Changes Experienced by Latino Parents of Adolescents
Through a Parent Training Program in an Urban Community

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requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

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The author presented results from a qualitative study of the changes experienced by 13 Latino parents of adolescents in East Los Angeles participating in a parent training program. Data collected from classroom observations, focus groups, and interviews with the instructors of the parent training program were triangulated to determine that the skills of showing love and affection and improved communication through listening instead of yelling were changes most commonly reported by parent participants positively affecting the parent-child relationship. Barriers to implementing these skills included parents' assumptions regarding the parent-child relationship, culture and upbringing, and fear of unknown outcomes. Despite these barriers,
there is substantial overlap between the goals of the program and the changes reported by parents. Instructors tailored the parent training curriculum to the target demographic by engaging parents in roleplaying and by sharing personal stories and examples to provide context.
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DEDICATION PAGE

This dissertation is dedicated to each and every one of the parents who participated in this study and to all those parents who continue to struggle with their teenage children.


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CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although many studies show the positive impact of parent involvement on student academic achievement (Fan, 2001; Jeynes, 2007; Keith et al., 1998; Park & Bauer, 2002; Paulson, 1994; Singh et al., 1995; Steinberg et al., 1992), little research shows the effects of parent involvement on student discipline, particularly at the secondary level (Sheldon and Epstein, 2002). However, studies insist on the need for stronger parent partnerships to improve student behavior, especially in urban high schools. (Flannery et al., 2009; Warren et al., 2003).

Our nation’s educational system currently faces an urgent challenge; zero-tolerance school discipline policy tactics, such as expulsions and suspensions, are frequently used, indirectly pushing students out of school and ultimately into the criminal justice system (Skiba, 2000). Students who are suspended are more likely to fall behind in school due to loss of learning time; to be retained; to drop out; to commit a crime; and to become incarcerated as adults (The Advancement Project, 2005). The statistics are also disproportionately alarming for students of color: In 2000, African American students represented 17% of the student population nationwide, but account for 34% of nationwide suspensions. In 2003, African-American youths made up 16% of the nation’s overall juvenile population but accounted for 45% of juvenile arrests (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Despite these numbers, states have codified even harsher permanent expulsion laws, including Michigan and Nevada, without providing the student any opportunity for an alternative education (Meek, 2009).

Out-of-school suspensions—where a student is excluded from school for ten days or less—have become the most prevalent disciplinary method adopted by schools. (Bloomberg, 2004). In the state of California alone, between 2004 and 2009, there was a six percent increase
in the number of suspensions and/or expulsions. While this increase may not appear to be significant, the total number of suspensions and expulsions is more telling, particularly at a local level: In the 2008-2009 school year, out of a total of 782,682 suspensions and/or expulsions in California, 50,411 were generated in secondary schools across the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Part of the rise in suspensions and expulsions resulted from the rise in the use of “zero-tolerance policies” in which educators give harsh and inflexible punishments for rule-breaking (Meek, 2009). By 1993, zero tolerance policies were adopted by school boards across the nation to deal with drugs and weapons as mandated by the Gun-Free Schools Act (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). This approach has evolved into a movement across schools resulting in students being expelled for trivial reasons ranging from bringing paper clips to class to carrying cough drops (Skiba, 2000).

In a 1998 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) survey of 1,234 principals or disciplinarians at the elementary and secondary school levels, the participants listed what they considered serious or moderate problems in their schools. The most frequently cited problems at all school levels were the less violent behaviors such as tardiness (40%), absenteeism (25%), and physical conflicts between students (21%). The more critical incidents were reported infrequently: drug use (9%), gangs (5%), possession of weapons (2%), and physical abuse of teachers (2%). The NCES report found that violent crimes occurred at an annual rate of only 53 per 100,000 students. However, schools use suspensions with great frequency for more minor offenses, resulting in high suspension rates. In fact, students are suspended for the most serious offenses relatively infrequently (Bain & MacPherson, 1990; Dupper & Bosch, 1996; Kaeser,
Studies show that although these exclusionary policies seek to deter misbehavior and to create a safer learning environment, the policies have instead encouraged at-risk students to engage in more risky behavior and violence (Blum & Reinhart, 2001). Suspensions are also ineffective in reducing the recurrence of suspensions, and instead, they increase the likelihood of a suspended student experiencing ongoing discipline problems (Meek, 2009; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Instead of creating a safer learning environment, exclusionary disciplinary policies have been counterproductive and created a more hostile school environment.

In response to the exclusionary discipline practices, school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS or “Positive Support”) has been used increasingly in schools in the past 10 years where the primary response to problem behaviors is not punitive but rather proactive and positive (Colvin and Fernandez, 2000; Elias, 1998). Locally, school districts including Los Angeles Unified School District have recently adopted Positive Support to emphasize integration of measurable outcomes, data-based decision making, and overt support systems school-wide, in small groups, and at individual levels (Turnbull et al., 2002; Warren et al., 2003). Positive Support efforts have resulted in decreases in problem behavior in a variety of contexts in both elementary schools (Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin, 1998; Scott, 2001; Todd et al., 1999) and middle schools (Colvin, Kameenui, and Sugai, 1993; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997). However, high schools face unique challenges that affect the likelihood of a sustainable implementation (Flannery, Sugai, and Anderson 2009). Further, few studies have evaluated applications of Positive Support in urban schools characterized by poverty, community violence, and high base rates of problem behavior (Warren et al., 2003).
Conducting empirical research on the efficacy and efficiency of Positive Support programs is complex and expensive (Sugai and Horner, 2006). Warren and his colleagues (2003) worked on implementing the program with four middle schools for five years and found that without direct intervention and guidance from his team, the percentage of discipline referrals and suspensions increased. The schools had a difficult time sustaining the complex system (Flannery et al., 2009). Researchers found that three strategies including collective buy-in from staff, a plan for sustainability, and community and family support were critical prerequisites for achieving lasting positive change (Flannery et al., 2009; Warren et al., 2003). These strategies were not easily implemented in inner-city schools, and very few studies have evaluated its effect on high schools, particularly urban high schools (Bohanon et al., 2006). Such schools face additional problems such as school personnel feeling overwhelmed, high teacher turnover, high base rates of problem behavior, and very little perceived support from parents and community members (Warren et al., 2003).

Despite the challenges particular to urban schools, studies by Flannery and Warren and their colleagues shed light on the valuable role of parent involvement in the implementation of Positive Support. The lack of parent involvement in these schools revealed problems in maintaining a positive rapport between school and parents (Flannery et al., 2009). In effect, active parent involvement and support are vital to the success of the comprehensive Positive Support program (Los Angeles Unified School District, School Wide Positive Behavior Support Plan).

To further demonstrate the significant impact of parent involvement on student disciplinary behavior, Sheldon and Epstein (2002) took a non-school-based approach--parent
involvement--to reduce the number of disciplinary actions and to ensure a school climate focused on learning. They found that parent involvement helped improve student discipline. Thirty-seven elementary schools and 10 middle or high schools participated in the study where the school respondents completed a preliminary survey and a follow-up survey after one year. The researchers examined ways to improve student behavior and school discipline by measuring Epstein’s (1995, 2001) six types of parent involvement activities, which are widely recognized frameworks of parent involvement. The six types of parent involvement include parenting practices, communication practices between schools and homes, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Using this framework, Sheldon and Epstein (2002) identified 13 specific parent involvement activities that schools implemented and found that parenting practices and communication practices between schools and families were determined to be the types of parent activities that most predicted improvement in student behavior.

Further research examines the influence of parenting styles on student behavior (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg et al., 1992). However, limitations exist in studies that use parent child-rearing attitude questionnaires to determine a parent’s parenting style and its relationship to the student behavior. These questionnaires have serious methodological limitations and almost zero convergent validity because the parents’ self-reporting attitudes on questionnaires typically do not directly reflect their actual parenting practices (Holden and Edwards, 1989). Additionally, research findings with respect to both parenting styles and parenting practices, and their association with child behavior problems, are inconsistent across culture and socioeconomic status groups. Accordingly, parent training programs have emerged
as a potentially important component of more comprehensive prevention and intervention programs for families of children with disruptive behaviors (Dumas, 1989; Kazdin, 1987; Patterson, Chamberlain, & Reid, 1983; Webster-Stratton, 1991).

While parent training programs directed at families of adolescents have shown significant potential for contributing to the prevention of youth problem behaviors, there remain many barriers that need to be overcome before such programs gain wider acceptance and ultimately impact the lives of youth and their families. Moreover, many parent training programs are available to teach parents the skills necessary to improve discipline at home and at school; however, issues with low parent attendance and parent acceptance of the skills taught continue to plague these programs. Clearly, parents need access to programs with appropriate learning experiences that are socio-culturally relevant. It is not clear, however, which learning experiences facilitate change in how parents interact with their adolescent child over disciplinary problems, particularly parents from minority groups and low socio-economic status. This study examined the experiences of parents participating in a parent training program. Specifically, this study sought to gain a deeper understanding of the process of change experienced by parents with respect to how they relate to their children over discipline issues.

**Research Questions**

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What are the changes that parents report in the way they interact with their child over discipline issues as a result of this parent training program?
  - What specific skills they say they learned, if any, triggered these changes?
  - How, if at all, did the parents implement these skills?
• According to the parents participating in a parent training program, what are the barriers, if any, to implementing the skills that are taught?

• According to the observer, the class instructor, and the parents, how is the curriculum adapted by the instructor to ensure agreement of goals for the class, parent participation in the learning tasks and activities, and development of trust and bond between parents in parent support groups?
  o According to the class instructor, how does he/she adjust the activities and/or curriculum for the needs of this population of parent learners and why?

Research Design and Methodology

Through parent focus groups, instructor interviews, and observations of the parenting classes, this study was grounded in qualitative research methods to explore and understand process and perceptions of parents (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research provides the researcher with the actual descriptive experiences of each parent or a specific event. Particularly by asking open-ended questions during focus groups, I pushed beneath the surface to understand the parents’ attitudes, beliefs, practices, and the meaning they make of their experiences. In sum, these qualitative methods of interviews, focus groups, and observations allowed me to answer my research questions and fulfill the intended purpose of the study.

Site

I conducted my qualitative research study at a local park in East Los Angeles that for the past six years has offered a parent training program as part of their Building Families Program. The park is located in a low income, urban community in the heart of East Los Angeles with a high concentration of Latino immigrants, non-citizens, low-income families, households with
second languages. Moreover, over 60% of residents are without a high school diploma, and over 30 street gangs have been identified as operating in the community.

The parent training program was a ten-week course that required parents to attend class once a week for three hours. Two trained and certified instructors alternated and taught the classes in Spanish. The goal of the program was for parents to learn and practice specific prevention and intervention strategies for destructive behaviors such as truancy, alcohol and other drug use, gang involvement and other criminal behavior, running away, violence, and suicide.

Participants

The participants included two instructors and thirteen Latino caregivers (e.g. parents, guardians) participating in the parent training program from beginning to end. All participants agreed to be observed during class and to participate in two focus groups. The parent participants included six fathers and seven mothers. I limited the population to caregivers of high school students because these students typically are engaged in at-risk behaviors and are displaying more serious discipline problems. The instructors were observed during each class and participated in one interview at the start of the program.

Data Collection

In order to collect data that supported process and change in perceptions, I collected data from three main sources: class observations, parent focus groups, and instructor interviews. Due to the class instruction being delivered in Spanish, I contracted a Spanish language translator who attended each class session and the focus groups to transcribed observed communications verbatim.
Using a coding process for recording observational data, I conducted weekly class observations of the parenting classes to learn the process of how parents learned the curriculum. I observed how the instructor delivered the curriculum and the parents’ reactions and behaviors in response.

During parent focus groups, I asked parents to discuss the skills that they implemented, the changes they experienced in the manner in which they relate to their children, and the barriers to implementing the skills taught in class. Twelve parents participated in the mid-course focus groups, and the same twelve parents and one additional parent participated in the end-of course focus groups. Each focus group took place after class for approximately one hour. I separated the groups by gender to allow the parents to feel more comfortable to share in front of others who are similar to them (Morgan, 1998).

I also interviewed the two class instructors separately to learn more about how they teach the parenting classes. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions that ask the instructors to describe how they ensured agreement of goals for the parents, how and why they assigned certain learning activities and tasks, and how they developed bond with the parents to meet goals. I also asked questions about how the instructor adjusted the activities and/or curriculum for this specific population of parents.

**Public Engagement**

The implications of this study are numerous not only for the program administrators and instructors, but for parents, school administrators, teachers, mental-health professionals, and law enforcement officials. The results of this study will help the parent training program administrators and instructors to better understand and ultimately better address the needs of the
community that they serve. They will learn information about the skills that parents felt were most effective as well as the barriers that may have hindered them from effectively implementing certain skills. More importantly, the parents will have the opportunity to share and process what they learned and experienced throughout the ten-week program.

As for school administrators, teachers, and counselors that serve a similar population of families, the results of the study provide insight for effective instructional strategies and activities to actively engage parents. These strategies and activities can be implemented in schools during parent workshops in order to increase authentic parent engagement and involvement. This study will also contribute to a deeper understanding of the parents’ needs, challenges, and experiences relating to addressing discipline issues that may prompt school officials to seek other resources and support for families.

The results of this study will be shared with various stakeholders including program administrators, program instructors, the District Attorney office, and local school leaders in order to raise awareness and understanding of not only the needs of the families in the community, but also the great potential and the positive successes experienced by the parents in the community.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examined the experiences of parents in the setting of a parent training program to gain a deeper understanding of the process of change experienced by parents with respect to how they relate to their adolescent child over discipline issues. The literature review first discusses the problem of high numbers of students expelled or suspended. Second, it discusses the purpose and negative impact of zero tolerance policies on students (Meek, 2009). Third, it offers a brief description of alternatives widely used by many schools that claim the need to involve families and community resources (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009; Warren et al., 2003). Here, I note that none of these alternatives indicate how parent involvement can be a potential solution in mitigating student behavior problems despite the research on the positive impact of parent involvement on student achievement and behavior. Given this gap, I then explore various types of parent involvement and their general impact on student achievement and behavior followed by a closer examination of the influence of parenting styles and specific parenting practices on student behavior and its limitations. Finally, I discuss the role of parent training programs, specifically the effectiveness of reducing discipline problems and the acceptability of the programs.

Background

Out-of-school suspensions—where a student is excluded from school for ten days or less—have become the most prevalent disciplinary method adopted by schools. (Bloomberg, 2004). In 2006, more than 3.3 million students nationwide were suspended out-of-school at least once and 102,000 were expelled during the academic school year. About 7%, or one out of every fourteen students, nationwide was suspended from school at least once during the 2005-
The rate has more than doubled since 1974 and steadily increased from 6.6% in 2002 to 6.8% in 2004, and up to 6.9% in 2006. Students of color and students with disabilities are more likely to be suspended and expelled than their peers for the same behavior (American Psychological Association, 2008). For example, African-American students were suspended three times more often than their White peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

In the state of California alone, between 2004 and 2009, there was a six percent increase in the number of suspensions and/or expulsions. While this increase may not appear to be significant, the total number of suspensions and expulsions is more telling, particularly at a local level: In the 2008-2009 school year, out of a total of 782,682 suspensions and/or expulsions in California, 50,411 were generated in secondary schools across the Los Angeles Unified School District (California Department of Education). Part of the rise in suspensions and expulsions resulted from the rise in the use of “zero tolerance policies” in which educators imposed harsh and inflexible punishments on students for rule-breaking (Meek, 2009; Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project 2000).

**Zero Tolerance Policy**

“Zero tolerance” policies grew out of state and federal drug enforcement policies in the 1980s. They were intended primarily as a method of sending a firm message that those certain behaviors will not be tolerated, by punishing all offenses severely, no matter how minor (Skiba, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). “Zero tolerance” first received national attention as the title of a program developed in 1986 by U.S. Attorney Peter Nunez in San Diego, impounding seagoing vessels carrying any amount of drugs, no matter how small. The program was highlighted as a
national model in 1988 and the language of “zero tolerance” began to be applied to a broad range of issues, ranging from environmental pollution, trespassing, skateboarding, homelessness, to carrying boom boxes (Skiba, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

In the early 1990s, educators used this no-nonsense response to drugs, gangs, and weapons, and by 1993, zero tolerance policies were being adopted by school boards across the nation not only to deal with drugs and weapons but also to eliminate smoking and school disruption. In 1994, this policy was made universal through the Gun-Free Schools Act, which mandated expulsion for possession of a weapon (Skiba, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). However, local school districts began to broaden the use of zero tolerance beyond the federal mandates to include banning drugs and alcohol (Kumar, 1999), fighting (Petrillo, 1997), threats (Borsuk & Murphy, 1999), and swearing (Nancrede, 1998). The expansive application of zero tolerance evolved into a movement across schools resulting in students being expelled for trivial reasons ranging from bringing paper clips to class to carrying cough drops (Skiba, 2000).

