2%	25.7%	45.9%		

Survey Results - High School and Career Aspirations Factor (F1)

Item	N	Item Ratings					Mean	SD
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
30. I have a role model (like a friend, family member, or other adult figure) who inspires me to continue in school.	74	4	3	16	27	24	3.865	1.090
		5.4%	4.1%	21.6%	36.5%	32.40%		
34. Moving to high school next year makes me nervous.[a]	74	18	24	15	10	7		
		24.3%	32.4%	20.3%	13.5%	9.5%	3.486	1.263
39. I see the importance of graduating from high school.	74	1	5	8	25	35	4.189	0.975
		1.4%	6.8%	10.8%	33.8%	47.3%		

a. Scores for this item were reversed.

Subsection B: In this section, Research Question 1B, "Do the perceptions stated in Research Question 1A differ across gender lines?" will be addressed.

The second part of Research Question 1 sought to determine if there were differences across gender groups in how eighth grade Hispanic students perceived the transition to high school and predicted their ability to complete high school and enter college. Univariate analysis of variance was employed to determine if significant differences existed in the way male and female participants responded to the high school graduation variable (DV) and the High School and Career Aspirations factor (F1). Results are presented in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6, respectively. An analysis of variance showed that the differences in responses to the High School Graduation Variable were significant, $F(1, 72) = 8.405$, $p = 0.005$. The mean score for males participants ($M = 2.385$, $SD = 1.388$) was significantly lower than the mean score for female participants ($M = 3.362$, $SD = 1.374$). This result indicates that female Hispanic students worry less than male students in terms of not graduating from high school in the future. The High School and Career Aspirations factor (F1) included several items related to how students perceived their academic future. An analysis of variance showed that the differences in responses to the High School and Career Aspirations factor across gender groups were significant, $F(1, 72) = 4.371$, $p = 0.040$. The mean scores for males participants ($M = 3.791$, $SD = 0.560$) and female participants ($M = 4.103$, $SD = 0.637$) differed significantly. This result shows a more optimistic self-perceived prospect regarding academic advancement in high school and beyond among female Hispanic students than among male students.

Table 4.5

One-Way Analysis of Variance for the Dropout Variable by Gender

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Corrected Model	15.981[a]	1	15.981	8.405	0.005
Intercept	552.749	1	552.749	290.694	0.000
Gender	15.981	1	15.981	8.405	0.005
Error	135.005	71	15.981	8.405	
Total	814.000	73			
Corrected Total	150.986	72			

Note. R^2 = R squared
a. R^2 = 0.106 (Adjusted R2 = 0.093)

Table 4.6

One-Way Analysis of Variance for F1 by Gender

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Corrected Model	1.630[a]	1	1.630	4.371	0.040
Intercept	1043.306	1	1043.306	2797.201	0.000
Gender	1.603	1	1.603	4.371	0.040
Error	26.482	71	15.981	8.405	
Total	1191.561	73	0.373		
Corrected Total	29.112				

Note. R^2 = R squared
a. R^2 = 0.058 (Adjusted R2 = 0.045)

Part III. Results for Research Question 2

 Subsection A: Research Question 2A, "How do eighth grade Hispanic students

perceive the seven factors pertinent to the self-perceived possibility of graduating from

high school?" will be answered in this section, minus the High School and Career

Aspirations Factor(F1)which was reported for Research Question 1A.

 To answer this Research Question, the researcher analyzed student responses to

the different factors pertinent to the students' perceptions of the high school graduation

possibility, including perceptions of academic preparation, teachers and instruction,

school organization, social-cultural context, home-school connection, and after school

employment. The results from the analysis of each of the Factors of F2-F7 follow:

 Academic Preparation Factor (F2)

 The second factor (F2) related to how students perceive their academic

preparation through eighth grade, including how challenged they felt by their school

work. The Academic Preparation factor includes items 2, 6, 41, and 42. Mean scores

(with standard deviations in parentheses) for these items are 4.234 (0.737), 3.541 (1.075),

4.000 (0.860), and 3.419 (0.907), respectively. Scores for item 6 were reversed

indicating that 60% of participants do not feel challenged by their school work.

Individual item frequencies and means are presented in Table 4.7. When grouped

together to create the Academic Preparation factor, the factor mean is 3.807 (SD =

0.578).

Table 4.7

Survey Results – Academic Preparation Factor (F2)

Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
				Item Ratings				
Academic Preparation Factor (F2)							3.800	0.578
2. My school work is preparing me for the future.	74	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	13 17.6%	30 40.5%	31 41.9%	4.234	0.737
6. I am challenged by my school work.[a]	74	12 16.2%	33 44.6%	16 21.6%	9 12.2%	4 5.4%	3.541	1.075
41. I am always prepared for class with paper and pencil.	74	0 0.0%	5 6.8%	12 16.2%	35 47.3%	22 29.7%	4.000	0.860
42. I work hard to prepare for exams.	74	3 4.1%	5 6.8%	31 41.9%	28 37.8%	7 9.5%	3.419	0.907

a. Scores for this item were reversed.

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Perceptions of Teachers and Instruction (F3)

How students perceived their teachers and classroom instruction was assessed in the next factor (F3). The Perceptions of Teachers and Instruction grouped survey items 1, 4, 10, 13, and 35, to address how students perceived teacher concern and caring and student involvement in their coursework. Mean scores (with standard deviations in parentheses) for these items are 3.595 (1.019), 3.568 (1.021), 3.203 (1.238), 3.432 (0.893), and 3.189 (1.279), respectively. Individual item frequencies and means are presented in Table 4.8. The mean for the Perceptions of Teachers and Instruction factor is 3.397 (SD = 0.768).

Table 4.8

Survey Results – Perceptions of Teachers and Instruction Factor (F3)

Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
				Item Ratings				
Perceptions of Teachers and Instruction Factor (F3)							3.397	0.768
1. My teachers believe in me.	74	3 4.1%	7 9.5%	20 27.0%	31 41.9%	13 17.6%	3.595	1.019
4. Teachers at my school care about the students.	74	2 2.7%	8 10.8%	25 33.8%	24 32.4%	15 20.3%	3.568	1.021
10. I am treated fairly by teachers at my school.	74	9 12.2%	12 16.2%	19 25.7%	23 31.1%	11 14.9%	3.203	1.238

Table 4.8 continued

Survey Results – Perceptions of Teachers and Instruction Factor(F3)

				Item Ratings				
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
13. My teachers are concerned when I do not do well on assignments.	74	2 2.7%	8 10.8%	26 35.1%	32 43.2%	6 8.1%	3.432	0.893
35. Our media center has books that appeal to my interests.	74	12 16.2%	7 9.5%	21 28.4%	23 31.1%	11 14.9%	3.189	1.279

School Organization (F4)

The next factor considered how the organization of school and its policies and procedures may influence a student's decision to dropout of school. The School Organization factor (F4) included items 3, 12, 19, 21, 22, 24, 43, 44, and 45. Mean scores (with standard deviations in parentheses) for these items are 3.689 (1.006), 3.351 (1.065), 3.649 (1.140), 3.162 (1.282), 3.808 (1.002), 3.851 (0.902), 3.568 (1.035), 2.446 (1.195), and 3.838 (0.937) respectively. Individual item frequencies and means are presented in Table 4.9. When grouped to create the School Organization factor, the factor mean is 3.485 (SD = 0.545).

Table 4.9

Survey Results – Perceptions of School Organization Factor (F4)

Item	N	Item Ratings					Mean	SD
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Perceptions of School Organization Factor (F4)							3.485	0.545
3. My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	74	2 2.7%	8 10.8%	16 21.6%	33 44.6%	15 20.3%	3.689	1.006
12. I feel safe at school.	74	3 4.1%	13 17.6%	24 32.4%	23 31.1%	11 14.9%	3.351	1.065
19. I often see my principal walking in the hall at school.	74	4 5.4%	8 10.8%	17 23.0%	26 35.1%	19 25.7%	3.649	1.140
21. Punishment for breaking school rules is applied fairly at my school.	74	12 16.20%	9 12.2%	18 24.3%	25 33.8%	10 13.5%	3.162	1.282

Table 4.9 continued

Survey Results – Perceptions of School Organization Factor (F4)

				Item Ratings				
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
22. I know what I need to do to graduate from high school.	74	3	2	21	28	20	3.808	1.002
		4.1%	2.7%	28.4%	37.9%	27.0%		
24. I understand my school's attendance requirements.	74	2	2	18	35	17	3.851	0.902
		2.7%	2.7%	24.3%	47.3%	23.0%		
43. It is easy for me to see the connection between what I have learned in school and what I will do in the future.	74	2	8	26	22	16	3.568	1.035
		2.7%	10.8%	35.1%	29.7%	21.6%		
44. I prefer to take classes in a 90 minute block rather than a 45 minute class period.	74	21	17	22	10	4	2.446	1.195
		28.4%	23.0%	29.7%	13.5%	5.4%		
45. Having a good attendance record at school is important to me.	74	1	3	24	25	21	3.838	0.937
		1.4%	4.1%	32.4%	33.8%	28.4%		

Social and Cultural Context Factor (F5)

Social and cultural interaction in school was demonstrated in the research literature to be closely related to a student's decision to dropout of school. This factor, the Social and Cultural Context factor (F5), addressed the connectedness of students to their school in terms of cultural diversity and social networks at school. Items 5, 9, 15, 16, 18, and 26 are grouped in this factor. Mean scores (with standard deviations in parentheses) for these items are 2.514 (1.063), 2.616 (0.988), 3.027 (1.146), 3.081 (1.290), 3.274 (1.126), and 3.081 (1.236), respectively. Scores for item 5 were reversed indicating that nearly 50% of survey participants feel uncomfortable being Hispanic at their schools. Individual item frequencies and means are presented in Table 4.10. The Social and Cultural Context factor mean is 2.932 (SD = 0.644).