In a 1998 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) survey of 1,234 principals or disciplinarians at the elementary and secondary school levels, the participants listed what they considered to be serious or moderate problems in their schools. The most frequently cited problems at all school levels included less violent behaviors such as tardiness (40%), absenteeism (25%), and physical conflicts between students (21%). Critical incidents were reported less frequently: drug use (9%), gangs (5%), possession of weapons (2%), and physical abuse of teachers (2%). The NCES report found that violent crimes occurred at an annual rate of only 53 per 100,000 students. However, schools use suspensions with great frequency for more minor offenses, resulting in high suspension rates. In fact, students were suspended for the most
serious offenses relatively infrequently (Bain & MacPherson, 1990; Dupper & Bosch, 1996; Kaeser, 1979). This approach is devastating to our nation’s educational system because students who are suspended are more likely to fall behind in school due to loss of learning time; to be retained; to drop out; to commit a crime; and to become incarcerated as adults (The Advancement Project, 2005).

Studies show that although these exclusionary policies seek to deter misbehavior and to create a safer learning environment, the policies have instead encouraged at-risk students to engage in more risky behavior and violence (Blum & Reinhart, 2001). Suspensions are also ineffective in reducing the recurrence of suspensions, and instead, they increase the likelihood of a suspended student experiencing ongoing discipline problems (Meek, 2009; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Instead of creating a safer learning environment, exclusionary disciplinary policies have been counterproductive and created a more hostile school environment, indirectly pushing students out of school and ultimately into the criminal justice system (Skiba, 2000).

To alleviate this problem, growing numbers of schools are using positive approaches to discipline that improve school climate and learning, as alternatives to a culture of zero tolerance, punishment, and removal.

**Alternatives to Zero Tolerance Policy**

In response to zero tolerance policies, a growing number of schools are using positive approaches to discipline that improve school climate and learning, as alternatives to a culture of zero tolerance, punishment, and removal. Some alternatives include violence prevention programs that help students develop conflict management skills: Second Step, Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, Restorative Justice. Other alternatives include positive behavioral
supports systems that help improve school-wide behavior and safety and offer early intervention strategies that target low levels of inappropriate behavior before they escalate into violence.

Out of these various approaches, two programs have been widely adopted by schools: Restorative Justice and Positive Behavior Supports. Restorative Justice is a problem-solving approach to discipline whereby the parties involved in an offense collectively repair harm and restore positive relationships through small group circles and fairness committees (Marshall, 1999). While this approach is used to build a sense of school community and resolve conflict, its positive results are mitigated by the self-selection bias evident in controlled outcome studies on restorative justice programs. Self-selection bias is an inherent problem in restorative justice research as it is not possible to truly randomly assign participants to treatment and control conditions. When an individual is forced to participate in a restorative justice program, most would argue that the program is no longer truly restorative (Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005). Despite these weaknesses, many schools including Denver Public Schools, West Philadelphia High School (a school on the state’s “Persistently Danger Schools” list for six years), and Chicago Public Schools, implemented Restorative Justice and experienced reductions in suspension numbers and students arrests (Adams, 2008; Advancement Project, 2005; Lewis, 2009).

The second program is the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which is frequently called School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) when applied at the school-wide level.\(^1\) Positive Support refers to a systems change process for an entire school or

\(^1\) For the purposes of this literature review, both terms will be consolidated and referred to as “Positive Support”.

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district. The underlying theme is teaching behavioral expectations in the same manner as any core curriculum subject. At the school-wide level, universal interventions are used which include four major components: defining school-wide behavioral rules and expectations, teaching the expectations to students in classes, establishing an effective positive reinforcement system, and using data to monitor and evaluate effectiveness of the program (Colvin, 1991; Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993; Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Group and individual interventions are subsequently designed and used for students at higher risk for problem behavior and for whom universal supports are insufficient (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 1999). These additional interventions may include special instructions, specific skills training for students, or other interventions based on the pattern of problem behavior exhibited by student (Hawken & Horner, 2001; Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

**Difficult Application of Positive Support to Specific Context**

In response to the exclusionary discipline practices, Positive Support has been used increasingly in schools in the past 10 years where the primary response to problem behaviors is not punitive but rather proactive and positive (Colvin and Fernandez, 2000; Elias, 1998). According to the National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, Positive Support is implemented in 5,359 schools across the country, of which 11% are high schools. However, research shows that application of Positive Support is difficult in varying specific contexts. For example, high schools face the challenge of securing buy-in from their administration and staff members while urban schools face the challenge of effectiveness and sustainability of Positive Support. Despite these challenges, the role of parent involvement
in the implementation of Positive Support is perceived to be valuable across different school settings but is under-utilized.

**High schools.** While Positive Support efforts have resulted in decreases in problem behavior in elementary and middle schools (Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Yon-Lee, 1997; Kartub, Taylor-Greene, March, & Horner, 2000; Leedy, Bates, & Safran, 2004), few studies have evaluated its effect on high schools, particularly urban high schools (Bohanon et al., 2006). In contrast to middle and elementary schools, high schools generally have multiple administrators, a larger staff and student body, and varied expectations around academic achievement and graduation requirements (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009). Hence, because high schools deal with more challenges, the level of complexity increases in implementing programs like Positive Support.

Flannery, Sugai, and Anderson (2009) presented results from a national survey of 43 high schools implementing Positive Support. According to the survey results, a common challenge for many high schools was the struggle to obtain buy-in and support from both administrators and staff members. Although fourteen schools indicated that securing support and participation of staff members was a top priority and a focus area, only 30% of respondents stated that 76% or more of their staff supported the implementation. Furthermore, only 26% of respondents stated that at least 76% of staff participated. These results are troubling because at least 80% of faculty and staff must support the implementation of Positive Support in order for the community to experience any success (Sugai et al., 2005; Sugai & Horner, 2005). Although 80% of staff participation is recommended for elementary and middle schools, the question still remains whether 80% is appropriate for high schools due to the lack of systematic research measuring the
effectiveness of Positive Support in high schools (Flannery et al., 2009). Regardless, the lack of support had deleterious effects, including lack of development time with teachers, lack of consistent implementation, and conflicting opinions about the appropriateness and value of elements of the Positive Support program.

**Urban schools.** Few studies have evaluated applications of Positive Support in urban schools characterized by severe poverty, community violence, and high base rates of problem behavior (Warren et al., 2003). Another study by Warren and his colleagues (2003), where the researchers helped implement Positive Support in four urban middle schools for five years, found that the percentage of discipline referrals and suspensions increased when there was no direct intervention and guidance from his research team. The urban schools in particular had difficulty sustaining the complex system (Flannery et al., 2009).

Researchers found that three strategies including collective buy-in from staff, a plan for sustainability, and community and family support were critical prerequisites for achieving lasting positive change (Flannery et al., 2009; Warren et al., 2003). These strategies were not easily implemented in inner-city schools. Such schools specifically face additional problems such as school personnel feeling overwhelmed, high teacher turnover, high base rates of problem behavior, and very little perceived support from parents and community members (Warren et al., 2003).

**Need for parent involvement.** In sum, while the Positive Support efforts have resulted in decreases in problem behavior in elementary and middle schools (Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Yon-Lee, 1997; Kartub, Taylor-Greene, March, & Horner, 2000; Leedy, Bates, & Safran, 2004), research shows that application of Positive Support is difficult in high schools and urban schools.
High schools face the challenge of securing buy-in from their administration and staff members while urban schools face the challenge of sustaining Positive Support. Despite these challenges, the studies by Flannery and Warren and their colleagues discuss that the role of parent involvement in the implementation of Positive Support is perceived to be valuable across both school contexts but is under-utilized. In fact, the lack of parent involvement in these schools revealed problems in maintaining a positive rapport between school and parents (Flannery et al., 2009).

When members of the Positive Support teams in high schools in the study by Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson (2009) were asked to share strategies that helped and challenged implementation, parent involvement in the form of having an active parent group was listed as a helpful strategy. Inexplicably, however, only five out of 43 high schools indicated that parent involvement and support were a focus area or a top priority in their implementation of Positive Support (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009).

Although Positive Support claims the need to involve families and community resources (Flannery et al., 2009; Warren et al., 2003), a lack of authentic engagement with parents is evident. For example, Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest school district in the nation, adopted Positive Support in 2007, but does not have a formal or comprehensive parent involvement component. A presentation used to guide schools on how to implement Positive Support dedicates only one slide out of 25 regarding the importance of “family and community collaboration.” The presentation emphasizes that “[f]amily and community partnerships are key in the adoption, implementation and maintenance of the School-wide Positive Behavior Support systems,” but suggests no concrete strategies. While there are many
resources available for schools including rubrics, videos, slide presentations, graphs, and strategies, the link for parents and community members only refer to two third-party websites (e.g. www.myparents.com and www.pta.org) and a PowerPoint presentation as resources for parents. The PowerPoint simply presents information regarding what Positive Support is and encourages parents to discuss school expectations with their child at home. Parents can be and are claimed to be a vital part of the solution in mitigating student behavior problems at schools, but this potential solution appears to be overlooked.

Furthermore, although research has pointed to the positive impact of parent involvement on student achievement and behavior, little attention has been given to what specific parenting practices may be associated with improved student behavior. Although schools’ and teachers’ efforts play a direct role in a student’s academic performance and behavior, parent involvement and practices have been measured to positively affect student success (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Jeynes, 2007; Keith et al., 1998; Paulson, 1994; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). Parents are their children’s first teachers and consequently have as much a significant role in their children’s performance in school as the schools themselves—if not more.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of parents participating in a parent training program to gain a deeper understanding of the process of change experienced by parents with respect to how they relate to their adolescent child regarding discipline issues.

**Impact of Parent Involvement**

As Positive Support has shown, parent involvement in schools is an important aspect that has been overlooked as an alternative solution despite its recognized potential to mitigate student
behavior problems at school. Research has shown parent involvement to be associated with a number of positive educational outcomes such as increased academic achievement (Chen & Gregory, 2010; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Fan, 2001; Jeynes, 2007; Keith et al., 1998; Park & Bauer, 2002; Paulson, 1994; Singh et al., 1995; Steinberg et al., 1992; Stevenson & Baker, 1987), better attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2001), and fewer behavioral problems (Deslandes & Royer, 1997; Lee, 1994; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). Only a few studies show the effects of parent involvement on student discipline, particularly at the secondary level (Hill et al., 2004; Sheldon and Epstein, 2002). Studies insist on the need for stronger parent partnerships to improve student behavior, especially in urban high schools (Flannery et al., 2009; Warren et al., 2003).

The impact of parent involvement on such student outcomes may be explained by Bronfenbrenner’s (1977, 2005) ecological systems theory that looks at multiple complex layers of influence on a child’s development. The closest layer is the child’s relationship with family, school, neighborhood, or childcare environment. According to the theory, if the immediate structure of environment breaks down, the child will not have the tools to explore other parts of his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner’s theory thus emphasizes the importance of the child’s relationship with people from his/her immediate sphere of influence. Epstein (1987, 1995) also discusses the overlapping “spheres of influence” of family, school, and community and the enhancement of student learning and development as a result of purposeful overlap of the spheres of influence.

Parent involvement in schools has been defined in many different ways (Keith et al., 1998). Due to the varying definitions used by researchers, the construct of parent involvement is
multidimensional (Fan, 2001), making it difficult to synthesize the research studies on the impact of parent involvement. For example, Jeynes (2007) defines parent involvement as parental participation in the educational experiences and outcomes of their children. A distinction, however, exists between parent involvement at home and at school (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). At school, parent involvement includes activities such as volunteering, assisting with homework, communicating with teachers and administrators about educational matters, and attending school events, meetings, and parent-teacher conferences (Christenson et al., 1992; Steinberg et al., 1992; Singh et al., 1995; Hill & Taylor, 2004). On the other hand, parent involvement at home includes assisting in academic activities at home, parental aspirations and expectations for students’ academic achievement, parent-child communication about school, and student supervision (Keith et al., 1998; Jeynes, 2007; Singh et al., 1995).

Epstein (1995, 2001) defines parent involvement by identifying six types of parent involvement that include definitions used by other researchers: Type 1. parenting or helping all families establish home environments to support children as students; Type 2. communicating or designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication; Type 3. volunteering or recruiting and organizing families to help the school and support students; Type 4. learning at home or providing families with information and ideas to help students with homework; Type 5. decision making or including parents in school decisions and developing parent leaders; and Type 6. collaborating with the community or identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen schools, students, and families. Epstein recommends these six types of parent involvement for schools to promote and build partnerships with families.
Studies show that various dimensions of parent involvement, whether displayed at home or at school, positively impact student academic achievement (Fan, 2001; Jeynes, 2007; Keith et al., 1998; Park & Bauer, 2002; Paulson, 1994; Singh et al., 1995; Steinberg et al., 1992). For example, in 1998, Keith and colleagues analyzed data drawn from a nationally representative sample of 15,703 students and their parents who were part of the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) in 1988 and 1990. The researchers employed latent variable structural equation modeling using data from both years of the NELS study to determine longitudinal effects of parent involvement, defined as parental aspirations and communication with child about school, on tenth grade students’ learning. The results indicated that parent involvement had a powerful effect (path coefficient of .25) on students’ academic performance, as measured by their grade-point average.

Fan (2001) used a sample size of approximately 10,500 students from the same NELS data set with three waves of non-missing data on the academic achievement and parent involvement measures from 1988, 1990, and 1992. The study concluded that parent aspirations, a dimension of parent involvement, had a consistent and positive effect on students’ academic growth.

To further demonstrate the significant impact of parent involvement on student disciplinary behavior, Sheldon and Epstein (2002) took a non-school-based approach by implementing parent involvement to reduce the number of disciplinary actions and to ensure a school climate focused on learning. They found that parent involvement improved student discipline. Thirty-seven elementary schools and 10 middle or high schools participated in the study where the school respondents completed a preliminary survey and a follow-up survey after
one year. The researchers examined ways to improve student behavior and school discipline by measuring Epstein’s (1995, 2001) six types of parent involvement activities and found that parenting practices and communication practices between schools and families were determined to be the types of parent activities that most predicted improvement in student behavior.

Jeyne’s (2007) meta-analysis of 52 quantitative studies which sought to determine the influence of parent involvement on student academic achievement in urban areas, concluded that overall parent involvement is significant for secondary school students, positively affecting their grades, test scores, and other measures of academic achievement. Traditional forms of parent involvement include holding high expectations, attendance and participation in school functions, communication with children and school, and homework assistance (Jeynes, 2007). Some forms of parent involvement are more obvious and demonstrative while others are more subtle due to their psychological constructs. One of the main findings from this meta-analysis was that within the broad concept of parent involvement, the dimensions of parental expectations and parenting style generated the largest positive effect on student achievement. This suggests that parent involvement goes beyond traditional conceived forms of parent involvement; it is, therefore, imperative to study what is happening in the homes.

For the past 20 years, parent involvement research, policy, and practice have been dominated by Epstein’s (1990, 1995) model of family-school-community partnerships framed by the six types of parent involvement. However, studies have shown that more specific parenting practices in the homes impact student behavior (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Lopez, 2001; Schaffer, Clark, & Jeglic, 2009; Wood et al., 2003). Research has generally conceptualized parenting in light of both global parenting styles (e.g. authoritarian, authoritative,
and permissive) and specific parenting practices (e.g. parental encouragement, empathy, educational involvement) in order to examine the influence of specific parenting factors on child outcomes (Baumrind, 1971; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn et al., 1991; Schaffer et al., 2009; Steinberg et al., 1992). Of the many parenting factors, parenting styles have been among the most frequently investigated (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg et al., 1992).

**Impact of Parenting Styles**

Critical to an understanding of parenting style construct is Diana Baumrind’s (1971) conceptualization of parenting styles. This section of the literature review first discusses the nature of each parenting style, explaining the distinctions between the three types (authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive). Then the review focuses on the impact of parenting styles and practices on academic achievement and student behavior as well as the limitations of parenting styles predicting student behavior outcomes.

**Parenting styles.** Research has generally conceptualized parenting in light of both global parenting styles (e.g. authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive) and specific parenting practices (e.g. parental encouragement, empathy, educational involvement) in order to examine the influence of specific parenting factors on child outcomes (Baumrind, 1971; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn et al., 1991; Schaffer et al., 2009; Steinberg et al., 1992). Accordingly, the distinction between parenting style and parenting practices is necessary in order to disentangle specific components of parenting which may be linked to behavioral outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Lewis, 1981). While parenting style captures the aggregated effects of specific practices, individual parenting practices are seen as
dimensional representations of parenting (Stewart & Bond, 2002). Researchers often examine the mediating effects of concrete and specific parenting practices to explain the relationship between a parenting style and student behavior outcomes (Lamborn et al., 1991; Lopez, 2001; Schaffer et al., 2009; Steinberg et al., 1992).

Parenting style as a global dimension has been the focus of a large body of empirical literature and has been linked to a myriad of child outcomes, including external behavior problems (Aunola & Nurmi 2005; Baumrind, 1971; Darling & Steinberg 1993). Parents’ behaviors typically yield two dimensions: demandingness and responsiveness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Diana Baumrind (1971) used these dimensions to derive four parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglecting.

Authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive and characterized to have firm control, provide high emotional support, grant appropriate autonomy, and encourage bidirectional communication between parent and child. An authoritarian parenting style involves high demandingness but low responsiveness to children. Authoritarian parents are obedience and status-oriented, and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation.