Table 4.10

Survey Results – Perceptions of the Social-Cultural Context (F5)

Item	N	Item Ratings					Mean	SD
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Perceptions of Social-Cultural Context Factor (F5)							2.932	0.644
5. At my school it is uncomfortable to be of the race or ethnic group that I belong to.[a]	74	3 4.1%	7 9.5%	31 41.9%	17 23.0%	16 21.6%	2.514	1.063
9. The cultures of different groups in school are discussed in my classes.	74	13 17.6%	16 21.6%	1 1.4%	30 40.5%	14 18.9%	2.616	0.988
15. I feel comfortable talking with my counselor at school.	74	8 10.8%	16 21.6%	23 31.1%	20 27.0%	7 9.5%	3.027	1.146

a. Scores for this item were reversed

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Table 4.10 continued

Survey Results – Perceptions of Social-Cultural Context Factor (F5)

		Item Ratings						
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
16. All cultures are respected at my school.	74	13 17.6%	8 10.8%	24 32.4%	18 24.3%	11 14.9%	3.081	1.290
18. Participating in extracurricular activities at my school is important to me.	74	6 8.10%	10 13.50%	27 36.50%	20 27.00%	11 14.90%	3.274	1.126
26. I am happy at my school.	74	11 14.9%	11 14.9%	22 29.7%	21 28.4%	9 12.2%	3.081	1.236

Home-School Connection Factor (F6)

In addition to social and cultural connectedness at school, the importance of connecting school with a student's home life is also present in the literature as a factor in a student's decision to drop out of school. The Home-School Connection factor (F6) sought to asses how students perceived the relationship between their teachers, parents, and community. This factor consisted of items 23, 32, 33, 36, 37, and 38. Scores for item 23 were reversed. Mean scores (with standard deviations in parentheses) for these items are 3.568 (1.148), 3.514 (1.024), 2.622 (1.246), 2.904 (1.137), 2.405 (1.181), and 2.365 (1.105), respectively. Individual item frequencies and means are presented in Table 4.11. When grouped to create Home-School Connection factor, the factor mean was 2.896 (SD = 0.6890).

Table 4.11

Survey Results – Perceptions of Home-School Connections Factor (F6)

Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
				Item Ratings				
Perceptions of Home-School Connection Factor (F6)							2.896	0.689
23. I have more responsibilities at home than at school.[a]	74	17 23.0%	26 35.1%	17 23.0%	10 13.5%	4 5.4%	3.568	1.148
32. My parents know what is going on at my school.	74	2 2.70%	11 14.90%	20 27.00%	29 39.20%	12 16.20%	3.514	1.024
33. My parents visit my school often during the year.	74	17 23.00%	20 27.00%	16 21.60%	16 21.60%	5 6.80%	2.622	1.246
36. My teachers have attended activities in my community.	74	10 13.5%	14 18.9%	30 40.6%	13 17.6%	7 9.5%	2.904	1.137

a. Scores for this item were reversed

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Table 4.11 continued

Survey Results – Perceptions of Home-School Connection Factor (F6)

		Item Ratings						
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
37. My teachers know my parents well.	74	22	17	21	11	3	2.405	1.181
		29.7%	23.0%	28.4%	14.9%	4.1%		
38. I frequently attend activities in my community.	74	19	23	21	8	3	2.365	1.105
		25.70%	31.10%	28.40%	10.80%	4.10%		

After School Employment Factor (F7)

The last factor identified in the research literature as being linked to the decision to drop out of school involves the after school employment in which many students engage. The After School Employment factor (F7) is comprised of item 28. Item 28, "I need to earn money to help my family financially," yielded an average score of 2.667 (SD = 1.205). Scores for this item were reversed indicating that 43% of participants feel the need to work to aid their families financially. Frequencies for F7 are reported in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Survey Results – After School Employment Factor (F7)

				Item Ratings				
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
28. I need to earn money to help my family financially.	74	7 9.5%	9 12.2%	26 35.1%	17 23.0%	15 20.3%	2.667	1.205

Subsection B: Research Question 2B, "How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive their academic backgrounds, home language, and extracurricular activities?" will be answered in this section.

To address the Research Question 2B, the academic, language, and extracurricular items were analyzed; frequencies, means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4.13, Table 4.14, and Table 4.15, respectively.

Analysis of Academic Backgrounds

Days Absent from School

Of the 74 participants, the majority of students reported being absent from school for six days or less during the current academic year (n = 61, 82.4%). By the time the survey was administered, at the mid-year point in the academic year, 13 students reported having already missed seven or more days of school (17. 6%).

Time Spent on Homework

Only one study participant reported spending no time on homework assignments (1.4%). The remainder of the study participants indicated spending increasing amounts of time on homework on an average evening. Most students reported spending a half hour or less on homework each night (n = 33, 44.6%). Approximately one hour was spent on homework by 22 participants (29.7%). Fourteen participants reported spending two hours on homework each night (18.9%), while an additional four participants reported spending three hours or more on homework on the average school night (5.4%).

The overwhelming majority of male participants reported spending one hour or less on the average school night (n = 25, 96.0%), while more than half of all female

participants indicated they spent one hour or more on homework each night (n = 26, 55.3%).

Grades

The majority of the eighth grade Hispanic students who participated in the study reported earning grades of "mostly Bs" (n = 36, 48.6%) or "mostly Cs" (n = 20, 27.0%) in their classes. Only 12.2% (n = 9) reported earning grades of "mostly As" and 10.9% (n = 8) reported earning grades of "mostly Ds" or "mostly below Ds."

EOG Testing

Students were asked to self-report the scores from their seventh grade End of Grade (EOG) tests in reading comprehension and mathematics. Passing scores, three or higher, were reported by 84.3% (n = 59) of participants on the EOG reading comprehension exam and by 83.7% (n = 57) of participants on the EOG mathematics exam. These two items, EOG reading comprehension scores and EOG mathematics scores, had more missing values than any other academic item.

Grade Retention

Of the 74 study participants, 70.3% (n = 52) indicated that they had been retained in either elementary or middle school, while 29.7% (n = 22) indicated that they had never repeated a grade. A slightly larger percentage of female participants (34.0%) than male participants (19.2%) reported repeating a grade. Of the students who reported having repeated a grade, only two students indicated they were retained in either sixth or seventh grade (7.7%).

Table 4.13

Academic Background Items

Item	Item Description	N	Frequency	Percentage
57. Days Absent from School		74		
	None		19	25.7%
	3 days or less		24	32.4%
	4-6 days		18	24.3%
	7-9 days		3	4.1%
	10 days or more		10	13.5%
63. Time Spent on Homework		74		
	None		1	1.4%
	Half hour or less		33	44.6%
	1 hour		22	29.7%
	2 hours		14	18.9%
	3 hours or more		4	5.4%
64. Grades		73		
	Mostly As		9	12.2%
	Mostly Bs		36	48.6%
	Mostly Cs		20	27.0%
	Mostly Ds		3	4.1%
	Mostly below Ds		5	6.8%
65. EOG Reading Comprehension (7th grade scores)		70		
	One		1	1.4%
	Two		10	14.3%
	Three		34	48.6%
	Four		22	31.4%
	Five		3	4.3%

Table 4.13 continued

Academic Background Items

Item	Item Description	N	Frequency	Percentage
66. EOG Mathematics (7th grade scores)		68		
	One		1	1.5%
	Two		10	14.7%
	Three		29	42.6%
	Four		26	38.2%
	Five		2	2.9%
68. Grade Retention		74		
	Yes		22	29.7%
	No		52	70.3%
69. Grade Repeated		26		
	Kindergarten or First grade		7	26.9%
	Second or Third grade		12	46.2%
	Fourth or Fifth grade		5	19.2%
	Sixth or Seventh grade		2	7.7%
	Eighth grade		0	0.0%

Analysis of Language Items

All of the survey participants identified themselves as Hispanic (n = 74) and 86.5% (n = 64) reported that they spoke a language other than English in their homes. Of the home languages indicated by students, the majority participants (n = 63, 98.6%) reported that Spanish was the language commonly spoken in their homes. One participant reported than another language was spoken in their home, possibly denoting a heritage language, such as Tarascan.

Students who indicated that their home language was not English were asked to answer three additional items related to being a language minority student. Individual item frequencies are presented in Table 4.14. The items probed how the challenges in speaking, reading, and writing English as a second language may influence their academic perceptions and success. For the first language item, "I don't enjoy my classes because of my difficulties in speaking English," responses were reversed, yielding mean scores of 1.985 (SD = 1.079), indicating strong agreement with the statement. Responses to the second language item, "I don't get good grades because of my difficulties in reading and writing English," were also reversed, yielding low mean scores of 2.156 (SD = 1.113), indicating agreement with the statement. For the final language item, "Sometimes students who speak English with accents in school are not treated respectfully," responses were not reversed. Mean score for this item is 3.016 (SD = 0.914) indicate the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. When combined to form the Language Factor, the factor mean is 2.386 (SD = 0.734).

Table 4.14

Analysis of Language Items

Item	Item Description	N	Frequency	Percentage
58. Do you speak a language other than English at home?		74		
	Yes		64	86.5%
	No		10	13.5%
59. Home Languages other than English		64		
			63	98.6%
	Spanish		0	0.0%
	Hmong		0	0.0%
	Chinese		0	0.0%
	Filipino		1	1.4%
	Other			

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Table 4.14 continued

Language Items

Item	N	Item Ratings					Mean	SD
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Language Factor Mean							2.386	0.734
60. I don't enjoy my classes because of my difficulties in speaking English.	74	3 4.1%	4 5.4%	12 16.2%	25 33.8%	30 40.5%	1.985	1.079
61. I don't get good grades because of my difficulties in reading and writing English.	74	3 4.1%	6 8.1%	15 20.3%	24 32.4%	26 35.1%	2.156	1.113
62. Sometimes students who speak English with accents in school are not treated respectfully.	74	4 5.4%	13 17.6%	40 54.1%	12 16.2%	5 6.8%	3.016	0.914

Analysis of Extracurricular Activities Items

Survey participants were asked to indicate in which extracurricular activities they participated (see Table 4.15). Of the participants (n = 74), 28.4% of the students (n = 21) did not respond to the extracurricular activities item. Of the 53 responses to this item, most students (n = 25, 33.8%) indicated that they participated in athletic activities at their schools. Only three students (4.1%) participated in band. None of the students participated in Battle of the Books. Several students (n = 6, 8.1%) indicated they participated in academic honor societies, such as Beta Club. An additional six students (8.1%) indicated that they did not participate in any extracurricular activities at school. Lastly, 13 students (28.4%) responded that they participated in "Other" extracurricular activities.

Table 4.15

Analysis of Extracurricular Activities Items

Item	Item Description	N	Frequency	Percentage
67. What extracurricular activities do you participate in at your school?				
		53		
	Athletics		25	33.8%
	Band		3	4.1%
	Battle of the Books		0	0.0%
	Beta Club/Honor Society		6	8.1%
	None		6	8.1%
	Other		13	17.6%
	No Response		21	28.4%

Part IV. Results for Research Question 3

Subsection A: Research Question 3A, "Which factors exhibit a significant impact on the perceived possibilities of graduating from high school?"

The third Research Question sought to determine which factors exhibited a significant impact on a student's decision to drop out of school and which of those factors are most prevalent in the sample population. A standard multiple linear regression analysis was performed between the dependent variable, High School Graduation Variable (DV) and the independent variables, including student socio-demographic variables (see results in Subsection A), immigration related variables (nativity, home language, etc.), academic background variables (see results in Subsection C), and dropout related school and schooling factors (F1-F7) (see results in Subsection D). Regression analysis was performed using SPSS. Assumptions were tested examining normal probability plots of residuals and scatter diagrams of residuals versus predicted residuals. No violations of normality, linearity, or homoscedasticity of residuals were detected. In addition, box plots revealed no evidence of outliers.

Multiple regression is a statistical technique that allows us to predict a "dependent" variable on the basis of the value of several "independent variables." In this chapter, the researcher reports the results regarding the test of significance of the model, the R Square, and the test of the significance of the predictor variables (Beta). The model significance test assesses the overall significance of the fitness of the model. R Square indicates the proportion of the variance in the criterion variable was accounted by the proportion of the variance in the predictors. The Beta (standardized regression

coefficients) is a measure of how strongly each predictor variable influences the criterion (dependent) variable. The higher the Beta value the greater the impact of the predictor variable on the criterion variable. Beta allows researchers to compare the strength of relationship between each predictor to the criterion (dependent) variable (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2006).

Subsection A: Socio-demographic Factors and the Perception of High School Graduation Possibility

Multiple regression analysis revealed that the first model, utilizing the student demographic factors of gender, age, number of siblings, and free or reduced lunch status as the independent variables, was marginally significant at predicting a student's self-prediction about completing high school, $F(4, 67) = 2.336$, $p = 0.064$. R^2 for the model was 0.122, and adjusted R^2 was 0.070. Table 4.21 displays the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and standardized regression coefficients (β) for each variable.

In terms of the relationship between the independent demographic variables and the self-prediction variable regarding high school completion, gender ($t = 2.695$, $p = 0.009$) significantly predicted dropout self-prediction. These results indicate that female Hispanic eighth grade students are more optimistic about the possibility of graduating from high school than their male counterparts.

Table 4.16

Multiple Regression Analysis of Socio-demographic Variables and the Self-predicted

High School Graduation Variable

Independent Variable	B	Beta	t	P
Gender	0.926	0.309	2.695	0.009
Age	-0.311	-0.103	-0.895	0.396
Number of Siblings	0.078	0.087	0.735	0.465
Free/Reduced Lunch	-0.397	-0.104	-0.891	0.376

Note. $R^2 = 0.122$, $F(4, 67) = 2.336$, $p = 0.064$

Subsection B: Immigration Related Variables and the Perception of High School Graduation

Multiple regression analysis revealed that the second model, utilizing the student immigration related variables including student nativity, maternal and paternal nativity, home language, and the language factor mean as the independent variables, significantly predicted a student's self-prediction about completing high school, $F(5, 67) = 3.218$, $p = 0.012$. R^2 for the model was 0.194, and adjusted R^2 was 0.133. This model accounted for nearly 20% of the variance in the self-predicted High School Graduation variable. Table 4.17 displays the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and standardized regression coefficients (β) for each variable.

In terms of the relationship between the independent immigration variables and the dropout self-prediction variable, home language ($t = -3.184$, $p = 0.002$) significantly predicted high school graduation self-prediction. Hispanic students who reported their home language was Spanish were more optimistic about their possibility to complete high school.

Table 4.17

Multiple Regression Analysis of Immigration Related Variables and the Self-predicted

High School Graduation Variable

Independent Variable	B	Beta	T	p
Student Nativity	-0.050	-0.017	-0.135	0.893
Maternal Nativity	-0.612	-0.141	-0.940	0.351
Paternal Nativity	0.326	0.075	0.497	0.612
Home Language	-1.794	-0.414	-3.184	0.002
Language Factor	0.293	0.151	1.314	0.193

Note. $R^2 = 0.194$, $F(5, 67) = 3.218$, $p = 0.012$

Subsection C: Academic Background Variables and the Perception of High

School Graduation Possibility

Multiple regression analysis revealed that the third model, utilizing the student academic factors of days absent from school, time spent on homework, grades, End of Grade test scores, grade retention, and sibling dropouts as the independent variables, significantly predicted a student's self-prediction about completing high school, $F(7, 58)$ = 2.396, p = 0.032. R^2 for the model was 0.224, and adjusted R^2 was 0.131. This model accounted for 22% of the variance in the self-predicted High School Graduation variable. Table 4.18 displays the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and standardized regression coefficients (β) for each variable.

In terms of the relationship between the independent academic variables and the self-prediction dependent variable regarding high school graduation, several variables displayed significant predictive power, including having a sibling who dropped out of school (t = 2.629, p = 0.011), the number of days absent from school, (t = 2.115, p = 0.039), time spent on homework (t = 2.002, p = 0.050). These results indicate that students who do not have a sibling who dropped out of high school are more optimistic about their possibility of graduating from high school than Hispanic students with a sibling who had dropped out of school. Also, the results indicate that as the amount of time students spend on their homework increases, so does their optimism about completing high school. Oddly, the results also indicated that as the number of days a student is absent from school increases, so does their perceptions of their ability to complete high school.

Table 4.18

Multiple Regression Analysis of Academic Background Variables and the Self-predicted

High School Graduation Variable

Independent Variables	B	Beta	t	p
Days Absent from School	0.333	0.292	2.115	0.039
Time Spent on Homework	0.376	0.242	2.002	0.050
Grades	-0.076	-0.054	-0.355	0.724
EOG Reading	-0.442	-0.242	-1.591	0.117
EOG Mathematics	-0.331	-0.180	-1.292	0.202
Grade Retention	-0.172	-0.055	-0.436	0.664
Sibling Dropouts	0.971	0.334	2.629	0.011

Note. $R^2 = 0.224$, $F(7, 58) = 2.396$, $p = 0.032$

Subsection D: Perceptions of School and Schooling Related Factors and the Self-Perception of the Possibility of Graduating From High School

Multiple regression analysis revealed that the fourth model, utilizing the student perceptions of the seven dropout related factors, high school and career aspirations, academic preparation, teachers and instruction, school organization, social-cultural context, home-school connection, and after school employment, did not significantly predict a student's self-prediction about completing high school, $F_{(7, 66)} = 1.468$, $p = 0.194$. R^2 for the model was 0.135, and adjusted R^2 was 0.043. Table 4.19 displays the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and standardized regression coefficients (β) for each variable.

In terms of the relationship between the independent academic variables and the dropout self-prediction variable, the after school employment factor (F7) ($t = 2.749$, $p = 0.008$) significantly predicted high school graduation self-prediction. The results indicate that students who felt less pressure to contribute to their families financially were more positive about their ability to complete high school.

Table 4.19

Multiple Regression Analysis of School & Schooling Related Factors and the Self-predicted High School Graduation Variable

Independent Variables	B	Beta	t	p
F1	-0.039	-0.017	-0.134	0.894
F2	0.256	0.103	0.672	0.504
F3	0.023	0.012	0.072	0.943
F4	-0.086	-0.033	-0.165	0.869
F5	0.443	0.198	1.227	0.224
F6	-0.329	-0.157	-1.022	0.311
F7	0.389	0.325	2.749	0.008

Note. $R^2 = 0.135$, $F(7, 67) = 1.468$, $p = 0.194$

Subsection E: Research Question 3B, "Which of the variables and factors stated in Research Questions 1 & 2 are most prevalent in terms of predicting Hispanic eighth graders' self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school in the future?" will be addressed in this section.

A final multiple regression analysis was conducted based on the results of the four previous regression analyses (Subsections A-D). This model utilized the independent variables found to be statistically significant in the four previous models to create a new model for eighth grade Hispanic students in the Woods County Schools. Independent variables included gender, home language, days absent from school, time spent on homework, sibling dropouts, and the after school employment factor (F7). This new model significantly predict a student's self-prediction about completing high school, $F(6, 65) = 5.420$, $p < 0.001$. R^2 for the model was 0.333, and adjusted R^2 was 0.272. This value for R^2 means the changes in these six variables included in the regression can explain more than 30% of the variation of the self-predicted possibility of graduating from high school.

Table 4.20 displays the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and standardized regression coefficients (β) for each variable. Several variables significantly predicted dropout self-prediction, including gender ($t = 2.070$, $p = 0.042$), home language ($t = -2.723$, $p = 0.008$), and having a sibling who dropped out of school ($t = 2.003$, $p = 0.049$). This model again indicates that females Hispanic students are more optimistic about completing high school than male students. Additionally, students whose home language is Spanish and students who do not have a sibling who dropped out of school are also more positive about their chance to complete high school. The after school

employment factor (F7) was found to be marginally significant in predicting the dropout possibility (t = 1.790, p = 0.078), indicating that students who need to work to help their families financially are less optimistic about their ability to complete high school. Lastly, the standardized beta values of the significant variables and marginally significant factor are similar in size indicating that each variable may have equal predicting power on a student's self-prediction about the possibility of graduating from high school except Home language. Speaking a heritage language seems a more powerful predictor than the other three significant predictors.

Table 4.20

Multiple Regression Analysis of Variables found Significant in Previous Analyses and

the Self-Predicated High School Graduation Variable

Independent Variables	B	Beta	T	p
Gender	0.670	0.223	2.070	0.042
Home Language	-1.321	-0.306	-2.723	0.008
Days Absent from School	0.124	0.107	1.013	0.315
Time Spent on Homework	0.170	0.110	1.030	0.307
Sibling Dropouts	0.624	0.212	2.003	0.049
After School Employment (F7)	0.246	0.202	1.790	0.078

Note. $R^2 = 0.333$, $F(6, 65) = 5.420$, $p < 0.001$

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The major findings of the study will be discussed in this chapter and recommendations for school administrators, classroom teachers, and other educators are made accordingly. Based on the critique of the limitations of this study, recommendations also are made for future research.

Summary and Discussion of Results

The purpose of this study was to assess eighth grade Hispanic students' perceptions of school and schooling and to determine how those perceptions related to their self-perceived possibility of graduating from high school. Findings were organized into four major sections. First, the socio-demographic composition of the sample was presented. Next, student responses to the high school graduation variable and future aspirations were analyzed as a whole and then analyzed to determine if differences existed across gender groups. In the next section, the remaining high school graduation related factors (F2-F7) were reported. Academic, language, and extracurricular factors were also reported. Finally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which graduation contributing factors were most prevalent in the sample.

Summary and Discussion of Socio-demographic Characteristics

The descriptive statistics of the survey sample yielded interesting information about the demographics of Hispanic school children in Woods County Schools. Participants were almost evenly divided between those born in the United States and

those born in another county. Furthermore, nearly 90% of all parents, mothers and fathers, were born outside of the United States. In terms of family size, participants reported having large families, averaging almost 5 siblings per family ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.585$). In addition to having large families, many participants also had siblings who had dropped out of school. Almost 62% of the participants in the sample had siblings who did not complete high school. Lastly, Hispanic eighth graders may have lower SES than the average student population in Woods County; a high percentage of the participants in the sample ($n = 62$, 83.8%) indicated that they received free or reduced lunch at school.