Permissive parenting is just the opposite, where parents are responsive but not demanding. Permissive parents are lenient, allow their children to self-regulate, use as little punishment as possible, avoid confrontation, and make few demands for mature behavior. Neglecting parents are neither demanding nor responsive. They do not structure and monitor, and are not supportive, or may be actively rejecting or neglecting their childrearing responsibilities altogether (Baumrind, 1991).
Research based on this construct has shown that parenting styles may enhance or mitigate positive or negative behavior outcomes in children. What these studies show is that specific parenting practices are associated with certain parenting styles and mediate behavior outcomes, but not necessarily so when measuring parenting styles across cultural and ethnic groups as well as socioeconomic statuses.

**Impact of parenting styles on academic achievement and student behavior.** Many studies agree that adolescents who are raised by authoritative parents perform better in school than their peers who are raised by authoritarian or permissive parents (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Park & Bauer, 2002; Paulson, 1994; Steinberg et al., 1992). For example, Steinberg and his colleagues (1992) conducted a two-year longitudinal study of 6,400 American high school students and examined the relationship between parenting style and student achievement in the context of two specific mediating parenting practices: parental encouragement and educational involvement. Accordingly, Steinberg’s study sought to test findings from prior studies and further determine whether authoritativeness contributes to school success through such specific behaviors. It was concluded that the two mediators were significantly correlated with the authoritative parenting style, which also significantly impacts student performance in schools during the high school years.

Similarly, a study by Paulson (1994) with 247 ninth-grade students and their parents from five high schools in urban, suburban, and rural communities in the Southeast and the Midwest examined the relationship between parenting style, as perceived by both students and parents, and student achievement. Parenting style was measured by using two continuous dimensions of demandingness and responsiveness. The results of the study revealed that high levels of
demandingness and responsiveness were predictive of achievement. It also appears that parents may impose high expectations and share achievement values with their children regardless of their parenting style and still positively impact student achievement.

Apart from its impact on academic achievement, parenting styles have also been found to affect student behavior. The authoritarian parenting style and specific parent practices such as harsh and punitive discipline practices have been linked to negative behavioral outcomes such as aggression, delinquency, conduct problems, depressive symptoms, and lower levels of emotional functioning (Chamberlain & Patterson, 1995; Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996; Rubin, Stewart, & Chen, 1994; Weiss, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1992; Steinberg et al., 1994). On the other hand, authoritative parenting styles have been associated with positive developmental outcomes such as greater self-reliance, less deviance, and more positive peer relationships (Steinberg et al., 1994).

At the other end of the spectrum, permissive parenting styles have been linked to delinquency, aggression, higher frequency of substance abuse, school misconduct, and students who are less engaged (Baumrind, 1991; Haapasalo & Tremblay, 1994; Lamborn et al., 1991). Recently, Schaffer and colleagues (2009) studied the effect of emotional and cognitive empathy in the relationship between parenting styles and antisocial behavior amongst college undergraduate students. The researchers found a significant relationship between antisocial behavior and low levels of empathy and concluded that permissive parenting is correlated with antisocial behavior through its effect on hindering the development of empathic abilities.
The varying and measured student behavioral responses to parenting behaviors support the argument that both general parenting styles and specific parenting practices should be examined when studying student behaviors.

**Limitations of parenting styles predicting student behavior outcomes.** A landmark study by Holden and Edwards (1989) suggests, however, that studies utilizing parent child-rearing attitude questionnaires are ineffective, outdated, and therefore, inaccurate to predict the relationship between parental attitudes and child behavior. Studies utilizing questionnaires measuring parenting practices, beliefs, and values and presumably parenting styles fall into the same category. Holden and Edwards (1989) concluded that the available evidence provides generally weak support for the convergent validity of these questionnaires. According to this study, these questionnaires have serious methodological limitations because the responses typically do not directly reflect parental behavior in practice. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) concluded that there is not necessarily a direct link between beliefs and behavior. Beliefs are just one of a set of elements of social cognition that influence behavior. Therefore, measuring parent attitudes about their own parenting styles alone are insufficient for predicting child behavior outcomes. Given that parenting practices occur within the context of the child’s cultural group and socioeconomic status, it is also necessary to also examine parenting within and across ethnic and racial groups and socioeconomic status (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; McLoyd, 1990).

Much of the available literature on parenting styles and practices has been conducted among middle-class, Caucasian families. Thus, associations between parenting and behavior problems among minority families and low socioeconomic families are relatively poorly understood. Darling & Steinberg (1993) point out that the influence of parenting style on student
behavior outcomes across ethnic and racial groups has not been adequately studied, despite research findings suggesting that differences exist. For example, research focusing on the effects of authoritative parenting has found that it is least associated with academic achievement among African- and Asian-American children, which contrasts the strong association found among Caucasian children (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1992).

Furthermore, authoritarian parenting is associated with assertiveness among African-American girls, yet fearful and timid behavior among Caucasian children (Baumrind, 1972). By contrast, student achievement of Hispanic-American and Asian-American students were positively impacted by school-specific parenting practices (e.g. parental encouragement) more than African-American and Caucasian students (Steinberg et al, 1992).

Discrepant findings have led to the hypothesis that the use of an authoritarian parenting style may be adaptive for some minority groups, particularly for those living in more economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. For example, Roche and colleagues (2007) point out that for African-American males, punitive parenting is less strongly associated with unfavorable behavior outcomes when mothers perceive that the neighborhood poses more threats and offers fewer social resources. This suggests that parenting styles should be examined within cultural and environmental contexts.

Research shows that there is inconsistent application of Baumrind’s parenting styles among Latino parents. More specifically, some research suggests that Latino parents may actually use a combination of both authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles (Hill, Bush, & Roosa, 2003). For example, a study examining parenting practices in Mexican-descent and non-Hispanic Caucasian parents found that while Caucasian parents reported less authoritarian
parenting than Mexican parents, all parent groups reported being more authoritative (Varela et al., 2004). Based on the range of parenting patterns exhibited by Latino parents, it is argued that parenting among Latinos may range from permissive to authoritarian styles (Martinez, 1988).

The influence of parenting practices on child behavior also varies. For example, while inconsistent discipline (e.g. inconsistent follow-through on consequences) has been associated with child conduct problems in Caucasian students (Patterson, 1986), this relationship is not consistently observed within Latino families (Roosa, Tein, Groppenbacher, Michaels, & Dumka, 1993; Dumka, Roosa, & Jackson, 1997).

Differences in the effect of specific parenting practices also exist between parents of varying socioeconomic statuses (SES). Pettit and his colleagues (2007) conducted a study measuring the differences in delinquent behavior outcomes by examining the mediating effect of child monitoring and psychological control. The study confirmed that monitoring is associated with a pro-active parenting style and resulted in fewer delinquent behavior problems. On the other hand, psychological control was associated with harsh parenting. Notably, the differences between these associations were delineated according to SES. Middle-class mothers in conventional families were found to be more apt to supervise their children and track their whereabouts, whereas lower SES mothers were found to consider child monitoring less important. The study however stops short from concluding that SES plays a direct part in the type of parenting style a parent may be engaging in. (Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 1999).

As shown by this discussion, research findings with respect to both parenting styles and parenting practices, and their association to child behavior problems, are inconsistent across culture and socioeconomic status groups. While parenting skills and practices can be taught and
developed, culture, socioeconomic status, and other social norms and attitudes are important factors to consider when shaping parenting practice. Accordingly, parent training programs have been developed to aid parents in learning skills and techniques to address behavioral problems displayed by their children.

**Parent Training Programs**

As parents and families continue to be one of the most important influences on adolescent development, parent training programs have emerged as a potentially important component of more comprehensive prevention and intervention programs for families of children with disruptive behavior disorders (Dumas, 1989; Kazdin, 1987; Patterson, Chamberlain, & Reid, 1982; Webster-Stratton, 1991). A meta analysis by Farrington (2003) which reviewed 40 of the highest quality family-based crime prevention programs found that the most effective types of programs used behavioral parent training. The least effective types of crime prevention programs were those based in schools that included a combination of classroom teaching practices, parent training, and child social skills training. Other studies also demonstrate the positive impact of a family-based intervention or prevention program on reducing recidivism and delinquent behaviors by adolescents (Alexander & Parsons, 1973; Kumpfer & Alvarado, 2003). For example, a parenting program with a Japanese population living in Australia showed high acceptability of the program and effectiveness in reducing parent reported child behavior problems and parental conflict (Matsumoto, Sofronoff, and Sanders, 2007).

As Kumpfer and Alvarado (2003) point out in their review of preventive family interventions for youth, "Effective parenting is the most powerful way to reduce adolescent problem behaviors." While many programs for families and parents of adolescents are well
intended and even successful in some cases, some studies report that certain barriers (e.g., transportation, child care, and health problems) interfere with participation in the programs (Hahn, 1995; Spoth, Redmond, Hockaday, & Shin, 1996). Other barriers may include time constraints, negative experiences with institutions and professionals, language/cultural barriers, and stressful life events—factors that are most problematic for individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds (McKay, McCadam, & Gonzales, 1996; Tolan & McKay, 1996).

Although a study by Perrino and her colleagues (2001) found that families with healthier and more organized structures predicted higher participation in family-focused preventive interventions compared to highly troubled families, little is known about the impact of socio-cultural relevance on the acceptability of a prevention/intervention program. Furthermore, the majority of programs lacked evidence regarding whether or not they are effective (Kumpfer & Alvarado, 2003; Spoth, 2007).

While parent training programs directed at families of adolescents have shown significant potential for contributing to the prevention of youth problem behaviors, there remain many barriers that need to be overcome before such programs gain wider acceptance, greater political support and ultimately impact the lives of youth and their families (Small, in press).

Present Study

The parent training program used in the present study to facilitate research is a program designed to assist parents with difficult or out-of-control adolescents. Parents learn and practice specific prevention and intervention strategies for destructive behaviors such as truancy, alcohol and other drug use, gangs and other criminal behavior, running away, violence, and suicide. A two-year evaluation study conducted by Holzheimer and Davis (2009) in Ohio found that the
program was effective in helping parents make changes in their parenting practices to decrease their adolescents’ destructive behaviors. Not only did the study find that the program helped parents change their parenting practices but they were also able to sustain positive changes over time. Parents reported improvements in parenting practices and skills for communication (Holzheimer and Davis, 2009).

Another mixed methods study by Stolz and his colleagues (2010) measured change in parental support, parental behavioral control, adolescent antisocial behavior, and adolescent school achievement. The researchers conducted pre and post surveys for each measurement to both the parent and the adolescent child. The study found that the participants who completed the program reported positive results as did their focal adolescents. Youth and parents report higher levels of parental support, parental behavioral control, and a decrease in antisocial behavior. However, a major limitation in this study was that although the researchers obtained a high initial response rate (98%) for the pre-surveys, out of the 127 parents, only 88 attended the last workshop session and 70 of the 88 parents completed the post surveys. 106 youth completed the pre-surveys and only 32 of the 106 responded to the follow-up survey. Therefore, the pre-post comparisons were based on a smaller sample of parents and youth and while the results may have been positive, the parents who left the program and did not complete the post-surveys might have reported different responses. The sample also included predominantly European-American/White participants (approximately 70%), and included a small representation of minorities including Latinos and African-Americans.

Many parent training programs are available to teach parents the skills necessary to improve discipline at home and at school; however, issues with low parent attendance and parent
acceptance of the skills taught continue to plague these programs. Clearly, parents need access to programs with appropriate learning experiences that are socio-culturally relevant. It is not clear, however, what learning experiences facilitate change in how parents interact with their adolescent child over disciplinary problems, particularly parents from minority groups and low socio-economic status. This study examined the experiences of Latino parents participating in a parent training program to gain a deeper understanding of the process of change experienced by parents with respect to how they relate to their child over discipline issues.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In 2006, more than 3.3 million students were suspended out-of-school at least once and 102,000 were expelled. Part of the rise in suspensions and expulsions has been attributed to the rise in the use of “zero-tolerance policies.” Under these policies, educators impose harsh and inflexible punishments for rule-breaking. To alleviate this problem, a growing number of schools are shifting to positive approaches to discipline. However, none focus on how parents can mitigate student behavior problems at schools.

Many parent training programs and parenting classes teach parents the skills necessary to improve discipline at home and at school; however, issues with low parent attendance and parent resistance continue to plague these programs. Clearly, parents need access to programs with appropriate learning experiences. It is not clear, however, what learning experiences facilitate change in how parents interact with their adolescent child over disciplinary problems. This study will examine the experiences of parents participating in a parent training program designed to teach parenting skills and techniques to manage discipline problems.

While there are numerous parent training programs, the program used in this study was developed based on the responses and input of over 400,000 parents who were struggling with discipline issues with their adolescent child over the course of the past twenty years. This program is implemented across the nation in at least 12 different states and is used by law enforcement, court systems, diversion programs, school officials, and mental health professionals. The course’s stated goal is to assist parents and their adolescent children to address and intervene with destructive behavior that could lead to school expulsion, incarceration, and/or probation. It also aims to help parents develop skills to reduce truancy,
poor school attendance and academic performance, family conflicts, arguments, and violent outbursts, among other destructive behaviors. The course has a full curriculum guide and is taught only by certified instructors. A summary of the full curriculum is attached hereto in Appendix A.

This study examined the process of change in parent participants relating to their child over discipline issues and aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the changes that parents report in in the way they interact with their child over discipline issues as a result of this parent training program?
   a. What specific skills they say they learned, if any, triggered these changes?
   b. How, if at all, did the parents implement these skills?

2. According to the parents participating in a parent training program, what are the barriers, if any, to implementing the skills that are taught?

3. According to the observer, the class instructor, and the parents, how is the curriculum adapted by the instructor to ensure agreement of goals for the class, parent participation in the learning tasks and activities, and development of trust and bond between parents in parent support groups?
   a. According to the class instructor, how does he/she adjust the activities and/or curriculum for the needs of this population of parent learners and why?

**Research Design**

I used a qualitative research design with a focus on phenomenology or understanding the essence of experiences about a phenomenon—in this case, a process of change experienced by parents with respect to how they relate to their child over discipline issues. Since the goals of the
study were to gain a deeper understanding of the thought processes and the experiences of a select number of individuals, a qualitative approach was most appropriate to capture the parents’ individual and collective voices. Although surveys and other qualitative approaches can be used to identify the experiences from a larger group of parents, they are not centered on capturing first hand narratives from the parents. First hand narratives were particularly important for this study because the study aimed to explore and develop patterns and relationships of meaning. A survey would not be sufficient to examine these patterns and relationships beyond a surface level.

Through interviews, focus groups, and observations of the parenting classes, this study was grounded in qualitative research methods so as to explore and understand process and perceptions of parents (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research also allowed me to ask open-ended questions during interviews and focus groups and collect data through observations of the classes. Focus groups, in particular, helped me to push beneath the surface to understand the parents’ attitudes, beliefs, practices, and the meaning they make of their experiences. In sum, these qualitative methods of interviews, focus groups, and observations helped answer my research questions and fulfill the intended purpose of the study.

Methods

**Site selection.** I conducted my qualitative research study at a local park in East Los Angeles that for the past six years has offered a parent training program as part of their Building Families Program. The park is located in a low income, urban community in the heart of East Los Angeles with a high concentration of Latino immigrants, non-citizens, low-income families, households with second languages. Moreover, over 60% of residents are without a high school diploma, and over 30 street gangs have been identified as operating in the community. The area
lacks the resources to provide a proactive intervention and prevention program that addresses the needs of the students, parents, and schools.

In 2005, a series of gang shootings urged families and members of this community to come together and seek resources to decrease crime in their community. Through collaborative effort from various departments including the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreations, the District Attorney’s Office, the Sheriff’s Department, and the Los Angeles County Probation Department, a specific parent training program was adopted and offered to community members.

The sampled parent training program is designed as a ten-week, behavior modification and activity-based parent education program to provide assistance to parents dealing with the destructive behavior of adolescents. The program required parents to attend class once a week on Saturdays for three hours. Each parent participant was required to purchase a parent workbook containing reading materials and written exercises, which was included in the course fee. Parent workbooks were available in both English and Spanish.

Two trained and certified instructors delivered instruction in Spanish that corresponds with the parent workbook. The instructors provided a structure of learning and support through discussions on parenting techniques and skills, destructive adolescent behaviors, classroom learning activities, and homework assignments. The goal of the program was for parents to learn and practice specific prevention and intervention strategies for destructive behaviors such as truancy, alcohol and other drug use, gang involvement and other criminal behavior, running away, violence, and suicide. See Appendix A for further details of the program.
This site is appropriate for my study because expulsion and suspensions rates are disproportionately higher for students of color, and 100% of the parents participating in this parent training program were Latino parents who were struggling with discipline problems with their adolescent child. The program was designed to serve stressed families with at risk preteens and teens in an urban community. It is also designed for parents whose children are on probation, in trouble with the juvenile courts justice, in danger of failing school, or exhibiting destructive behavior at home or in school.

Access. I had no prior association or affiliation with the sampled parent training program, its creator, or the sampled site. To gain access to the parents participating in the program, the Recreation Services Manager who oversees the program at the local park provided me permission to conduct my research study at the site. The topic and the results of my research study interested him and closely relate to the goals of the program. With permission, I was allowed to observe the parenting classes, conduct four focus groups with parent participants, and interview the program instructors. The instructors were also invested in my research study to improve the quality of the program. During a meeting with the instructor on Thursday, September 8, 2011, the instructor provided me with the program’s curriculum. Since then, I attended the parenting classes as a participant to gain more insight about the program and to familiarize myself with the curriculum.

I also disseminated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to the Recreation Services Manager describing my study, an overview of what is asked from the parent participants, my role and involvement throughout the program, time commitments from the instructor and the parent participants, and expectations. See Appendix B for MOU.
Participants. The population for this study included thirteen Hispanic or Latino parents of adolescents between the ages of 14-18 and two program instructors who co-taught the parenting classes. The instructors agreed to be observed during class and to participate in one-on-one interviews. All the parent participants completed the parent training program and agreed to be observed during class and participate in two focus groups.

Both instructors had taught the program for at least six years in the same community. Prior to teaching the course, they both participated in the program as parents due to having disciplinary issues with their own children. They both benefited from the program and wanted to give back to the community by teaching the curriculum to other parents struggling with their adolescent children.

In order to recruit parent volunteers to participate in my study, I introduced my study to all the parents enrolled in the parent training program during the first class session. There were twenty-four parents enrolled in the first class. I administered a potential parent participant selection questionnaire to all parents to gather general information and determine who would be interested in participating in my study (see Appendix C for questionnaire in English and Appendix D for questionnaire in Spanish). Based on predetermined criteria, I selected thirteen parents of those who agreed to participate in the questionnaire. The criteria for parents were to be (a) a parent of a high school student, (b) Hispanic or Latino, (c) attend the parent training program from beginning to end, and (d) agree to be observed in class and participate in two 60-minute focus groups. I limited the population to parents of high school students because these students typically engage in more at-risk behaviors and display more serious discipline problems.
Of the thirteen recruited parents, there were six fathers and seven mothers. The sample also included three married couples, one married male parent whose wife did not participate in the study or the parent training program, one single male parent who lives with a partner, one separated male parent, and four single female parents. The primary language for all thirteen parents was Spanish. Therefore, all of my written and oral communication, including the participant consent forms, was delivered in both English and Spanish. I provided a consent form to each selected parent and reviewed each section of the consent form. They had the option to review the form throughout the week and sign and return it the following week.

Three of the parents participated in the parent education program voluntarily; eight parents, including two couples, were ordered by court to attend the program; and two parents were referred by their child’s high school. Eleven out of thirteen parents attended all ten classes of the program. One parent attended nine classes and another parent attended seven classes. The parent who only attended seven classes repeated the ten-week program five consecutive times as ordered by the court, adding up to fifty weeks of the program. One married couple and one other male parent completed the program twice. A total of four parents completed the program more than once.

According to the parent questionnaires, parents who agreed to participate in the study listed sixteen disciplinary issues they were experiencing with their adolescent child at the time. See Table 1 for list of issues along with more specific demographic information about each parent participant. Pseudonyms are used for the purpose of maintaining anonymity.
Table 1
Demographics of Thirteen Parent Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Parent Age</th>
<th>Child Age</th>
<th>Marital Status of Parent</th>
<th>Reason for Program Participation</th>
<th>Discipline Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Javier</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alejandro</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humberto</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>≥ 18</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Referred by court</td>
<td>8, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>9, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Referred by court</td>
<td>2, 3, 8, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Referred by court</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Referred by court</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinaldo⁴</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Referred by court</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Referred by court</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julio⁵</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>≤ 25</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Referred by school</td>
<td>1, 2, 6, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Referred by school</td>
<td>1, 2, 6, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerardo⁶</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Referred by court</td>
<td>2, 3, 6, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griselda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Referred by court</td>
<td>2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Discipline issue codes: 1 = truancy; 2 = poor school attendance; 3 = poor academic performance; 4 = suspension from school; 5 = expulsion from school; 6 = family conflicts; 7 = arguments; 8 = violent outbursts; 9 = emotional stress; 10 = probationary period; 11 = gang affiliation; 12 = drug and alcohol abuse; 13 = threats of suicide and running away; 14 = vandalism; 15 = incarceration; 16 = other.

⁴Reynaldo and Hilda are married, and both participated in the program and the research study.

⁵Julio and Cristina are married, and both participated in the program and the research study.

⁶Gerardo and Griselda are married, and both participated in the program and the research study.

Role management. My role as the researcher was to observe parents participating in the parent training program and the instructor teaching and delivering the curriculum throughout the ten week duration of the program. During class observations, my role was to observe how the instruction was delivered and to also listen to what the parents shared and discussed in their support groups. Due to the nature of the content shared during class, it was important to build positive rapport with the parents and remain neutral and unbiased as my translator and I listened
to the discussions shared by the parents. I did not judge nor criticize their comments or concerns. My translator and I built positive rapport and trust with parents by being present each week, making them feel comfortable by listening to their stories, and asking questions with interest to clarify or better understand what they shared.

**Data Collection**

In order to collect data that supports process and change in perceptions, I collected data from three main sources: class observations, parent focus groups, and instructor interviews.

**Data collection considerations.** Due to the vast majority of the parents enrolled in the program being Spanish-speaking only, instruction was delivered in Spanish. To address the language barrier and increase the accuracy of data collection, a Spanish language translator assisted by attending each class with me and interpreting observed communications. The translator was also present in the subsequent parent focus groups. The translator was held to full confidentiality of all the data collected from the parent questionnaires, observations, interviews, and focus groups.

**Class observations.** The process of parents learning the parent training curriculum was observed. The translator and I observed the same parent support group each week and utilized a coding process to systematically record the learning activities that occurred in class.

Each class consisted of two components: classroom instruction by a trained and certified instructor and parent support group discussions. At the start of the first class, the instructor randomly grouped the parents into smaller support groups of four to seven parents. The thirteen participants in this study were assigned to their own parent support groups for observation.
purposes. One group consisted of seven parent participants and the second consisted of six. Both
groups were picked at random and each consisted of mixed genders.

Each week, I observed and recorded instructional strategies used by the instructor, the
learning activities employed in class, and the parents’ responses. The Spanish translator and I
both recorded observations in English in our own observation notebooks. During the first three
classes, I developed a coding protocol to systematically record and categorize my observational
notes. Descriptions of the parents’ responses in class were also recorded.

The coding system identified twelve unique activities commonly used by the instructor
during the course. See Appendix E for a full description of these activities. By the fourth class,
the translator and I strictly used this coding protocol to record these instructional strategies and
activities. Both observation notebooks sequentially numbered these activities so that both
notebooks could be synchronized.

**Parent Focus Groups.** Through parent focus groups, I obtained qualitative data in the
form of parent narratives. Twelve parent participants participated in a total of two focus groups,
and one male parent participated in only one focus group. The thirteen parent participants were
divided into two single-gender focus groups. The male focus group consisted of six fathers, and
the female focus group consisted of seven mothers. Focus groups were separated by gender to
allow the participants to feel more comfortable to share in front of others who are similar to them
and therefore encourage more descriptive and honest responses (Morgan, 1998).

Focus groups were labeled one through four, and each focus group lasted a little over an
hour. Focus groups one and two, labeled as “mid-course focus groups,” were conducted after at
least three class sessions were completed. Focus groups three and four, labeled as “end-of-
course focus groups,” were conducted after at least eight class sessions were completed. The male focus groups were randomly selected to occur a week before the female focus groups.

Prior to the mid-course focus groups, I prepared questions based on the research questions in this study specifically relating to the skills that the parents learned in class and how they were implemented at home. See Appendix F for the mid-course focus group protocol. During the end-of-course focus groups, I asked questions to learn more about the changes that the parents experienced in their interactions with their child over discipline issues and the barriers they faced with implementing the skills. See Appendix G for the end-of-course focus group protocol.

The focus groups provided parents the opportunity to describe, in detail, their experiences, thought processes, and emotions attached to their learning experiences from the parenting classes. I recorded the focus groups with a digital recording device; each focus group was translated and transcribed into English. Confidentiality and anonymity was reinforced to encourage parents to share openly and honestly about their experiences.

**Instructor Interviews.** In order to answer the third research question, I conducted one-on-one interviews with each of the two instructors. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions asking the instructors to describe how they ensured agreement of goals for the parents, how and why they assigned certain learning activities and tasks, and how they developed bonds with the parents to meet the goals. I also asked questions regarding how the instructor adjusted the activities and/or curriculum for this specific population of parents. See Appendix H for the interview protocol. The interview was recorded and transcribed.
Data Analysis

I began data analysis by transcribing the recorded responses from the parent focus groups and the instructor interviews. Through an inductive data analysis, I identified patterns, categories, and themes by organizing the collected data into units of information. This inductive process illustrates working back and forth between the themes and the database until I have established a comprehensive set of themes that all tied back to my research questions (Creswell, 2009, p.175). I combined the three data sources (i.e. focus groups, instructor interviews, and observational notes) to reach my findings.

The coding process began by analyzing the data gathered from the focus groups. I read through the transcripts several times to identify data units of meaning which included quotes and examples shared by the parents during the focus groups. The data units were then coded by recurring patterns of behavior, parenting skills, changes, and barriers that parents shared which were then turned into categories. As I coded, I also analyzed the data based on what I expected to find, what was surprising or unusual, and what addressed a larger theoretical perspective in the research (Creswell, 2009). For more efficient data analysis, I also developed a qualitative code-spreadsheet, which included a list of predetermined and emerging codes, definition of the codes, and specific instances in which the code was found in the data. The spreadsheet was an invaluable tool to systematically analyze the data. The notes from the instructor interviews were also coded the same way as the classroom observations and parent focus groups with regard to the process of engagement during the classes.
Additionally, the procedure for data collection and analysis was a simultaneous and iterative process. As I reviewed the classroom observations during each class session, I not only identified recurring themes but also used the data to develop the classroom observation protocol.

Overall, the recurring themes and patterns that emerged from the analyzing the data helped me to focus my decisions in data collection, such as choosing what questions to ask and what topics to focus on during subsequent interviews, focus groups, and observations. By concurrently collecting and analyzing the data, I gained a deeper and clearer understanding of the process by which parents changed and interact with their child, with respect to the supports and the barriers and their own changes in behavior.

**Ethical Issues**

A major potential ethical issue arising from this study was related to the confidentiality of the information disclosed by parent participants. In order to gain trust and accurate narratives from parents, the identities of the parents was kept anonymous and any identifying information was removed from all transcriptions of observations and interviews. This was clearly communicated to the parents at the beginning of each focus group.

Therefore, I developed an informed consent form in both English and in Spanish that notified the participants of the protection of their rights. See Appendix I for consent form in English and Appendix J for consent form in Spanish. Elements of the informed consent form included: purpose of the research, benefits for participants, notation of risks, guarantee of confidentiality, identification of the level and type of participant involvement, etc. At any point in the study, the parents had the option to withdraw from the research project.
On a related note, due to the nature of the study, it was acknowledged that confidentiality may need to be breached if information of imminent bodily harm was disclosed to the researcher, as interviews of this type may reveal a history of child abuse or harsh disciplinary measures used at home by parents. It was established that if a disclosure was made that the parent subject may engage in an act that will imminently cause physical harm to the child, it may be necessary to disclose this information to the proper authorities. However, the likelihood of this type of disclosure was very low. Additionally, the risk of breaching confidentiality under these circumstances was disclosed to the parents in the consent form.

An important part of the project was the audio recording of focus groups and interviews. The audio recordings were solely used for the purpose of transcription and subsequent coding. Once the transcriptions were completed and verified for accuracy, the audio recordings were stored for safekeeping until the conclusion of the study. At the conclusion, the recordings were destroyed.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

In order to strengthen the credibility and the trustworthiness of my study, I triangulated the data between the three sources of data: the parents’ self-reporting of the changes of their own behaviors during focus groups, the instructor’s reports on how they actively engaged the parents in their learning process, and my own observations of the parenting classes. From these different sources, I strove to establish and support the credibility of the data. Potential limitations in my own observations were limited by ensuring that all communications were translated from Spanish to English. All audio-recordings of focus groups recorded in Spanish were also translated and transcribed into English verbatim.
To promote trustworthiness of the collected data, I attended each parenting class for ten weeks because my consistent presence and limited casual interactions with the parents assisted in building relationships and familiarity with the parents. It was important to build positive rapport with the parents in order for them to feel more comfortable to share openly and more honestly during the focus groups.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In response to exclusionary disciplinary measures, parent involvement and parent training programs have been specifically identified as compelling preventive approaches to student discipline. Few studies, however, document the changes experienced by parents participating in these programs; nor do they identify the skills that these parents report to be effective, particularly in the Latino community.

This study examined the experiences and thought processes disclosed by parents in the setting of a parent-training program. It investigated the process of change experienced by parents in relating to their child and managing discipline issues. To learn about the parents’ experiences and changes, I attended a ten-week parent-training program as an observing researcher and recruited thirteen parent participants from those attending the program for parent focus group discussions. Each focus group was separated by gender to allow the parents to feel more comfortable to share in front of others who are similar to them (Morgan, 1998). Twelve parent participants participated in a mid-course focus group, and one additional male parent participated in the end-of-course focus groups, totaling thirteen parent participants.

Through qualitative data gathered from ten class observations, two instructor interviews, and four parent focus groups, I aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What are the changes that parents report in the way they interact with their child regarding discipline issues as a result of this parent-training program?
  - What specific skills, if any, triggered these changes?
  - How, if at all, did the parents implement these skills?
• According to the parents participating in a parent-training program, what are the barriers, if any, to implementing the skills that were taught?

• According to the observer, the class instructor, and the parents, how is the curriculum adapted by the instructor to ensure agreement of goals for the class, parent participation in the learning tasks and activities, and development of trust and bond between parents in parent support groups?

  o According to the class instructor, how does he/she adjust the activities and/or curriculum for the needs of this population of parent learners and why?

The findings from this study are presented in three sections of this chapter. In the first section, I discuss two significant changes that parents reported in the way they interact with their adolescent child as a result of the program. Parents reported changes in their behavior by 1) showing non-sexual love and affection to their children and 2) communicating with their children by replacing yelling behaviors with listening.

In the second section, I discuss the barriers parents reported to implementing the skills taught through the program. Parents reported that their own beliefs and assumptions regarding their relationship with their children acted as a barrier to implementing skills. In an unexpected finding, only fathers identified that their family background and upbringing acted as a barrier to implementing the skill of demonstrating love and affection to their children. Finally, parents identified their own fear of unknown outcomes as a barrier to implementing the skills taught.

In the final section, I discuss what instructional techniques the course’s instructors report using to gain the trust of their audience and how they adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of their community. In this regard, the instructors seek to ensure understanding by verbally
summarizing course content to participants; engage parent participants in role-playing activities to create lasting understanding; and share their own real-life examples to provide participants with context and relevance.

**Changes in the Manner Parents Interact with Their Child**

Although a variety of skills were taught through the studied parent training program, parent participants in this study identified two significant changes in the manner in which they interacted with their children: 1) expressing non-sexual love and affection to their child physically, verbally, or in writing and 2) communicating not through yelling but through listening. See Table 2 below to see the total number of parents that reported the listed changes and the number of times the parents mentioned each change during the focus groups.

Table 2

*Changes Reported by Parents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>N Parents Reporting Change</th>
<th>Mid-Course Focus Groups (n = 12)</th>
<th>End-of-Course Focus Groups (n = 13)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Showing Love and Affection</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusing to Argue (Not yelling)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Negative Consequences</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Supervision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the changes in behavior reported by parent participants necessarily involved the implementation of skills taught in the parent-training program, this section will review pertinent
observations from course sessions and course materials and then describe the findings from parent focus group discussions.

**“Showing love”**. A recurrent theme that arose throughout all four focus group discussions centered on the topic of expressing and communicating non-sexual affection and love to the parents’ children. This theme was predominant irrespective of the gender of the parent.

**Relevant class objectives and observations.** With regard to learning how to show love, the stated objective in the course workbook was “recognizing successful ways to demonstrate love and affection.” The instructor shared with the parents in the class the importance of demonstrating love. She further acknowledged that it is difficult to say, “I love you” to an adolescent child. Participants then created a list of examples of conveying love and affection to their children. Some examples parents identified included saying the words “I love you” to their child and giving kisses and hugs.

Another skill taught to parents included motivating their children to change their behavior by giving “positive strokes.” “Positive strokes” are positive consequences communicated by parents to their children in response to observing desired behaviors. Examples of giving “positive strokes” to children include saying “Good job” or giving compliments to acknowledge and reinforce the child’s behavior when he or she is found engaging in desired behavior. In small groups, participants created lists of examples of desired behaviors warranting “positive strokes.” Participants then shared the examples they identified with the entire class.

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2 For the purposes of this paper, references to expressing and demonstrating non-sexual love by the parent in verbal, physical, or written forms directly to the child will be referred to as more simply “showing love and affection.”
Data obtained from the classroom, the focus groups, and the instructor interviews corroborate the finding that showing love and affection has a relationship to creating change in destructive adolescent behavior. When asked to identify the main goals of the studied parent training program, the instructor first mentioned that “[t]he goals of the program are to help parents show their love and affection.” Furthermore, the first instructional unit of the program teaches showing love and affection as a specific parenting technique.

**Changes in parents’ behaviors.** Participants reported that the activity of showing love and affection directly to their children most changed in the way they interacted with their children. Participants even identified this change to be a contributing cause of improvement in their child’s behavior and their relationships with their adolescent children. Participants’ responses further indicate that showing love and affection required deliberateness and persistence.