Summary and Discussion of Research Question 1A

Some interesting findings have emerged from analyzing data for Research Question 1A, "How do eighth-grade Hispanic students perceive the possibility of graduating from high school and what are their high school and career aspirations?" Based on the means and standard deviations presented for each item in Factor 1, Hispanic eighth graders seem to have high spirits and optimism in terms of transitioning to high school and later to college. The highest reported means for this factor were for item 20, "Graduating from high school is a priority for me," ($M = 4.203$, $SD = 0.876$) and item 39, "I see the importance of graduating from high school" ($M = 4.189$, $SD = 0.975$). More than 75% of the participants reported being excited about going to high school. The lowest scoring item in the High School and Career Aspirations factor was item 34, "Moving to high school next year makes me nervous." Once the responses to this item were reversed, they revealed that nearly 57% of the participants disagreed with the statement or had no opinion about it.   These findings help to fill the void in the research literature about this pivotal transition period in students' academic careers (Lan &

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Lanthier, 2003). It is essential that schools, educators, and administrators seize upon the high hopes, enthusiasm, and intrinsic motivation that Hispanic students possess as they enter the transition to high school by providing a welcoming and nourishing learning community in high school (Sui-Chi & Willms, 1996; Wojtkiewicz & Donato, 1995).

However, high school educators should not be overly optimistic when they read this result. When asked if moving to high school next year makes them nervous, the about 39% of the eighth graders disagreed, but about 42% of them were not sure if they would be able to graduate from high school; 20% of participants had no opinion regarding this question. This important item indicates quite clearly that this group of students needs significant support if we want them to complete high school in the future (Juarez, 2001). One way to support Hispanic students, and all students, during this time of transition is to implement meaningful, cohesive transition programs that support students before, during, and after the transition to high school (Mizelle, 2005; Cushman, 2006, McIntosh & White, 2006).

Summary and Discussion of Research Question 1B

For Research Question 1B, "Do the perceptions stated in Research Question 1A differ across gender lines?" significant differences were found across gender lines in regard to the perception of the possibility of graduating from high school and High School and Career Aspirations factor (F1). One-way analysis of variance revealed that significant differences existed in the way male and female Hispanic students perceive their abilities to complete high school and their future aspirations. Female Hispanic students are more positive about transitioning to high school than their male counterparts. Female students are also more optimistic about their ability to complete high school than

male Hispanic students. These results suggest that Hispanic males are in greater need of academic and social support as they transition to high school. These results support the research literature which cites higher dropout rates for Hispanic males than other racial/ethnic groups of the same age (NCES, 2000). Yet, the results contradict other research studies that found Hispanic female students to be more at risk of dropping out of school (Olatunji, 2005).

Summary and Discussion of Research Question 2A

Findings from Research Question 2A, "How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive the seven factors pertinent to the self-perceived possibility of graduating from high school?" suggest that students are generally pleased with their school and schooling experiences. Factor 1, the High School and Career Aspirations factor, had the highest mean of all the factors (M = 3.971, SD = 0.646), followed closely by the Academic Preparation factor (F2) (M = 3.800, SD = 0.577). Over 82% of participants agreed that their school work was preparing them for the future, yet less than 60 % of students found their school work engaging and challenging.

Student perceptions of teachers and instruction (F3) (M = 3.397, SD = 0.768) were favorable, yet had some interesting discrepancies. Nearly 70% of participants reported agreement with item 1, "My teachers believe in me," while less than 50% of students felt that they were treated fairly by the teachers at the school. These results may reflect strong relationships between Hispanic students and their immediate teachers and possible mistrust between Hispanic students and other teachers in the school setting. Teachers are often unaware of the cultural bias they project in school and that bias is internalized by students as the teachers and school not wanting them there (Wayman,

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2002; Delpit, 1995; Midobuche, 2001). Schools should strive to embrace Hispanic students, employ more culturally responsive strategies to avoid the perpetuation of negative stereotypes, and focus on inclusiveness.

Students reported favorable responses to items related to the School Organization factor (F4). According to student responses, it is evident that Woods County Schools are clearly communicating their school policies and procedures to all students, avoiding the subtractive model of schooling described by Valenzeula (1999). The majority of students indicated that teacher expectations are clearly communicated (64.9%). Middle school principals are also successful in being positive and visible figures in their schools; more than 60% of Hispanic students reported seeing their principals regularly in the hallways. However, although nearly 65% of Hispanic participants claim to know what they need to do to graduate from high school and 70% understand the attendance requirements, 42% of Hispanic eighth grade students still worry that they will not graduate from high school. These findings confirm Ochoa's 1994 study in which less than half of the Hispanic participants felt confident of completing high school, even though over 90% Hispanic students claimed to know what was required to graduate. Also of note is the overwhelming preference among Hispanic eighth grade students for shorter class periods. Less than 20% of survey participants preferred classes taught on a ninety minute blocks schedule. This preference may reflect the fatigue and isolation that many language minority students experience in longer class periods (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999).

Interestingly, just as less than 50% of students felt that they were treated fairly by their teachers at school, nearly 50% students felt that punishment for breaking school rules was being applied unfairly. Clearly, eighth grade Hispanic students perceive

inequitable treatment from teachers and school administrators, in terms of school discipline, which is further supported by the relatively low factor mean for the Social-Cultural Context factor (M = 2.932, SD = 0.643). These findings support Wayman's 2002 study that teacher bias and racism in schools negatively impact student perceptions of the school environment. Eighth grade Hispanic male participants viewed the social and cultural environment of school slightly more favorably (M = 3.079, SD = 0.616) than female participants (M = 2.846, SD = 0.656), although the difference was not statistically significant. However, most participants were neutral in their responses to items pertaining specifically to race and culture in school. Students may have felt uncomfortable responding honestly to these items when the survey was being given.

Of all the Perception of School and Schooling factors, the Home-School Connection factor had the second lowest mean score. The lowest scores for the entire instrument were reported for item 38, "I frequently attend activities in my community" had an average score of 2.365 (SD = 1.105), followed closely by item 37, "My teachers know my parents well," with an average score of 2.405 (SD = 1.181). The research literature suggests that immigrant families participate in their children's education differently than American parents (Lopez, 2001; Orellana, 2001). These results indicate the Hispanic students do not feel their school lives and home lives are well connected. The findings suggest the need for schools and communities to actively seek new ways to engage Hispanic students and families in school and community activities in order to build stronger relationships and increase students' feelings of connectedness. Additionally, item 5, "At my school it is uncomfortable to be of the race or ethnic group that I belong to," had a low mean score (M = 2.514, SD = 1.063). Nearly 50% of

participants indicated that they felt uncomfortable being a Hispanic student at their middle school. Item 5 confirms findings from the Perceptions of School Organization factor (F4), in which students reported perceiving inequitable treatment and bias in their schools.

Lastly, the After School Employment factor had the lowest factor mean of all the Perceptions of Schools and Schooling factors (M = 2.667, SD = 1.205). Forty-three percent of participants indicated a need to work to help their families financially. These findings are congruent with earlier studies in which Hispanic students reported that their responsibilities at home and work overshadowed their school work (Ochoa, 1994).

Summary and Discussion of Research Question 2B

Findings from Research Question 2B, "How do eighth grade Hispanic students perceive their academic backgrounds, home language, and extracurricular activities?" yielded additional insights. The majority of survey participants reported missing six days or less of school (82.4%) and spending one hour or less on homework on an average school night (74.3%). Hispanic students self-reported grades averaging Bs and Cs (75.6%). Passing EOG scores were reported by most students in reading comprehension (84.3%) and mathematics (83.7%). These self-reported scores are of some concern considering testing complications during the prior year's testing and the controversy about the mathematics EOG test. This confusion may have led to increased missing values for the EOG test items; more missing values were reported for EOG items than for any other academic item. Lastly, almost 30% of the Hispanic eighth grade students indicated that they had been retained in a previous grade, most noting grade retention in kindergarten through third grade. Although grade retention did not prove to be a

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significant variable in predicting the high school graduation variable in subsequent multiple regression analysis, school officials might find it helpful to track elementary school retentions. Students who were retained once or twice before the eighth grade were likely to be over age and older eighth grade students were found to be less optimistic about their ability to graduate from high school.

As expected, the majority of Hispanic eighth grade students who participated in the study reported speaking a language other than English at home (86.5%) and of those students, nearly all reported that Spanish was their home language (98.6%). The additional home language items indicated that Hispanic language minority students encounter serious challenges with reading, writing, and speaking English and those challenges influenced how much students enjoy their classes and how successful they are in class. These findings may signal the need for additional communication between middle school ESL teachers and subject area teachers. Additional support for language minority students on classroom assignments may increase their success on classroom assignments and help to maintain the optimism and enthusiasm they have for school.

Responses for extracurricular activities items did not lead to significant insight into the Hispanic student population's perceptions of these activities. Athletic activities earned the most participation within the sample (n = 25, 33.8%), but lack of participation was more interesting. More non-responses, missing values (n = 21) and "none" responses (n = 6) were reported than actual participation in extracurricular activities at school. None of the participants reported participating in the Battle of the Books extracurricular activity where students read selected novels and compete in challenges about their general knowledge of the books. It may be that the challenges language

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minority students face in connection with reading, writing, and verbally communicating in English prevents them from feeling comfortable with participating in this activity. Also, only three students indicated participation in band (4.1%). Students are sometimes considered to be tracked in band because of the time required to develop collective skills. Schools might consider making more of an effort to make band activities more diverse in their student composition. Furthermore, the financial costs of participating in extracurricular activities have been found to be a significant barrier to participation for Hispanic students (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999). Considering that nearly 84% of the participants reported receiving free or reduced lunch, an indicator of low socio-economic status, it is not surprising that less than 50% of the Hispanic eighth grade students in the study participate in extracurricular activities.

Summary and Discussion of Research Question 3A

Research Question 3A, "Which variables and factors stated in Research Questions 1A, 2A, and 2B significantly predict the Hispanic eighth graders self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school?" yielded four multiple regression models, one for socio-demographic variables, one for immigration variables, one for academic variables, and one for factors related to school and schooling perceptions. Each sought to adequately predict a students' self-perception of completing high school. A final hybrid model, consisting of the significant variables from previous analyses was also tested.

The first model utilized socio-demographic variables. It revealed a successful model with gender as the only significant variable in predicting a student's self-perceived possibility about completing high school. Female Hispanic students were more optimistic about their ability to complete high school than male students. The model also

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indicated that older students, those age 14 or 15, tend to be less optimistic about their ability to graduate from high school. These findings indicate that schools should focus special attention on male Hispanic students who are somewhat overage for eighth grade as they are more at risk of dropping out of school considering that their self-prediction about completing high school is low. Additionally, students who receive free or reduced lunch are more optimistic about graduating from high school than those students who do not receive free or reduced lunch. These findings support the research literature which asserts that language minority children in poverty are provided support and encouragement to succeed in school from their families (Lopez, 2001; Midobuche, 2001). Hispanic families see school work as the student's job and students are given the support to be successful at school. This translates into higher aspirations and a more optimistic outlook for high school and beyond.

The second multiple regression model utilized student immigration variables to account for the variance in students' self-prediction about completing high school. Of the five variables entered in this model only home language was found to be a significant predictor. Students for whom Spanish is the home language are more optimistic about their ability to graduate from high school. These findings indicate that students with a high ethnic identity are more likely to be successful in school, findings that are supported by the research literature (Kovach & Hillman, 2002). This model also highlighted the importance of noting student and parental nativity. These findings indicate that foreign-born students and students with foreign-born mothers are more likely to be positive about their self-prediction about graduating from high school, though the positive effects do not reach a statistically significant level. Research literature about first and second

generation students echoes these findings and supports the application of the additive model of acculturation as the theoretical framework for working with language minority students (Gibson, 1995; Krashen, 1998; Lee, 2001; Waters, 1994; Wojtkewicz & Donato, 1995).

Student academic variables were used to create the third model for multiple regression analysis. This model had an R^2 of 0.224 which accounted for 22% of the variance in students' self-prediction about completing high school. Three variables were found to be significant predictors, including having a sibling who dropped out of school, the number of days absent from school, and the amount of time spent on homework. The existence of a sibling dropout links family structure and dynamics to the graduation self-prediction. The sibling who dropped out of school is one less role model for the student on the road to high school graduation. When one member of a family presents as being at risk of dropping out for some reason, schools should monitor the student's siblings who are also enrolled in school. Preventing one dropout in a family may aid in preventing additional dropouts within the family. Students from families with no dropouts may reflect higher aspirations, strong family structures, and strong cultural identity (Kovach & Hillman, 2002; Valencia, 1994). Another statistically significant variable in the regression model based on academic variables was the amount of time spent on homework assignments on an average school day. The analysis revealed that students who spent more time on homework assignments were more optimistic about their self-perceived possibility of completing high school.

In addition, the number of days absent from school was statistically significant in the model based to predict the self-perceived possibility of graduating from high school

on student academic variables. Yet, interpreting this significant variable is problematic. The model suggests that as the number of days absent increases students become more optimistic about their ability to graduate from high school. Several speculations can be made here. It may be that inaccuracy in the survey responses to this item arose because participants did not reply truthfully to this item. However, it is more likely that the researcher did not ask the proper follow-up questions. More accurate data could have been gathered by asking students why they had missed so many days of school. Absences for helping family are different from skipping school for no legitimate reason. Furthermore, of the 10 participants who indicated missing 10 days of school or more, seven were female. A high rate of absenteeism among Hispanic females may reflect the way girls are asked to contribute to their families; it is unlikely that these female students were skipping school, rather they may have been absent because they were asked to assist in caring for family members. Understanding patterns in absenteeism may help school officials better understand the family structure and needs of Hispanic families and help to strengthen the relationship that Hispanic female students perceive between school and home.

All of the significant variables in the academic multiple regression model have a similar effect size (betas) suggesting that all significant variables should be considered of equally importance. High absenteeism is often one of the first at risk warning signs, but this model implores educators and administrators to look more deeply into the reasons for absences, particularly among Hispanic females, as suggested by the researcher. The model also suggests that school officials gather additional academic data on students who

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may be at risk, including data about the amount of time spent on homework and if students have a sibling who dropped out of school.

The fourth multiple regression model utilized the Perceptions of School and Schooling factors as the independent variables used to predict the self-perceived high school graduation dependent variable. Only the After School Employment factor (F7) was found to be significant, suggesting that students who feel less pressure to work to aid their families financially are more likely to view graduating from high school optimistically. The research literature warns that students who work more than 20 hours per week, in addition to attending school, are more likely to drop out of school (McNeal, 1997). In this sample, 43% of the participants reported feeling the need to help their families financially by having an after school job. The findings of this research confirm previous studies; the pressures students feel to help provide for their families financially negatively impacts their self-perceived perceptions of possibility of graduating from high school.

Summary and Discussion of Research Question 3B

Research Question 3B, "Which of the variables and factors stated in Research Questions 1 & 2 are most prevalent in terms of predicting Hispanic eighth graders' self-perceived possibilities of graduating from high school in the future?" led to a final hybrid model. The final multiple regression model was created with the independent variables and factor that were identified as significant predictors in previous regression analyses. This model had the largest value for R^2 ($R^2 = 0.333$), indicating that the hybrid model did the best job of predicting the variance in the student's self-prediction about their likelihood to complete high school based on the variations of the independent variables.

In this hybrid model, several independent variables were found to be significant including home language, gender, and having a sibling who had dropped out of school. The After School Employment factor was also found to be marginally significant when the other variables were controlled. The effect size for all the significant variables and marginally significant factor were similar in magnitude indicating that each should be an equal part in identifying students who might be at risk of dropping out of school.

This model would be most useful for school administrators and counselors seeking to identify at risk students. Currently counselors in the Woods County Schools track certain academic, attendance, and discipline issues when developing at risk student profiles. This model supports the research literature in many areas (Lopez, 2001; Midobuche, 2001; Kovach & Hillman, 2002; Gibson, 1995; Wojtkewicz & Donato, 1995) and suggests that school officials gather additional data on home language, the number of siblings who had dropped out of school, and student after school employment. Additionally, more detailed information about the reasons for excessive absences would be insightful.

In summary, the results of this study support the findings of many previous research studies about dropouts, yet contribute to the research literature in several ways. First, the findings give a voice to Hispanic students in the dropout dilemma. Previous research studies treated high school dropouts as a homogenous group and failed to give a voice for any one racial/ethnic group (Rumberger, 1993; Lee & Burkam, 2003; Lan & Lanthier, 2003). The student participants in this study contribute a Hispanic voice to the dropout research. Second, as compared to the old immigration states of Texas, California, and Arizona where much of the research on Hispanic dropouts was conducted,

North Carolina is considered a new immigration state (Mayer, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Little of the dropout research literature is based on studies conducted in the new immigration states of the southeastern United States. By surveying the perceptions of Hispanic students in the Piedmont region of North Carolina, this study contributes to the research literature.

Suggestions for School Administrators

The findings of this research provide educators and school administrators with recommendations for improving the educational experiences for Hispanic students as they transition to high school. The findings are rooted in the theoretical framework of the additive model of acculturation, which and seeks to be culturally responsive while encouraging students to stay in school and succeed academically. This researcher hopes the results from her study will help school officials to identify students who may be at risk of dropping out and create a more positive learning and social environment for Hispanic students. The six recommendations made based on the findings in this study are as follows:

First, collect more detailed data about students who present signs of being at risk of dropping out of school. In addition to the information currently collected by school counselors about student attendance, academic progress, and discipline issues, the researcher suggests that additional data be gathered about at risk students. Essential pieces of socio-demographic data would include home language, since students who speak Spanish at home are more optimistic about completing high school. If Spanish is the home language of an at risk student, school officials should not make assumption that

the heritage language is the problem for high school completion. Instead, school officials should make additional inquiries about the other significant variables that may create a negative self-prediction about completing high school. Gender is an obvious, but important factor in assessing a student's self-perception about completing high school (Mayer, 2004; Olatunji, 2005). Male Hispanic students are less optimistic about their abilities to complete high school and may require additional support from teachers and administrators. Lastly, additional information about a student's family, specifically if the student has a sibling who dropped out of high school, is essential. Hispanic students with sibling dropouts lack a positive role model on the road to high school graduation. High school counselors would be well served to continue to develop relationships with their feeder middle schools to identify younger siblings who might be influenced by an older sibling who has dropped out of school.

In addition to detailed demographic information, more data related to the three significant variables may be useful for school administrators. Attendance data detailing the reasons for absences, possibly including follow-up contacts to parents regarding excessive absences, would be helpful. It is noteworthy that more Hispanic females reported excessive absences, 10 days or more, than male students. Detailing absence excuses could help to identify if female students are missing school to address family needs. Academically, school officials should look for warning signs before grades are posted at the end of the marking period. By noting if students are completing homework assignments and inquiring about how much time is spent on homework assignments on an average school night, would help to identify students who might be at risk before the term ends. Lastly, discovering if a student is maintaining an after school job is another

important factor; working more than 20 hours per week or in certain job sectors places students more at risk of leaving school (McNeal, 1997). Students who feel a family obligation to work are more likely to have negative self-perceptions about graduating from high school. This information could be useful in refocusing a student on the importance of graduating from high school.

Second, to properly support students as they move from middle school to high school it is essential that school districts implement comprehensive transition programs. Successful transition programs require the commitment of educators at both the middle and high school level (McIntosh & White, 2006). Transition programs would link middle school students and teachers with their high school counterparts for the sharing of data, ideas, and experiences. High school tours, parents' nights, and summer bridge activities prior to the students beginning high school, ease the anxiety that many Hispanic students report feeling as they prepare for high school (Cushman, 2006). Vertical alignment of school personnel to assist students during this transition will provide additional support for language minority students in small, sheltered learning environments, allowing them to develop strong peer and teacher relationships (Conchas, 2001; Gibson & Benijez, 2002; Mizelle, 2005; Cushman, 2006, McIntosh & White, 2006).

Third, place special focus on Hispanic males' low self-perception about completing high school. The findings indicate that all Hispanic males are in need of additional support, academically and socially, to improve their optimism about completing high school. These findings are incongruent with some studies identifying female Hispanic students as being more at risk of dropping out of school (Olatunji, 2005). Schools should consider providing Hispanic males with more roles models in school,

perhaps through coaching or mentoring programs, particularly in communities that have smaller Hispanic populations (Mayer, 2004). Schools may reach out to Hispanic community and church organizations and find them willing partners for programs to support Hispanic male students.