**Showing love and affection directly.** Parent participants most frequently discussed the topic of demonstrating love and affection to their children in focus group discussions. Ten out of thirteen parents reported directly demonstrating love and affection through non-sexual physical actions (e.g. hug, kiss, handshake, pat on back) and verbal affection (e.g. “I love you,” “I care about you”) up to a total of 28 times during the aggregate of the focus groups conducted (see Table 2). More specifically, parents identified saying the words “I love you” to their child as a change in their behavior the most—a total of 14 times during focus group discussions.

Demonstrating love through verbal and physical affection was not only the subject most frequently reported, but it was also the skill that was discussed the most in depth. Although this study did not directly observe interactions between parents and their children, the depth of
discussions by parents regarding the subject suggests that this change is significant. Parents’ responses in focus groups were not only more detailed, but exhibited a higher degree of emotion.

Parents described three manners of demonstrating non-sexual love and affection directly to their children: physically, verbally, and in written form.

Showing physical love and affection, as reported by the parents, included hugging, placing arms around the child, handshakes, hand signals in acknowledgment, “high fives,” and kissing on the cheek. All six male parents noted that showing physical affection was a change in their interactions with their adolescent children because they never engaged in this activity before. Two of them shared that although they engaged in this behavior when their child was younger, they did not continue to do so as the child became an adolescent. Two other parents, Julio and Javier, both shared that they rarely showed love or affection to their teenage child before starting the parent-training program. After attending the program, they began showing love physically by greeting their child with handshakes, a hug, or a hand signal to acknowledge their child.

Most notably, fathers more frequently reported showing physical affection than mothers. In fact, all six fathers specifically mentioned showing physical affection to be an activity they utilized which yielded positive outcomes with their adolescent children. One male parent, however, shared that it was easier to implement the skill of showing love physically because he engaged in this activity previously. In contrast, only one of the mothers reported having practiced showing physical affection with their children.

Showing verbal love and affection, as reported by the parents, included expressly and directly saying the words “I love you” and “I care about you” to their children. Other examples
included giving “positive strokes” or complimenting their children for engaging in compliant behavior (i.e., completing chores, doing a good job in school, doing homework, or otherwise complying with the parents’ requests). The parent training course taught a skill called giving “positive strokes” which consisted of verbally communicating encouragement, showing love, saying the words “I love you” or otherwise complimenting the child directly for good conduct.

All twelve parent participants reported giving positive strokes to their children when the child was observed engaging in a desired behavior. For example, when the child helped around the house, cleaned his/her room, or was found to be ready for school, parents have said, “Felicidades por hacer algo bueno” meaning “Congratulations for doing something good,” or “Good job, champion” while gesturing thumbs up, or said “I love you.” Another parent described that he gave a positive stroke when he came home from work and saw his children helping his pregnant wife cleaning the house and separating clean laundry. Upon observing this behavior, the parent gave all of his children a hug, complimented them for a good job, and further said the words “I love you.” He reported that his children were very happy and responded in kind with the words “I love you” to him and his wife. While no specific examples were provided, all seven female parents unanimously reported that they gave positive strokes to their children.

Showing love verbally also elicited the strongest reactions and emotions during focus group discussions. Gerardo, while reporting his experiences of giving “positive strokes” to his son, became emotional as he recounted the following:

You have to recognize that you [his son] are really smart. I just listen and so later on when we were home, I hugged him and I told him you’re really smart. You could do it
[succeed in school] if you want. He just kept looking at me and said, ‘I know that. I know. I know that I failed you. But I love you.’

This example further demonstrates that verbally showing love is found being performed in conjunction with physical displays of affection. Similarly, Gerardo’s wife, Griselda, became emotional and began to cry when she shared how her son, who was detained at the time, responded to her verbal showings of affection:

I came to the point where I was hating him. And not have any communication with him.

What I really liked about the program was the first part of demonstrating love to him.

Like telling him I love you, again. I had to learn again to say, I love you. To try to accept him for who he is (….) Telling him, “I love you,” and hearing him say, ‘Mommy, I really missed you. I needed you. I love you.’

Although Gerardo and Griselda were in separate focus groups, they both became emotional as they shared their observations regarding the change in their son’s behavior as a result of explicitly and directly demonstrating affection and love.

Two male parents further described the significance of saying the words “I love you” as an alternative to hitting and yelling. Gerardo reported showing love and affection to be the main source of the biggest change in their children’s behavior. He emphasized the significance of love by sharing the following analogy:

I’ve heard a saying that you can attract more flies with honey than vinegar. Before I didn’t understand that, but now I do. The biggest change you’ll get from your children is by showing love and understanding than to yell at them and hit them.
Humberto also shared that although it was difficult to say the words “I love you,” he believed it was necessary:

> It’s really hard for us to tell them, “Hey, I love you. You mean the world to me,” because we were raised by being hit. In reality, we don’t need to be hit. We need to demonstrate love.

Gerardo and Humberto both implied that hitting was their former method of interacting with their child, and showing love was a change that they both made in the manner in which they interacted with their children. Humberto stressed this point by sharing that merely saying the words “I love you” was not sufficient; the words required follow-through by showing love in another manner.

In addition to demonstrating love physically and verbally, one parent discussed the significant change for both the parent and the child when love was communicated also in writing. For example, Gerardo expressed his love in a birthday letter he wrote for his son who was detained. His son called to say that he received the letter and told him, “I love you.” Gerardo became emotional when he repeated his son’s words of love. This example demonstrated the emotional impact of saying, “I love you” for both the parent and the child even when expressed in writing.

Just as parents reported changes in their own behaviors in the way they interacted with their child, they also reported changes in their children’s behaviors. The children’s reactions, as reported by the parents, further support the finding that engaging in the act of showing love verbally or physically is significant. For example, parents reported their children to have expressed and reciprocated showing love in specific and definable ways. Five parents reported
that when they first said, “I love you” to their child, the child was surprised, confused, or quiet, but also eventually responded by saying “I love you” or gave the parent a hug. Based on this observation, it appears engaging in showing love and affection is a contributing factor to breaking coercive patterns of behavior and encouraging or reinforcing positive cycles of behavior (Patterson, 1986).

*Showing love and affection deliberately and persistently.* Another theme observed from focus group discussions was the need for deliberate and persistent applications of showing love and affection. Seven parents reported experiences of needing to deliberately and persistently express their love and affection to experience change, despite experiencing the discomfort and lack of positive responses from their children. Eight parents reported that their consistent expression of love opened up the communication lines and the child began to talk to the parent more frequently.

Christina shared that her 16-year old son lived at his grandmother’s house across the street and rarely slept at home. According to Christina, his grandmother “was everything to him.” All throughout describing her situation, Christina cried and shared how difficult it was for her to tell her son “I love you” as he was walking out the door one day:

One time, he came in the house just to get some flier. And I tell him, he doesn’t even say hi. Not even, ‘Mom I’m okay,’ or anything. I just see him running to the door. I say, ‘Stop! Wait. I want to tell you something.’ It was so hard for me to tell him to … and I tell him, ‘You know what? Jose [Cristina’s husband] and I love you.’ He act so silly: ‘Oh mom you too.’ And then he just left. He just leaves.
While it may have been inconvenient and awkward, Christina acted deliberately by stopping her son to specifically tell him “I love you.”

Another parent, Diana, was initially skeptical regarding the effect of saying, “I love you,” to her son. She reported that instead of improving, her son’s behavior worsened. She believed that saying, “I love you” to her son encouraged him to engage in undesired behaviors such as drinking. She further described how her son reacted negatively to her acts of love:

But now that I tell him, “I love you,” and sending him a text, and during the first weeks when I started doing that, he started leaving more. It was even more. To me, it was worse.

Nevertheless, Diana reported making a deliberate choice and shared that she had been consistently calling her son every day in the morning from work to wake him up and to say, “I love you. May God bless you.” She reported that her son’s responses were limited to responding in kind.

Later during the end-of-course focus group, Diana shared that saying “I love you” was the most important change in her behavior that she experienced. She reported consistently expressing love to her son and that by the end of the program communications with her son increased. This was Diana’s first time ever to tell her son, “I love you,” on a regular basis. She shared:

He opened up to me. And now the changes I made are that it works to tell them, “I love you,” because I never told him that. And now he has opened up more with me, and he’s a little more calm, and he gets home when he’s supposed to be there … I think that what made him change is that I tell him all the time that I love him.
Diana’s deliberate and persistent expressions of love positively affected her relationship with her son.

The deliberateness in parents’ behaviors required parents to overcome negative reactions and even parents’ fear of their own children. Gerardo said he tried to show love by giving his 17-year old son a hug or a kiss and by telling his son that he loved him even though his son reacted with silence. Gerardo nevertheless continued to implement the skills taught in class without expecting a response in return. In another example, Alejandro overcame his fear of his son’s behavior and persisted in showing his love. On one day after school, Alejandro placed his arm around his son’s shoulder and his son allowed him to touch him for a few moments before removing his father’s arm.

Expressing love was also used deliberately as a tool to confront children’s destructive behavior. Three parents reported deliberately saying the words “I love you” as a means to segue into addressing their child’s problem behaviors. For example, Christina said, “I love you,” before sharing how she felt frustrated and worried about her daughter’s destructive behavior. Christina described being upset and worried because her daughter did not come home after dark. When she finally found her daughter in a park and brought her home, she waited until she was calm before talking to her daughter. She asked her other children to leave the room so she could speak privately to her daughter and described her conversation:

I explained to her how much I love her, how much I didn’t like this, and I understand why she did it, and thank God nothing happened to you. Don’t do it again. For the moment, you are not allowed to bring friends home.
Two other parents, Griselda and Miriam, also began to say to their child, “I love you. I do this because I care about you,” whereas in the past, they did not explicitly express their love. As a result, they reported that their children became less resistant and more willing to listen and engage with their parents. Griselda reiterated that her son confided in her and communicated with her more as a result of her saying, “I love you.” Showing affection and love could be used deliberately as a tool to open and maintain communication with the parents’ adolescent child.

**Communicating not by yelling but by listening.** The second recurrent theme that arose throughout all four focus group discussions was a change in communication styles, particularly in refraining from yelling and instead, listening. Reported changes in communication between parent and child were consistently expressed across genders. The following sections discuss the class objectives and observations that are relevant to the theme of communication. They then discuss the changes in behaviors that parents report by communicating by listening in place of yelling.

**Relevant class objectives and observations.** Importantly, the program’s course workbook devoted a chapter to the objective of “recogniz[ing] successful ways to end family arguments, also known as, learn[ing] how to never argue with your child again.”

As a whole class, the parents initially reviewed exercises in the workbook, discussed their expectations for dealing with parent-child confrontations, and then in turn discussed possible expectations their children might hold regarding the same. Some of the responses included going into the room, slamming and locking the bedroom door, leaving the house, engaging in physical violence, cursing and yelling back. Participants discussed possible parent and child feelings and emotions tied to confrontations. The course reading emphasized that the key to
effective problem solving was preparation. Parents who took the time to properly prepare themselves were more likely to be able to successfully address their children’s problematic behaviors. From the coursebook, the instructor reviewed five tips to assist parents in preparing to address their children’s problematic behaviors:

1) timing (Am I calm enough to talk to my child?)
2) develop a plan or an outline (Have I organized my thoughts?)
3) pick a private and neutral location (Where will I talk to my child?)
4) minimize interruptions (Will we be disturbed?)
5) preparing yourself for the worst to be in a better position to help than be shocked and angry (Hope for the best, but be prepared for anything.)

In small groups of four or five, parents engaged in a roleplaying activity. The activity required parents to prepare for and engage in a conversation with another participant using a hypothetical situation in which their 16 year-old daughter returned home drunk from a party.

After this activity, the class reviewed course materials regarding steps to guide parents in structuring conversations with their child when they discover their child engaging in undesired behavior:

I love: Begin by telling your child how much he is loved.

I see: Describe the specific unwanted behavior (drinking, drug use, gangs, etc.).

I feel: Tell your child exactly how you feel about the behavior (fear, anger, etc.).

Listen: After describing how you feel, just listen to your child’s response.

I want: Describe the behavior you want. State or restate the house rule regarding the behavior.
I will: Tell your child what you will do to support his success (catch the child doing something right, add discipline, structure, added supervision, spot checks, etc.)

The instructor reviewed these steps with the parents and emphasized that when a child becomes emotional, the parent must always remain calm and should “stick to the six steps and don’t say anymore.” The instructor demonstrated how to respond in a confrontation by role-playing with a parent volunteer in front of the entire class. The parent volunteer played the role of the parent and practiced the six steps while the instructor played the role of the child. Throughout the role-playing activity, the instructor stopped, corrected the parent, and guided the parent to use the six steps correctly. The instructor again stressed the importance of remaining calm and modeled this for the parents.

After this role-playing exercise, the instructor assigned each group of parents a different hypothetical situation, and asked them to practice the six steps with one another. She then called two parents (one as the child, and the other as the parent) from each group to demonstrate the skill of effectively beginning a conversation with their child. When a parent did not follow the steps correctly, the instructor stopped the parent and modeled the recommended practice. The class observed the skill being practiced at least six times as parents from each group took turns.

After the role-playing activity, the instructor summarized the lesson and stressed the importance of the middle step—to listen. She encouraged parents to refrain from yelling and making negative comments, but instead to remain calm and listen to their child’s feelings.

In both of the aforementioned class sessions, other learning activities included group reading from the workbook, reading aloud by participants, answering open-ended written workbook exercises in response to these readings, listening to the instructor summarizing
specific sections from the workbook, listening to examples shared by the instructor, listening to and sharing personal experiences with the entire class, and practicing the skills by role-playing with another parent partner in small groups or in front of the class.

With regard to learning how to listen, the stated objective in the course workbook was to “list the five components of active listening,” and “participate in a structured support group.” The instructor outlined five steps discussed in the workbook: stop what you are doing, look at your child, listen to your child, rephrase and repeat what your child says, and be empathetic. The class then repeated the five steps aloud in unison.

Participants were then instructed to gather around for a demonstration. The instructor sat directly in front of a parent and asked the following questions, sequentially: What makes you mad? What makes you sad? What makes you scared? What makes you happy? Between each of these questions, the instructor interjected, “What else?” The instructor modeled the skill of listening. Parents were visibly engaged in the demonstration.

The instructor reiterated the importance of staying calm and listening as a parent. She then explained the skills she modeled: speaking slowly, listening, asking the question again, and not reacting to the response. Parents were instructed to write down the same four questions: 1) What makes you mad? 2) What makes you sad? 3) What makes you scared? 4) What makes you happy? Parents were encouraged to ask, “What else?” three times between each of the preceding questions. Parents then paired with one another and practiced the skill. A written reflection exercise was completed afterwards.

Throughout this lesson, the learning activities included group reading from the workbook, listening to and sharing personal experiences with the entire class, observing the
instructor model good listening skills, and then practicing the skills by role-playing with another parent partner.

**Changes in parents’ behaviors.** Throughout the four focus groups, all thirteen parent participants reported changes in their communication styles as a result of the parent training program. Like the change in showing love and affection, the changes in communication styles were also consistently expressed across genders. In the following sections, I discuss the changes in behaviors that parents report with regard to communication between parent and child, particularly by refraining from yelling and by listening instead.

**Refraining from yelling.** Eleven out of thirteen parents reported that they practiced the skill of not yelling and arguing with their child. Refraining from yelling was a specific skill taught during class prior to the mid-course focus groups. Across both genders, parents cited the skill of refraining from yelling 23 times during the focus groups—the second highest cited skill. Participants reported that the skill of not yelling was one of the major changes they experienced in their interactions with their child.

The parents referred to times when they chose to remain calm and not argue during a moment when they would have otherwise yelled. For example, two parents controlled themselves from yelling by waiting a few hours to calm down before talking to their child. Alejandro, a parent who was scared of his son, shared that he held his anger in because he wanted to better himself, and his son responded well to him by not yelling and arguing.

Three parents reported that they specifically remembered the class when they were about to yell at their child, and as a result, calmed down and chose not to yell. Two parents, Gerardo and Julio, expressed that when they were upset and were tempted to argue with their child, they
stopped themselves from yelling because they specifically remembered the instructor’s admonition not to yell and remain calm. Gerardo and Javier also expressed that they explicitly told their child, “I am not going to argue with you,” and then explained the consequences to the child if he did not follow the rules. Another parent, Miriam, shared that when her daughter returned home late at night, her first instinct was to yell. Remembering the course, she gave herself a few hours to calm down. When she finally calmed down, she asked her daughter what happened. Her daughter’s response brought more rage in the mother, but Miriam suppressed her anger and calmly addressed her daughter’s inappropriate behavior:

   I was calm and she said, “Okay mom.” She didn’t fight with me and I didn’t fight with her. And it ended well. It really worked that I maintained myself calm. I didn’t yell, and I’m the type that yells immediately, and all my kids were like, “What’s going on with the mom?”

Not only did Miriam change her own behavior, but her daughter’s behavior also began to change. Another parent, Brenda, also had a similar experience. She shared that she noticed a change in herself and in her son since she stopped yelling. Her son became calmer and did not leave the house anymore without permission.