Fourth, strengthen the Home-School Connection for all Hispanic students. The Home-School Connection factor had the lowest mean score of all the Perceptions of School and Schooling factors. Furthermore, the low perceptions of home-school connectedness were significantly lower for female than male students. Male Hispanic students may have more opportunities to participate in school activities than female students and, therefore, feel more strongly connected to school. Additionally, schools may be interpreting the excessive absences of female Hispanic students incorrectly. School officials should seek partnerships with community and church organization to provide extracurricular activities in which all Hispanic students and families would be able to participate. The research literature indicates that students whose home and school lives are well connected are more optimistic about their ability to succeed (Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1996). Home-School Connections may also be improved by providing language minority parents with more opportunities to participate in school activities (Conchas, 2001). This may require rethinking the timing of school activities and planning events during the school year at various times, facilitating attendance by parents who might work non-traditional schedules.

Fifth, encourage and offer support to low socio-economic status students who are interested in participating in extracurricular activities. Davison Aviles, et al., (1999) linked participation in extracurricular activities to reduced dropout rates. By removing

the barriers to participation, schools may find that more language minority and low socio-economic status students take part in all sorts of extracurricular activities. Hispanic students may be discouraged from participating in extracurricular activities because they lack the right equipment or clothes (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999). Participation in athletic activities is most prevalent among Hispanic eighth graders, but participation in band may also increase if economic barriers were reduced or abolished. Also, school systems should consider increasing extracurricular opportunities that do not rely upon English language ability for participation. One way to expand extracurricular offerings would be to survey the student population to ascertain their interests in regard to after school activities. School officials could use the data to match school personnel and resources to student suggestions and develop extracurricular programs specifically tailored for students.

Sixth, and most important, provide professional development opportunities for teachers and school officials about culturally responsive teaching to reduce the bias and inequitable treatment Hispanic students perceive in school. The findings of this study indicate that students feel less bias from their own teachers than the other teachers, administrators, and rules and policies in school. Yet, bias in any form, from any teacher or school administrator, translates to an unwelcoming environment for language minority students (Wayman, 2002). In light of the continuing growth in the Hispanic student population, school systems would be well served to seek professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators in the areas of diversity and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). A more inclusive learning environment, one that acknowledges and accepts cultural diversity among its student population, will provide a

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strong foundation for students to succeed and improve their self-prediction about

graduating from high school (Cummins, 1993; Gibson, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999).

Suggestions for Classroom Teachers

Five additional recommendations for classroom teachers are made as follows:

First, participate in professional development sessions that endorse culturally

responsive teaching practices. The findings of this study indicate that Hispanic students

perceive less bias from their own teachers than from other teachers in the school.

Teachers need to be aware of the cultural bias they project to other minority students in

the school community (Wayman, 2002; Gay, 2000). Teachers who react negatively

toward Hispanic students in the school community at large supplant the positive

relationships they may be building with their own minority students. The growing

cultural diversity in North Carolina schools is growing in North Carolina needs to be

embraced in order for all students to succeed. Professional development opportunities to

increase cultural awareness and build diverse learning communities will help to increase

Hispanic students' perceptions of teachers and school and increase their self-perceptions

of their ability to succeed in school (Gay, 2000; Gibson, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999).

Second, create differentiated lesson plans with language minority students in

mind. Embedded in creating a culturally responsive learning community is the need to

create culturally responsive lessons. The findings of this study indicate that Hispanic

students do not find their assignments to be challenging. Teachers would be well served

to learn more about the interests, skills, and learning modalities of their Hispanic students

(Gay, 2000; Gardner, 1993; Juarez, 2001). While it may require additional effort on the

part of teachers to meet the unique needs of language minority students, the results will be seen in improved academic success, and ultimately in more Hispanic students believing that they can graduate from high school.

Third, seek classroom resources and materials that appeal to the interests of Hispanic students. Once teachers are able to identify interests, skills, and learning modalities of language minority students, it is essential that teachers advocate strongly for the acquisition of resources that meet the needs of Hispanic students (Gay, 2000). Once teachers identify and advocate for these resources, school administrators should support the acquisition of these resources for classrooms and media centers. The findings of this study indicated that less than 50% of Hispanic students found resources in the media center that appealed to their interests. The acquisition of materials that appeal to the interests of Hispanic students is the essential starting point for engaging students in learning and making them feel a part of the school community (Gay, 2000; Conchas, 2001; Davison Aviles, et al., 1999; Ochoa, 1994).

Fourth, work with eighth grade teaching colleagues to create learning communities that involve all students and parents. Parents of Hispanic students do not participate in school the same way that American parents traditionally do, but that does not mean that they are not supportive of their child's education (Lopez, 2001; Orellana, 2001). Schools and teachers need to become more open to the ways in which Hispanic parents are willing and able to participate in school activities. At the beginning of each school year teachers should work as teams, perhaps by grade level, to survey how all parents, but particularly especially Hispanic parents, are available to participate in school activities. Then, rather than assume that certain parents are unwilling to participate in

school, teachers should plan activities to meet parents' ability to contribute. For Hispanic parents, participation in school activities may include providing resources for activities rather than attendance at school functions (Lopez, 2001). Also, to encourage the attendance of Hispanic parents at certain events, teachers should consider planning events around the availability of those parents, perhaps at non-traditional times to encourage parental involvement.

Fifth, and maybe foremost, schools and educators may rethink about what they believe in terms of the educational aspiration and motivation of Hispanic students. Despite recent research literature reporting very high educational aspirations of the first generation immigrant children (Lee, 2001; Louie, 2001; Waters, 1994), a significant number of educators hold pessimistic beliefs in terms of improving Hispanic immigrant students' education. Some educators also believe that the premise of mastery of English is giving up immigrant children's home language, but the research literature indicates that first generation immigrant students make significant academic gains when the heritage language is preserved, as supported by the additive model of acculturation. The additive model of acculturation advocates for the blending of the old and new culture (Cummins, 1993; Gibson, 1995). Therefore, English mastery, at the expense of the heritage language, should not be the panacea prescribed for Hispanic students' academic success. Instead, teachers need to embrace the skills and knowledge that multilingual students possess and build upon those traits in the classroom. The findings related to the three questions regarding language situations in school and classroom indicate that language minority students feel their challenges in reading, writing and verbally communicating in English results in low grades. Teachers should seek the assistance of ESL teachers to

support their classroom instruction with strategies tailored to language minority students and supportive of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). The high aspirations of Hispanic students should not be diminished by teachers who fail to recognize the potential of students whose first language is not English.

Limitations of the Study and Implications for Future Research

This study had limitations in sampling and instrumentation that should be addressed for future research studies. The sample size used in the current study was sufficient, but a larger sample would yield better, more generalizable, results. A larger sample would also ensure a more equal representation of males and females in the sample. In addition, the statistical power of the data analysis would also be improved with a larger sample. In terms of survey procedure, a larger team with trained researchers to administer the survey would be advisable. It is possible that Hispanic students may feel unable to respond truthfully to some of the items on the survey with their teachers present. A larger research team would allow the classroom teacher to step out of the survey administration and provide students the opportunity to respond truthfully without fear of teacher reprisals. A larger survey team would also reduce the burden of gathering data from the teachers, guidance counselors, and principals who graciously assisted in this study.

Refinements to the survey instrument would also improve the results of future research. Several items were found to be negatively correlated with the remainder of the instrument. These items may need to be revised or clarified to improve the reliability of the total instrument. The findings of the current study suggest that additional items need

to be added to the instrument to gather more detailed responses and elaborate on certain items, such as the reason for school absences. Also, future research might consider translating the instrument into Spanish for those students who feel more proficient reading and responding to survey items in Spanish. The current study was limited to participation by those Hispanic students who felt proficient enough in English to participate. It is assumed that those students who did not feel competent reading in English may have chosen not to participate.

The data collected in this study points to the need for additional research for a small subset of the sample. A small number of Hispanic eighth grade students indicated that they did not receive free or reduced lunch and that they did not speak Spanish at home. Future research into the perceptions of these Hispanic students, perhaps through qualitative methods, would provide valuable information about students from more affluent Hispanic families and those who have adopted English.

Future research about the perceptions of eighth grade Hispanic students on school and schooling factors might consider conducting a follow-up survey during the ninth grade year. Such data would help to determine if the optimism that Hispanic students were found to possess in eighth grade was sustained into high school. The data gathered from a subsequent survey administration would yield additional insights that would allow educators to compare the school and schooling factors in two very different contexts, middle school and high school. A ninth grade version of the study would provide additional information about how students perceive the transition itself and what challenges and supports are encountered in the transition. A follow-up ninth grade

survey would also allow school officials to identify which variables or factors become

more significant as students progress into high school.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORMS

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Parental Permission for a Minor Child to Participate in a Research Study
Social Behavioral Form

_____

IRB Study #_____06-1001_____
Consent Form Version Date: ___January 2, 2007_____

Title of Study: Assessing Eighth Grade Student Perceptions of School and Schooling to Identify Dropout Risk Factors for Hispanic and Other Middle School Students

Principal Investigator: Diana B. Lys
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Education
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-962-9203
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Xue Lan Rong
Funding Source: none

Study Contact telephone number: 252-756-9011
Study Contact email: lysd@ecu.edu

_____

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to allow your child to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to give permission, or you may withdraw your permission for your child to be in the study, for any reason. Even if you give your permission, your child can decide not to be in the study or to leave the study early.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. Your child may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you and your child can make an informed choice about being in this research study.
You will be given a copy of this permission form. You and your child should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to learn about how eighth grade students perceive their schools, their preparation for high school, and their education in general.

Your child is being asked to be in the study because s/he is in the eighth grade.

How many people will take part in this study?
If your child is in this study, your child will be one of approximately 2500 people in this

research study.

How long will your child's part in this study last?
Your child will be asked to complete a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-20 minutes to complete. There will not be any follow-up interviews.

What will happen if your child takes part in the study?
- Your child will return the parental consent form to his/her homeroom teacher.
- On the day of the survey your child will complete the questionnaire. It should take about 15-20 minutes to complete.
- Your child may choose not to answer any item on the questionnaire for any reason.
- Your child will return the completed questionnaire to your homeroom teacher.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. This particular study attempts to receive information about how eighth grade students perceive their schools, their preparation for high school, and their education in general. This information will help educators to work with middle-grade students more effectively. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study. However, the information you provide may improve the quality of school for the class of students that follow you into the eighth grade.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
There are no known risks associated with participating in this survey.

There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher.

How will your child's privacy be protected?
Your child's privacy and the confidentiality of his/her responses will be protected in the following ways:
- Completed surveys will be kept in a locked storage cabinet in the researcher's office.
- Individually identifiable data will only be shared with the researcher's faculty advisor.
- No names or ID numbers will be used. Surveys will only be coded according to the student's school.
- Teachers and administrators will not be able to identify any individual student in this study.

Participants *will not* be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the

University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will your child receive anything for being in this study?
Your child will not receive anything for being in this study.