   *Deliberately listening.* The emergence of the skill of listening in discussions was the main difference between the parents’ mid-course and end-of-course focus group responses. During the mid-course focus groups, the parents did not mention the importance of listening, most likely because the topic of active listening was not yet reviewed in class. However, during the second half of the program, the program focused more on learning how to listen to improve communication between parent and child. By the time the end-of-course focus groups were
conducted, eleven out of thirteen parents reflected on the benefits experienced from not only refraining from yelling, but also from listening to their child.

The eleven parents reported the importance of listening to their child as it fostered improved communication between the parent and the child. Parents also reflected on the clear link between not yelling and listening; they were able to listen more to their child as a result of remaining calm and not yelling. Furthermore, the parents reported that the changes in their own behaviors also elicited various positive responses from their children. According to parents, the children yelled less and became more willing to communicate and listen to their parents after observing their parents’ change in behavior. One parent, Brenda, shared:

In my case, I learned not to yell. Now he listens to me. I listen to him. And we’re back to the time when he would ask me permission to go to the movies, to go to the store, to go with friends, and come back at the time I ask him. I believe the classes have been helpful because it’s working for me.

Another parent, Erica, also shared:

…before I came to this class, when I would start talking to my children, we would end up arguing. And now, it’s not like that. I calm myself, and I’m able to speak to my son. And for me, that was a wonderful change because it does work. It works to talk to them and not to yell at them (…) I would never listen to them. And now I do. It works to know how to listen and not to throw back in their faces the things that they tell you.

In Gerardo’s case, respect was once lost, but listening helped to rebuild their relationship:

The changes that I’ve noticed is that this works because I noticed that I used to yell a lot. We would fight and it came to a point we would be offensive to each other. There was no
respect, and course by course during the class, I learned I have to listen more instead of yelling. And it helped me a lot because I had no communication with my son, and now, I’ve had the opportunity to use the skills that have been taught.

For one parent, Reynaldo, the program helped him to be more understanding of his son although he believed that he already maintained good communications with his child. Reynaldo reported that the program helped him to not yell, but instead listen and engage in a dialogue with his children. As a result, Reynaldo reported that his son is now more open and that the two speak more often.

For another parent, Humberto, listening not only encouraged better communication but even created space for negotiations:

Up to date, she's behaving…well…not that great like how a parent would want, but how she was at the beginning, she's way better. I listen to her. She listens to me. I tell her what I don't like. She tells me what she doesn't like too. Now we negotiate what is a yes and what is a no.

Humberto further shared the unintended consequences of not listening in order to stress the point that listening is, in fact, important:

The problem sometimes is that we don’t listen to our children. Sometimes our children are trying to tell us what’s going on like, “Hey I don’t like this and that about my school,” or “They’re trying to do something to me.” And we say, “Nothing’s going to happen to you.” And when something happens, then we realize they were trying to tell me what was going on, and I didn’t listen. But he didn’t know how to tell me.
In sum, both male and female parents experienced significant changes in their interactions with their child by refraining from yelling and instead listening to their child.

While the parents generally discussed listening to be a significant change, two of the parents specifically shared that they believed listening worked better with their older adolescent children than their younger ones. One parent, Griselda, held the belief that her children were too young and therefore ignorant; she was in denial that her son would notice any problems at home until she provided an opportunity to share what was on his mind and listened to him. Griselda shared:

…my husband and I, he cheated on me. I thought, well they’re [the children] 12, 13, or 16. They’re not going to find out. They’re not going to know. These are adult problems. No. They see things. They ask themselves, why mommy doesn’t do anything if he’s cheating on her? Why can’t she overreact [express her emotions]? Those little things that us as a parent didn’t really say much because we don’t want to put more stress in their heads but they want to hear what we think, what we’re going to do, why we do certain things. So that’s the things I learned about my teenagers compared to little ones [her younger children]. I thought he didn’t know these things [adult problems], and he told me [that he knew], so like I said, I was in shock. But after that, I communicate why I didn’t do what he was expecting and the reasons why. [I] [o]pen[ed] a door for him to understand, “Oh I see why my mom didn’t do this.” Like put in this example, my husband cheated on me. Mommy didn’t say nothing … but he was mad at his dad and he start, you know, acting up.
Griselda asked her son what was frustrating him and then listened to him. She told him that it was okay for him to cry, and as he shared why he was angry and frustrated, Griselda reported that he cried like never before. By creating a space for communication, she learned a lot about her son and his source of frustration and quickly realized that he was not a little kid anymore. It was important for her to talk to him about what was going on at home, especially regarding her situation with her husband. Listening to her son also allowed her to open up to him and share her reasons for not leaving his dad, and she reported having a big breakthrough with her son a few days before the second focus group. In her own words, Griselda shared, “It impacted me to have better communication with them to let them speak and hear them out.”

Furthermore, during the last focus group session, four of the seven female parents described more about how they implemented a specific active listening skill that was taught and practiced in class to foster better communication. The male parents did not have the opportunity to share how they implemented the active listening skill because by skill was taught on the day of their last focus group; hence, they did not have the opportunity to practice the skill prior to the focus group. Nevertheless, the male parents still discussed extensively about the importance of listening to foster better communication with the child.

Four female parents specifically shared the positive impact of the active listening skill that they learned and practiced in class. These parents discussed asking their child the following series of questions: What makes you mad? What makes you sad? What makes you feel scared? What makes you feel happy? The parents’ job was simply to listen to their child, encourage them to share by following up with, “What else?” and not respond. Just listen. Four parents shared their experiences from implementing this skill:
**Miriam:** A lot of the things they said maybe I didn’t want to hear it. Because I’m already making a lot of changes that I’m doing here, but I just listen to them they opened up a little more. And just listening to them. It’s opened up a new door for us in the communication (….) A little more honest on both ends (….) Listening and remaining calm. That’s my main point that I’m trying to do.

**Christina:** I did try it for my middle child. I get surprised every time I talk to her. I talk to her face to face but she gets embarrassed (…) She told me all her feelings and I found out things that I didn’t know about her (…) So now I know where the frustration is coming from. Using, what do you feel? How do you feel? Tell me what’s wrong? And don’t worry, everything is going to be okay.

**Diana:** Yesterday, when I was talking to him, that’s how I started the conversation. That’s why he told me a lot of things that scared me but I didn’t say anything. All the bad things he was telling me. He was hanging out with guys that were way bigger than him. I’m not saying that he didn’t think about the things, but he would get drugs and he would do things that he told me that scared me and I didn’t say anything. I told him, “Keep telling me. I want to know. I want to know how to help you, but you need to let me know what you used to do.”

**Griselda:** But what I really enjoy that I tried was [asking my son] what is it that makes you mad? That part was what worked more…because he was able to take out all that he had, all the frustration. I saw him cry like I’ve never seen him before…And I didn’t cry even though I’m like a very emotional person. But I did not cry. I just listened. And when he was done with his stuff, and he said “that’s all.” I said, “think of something
more.” And he really react. I mean he really come out with things I was like in shock.

Listening with what he was telling me. So like I said, that [listening] I think it was more like an open key to understand him.

The foregoing data show that listening needs to be deliberate to open up lines of communication between the parent and the child. Parents also need to overcome and control their own emotions and reactions to their children’s conduct and make a deliberate choice to listen and not react.

**Barriers to Implementing Learned Parenting Skills**

Parents in this study identified three major barriers in relation to implementing the skills taught in the program: 1) parent’s own assumptions regarding their relationship with their children, 2) pre-existing parenting practices based on family background and upbringing, and 3) parents’ fear of unknown outcomes.

**Parents’ own beliefs and assumptions.** A common theme that emerged from discussions with parents involved the expectations parents held regarding their relationship with their children. More specifically, parents identified various assumptions and justifications that warranted the manner in which they previously interacted with and disciplined their children. These assumptions ranged from the parents’ culture, upbringing, personal experiences, to parents’ preconceptions regarding parent-child roles.

Five of the thirteen parents in this study reported that they assumed that their children already understood that their parents loved them. Accordingly, these parents did not believe expressing love and affection, either physically or verbally, was necessary. These parents also commented that they did not know that showing love was important. One parent shared that although he knew that he loved his children, he did not demonstrate it.
Not verbalizing or physically showing affection appeared to be the norm. For example, Humberto shared that he never directly expressed his love to his children. He said:

I knew I had love for them, but I would never tell them, “Hey son or daughter, you know that I love you very much and you’re the best thing that happened in my life.” I would never do that. My wife would say, “Why don’t you tell them that?” Why do you want me to tell them that if I know that I love them?” And she would tell me, “and how are they going to know that you truly love them if you never tell them?”

Humberto did not believe it was necessary to communicate to his daughter that he loved her as long as he, himself, knew that he loved her. Another parent, Alejandro, echoed Humberto’s sentiments when Alejandro shared that as long as he knew inside that he loved his child, it was enough for him to carry his love within him without expressing it to his children.

Parents also mentioned that their own pride was a source of the difficulty in implementing the skills learned in the program. Four of the seven female parents identified their pride as a barrier to implementing the skills taught in the class. Parents characterized their pride as the need to “always be right.”

Two parents mentioned the idea of “always being right” when asked what barriers they faced in implementing the skills taught through the course. For example, Griselda described that “thinking that I was always right,” was a challenge. She overcame the barrier and admitted, “I wasn’t.” In further discussions, Diana concurred with Griselda and described that “always think[ing] that we are right” even contributed to the child’s behavioral problems. For Griselda, this barrier was compounded by the “fear of losing control of the situation.”
Upon further analyzing the comments by the parents, there appeared to be an underlying assumption regarding these parents’ conceptions of parent and child roles. The concept of “always being right” was reported in conjunction with describing parent-child roles. Parents exhibited rigidity and inflexibility regarding the privileges and responsibilities they thought were associated with the parent’s role. Gerardo, a father, described his own beliefs regarding parent roles: “I didn’t want to listen to them. It’s my house. My rules. I’m the man of the house.”

In another example, Erica defined her conceptualization of the roles of parent and child as follows: “Well he needs to come talk to me because he’s my child and I’m the mother. And he has to look for me.” Erica associated being a mother with being an authority figure. Her statement further implies that being the parent confers the privilege of shifting the responsibility and burden of raising and resolving disciplinary issues to the child. No other justification is provided as to why the child should approach the mother other than the fact that the mother is the authority figure and the child is the subordinate.

Parents’ discussions of their assumptions regarding parent roles also revealed that the authority conferred by the parent role could be misused. In some cases, parents used their position of authority as a license to engage in more argumentative behavior. For example, Hilda stated: “Then I used to think that, since I was the mom, I had the right to interrupt, and not allow them to finish their sentences. They [the children] said, ‘Why are you telling something if you won’t even let me finish my sentence?’” Similarly, as discussed above, Erica believed that simply because she is the parent and authority figure, the responsibility to raise any issues or needs rested solely with the child. Accordingly, under this rationalization of parent-child roles, the child would be responsible for raising and resolving disciplinary issues. Presumably,
regularly shifting the responsibility of resolving the child’s disciplinary issues to the child could further strain parent-child relationships, particularly if the child does not take the initiative to resolve parent-child conflicts. This observation is consistent with findings from a seminal study by Patterson (1986) that indicate that the failure to identify positive and negative consequences may reinforce coercive patterns of behavior.

Along the same lines, parents cited the difficulty in overcoming the discomfort of taking the initiative to break the silence in verbalizing or physically showing affection to their children. In fact, the discomfort was so great that one parent, Alejandro, disclosed that he was afraid of what might happen if he showed love to his son, discussed later in this chapter.

More broadly however, parents reported that they realized that in order to create change, they needed to change their own behavior. In other words, the barrier here was the parents’ inability to identify that they may have been the source of the problem in the relationship. In Reynaldo’s case, he admitted that he was his own barrier:

I think the challenge is me. For me the challenge is me because I have to do a lot of change in my life, with my kids, my actions, my love, my everything with the kids. The thing I think is the challenge is me because when you make change, the kids make change too.

Reynaldo reported experiencing this self-realization for the first time in his life, and as a result, he also began to observe his children’s behavior improve. Parents further characterized themselves as barriers by pointing out their own denial of flawed parenting practices. One parent, Javier, admitted that he was not a loving parent but thought he was educating his children.
“perfectly”. He stated that not until he completed the parent-training program did he realize that showing love and affection was a critical part of raising his children.

This self-realization was not specific to one gender. All seven female parents unanimously agreed that “learning about yourself” and “learning how to change” is one of the most difficult skills to accomplish. Griselda supported this point by sharing: “And we say that we can’t change, but yet we ask our children to change. It’s hard. We must change first before our children can change.”

**Family background and upbringing.** In an unexpected finding, all male parents cited that their family background and their upbringing were a barrier to implementing the skill of demonstrating and expressing love and affection to their children. Although parents were placed in gender specific focus groups to ensure greater transparency and forthright responses, only the males mentioned family background and upbringing as a barrier.

When fathers were asked why the skill of showing love and affection was difficult, they justified the difficulty by pointing to their family background. When discussing the difficulty in showing love and affection, five of the seven fathers agreed that saying the words “I love you” to their child was difficult because they were never taught how to do this by their own parents. They identified their personal experiences in their own upbringing by pointing to the fact that they were raised by being hit. Fathers further described the difficulty of expressing or demonstrating love and affection because they knew no other way to raise their children. As Reynaldo described, “That’s how we were educated, so we want to educate the same way without knowing that we can’t.” Humberto reported that his parents taught him “to yell, to mistreat, and to hit,” and “never to say, ‘Son, I love you very much. I hit you because you did
this.” Such descriptions describe negative reinforcement of coercive patterns of behavior (Patterson 1986). The fathers’ descriptions here also conform to the characteristics of an authoritarian parenting style (Baumrind, 1971).

More interestingly, the fathers further attributed the lack of demonstrating and expressing love and affection to their culture. All six male parents agreed that breaking “habits,” “traditions,” and “principles” were barriers to showing love and affection to their children. The words “culture,” “habits,” “traditions,” and “principles” were all used to describe sources of the inability or absence of demonstrating love and affection in the context of disciplining children. In citing culture as a justification for not showing love or not knowing how to show love, Humberto said:

…we’re accustomed from our countries that with one good hit, it will either calm you down or make you more rebellious. But they never implement the things that they teach here [referring to the parent training program]. That’s why it’s so hard to say, “I love you” because you never heard it as a child.

Although fathers cited culture as a reason accounting for why it was challenging to demonstrate love and affection, they did not describe what specific aspects of their culture acted as the barrier. Accordingly, because culture was identified as a barrier in the context of habits, traditions and principles, any significance in this finding may be limited to that context.

Fear of unknown outcomes. Parents’ fear of the unknown was also commonly identified as a challenge to implementing the skills taught through the program. Fears ranged across various subject matters, but centered on the unpredictability of their children’s reactions to implementing the skills taught in the course. To some extent, parents attributed this fear to not
knowing whether trying a different approach to parenting might create a change in their relationship with their child.

One parent feared that her own anger towards her child might cause her to be disingenuous when saying, “I love you,” to her son. Another parent described the fear of being additionally burdened by her daughter’s problems. She explained:

I was afraid of having my own problems, and I have to carry their problems too. That was a challenge. But now that I faced it, ah, it was easier. That big hole that I had, it’s gone already. That’s my big challenge. See I was focused on myself. I want this I want that. My life. And I want my kids too, but I don’t want their problems with me. They’re going to have to have their own problems. I see it that way. But no. This is my problem too. This is my family, and I have to carry that problem. And I’m happy to face it because I know their problems now, what they really want, but their focus in the future. I thought it was big, but no. That was my challenge.

Two parents also cited the difficulty and discomfort of verbalizing or physically showing affection to their children because of the fear of being mocked by their children. The two female parents recalled being mocked by their children when their children said, “Here you go with your therapy again,” and thought that it was a joke. Although they were discouraged by their children’s initial reactions, the parents persisted and consistently showed love and affection. After repeated and consistent exercises of the skill, parents reported that their children told them that their children noticed the change in their mothers and in turn became more receptive and open with their mothers.
The fear of unknown outcomes was not limited to mothers. One father, Alejandro, expressed his fear that he did not know how his son would react if he demonstrated his love to his son. In an extreme example, one father, Javier, even feared implementing rules and enforcing rules with consequences because he was afraid that his children would physically retaliate against him.

These examples demonstrate that parents’ fears are not trivial. The unknown is certainly not insignificant for these parents and taking steps to deliberately implement the skills learned require courage in face of the unknown.

**Adaptations to the Course to Ensure Understanding and Engagement**

The course instructors and parents shared goals to facilitate better understanding in the parent-child relationship. While parents desired to improve their personal relationships, course instructors maintained a broader outlook of impacting their community. Through this common desire, instructors sought to use their own experiences and humor to gain parent participants’ trust. Having come from the same community as the parent participants, instructors adapt instructional methods to promote engagement into the course materials by including adaptations that provide context and relevance.

A key factor in the development of an effective relationship between a learner (the parents) and an advisor (the instructors) is the development of a strong working alliance (Bordin, 1979). Using Bordin’s alliance framework, I discuss how bonds are formed between the instructors and the parents, the goal agreement between parents and instructors, and the tasks or learning activities that the parents engaged in to achieve the goals. Bordin theorized that reaching
alliance in these three interdependent components is the key to change in the learners or the parents in this study.