Will it cost you anything for your child to be in this study?
There will be no costs for being in the study

What if you are a UNC employee?
Your child's taking part in this research is not a part of your University duties, and refusing to give permission will not affect your job. You will not be offered or receive any special job-related consideration if your child takes part in this research.

What if you or your child has questions about this study?
You and your child have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions contact Diana Lys, 252-756-9011 or lysd@ecu.edu, or contact Dr. Xue Lan Rong, 919-962-9203, xrong@email.unc.edu.

What if you or your child has questions about your child's rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your child's rights and welfare. If you or your child has questions or concerns about your child's rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

- -

Parent's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily give permission to allow my child to participate in this research study.

_____
Printed Name of Research Participant (Child)

_____   _____
Signature of Parent   Date

_____
Printed Name of Parent

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Assent to Participate in a Research Study
Adolescent Participants age 15-17
Social Behavioral Form

IRB Study #_____06-1001_____
Assent Form Version Date: ____January 2, 2007_____

Title of Study: Assessing Eighth Grade Student Perceptions of Schools and Schooling to Identify Dropout Risk Factors for Hispanic and Other Middle School Students

Principal Investigator: Diana B. Lys
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Education
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-962-9203
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Xue Lan Rong
Funding Source: none

Study Contact telephone number: 252-756-9011
Study Contact email: lysd@ecu.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your parent, or guardian, needs to give permission for you to be in this study. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to, even if your parent has already given permission. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to learn about how eighth grade students perceive their schools, their preparation for high school, and their education in general

You are being asked to be in the study because you are in the eighth grade.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 2500 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?
You will be asked to complete a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 15-20 minutes to complete. There will not be any follow-up interviews.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
- You will return the consent form to your homeroom teacher.
- On the day of the survey you will complete the questionnaire. It should take about 15-20 minutes to complete.
- You may choose not to answer any item on the questionnaire for any reason.
- You will return the completed questionnaire to your homeroom teacher.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. This particular study attempts to receive information about how eighth grade students perceive their schools, their preparation for high school, and their education in general. This information will help educators to work with middle-grade students more effectively. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study. However, the information you provide may improve the quality of school for the class of students that follow you into the eighth grade.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
There are no known risks associated with participating in this survey.

There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher.

How will your privacy be protected?
Your privacy and the confidentiality of your responses will be protected in the following ways:
- Completed surveys will be kept in a locked storage cabinet in the researcher's office.
- Individually identifiable data will only be shared with the researcher's faculty advisor.
- No names or ID numbers will be used. Surveys will only be coded according to the student's school.
- Teachers and administrators will not be able to identify any individual student in this study.

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill

will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
You will not receive anything for being in this study.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions contact Diana Lys, 252-756-9011 or lysd@ecu.edu, or contact Dr. Xue Lan Rong, 919-962-9203, xrong@email.unc.edu.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

- -

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____   _____

Your signature if you agree to be in the study   Date

_____

Printed name if you agree to be in the study

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Assent to Participate in a Research Study
Minor Subjects (7-14 yrs)

_____

IRB Study #____06-1001_____
Consent Form Version Date: ____January 2, 2007_____

Title of Study: Assessing Eighth Grade Student Perceptions of Schools and Schooling to Identify Dropout Risk Factors for Hispanic and Other Middle School Students

Person in charge of study: Diana B. Lys
Where they work at UNC-Chapel Hill: School of Education

Study contact phone number: 252-756-9011
Study contact Email Address: lysd@ecu.edu

_____

The people named above are doing a research study.

<u>These are some things we want you to know about research studies:</u>
Your parent needs to give permission for you to be in this study. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to, even if your parent has already given permission

You may stop being in the study at any time. If you decide to stop, no one will be angry or upset with you.

Sometimes good things happen to people who take part in studies, and sometimes things we may not like happen. We will tell you more about these things below.

<u>Why are they doing this research study?</u>
The reason for doing this research is to learn how eighth grade students feel about their schools, their preparation for high school, and their education in general.

<u>Why are you being asked to be in this research study?</u>
You are being asked to participate in this study because you are in the eighth grade.

<u>How many people will take part in this study?</u>
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of about 2500 people in this research study.

<u>What will happen during this study?</u>
This study will take place at you middle school, in your homeroom teacher's classroom, and will last 15-20 minutes.

During this study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire. There will not by any follow-up interviews.

Who will be told the things we learn about you in this study?
Only the researcher will have access to your responses. Your name will not be on any part of the questionnaire. Teachers and administrators at your school will be told about the general responses for the entire eighth grade class at your school, but individual students will not be identified in any way.

What are the good things that might happen?
People may have good things happen to them because they are in research studies. These are called "benefits." There is little chance you will benefit from being in this research study. However, the information you provide may improve the quality of school for the class of students that follow you into the eighth grade.

What are the bad things that might happen?
Sometimes things happen to people in research studies that may make them feel bad. These are called "risks." There are no known risks associated with participating in this study.

Will you get any money or gifts for being in this research study?
You will not receive money or gifts for being a part of this research study.

Who should you ask if you have any questions?
If you have questions contact Diana Lys, 252-756-9011 or lysd@ecu.edu, or contact Dr. Xue Lan Rong, 919-962-9203, xrong@email.unc.edu. If you have other questions about your rights while you are in this research study you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

If you sign your name below, it means that you agree to take part in this research study.

_____   _____
Sign your name here if you want to be in the study   Date

_____
Print your name here if you want to be in the study

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Assent   Date

_____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Assent

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Student Survey: Perceptions of School

Please indicate your opinions using a five point scale. Mark your responses on the answer sheet with a #2 pencil. All responses with remain confidential and you may choose not to answer any item. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following?

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	My teachers believe in me.	A	B	C	D	E
2.	My school work is preparing me for the future.	A	B	C	D	E
3.	My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	A	B	C	D	E
4.	Teachers at my school care about the students.	A	B	C	D	E
5.	At my school it is uncomfortable to be of the race or ethnic group that I belong to.	A	B	C	D	E
6.	I am challenged by my school work.	A	B	C	D	E
7.	I do not have enough time to complete my homework.	A	B	C	D	E
8.	I am bored with my classes.	A	B	C	D	E
9.	The cultures of different groups in school are discussed in my classes.	A	B	C	D	E
10.	I am treated fairly by teachers at my school.	A	B	C	D	E
11.	I am excited about going to high school next year.	A	B	C	D	E
12.	I feel safe at school.	A	B	C	D	E
13.	My teachers are concerned when I do not do well on assignments.	A	B	C	D	E
14.	I worry that I will not graduate from high school.	A	B	C	D	E
15.	I feel comfortable talking with my counselor at school.	A	B	C	D	E
16.	All cultures are respected at my school.	A	B	C	D	E
17.	I am intimidated by other students at school.	A	B	C	D	E
18.	Participating in extracurricular activities at my school is important to me.	A	B	C	D	E
19.	I often see my principal walking in the hall at school.	A	B	C	D	E
20.	Graduating from high school is a priority for me.	A	B	C	D	E
21.	Punishment for breaking school rules is applied fairly at my school.	A	B	C	D	E

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
22.	I know what I need to do to graduate from high school.	A	B	C	D	E
23.	I have more responsibilities at home than at school.	A	B	C	D	E
24.	I understand my schools' attendance requirements.	A	B	C	D	E
25.	Dropping out of school is not an option for me.	A	B	C	D	E
26.	I am happy at my school.	A	B	C	D	E
27.	My job interferes with my school work.	A	B	C	D	E
28.	I need to earn money to help my family financially.	A	B	C	D	E
29.	I want to go to college.	A	B	C	D	E
30.	I have a role model (like a friend, family member, or other adult figure) who inspires me to continue in school.	A	B	C	D	E
31.	I have friends in school.	A	B	C	D	E
32.	My parents know what's going on in my school.	A	B	C	D	E
33.	My parents visit my school often during the year.	A	B	C	D	E
34.	Moving to high school next year makes me nervous.	A	B	C	D	E
35.	Our media center has books that appeal to my interests.	A	B	C	D	E
36.	My teachers have attended activities in my community.	A	B	C	D	E
37.	My teachers know my parents well.	A	B	C	D	E
38.	I frequently attend activities in my community.	A	B	C	D	E
39.	I see the importance of graduating from high school.	A	B	C	D	E
40.	Sometimes students who speak a language other than English in school are not treated fairly.	A	B	C	D	E
41.	I am always prepared for class with paper and pencil.	A	B	C	D	E
42.	I work hard to prepare for exams.	A	B	C	D	E
43.	It is easy for me to see the connection between what I have learned in school and what I will do in the future.	A	B	C	D	E
44.	I prefer to take classes in a 90 minute block rather than a 45 minute class period.	A	B	C	D	E
45.	Having a good attendance record at school is important to me.	A	B	C	D	E

Tell us about yourself. Mark the answer choice that best applies to you on the answer sheet. If appropriate, please fill in your response in the space provided.

46. What is your gender?
      A.   Male
      B.   Female

47. What is your age?
      A.   12-13 years old
      B.   14-15 years old
      C.   16-17 years old

48. How do you describe yourself? If more than one, mark all that apply to you.
      A.   American Indian
      B.   Asian or Pacific Islander (for example, Cambodian, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Vietnamese)
      C.   Black or African American
      D.   Hispanic, Latino, or Latina (for example Cuban American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, or other Latin American)
      E.   White

49. Where were you born?
      A.   United States
      B.   Other: please tell us where _____

50. If you were born outside of the United States, at what age did you begin school in the United States?
      A.   younger than age 7
      B.   8-9 years old
      C.   10-11 years old
      D.   12-13 years old
      E.   14-15 years old

51. Where was your mother born?
      A.   United States
      B.   Other: please tell us where _____

52. Where was your father born?
      A.   United States
      B.   Other: please tell us where _____

How many brothers and sisters do you have?

53.	Number of Brothers:		54.	Number of Sisters:
A.	None		A.	None
B.	One		B.	One
C.	Two		C.	Two
D.	Three		D.	Three
E.	Four or more		E.	Four or more

55. Do you have an older sibling who dropped out of school?
     A.   Yes
     B.   No

56. Do you receive free or reduced lunch?
     A.   Yes
     B.   No

57. How many days have you been absent from school so far this year?
     A.   None
     B.   3 days or less
     C.   4-6 days
     D.   7-9 days
     E.   10 days or more

58. Do you speak a language other than English at home?
     A.   Yes
     B.   No

If your answer is **NO**, please go to question **#63**.

If your answer is **YES,** please answer the following questions.