**Development of a bond.** The instructors for the subject parent-training program maintain an inherent and personal bond to participants by virtue of the fact that they themselves are members of the same community and by having experienced themselves the difficulties the parent participants face. However, apart from that, specific techniques were deliberately utilized to further establish trust with their audience.

A bond is defined as a sense of liking and trust between the parents and the instructors and forms from trust and confidence. There were two instructors who alternatively taught the program. One instructor, Olivia, taught five out of the ten classes, and the second instructor, Vilma, taught two of the ten classes. Both instructors co-taught three of the ten classes. According to instructors, they developed trust and a bond with the parents by not judging the parents and showing empathy. In theirs interviews, both Olivia and Vilma shared that they gain the parents’ trust when they share their own stories of dealing with a difficult adolescent child and reveal that they were also once in the same situation as the parents. Vilma expressed that empathy helps parents lower their guards.

During my observations, I also observed the instructors sharing their own stories and showing empathy to the parents. They acknowledged what parents might feel by repeating comments such as, “It’s harder to say ‘I love you’ to children with hard characters,” and also by recognizing certain cultural barriers: “As Latino families, we have more of our emotional attachments than other races. We can’t let go at the age of 18 like other races do.”
In her interview, Vilma also expressed that she asks parents not to judge one another because no one person is better than the other. She shared that rules are mentioned in the beginning of class that judgment is not allowed in class. My observations also corroborated what the instructors shared in their interviews. Both Vilma and Olivia reminded parents during the first two classes to refrain from judging or making negative comments about each other. They asked the parents to respect each other. The instructors also used humor to warm up the parents as well as to keep them engaged and attentive.

**Goal agreement.** During the instructor interviews, I asked both instructors about the goals of program, and more specifically, their own goals for the parents who participate in the program. Vilma shared that the goal of the program “is to help parents to understand their children, to value them, and to put themselves in the adolescent’s place, to help them understand what they have to navigate outside in the world.” She stated that her own goal was to help change family’s lives for the better. Olivia’s descriptions of the goals of the program were more specific:

The goals of the program are to help parents show their love and affection, to have better communication with their children, and to help them [the children] with their destructive conduct that they have and that they can make changes, to have better communication with them, to know how to express their feelings. Another goal of the program is to have an action plan, to have consequences and goals. To make changes at home with rules that are frequent. To have established in writing what it is they have to do. Olivia’s own personal goal was to help parents believe that with small changes, they can create a better family and help their children to have a more positive impact on the community.
The goals that the parents shared were aligned with the instructors’ goals. Like the instructors, all the parents who participated in the focus groups expressed a desire to learn how to better respond to their children’s discipline problems by discussing how they implemented the skills taught through the program. In fact, although eight out of thirteen parents were ordered by the court to attend the class, all the parents expressed a sincere desire to learn how to better discipline their child. One parent specifically stated that she wanted to learn how to better communicate with her children.

**Task agreement.** The instructor engaged parents in various learning activities and tasks to facilitate movement toward achieving the goals of the program. For example, Vilma shared relevant real-life examples and stories to provide context to parents and assist them in making stronger connections to the content materials. To ensure that parents were engaged in understanding the course material and held accountable, she asked questions throughout the class, walked around the room, and checked homework assignments each week. Vilma also called on parents to read each page of the workbook, but believed it was important to also summarize each page of the curriculum workbook to review important points. When asked why she summarized content from the course materials, she noted that sometimes parents did not have the attention span or patience to pay attention to or understand the material if not delivered to them in an understandable manner. Olivia also shared a few other activities such as repeating important points and role-playing to allow parents opportunities to practice applying a skill during class to create lasting understanding.

When I asked the parents to identify which activities helped them to learn best, five parents reported that the examples shared in class were helpful. Three parents also mentioned
role-playing and practicing the skills to be very effective in helping them learn how to use the skills. All thirteen parents agreed that reading through the workbook was important and helpful. The summaries and repetition of important concepts helped them to remember and learn the materials better. However, there were two class sessions where the instructor skipped through pages that included outdated information, and during the focus groups more than half of the participating parents described feelings of being rushed and lost when the instructor skipped pages.

Contrary to the parents, the instructors did not believe that reading everything from the workbook was necessary. They believed that in order to avoid losing the focus and attention of the parents, it was sometimes necessary to summarize sections and not read entirely from the workbook. In fact, when I asked one of the instructors, Olivia, which activities she thought did not work well and why, she firmly stated:

Reading. Reading does not work for them. Maybe one or two but the highest percentage does not read. Because when they read what they need to do…not even the one reading knows what he is supposed to do. Reading for me in this program does not work.

Olivia raised the possibility of illiteracy among participants, and hence, she concluded that reading may not be an effective teaching tool for those parent participants. Asking parent participants to identify whether they are literate or not may embarrass those parents and detract from building trust. Accordingly, reading less from the workbooks was an adaptation created to address the needs of the illiterate population of parents. In this case, because all thirteen parents who participated in the study were literate, this may explain in part why they all reported that more reading could have been more helpful.
Other adaptations were made to the curriculum to better facilitate learning. For example, role-playing with partners, which the parents and the instructors both reported to be effective activities, was not originally a part of the curriculum. The instructors included this activity to provide opportunities for parents to practice and apply the skills taught in class. In particular, instructors emphasized the need to practice the skill of active listening whereby parents were paired and took turns asking a series of questions and actively listening. The effects of this adaptation were shown to be particularly effective as four parents specifically attributed change in their own behaviors as well as their children’s behaviors to this activity.

In summary, based on parents’ reports of the success they achieved at home, instructors appeared to be successful in aligning their course objectives by adapting the curriculum by actively engaging parents in role-playing activities and by sharing real-life examples to provide context to parents.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study explored the changes experienced by Latino parents participating in a parent training program to learn how to relate to their adolescent children regarding discipline issues. The research questions set forth in this study were open-ended, exploratory, and sought to obtain the experiences of parent participants and instructors involved in a parent-training program. The findings are significant in and of themselves insofar as they contribute to the growing body of literature on the experiences of Latino parents, the impact of parent training programs and its impact on adolescent discipline.

The dominant findings of the study are the significance of showing love and listening. Even though showing love was the first lesson covered in the program, the parents consistently discussed the significant impact of showing love during both the mid-course and end-of-course focus groups. The quality of the collected data relating to the skill of showing love and affection is further supported by the level of detail in the descriptions shared by the parents. The topic of love also elicited stronger emotions from parents. For example, three parents cried as they shared how they communicated love and how their child reciprocated love. Furthermore, although parents reported the skill of showing love as one of the most difficult to implement, they nevertheless reported implementing the skill and the positive changes in the parent-child relationship related to implementing those skills.

Equally important, the act of refraining from yelling was referenced hand-in-hand with listening. Although the parents learned the skill of listening later in the program and had few opportunities to practice the skill, parents mentioned listening frequently during the end-of-
course focus groups. Many parents described how they stopped themselves from yelling after specifically remembering the class and made the conscious effort to listen to their child.

There are broader implications for these findings based on the lack of prior research documenting the experiences of Latino parents in an urban community. Furthermore, no prior research exists documenting the specific adaptations made by the participating instructors to the subject parent-training program. Considering the extent of overlap that exists between the goals of the course and the responses reported by parent participants, identifying these adaptations to the curriculum may serve as a tool for future parent-training programs developed for the documented demographic.

**Translation of Research: Adaptations to the Curriculum for Latino Parents**

Although parent training programs are widely used as an alternative for addressing adolescent discipline problems, the effectiveness of these programs are not always evaluated. However, the findings of this study revealed through one parent training program that such programs may be effective, so long as the program is tailored to its target demographic. The findings are also consistent with the positive results of prior research on the studied parent training program.

A qualitative two-year study conducted in Ohio by Holzheimer and Davis (2009) on the studied parent training program found that those parents who completed the program made changes to their parenting strategies and were able to sustain positive changes over time. Similar to this study, the parents in the 2009 study reported that they demonstrated love and affection more frequently, experienced a reduction in conflict and argument in the house, strengthened positive communication between the parent and the adolescent. Both parents and adolescents
reported a reduction in arguing. The parents in the 2009 study also reported improvement in increasing structure and rule implementation as a result of the program which was not reported as a main finding in the present study. However, the findings in this study corroborate prior research that a positive parent-child relationship is not only beneficial to child development, but is a prerequisite to arguably more advanced parenting skills, such as active monitoring and supervision and should be explored in future studies. While research supports the importance of monitoring and supervision, the present study illuminated the fact that before a parent begins implementing rules, monitoring, and closely supervising their child, the parent must first establish a positive parent-child relationship where trust and respect is built and maintained.

Nevertheless, the positive effects of the program were also discussed in a mixed methods study conducted by Stolz and his colleagues (2010). The 2010 study used pre and post surveys for both the parents and the adolescents and conducted focus groups for a smaller subgroup of parents only. An average of 26 parents participated in both rounds of focus groups that were conducted. The 2010 study found that the parents who completed the program experienced positive results such as improved relationship with their child, greater parent hopefulness, and increased positive behavior in their adolescents. While the qualitative data collected from the focus groups was not compiled into themes and patterns in the 2010 study, the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative methods indicated positive outcomes including higher levels of parental support as reported by the parents and adolescents, increased parental behavioral control, and a decrease in the adolescents’ antisocial behavior.

Although adaptations were made to the curriculum and the delivery of instruction to meet the needs of the Latino population in the present study, the findings share similarities with the
findings in studies conducted in different states and with different populations of parents. All three studies including the present study found that parents reported improvement in parent-child relationships through more frequent demonstration of love and affection and improved communication.

Adaptations noted in this study that were made by the instructors included changes to the delivery of the curriculum in response to their experiences teaching the course, their experiences as a member of the target demographic, and their experiences as a former participant in the program. The findings in this study show significant overlap between the published course objectives, the course instructors’ understanding of the official course objectives, and parent responses regarding changes observed in their behavior and their children’s behavior. Not only did parent participants frequently cite “remembering the class” in implementing the skills taught, but reported that activities such as role-playing and sharing examples were particularly helpful. Both role-playing and sharing examples from the instructors’ experiences were adaptations made by the course instructor that were not originally in the curriculum.

**Recommendations for Practice**

The findings in this study warrant a number of recommendations to the parent training program itself and to schools and their administrators and teachers. Because the sampled parent training program is used in conjunction with law enforcement and like public agencies, the recommendations could be applied in those contexts as well.

**Recommendations for the program.** The recommendations for the parent training program presented here must first be prefaced with a commendation for what it has already accomplished. Already, the program has served a multitude of law enforcement agencies,
schools, parent engagement projects, and the like for the past 25 years across the United States. As discussed earlier, the course workbook and classes are already translated and conducted in Spanish. The subject parent training program is further bolstered by its own continued research on its courses. Certainly, the work of the instructors interviewed for this study are to be commended for undertaking the added task of independently adapting the course materials and course delivery to suit the needs of their community. The recommendations here simply add upon the efforts of those who have sought to improve the efficacy of the program.

Parent participants frequently reported the need for a safe space akin to the very focus groups that were conducted in this study. Currently there is no dedicated course component that allows parents to share their experiences in a facilitated small group setting. Parents reported that sharing their experiences and voicing what they have learned and experienced have had the added effect of confirming or validating their experiences at home. By conducting a dedicated session to sharing experiences, parents could further process the knowledge learned in class. This recommendation is limited by the practical reality that the parent training program is a teaching curriculum and not necessarily a counseling program. Moreover, considering the experiences of the instructor regarding participation and attendance, whether parents will actually participate in yet another session after class remains to be seen. Nevertheless, providing the option to participants who wish to further engage in such facilitated and confidential discussions may be beneficial.

With respect to course delivery, parent participants also noted that some course materials were not reviewed as adequately as they would have liked. While course instructors justified the practice of summarizing course materials to accommodate illiterate participants, the participants
in this study expressed the desire to read and review pertinent course materials in class. Considering this study’s determination that the course instructor maintains the most experience in delivering the course content to the target demographic, I would defer to the instructor’s sound discretion assuming course goals objectives are closely followed.

Finally, with respect to sustaining and even extending the services that the subject parent training program provides, recommendation is made to encourage former parent participants to become trained instructors. This is in keeping with the observation that former parent participants are in the best position to understand the needs and culture of their own community members.

**Recommendations for schools.** As one of the target audiences for this study, high school teachers and administrators should seriously consider implementing parent training programs like the one sampled in this study as a component of the school’s disciplinary policy and strategy. For much of the school year, administrators and teachers stand *in loco parentis* and therefore are often placed in the position to act as surrogate parents. Accordingly, the findings in this study have significant implications regarding how school authority figures should guide their disciplinary approaches in an urban school setting, and in some ways with respect to the Latino community.

In the classroom and at the student-to-teacher or staff level, teachers and staff may benefit from the findings in this study by modeling specific skills such as showing appropriate affection to students and by engaging in more active listening. Teachers and staff may need to overcome their own barriers to implementing these skills, which is a subject ripe for further study.
The zero-tolerance approach in many respects is akin to an authoritarian approach to discipline, exhibiting high demandingness upon students but with little to no responsiveness. Accordingly, urban schools would greatly benefit by incorporating the principles and skills described in this study into their disciplinary policies. As a concrete measure, parent training programs should be incorporated as a central parent involvement component to any Positive Support plan. Examples of incorporating this piece into a Positive Support plan could include requiring parents of disciplined students to attend a parent training program or even requiring parents of all incoming students to attend. For students who are repeatedly subject to school disciplinary measures, parents of those students could be required to repeat attendance of the parent training program.

Understanding the financial and logistical constraints that administrators often face, encouraging former parent participants to lead the program on campus as trained instructors of an accredited parent training program like the one sampled in this study would serve as a promising and cost-effective option for parent involvement. By allowing former parent participants to become instructors, administrators will not only gain stakeholder participation, but participation by stakeholders who are invested in creating lasting and meaningful change. Because the skills taught by this course are not specific for the in-school setting, the potential for improving discipline may expand beyond the school to the community at large.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

Several limitations may qualify the findings and recommendations made in this paper. Logistical limitations include the limited sample size of the participants in this study, the staggered timing between mid-course focus groups, the staggered timing between end-course
focus groups, possible inaccuracies in translations, and potential misunderstandings in communication due to cultural barriers. These limitations were minimized as reasonably possible as discussed in the methodology chapter.

As noted previously in this paper’s findings, parent-child interactions were not directly observed. The lack of this point of reference may detract from the reliability of the reports made by parents regarding their observations of their children’s reactions and behaviors. Accordingly, observations of the dyad of parent and child would yield more accurate findings regarding fidelity in implementing the skills taught, true acceptance and understanding of the skills taught, and the sustainability of implementing these skills in the long-term. Future studies may include a behavioral family therapy approach such as the Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (Eyberg, 1988) method for helping parents improve their children’s disruptive and oppositional behavior. Future studies may include pre-observations to identify pre-existing parenting practices as well as follow-up observations to identify differences in parenting practices and child behavior as a result of participating in a parent training program.

To that end, a longitudinal study may be conducted to characterize whether there is any development in the implementation of the skills discussed in this study. The findings in this study corroborate prior research that a positive parent-child relationship is not only beneficial to child development, but is arguably a prerequisite to more advanced parenting skills, such as active monitoring and supervision and should be explored in future studies. Such studies could unfold any hierarchy among these skills and how more advanced skills could be developed.

Finally, future studies could also attempt to address whether any of these skills correlate with any improvements in academic performance and student discipline in the school setting.
Personal Reflection and Conclusion

One of the compelling aspects of the findings in this study is the simplicity of the skills reported by parents. The simplicity of these skills, however, belies a complicated and deep-rooted set of internal and external barriers. For this particular sample of parent participants, the hallmarks of an authoritarian parenting style were found. Although it is uncertain whether the course was adapted to emphasize increasing parent responsiveness and create recognition of demandingness, the correlating skills (i.e., showing love and affection and listening instead of yelling) were reported to have caused the greatest change in the parent-child relationship.

Although the findings do not show—nor do they intend to show—with any statistical certainty that Latino parents’ parenting styles in general can be associated with any particular style, the hallmarks of an authoritarian parenting style were present in the sample studied. Specifically, parent responses in this study reported changes in behaviors relating to high demandingness and low responsiveness to children. (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The patterns of changes and barriers reported by parent participants discussed in the findings appear to be consistent with both increasing responsiveness and recognizing and modulating demandingness.

Parents experienced the greatest change in their interactions with their adolescent child by showing love and affection and by listening instead of yelling. Both activities were consistent with increasing parents’ responsiveness to their children. By the same token, the predominant barriers identified by parent participants related to regulating high demandingness. Parents reported their own assumptions and beliefs regarding rigid parent-child roles and their “need to be right” as justification for their pre-existing parenting practices. While not indicative for
Latino parents in general, the characteristics observed may be perceived as an authoritarian parenting style.

Another broader theme that presented itself in the findings is that the skills taught by the parent training program are readily achievable, regardless of the age of the parents’ children. Prior to beginning my research, I wondered whether or not parents could impact the behaviors of teenagers or if it was simply too late. The findings indicate that it is never too late to demonstrate love and respect by not yelling and instead listening.