59. What language do you speak at home?
     A. Spanish
     B. Hmong
     C. Chinese
     D. Filipino
     E. Other: please tell us the language_____

Please indicate your opinions on the five point scale.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
60.	I don't enjoy my classes because of my difficulties in speaking English.	A	B	C	D	E
61.	I don't get good grades because of my difficulties in reading and writing English	A	B	C	D	E
62.	Sometimes students who speak English with accents in school are not treated respectfully	A	B	C	D	E

Tell us about your school work. Mark the answer choice that best applies to you on the answer sheet.

63. On an average school day, about how much time do you spend doing homework outside of school?
   A.   None
   B.   Half hour or less
   C.   1 hour
   D.   2 hours
   E.   3 hours or more

64. What grades do you earn in school?
   A.   Mostly As
   B.   Mostly Bs
   C.   Mostly Cs
   D.   Mostly Ds
   E.   Mostly below Ds

How did you score on your most recent End of Grade test? The seventh grade EOG in May 2006.

65.   EOG Reading: 66.   EOG Mathematics
   A.   One   A. One
   B.   Two   B. Two
   C.   Three   C. Three
   D.   Four   D. Four
   E.   Five   E.   Five

67. What extracurricular activities do you participate in at your school?
   A.   Athletics
   B.   Band
   C.   Battle of the Books
   D.   Beta Club/Honor Society
   E.   Other: _____

68. Have you ever repeated a grade?
   A.   Yes
   B.   No

69. What grade(s) did you repeat? Mark all that apply.
   A.   Kindergarten or First grade
   B.   Second grade or Third grade
   C.   Fourth grade or Fifth grade
   D.   Sixth grade or Seventh grade
   E.   Eighth grade

Tell us about your thoughts in a little more detail. Answer questions # 70-76 on the survey sheet.

70. What is your favorite subject in school? Please choose only one answer. Circle your answer choice.

1.	Mathematics	6.	Music
2.	Language Arts	7.	Technology
3.	Science	8.	Foreign Language
4.	Social Studies	9.	Health and Physical Education
5.	Art	10.	Other: _____

71. Why is this subject your favorite subject?

_____

_____

72. What is the most difficult subject for you in school? Please choose only one answer. Circle your answer choice.

1.	Mathematics	6.	Music
2.	Language Arts	7.	Technology
3.	Science	8.	Foreign Language
4.	Social Studies	9.	Health and Physical Education
5.	Art	10.	Other: _____

73. Why is this subject so challenging?

_____

_____

74. In your opinion, what qualities does a great teacher possess?

_____

_____

_____

_____

75. Finish this sentence: When I think about going to high school I am….

_____

_____

_____

_____

76. Do you feel prepared to go to high school? Tell us why or why not.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for completing this survey.

ITEM FREQUENCIES AND RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

High School Graduation Factor (DV) - Item Frequencies

N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Item Ratings			Mean	SD
			Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
74	15	16	15	12	16	3.027	1.443
	20.3%	21.6%	20.3%	16.2%	21.6%		

High School and Career Aspirations Factor (F1) – Item Frequencies and Factor Reliability

							α	Mean	SD
High School and Career Aspirations Factor							0.675	3.971	0.647

		Item Ratings						
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
11. I am excited about going to high school next year.	74	5	3	10	24	32	4.014	1.165
		6.8%	4.1%	13.5%	32.4%	43.2%		
20. Graduating from high school is a priority for me.	74	1	0	16	23	34	4.203	0.876
		1.4%	0.0%	21.6%	31.1%	45.9%		
25. Dropping out of school is not an option for me.	74	5	4	10	20	35	4.027	1.205
		6.8%	5.4%	13.5%	27.0%	47.3%		
29. I want to go to college.	74	3	6	12	19	34	4.014	1.153
		4.1%	8.1%	16.2%	25.7%	45.9%		

High School and Career Aspirations Factor (F1) - continued

				Item Ratings				
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
30. I have a role model (like a friend, family member, or other adult figure) who inspires me to continue in school.	74	4	3	16	27	24	3.865	1.090
		5.4%	4.1%	21.6%	36.5%	32.40%		
34. Moving to high school next year makes me nervous.[a]	74	18	24	15	10	7		
		24.3%	32.4%	20.3%	13.5%	9.5%	3.486	1.263
39. I see the importance of graduating from high school.	74	1	5	8	25	35	4.189	0.975
		1.4%	6.8%	10.8%	33.8%	47.3%		

a. Scores for this item were reversed

Academic Preparation Factor (F2) – Item Frequencies and Factor Reliability

						α	Mean	SD
Academic Preparation Factor (F2)						0.520	3.800	0.578

		Item Ratings						
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
2. My school work is preparing me for the future.	74	0	0	13	30	31	4.234	0.737
		0.0%	0.0%	17.6%	40.5%	41.9%		
6. I am challenged by my school work.[a]	74	12	33	16	9	4	3.541	1.075
		16.2%	44.6%	21.6%	12.2%	5.4%		
41. I am always prepared for class with paper and pencil.	74	0	5	12	35	22	4.000	0.860
		0.0%	6.8%	16.2%	47.3%	29.7%		
42. I work hard to prepare for exams.	74	3	5	31	28	7	3.419	0.907
		4.1%	6.8%	41.9%	37.8%	9.5%		

a. Scores for this item were reversed

Perceptions of Teachers and Instruction Factor (F3) – Item Frequencies and Factor Reliability

							α	Mean	SD
Perceptions of Teachers and Instruction Factor (F3)							0.738	3.397	0.768

		Item Ratings						
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
1. My teachers believe in me.	74	3	7	20	31	13	3.595	1.019
		4.1%	9.5%	27.0%	41.9%	17.6%		
4. Teachers at my school care about the students.	74	2	8	25	24	15	3.568	1.021
		2.7%	10.8%	33.8%	32.4%	20.3%		
10. I am treated fairly by teachers at my school.	74	9	12	19	23	11	3.203	1.238
		12.2%	16.2%	25.7%	31.1%	14.9%		

Perceptions of Teachers and Instruction Factor(F3) - continued

		Item Ratings						
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
13. My teachers are concerned when I do not do well on assignments.	74	2 2.7%	8 10.8%	26 35.1%	32 43.2%	6 8.1%	3.432	0.893
35. Our media center has books that appeal to my interests.	74	12 16.2%	7 9.5%	21 28.4%	23 31.1%	11 14.9%	3.189	1.279

Perceptions of School Organization Factor (F4) – Item Frequencies and Factor Reliability

Perceptions of School Organization Factor (F4)							α	Mean	SD
							0.545	3.485	0.545

		Item Ratings						
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
3. My teachers are clear about what they expect from me.	74	2	8	16	33	15	3.689	1.006
		2.7%	10.8%	21.6%	44.6%	20.3%		
12. I feel safe at school.	74	3	13	24	23	11	3.351	1.065
		4.1%	17.6%	32.4%	31.1%	14.9%		
19. I often see my principal walking in the hall at school.	74	4	8	17	26	19	3.649	1.140
		5.4%	10.8%	23.0%	35.1%	25.7%		
21. Punishment for breaking school rules is applied fairly at my school.	74	12	9	18	25	10	3.162	1.282
		16.20%	12.2%	24.3%	33.8%	13.5%		

Perceptions of School Organization Factor (F4) - continued

Item	N	Item Ratings					Mean	SD
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
22. I know what I need to do to graduate from high school.	74	3	2	21	28	20	3.808	1.002
		4.1%	2.7%	28.4%	37.9%	27.0%		
24. I understand my school's attendance requirements.	74	2	2	18	35	17	3.851	0.902
		2.7%	2.7%	24.3%	47.3%	23.0%		
43. It is easy for me to see the connection between what I have learned in school and what I will do in the future.	74	2	8	26	22	16	3.568	1.035
		2.7%	10.8%	35.1%	29.7%	21.6%		
44. I prefer to take classes in a 90 minute block rather than a 45 minute class period.	74	21	17	22	10	4	2.446	1.195
		28.4%	23.0%	29.7%	13.5%	5.4%		
45. Having a good attendance record at school is important to me.	74	1	3	24	25	21	3.838	0.937
		1.4%	4.1%	32.4%	33.8%	28.4%		

Perceptions of the Social-Cultural Context (F5) – Item Frequencies and Factor Reliability

							α	Mean	SD
Perceptions of Social-Cultural Context Factor (F5)							0.644	2.932	0.644

		Item Ratings						
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
5. At my school it is uncomfortable to be of the race or ethnic group that I belong to.[a]	74	3 4.1%	7 9.5%	31 41.9%	17 23.0%	16 21.6%	2.514	1.063
9. The cultures of different groups in school are discussed in my classes.	74	13 17.6%	16 21.6%	1 1.4%	30 40.5%	14 18.9%	2.616	0.988
15. I feel comfortable talking with my counselor at school.	74	8 10.8%	16 21.6%	23 31.1%	20 27.0%	7 9.5%	3.027	1.146

a. Scores for this item were reversed

Item	N	Item Ratings					Mean	SD
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
16. All cultures are respected at my school.	74	13	8	24	18	11	3.081	1.290
		17.6%	10.8%	32.4%	24.3%	14.9%		
18. Participating in extracurricular activities at my school is important to me.	74	6	10	27	20	11	3.274	1.126
		8.10%	13.50%	36.50%	27.00%	14.90%		
26. I am happy at my school.	74	11	11	22	21	9	3.081	1.236
		14.9%	14.9%	29.7%	28.4%	12.2%		

Perceptions of Home-School Connections Factor (F6) – Item Frequencies and Factor Reliability

Perceptions of Home-School Connection Factor (F6)						α	Mean	SD
						0.689	2.896	0.689

		Item Ratings						
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
23. I have more responsibilities at home than at school.[a]	74	17	26	17	10	4	3.568	1.148
		23.0%	35.1%	23.0%	13.5%	5.4%		
32. My parents know what is going on at my school.	74	2	11	20	29	12	3.514	1.024
		2.70%	14.90%	27.00%	39.20%	16.20%		
33. My parents visit my school often during the year.	74	17	20	16	16	5	2.622	1.246
		23.00%	27.00%	21.60%	21.60%	6.80%		
36. My teachers have attended activities in my community.	74	10	14	30	13	7	2.904	1.137
		13.5%	18.9%	40.6%	17.6%	9.5%		

a. Scores for this item were reversed

Perceptions of Home-School Connection Factor (F6) - continued

			Item Ratings					
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
37. My teachers know my parents well.	74	22 29.7%	17 23.0%	21 28.4%	11 14.9%	3 4.1%	2.405	1.181
38. I frequently attend activities in my community.	74	19 25.70%	23 31.10%	21 28.40%	8 10.80%	3 4.10%	2.365	1.105

				Item Ratings				
Item	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
28. I need to earn money to help my family financially.	74	7 9.5%	9 12.2%	26 35.1%	17 23.0%	15 20.3%	2.667	1.205

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