The theme of self-realization also presented itself through numerous focus group discussions. Parents reported that the class specifically caused them to identify the parent-child relationship as an issue worth improving. Parents overcame their own pride and even their own fears. Some of the fears parents faced were as severe as risking physical retaliation from their own children. Nevertheless, they reported that the techniques and skills taught in the course are learnable and produce meaningful benefit to the parents who implemented them. Although a number of parent participants were ordered or referred by a juvenile court to complete the course, parents reported that these skills were so valuable that one parent even recommended that the government require all parents to complete the course.

Moreover, the self-realization reported by parents happened regardless of the age of their children. Although the scope of this study focused on changes in parent-adolescent relationships, some participants also had younger children. The fact that parents of adolescents were able to implement the skills and receive the benefits of the changes resulting therefrom demonstrate that implementing these skill sets can be learned at any time.

Assumptions were originally held that any barriers to changes in parent behaviors
consisted of external factors such as socio-economic status, time limitations, single-parent homes, or work. But here, the barriers that the parents shared were more introspective. Even though parent participants were asked what external factors acted as barriers to change, they were rarely reported if at all. Future studies should nonetheless be conducted to determine whether external factors, if any, act as barriers to behavioral change as between volunteer participants and court-mandated/school-referred participants in such parent training programs.

Regardless of the limitations and questions left for future studies, the findings in this study are poignant. As an administrator of an urban high school serving a majority of Latino students and families, I embarked on this research seeking to understand the underpinnings of the disciplinary issues faced by my own school with memories of students often sent to me due to their defiance, bitterness, and anger. It has left me with an indelible message and it is my hope that other academicians and practitioners will also find new meaning and power to the act of listening and saying, “I love you.”
Appendix A

Parent Training Program

THE PROGRAM

This particular parent training program prides in having a 22-year track record of proven results: 33% reduction in juvenile recidivism and 98% drop in school expulsions in Minidoka, Idaho as reported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in 2004 and 73% reduction in juvenile related law enforcement calls for service in 2006 as reported by the police department in Roseville, California. The program was created specifically for parents with difficult or out-of-control adolescents. Parents learn and practice specific prevention and intervention strategies for destructive behaviors such as truancy, alcohol and other drug use, gangs and other criminal behavior, running away, violence, and suicide.

The parent training program is a ten week course that requires parents to attend class once a week for three hours. Due to the high number of Spanish-speaking parents enrolled in the program in this particular East Los Angeles community, the classes are taught in Spanish. Each class consists of two components: classroom instruction by a trained and certified instructor and parent support groups. The parent workbook guides the classroom instruction, and the program instructors guide the parents to discuss behavior problems and learned skills with other parents in their parent support groups.

At the start of the first class, the instructor randomly groups the parents into smaller support groups and ensures that couples are placed in separate parent support groups. Because the grouping is random, I requested that all parents participating in my study were contained in
two support groups so that I can easily sit in on those groups and listen to conversations. The instructors accommodated my request.

Due to high demand and popularity of this program in the East Los Angeles local community, the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreations currently offers up to nine different sessions in nearby locations, four times a year.

THE CURRICULUM

Part One: Laying the Foundation for Change

Week 1: Understanding Our Children

Objectives: Parents will be able to (PWBAT)…
1. Describe character traits of a strong-willed child
2. Recognize successful ways to demonstrate love and affection
3. Discuss issues of influence versus control
4. Describe effective parenting strategies to increase or decrease behavior.

Week 2: Addressing Problematic Behavior

Objectives: PWBAT…
1. List five tips for parents to consider before addressing problematic behavior
2. Practice effective confrontation
3. Discuss how emotionally charged behavior often creates family arguments
4. Recognize successful ways to end family arguments (e.g. learn how to never argue with your child again)

Week 3: A Parent’s Formula for Success

Objectives: PWBAT…
1. List the elements of active supervision
2. Identify possible sources of negative influence
3. Discuss the necessity of creating structure for children
4. Implement the Homework Assignment Sheet

Week 4: Adolescent Drug Use

Objectives: PWBAT…
1. Identify physical signs of drug influence
2. Recognize behavioral signs of drug influence
3. Discuss a comprehensive drug use intervention strategy

Week 5: The Out-of-Control Child

Objectives: PWBAT…
1. Discuss parenting strategies to prevent gang involvement
2. Identify gang dress
3. List possible parenting strategies to intervene in gang involvement
4. Describe effective parenting strategies to intervene in out-of-control behaviors
Week 6: Considering Relationships and Developing Action Plans

Objectives: PWBAT…
1. Describe appropriate dating rules for their children
2. Review the most powerful ideas learned during the first 5 weeks
3. Develop action plans for behavioral change
4. Discuss the benefit of joining a parent support group

Part Two: Supporting Change & Improving Relationships

Week 7: Finding Help and Support

Objectives: PWBAT…
1. Identify and locate the resources available in their communities
2. Discuss the need for emotional support as they continue the process of change at home
3. Use the W.I.S.E. Advice Strategy

Week 8: The Dynamics of Change

Objectives: PWBAT…
1. List the three elements of change
2. Describe the difficulties in implementing change
3. Discuss the process of change
4. Participate in a support group session

Week 9: Managing Conflict in the Home

Objectives: PWBAT…
1. Recognize some of the potential causes of parent/child conflict
2. List strategies for reducing conflict in the home
3. Practice the support group process

Week 10: Active Listening

Objectives: PWBAT…
1. List the five components of active listening
2. Discuss potential barriers to active listening
3. Participate in a structured support group
Appendix B

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

DATE: ___/___/_______

TO: Albert Gomez, Recreation Services Manager

FROM: Julie Jhun, Researcher

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Understanding with the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation

I. PURPOSE AND GOALS

Through interviews, parenting class observations, and parent journals, this study will examine the experiences and thought processes of parents in the setting of a parent education program. This study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the process of change experienced by parents with respect to how they relate to their child and manage discipline issues. This project holds potential to provide targeted education to parents, parents with children with disciplinary issues, teachers and administrators, and improve discipline problems in urban high schools through authentic parent engagement.

II. BACKGROUND

In 2006, more than 3.3 million students were suspended out-of-school at least once and 102,000 were expelled. About 1 out of every 14 students, or 7%, nationwide was suspended from school at least once during the 2005-2006 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The rate has more than doubled since 1974 and is steadily increasing (6.6% in 2002, 6.8% in 2004, and 6.9% in 2006). Students of color and students with disabilities are more likely to be suspended and expelled than their peers for the same behavior (American Psychological Association, 2008). Students who are suspended are more likely to fall behind in school due to loss of learning time, be retained, drop out, commit a crime, and become incarcerated as an adult (The Advancement Project, 2005).
Part of the rise in suspensions and expulsions has been attributed to the rise in the use of “zero-tolerance policies” in which educators impose harsh and inflexible punishments for rule-breaking (Meek, 2009). By 1993, zero tolerance policies were adopted by school boards across the nation to deal with drugs and weapons through a mandated policy through the Gun-Free Schools Act (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). This approach has evolved into a movement across schools resulting in students being expelled for trivial reasons ranging from bringing paper clips to class to carrying cough drops (Skiba, 2000).

To alleviate this problem, a growing number of schools are shifting to positive approaches to discipline. While these alternatives attempt to address student behavior at schools and claim the need to involve families and community resources (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009; Warren et al., 2003), none of them are focused on how parents can be a vital part of the solution in mitigating student behavior problems at schools. Parents are their childrens’ first teachers and consequently have as much a significant role in their children’s performance in school as the schools themselves. Although schools’ and teachers’ efforts play a direct role in a student’s academic performance and behavior, there are a variety of factors outside of school that also affect student success – parent involvement and practices (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Jeynes, 2007; Keith et al., 1998; Paulson, 1994; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992).

Although research has shown parent involvement and specific parenting styles to be associated with a number of positive educational outcomes, such as increased academic achievement (Chen & Gregory, 2010; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Fan, 2001; Jeynes, 2007; Keith et al., 1998; Park & Bauer, 2002; Paulson, 1994; Singh et al., 1995; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992; Stevenson & Baker, 1987), better attendance (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002), and fewer behavioral problems (Deslandes & Royer, 1997; Lee, 1994; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002), only a few studies show the effects of parent involvement or parenting styles on student discipline, particularly at the secondary level (Hill et al., 2004; Sheldon and Epstein, 2002). Studies insist on the need for stronger parent partnerships to improve student behavior, especially in urban high schools (Flannery et al., 2009; Warren et al., 2003).

Many parent training programs and parenting classes are available to teach parents the skills necessary to improve discipline at home and at school; however, issues with low parent attendance and parent acceptance of the skills taught continue to plague these programs. Clearly, access to and adoption of the skills learned by parent participants are critical to gaining any traction among target populations. It is not clear, however, what learning experiences facilitate change in the way that parents interact with their adolescent child with disciplinary problems. Thus, this study will examine the experiences and the thought processes of parents in the setting
of a parent training program to gain a deeper understanding of the process of change experienced by parents with respect to how they relate to their child over discipline issues.

III. **Research Questions**

1. What are the changes that parents report in their interactions with their child over discipline issues as a result of this parent training program?
   a. What specific skills they say they learned, if any, triggered these changes?
   b. How, if at all, did the parents implement these skills?
2. According to the parents participating in a parent training program, what are the barriers, if any, to implementing the skills that are taught?
3. According to the observer, the class instructor, and the parents, how is the curriculum adapted by the instructor to ensure agreement of goals for the class, parent participation in the learning tasks and activities, and development of trust and bond between parents in parent support groups?
   a. According to the class instructor, how does he/she adjust the activities and/or curriculum for the needs of this population of parent learners and why?

IV. **Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

Qualitative Data:
- Four parent focus group sessions (after class on Weeks 4, 5, 9, and 10)
- One interview with each instructor
- Class observations (every week for ten weeks)

V. **Strategy for Findings Dissemination**

The outcomes of this study will be shared with the Recreation Services Manager at the site and instructors of the parent training program through presentation to the staff and in written report form.

VI. **Researcher Responsibilities Under this MOU**

- Conduct parent focus groups, instructor interviews, and class observations
- Manage logistics for each focus group and interview
- Ensure participation from all participants
• Share findings with Recreation Services Manager and program instructor(s)

VII. INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THIS MOU

• Agree to be observed during the 10-week class sessions
• Participate in two thirty-minute interviews and give permission to be audio recorded during interview
• Provide a space to hold the parent focus groups after the class sessions

VII. IT IS MUTUALLY UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED BY AND BETWEEN THE PARTIES THAT

1. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only when required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of protecting your name, the name of your organization, the names of your staff, and the names of the participating parents with codes. This study is designed to improve your parent training program; therefore all activities will be kept in the strictest of confidence. All data collected will be password protected on computers and also on hard drives that only the researcher has access to at all times.

2. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty or loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled. You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may leave at any time without consequences of any kind. You are not waiving any of your legal rights if you choose to be in this research study. You may refuse to answer any questions during the interviews that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

3. Safeguards to confidentiality of the participants are also provided in the Parent Participation Consent Form to ensure participants’ thoughts, reflections, and actions during the class sessions, focus groups, and classroom observations will not be disclosed to anyone but the researcher. All participants’ identities will be protected.

VIII. FUNDING
The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, East County Community Services Agency is agreeing to allow me to conduct my research study, including observations, facility use to conduct parent focus groups, and instructor interviews, at its site without payment.

IX. **TIMELINE FOR PROJECT**

Data collection will occur during the next session from January 2012 to March 2012.

X. **SIGNATURES**

This MOU shall be effective upon the signature of Albert Gomez, Recreation Services Manager of the East County Community Services Agency, Teresa Alejandre, the parent training program instructor, and Julie Jhun, the researcher. It shall be in force from January 1, 2012 to June 30, 2012.

____________________________________________ ______________________________
Albert Gomez, Recreation Services Manager                      Date

____________________________________________ ______________________________
Teresa Alejandre, Instructor                                   Date

____________________________________________ ______________________________
Julie Jhun, Researcher                                        Date
Appendix C

Potential Study Participant Selection Questionnaire

Thank you for taking a few minutes to complete this. This research study is being conducted by me, Julie K. Jhun, under the direction of Dr. Jeffrey Wood and Dr. Diane Durkin from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Your willingness to participate in this study is appreciated. Your experiences and thoughts are very unique and will help us understand your experiences as a parent.

Please answer the following questions about yourself. All answers will remain confidential.

1. Gender:  ☐ Male  ☐ Female

2. Please indicate your relationship to the child.
   ☐ Parent
   ☐ Legal guardian
   ☐ Other: ________________

3. Parent/Guardian Age:
   ☐ 25 and under
   ☐ 26 – 35
   ☐ 36 – 45
   ☐ 46 – 55
   ☐ 56 and over
   ☐ Decline to state

4. Age of the child with whom you are having discipline problems:
   ☐ 11 and under
   ☐ 12-13
   ☐ 14-15
   ☐ 16-17
   ☐ 18 and over
   ☐ Decline to state

5. Marital Status:
   ☐ Married
   ☐ Single, never married
   ☐ Single, living with relatives
   ☐ Single, living with partner
   ☐ Divorced
   ☐ Separated
6. Is your spouse/partner or ex-spouse/ex-partner also participating in this program now?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No

7. Race/Ethnicity:  
☐ Hispanic or Latino  
☐ Black or African American  
☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native  
☐ White  
☐ Asian or Pacific Islander  
☐ Other

8. Primary Language:  
☐ Spanish  
☐ English  
☐ Other: ___________________________________

9. Do you speak and understand English?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ A little

10. What is your highest level of education attained?  
☐ Not a high school graduate  
☐ High school graduate  
☐ Some college or Associate’s degree  
☐ College graduate  
☐ Graduate degree or higher

11. Please indicate your reason for participating in this program.  
☐ Voluntary  
☐ Referred by court  
☐ Other: ___________________________________

12. Please select the disciplinary issues that you are currently experiencing with your child.  
You may select more than one.  
☐ Truancy  
☐ Poor school attendance  
☐ Poor academic performance  
☐ Suspension from school  
☐ Expulsion from school  
☐ Family conflicts  
☐ Arguments  
☐ Violent outbursts  
☐ Emotional stress  
☐ Probationary period  
☐ Gang affiliation  
☐ Drug and alcohol abuse  
☐ Threats of suicide and running away  
☐ Vandalism
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☐ Incarceration
☐ Other: _______________________________________

13. Are you interested in participating in this study?
   ☐ Yes       ☐ No       ☐ Uncertain

14. If you answered “Yes” to Question 13, do you agree to be observed by me during class for the next ten weeks?
   ☐ Yes       ☐ No       ☐ Uncertain

15. If you answered “Yes” to Question 13, do you agree to participate in two focus groups to talk about your learning experience and how you have applied the skills at home with your child? The focus groups will be one hour long and will take place after class on Week 4/5 and Week 9/10.
   ☐ Yes       ☐ No       ☐ Uncertain

Please provide your contact information if you are available for this study and/or if you are considering it. If you give me this information, it does not guarantee that I will contact you, but you will be included in the raffle.

Name: ____________________________________________

Home Number: _______________________ Cell Number: _____________________________

Which number is the best way to contact you?       ☐ Home       ☐ Cell

Which day and time are you most available? ________________________________

Thank you! I will contact the parents that are randomly selected to participate.
Appendix D

Cuestionario de Selección de Posibles Padres como Participantes

Gracias por tomar unos minutos para completar esto. Este estudio de investigación está siendo llevado a cabo por mí, Julie K. Jhun, bajo la dirección del Dr. Jeffrey Wood y la Dr. Diane Durkin de la Escuela de Licenciatura en Educación y Estudios de Información en la Universidad de California en Los Ángeles. Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Su voluntad de participar en este estudio se aprecia. Sus experiencias y pensamientos son muy únicos y nos ayudará a entender sus experiencias como padre.

Por favor conteste las siguientes preguntas sobre usted mismo. Todas las respuestas serán confidenciales.

1. Sexo: ☐ Barón ☐ Hembra

2. Por favor, indique su relación con el niño/a.
   ☐ Padre
   ☐ Tutor Legal
   ☐ Otros: _____________

3. Edad del Padre / Tutor:
   ☐ 25 años o menor
   ☐ 26 a 35
   ☐ 36 a 45
   ☐ 46 a 55
   ☐ 56 o mayor
   ☐ Me niego a declarar

4. Edad del niño con quien usted está teniendo problemas de disciplina:
   ☐ 11 años o menor
   ☐ 12-13
   ☐ 14-15
   ☐ 16-17
   ☐ Mayores de 18 años
   ☐ Me niego a declarar

5. Estado civil:
   ☐ Casado
   ☐ Soltero/a, nunca casado/a
   ☐ Soltero/a vivo con mis familiares
   ☐ Soltero/a, vivo con pareja
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☐ Divorciado
☐ Separado

6. ¿Está participando su esposo/a o pareja o ex esposo/a o pareja en este programa ahora?
   ☐ Sí ☐ No

7. Raza / Origen Étnico:
   ☐ Hispano o Latino
   ☐ Negro o afro-americanos
   ☐ Indio Americano o Nativo de Alaska
   ☐ Blanca
   ☐ Asiáticos o isleños del Pacífico
   ☐ Otro

8. Idioma principal:
   ☐ Español
   ☐ Inglés
   ☐ Otro: ___________________________________

9. ¿Habla y entiende inglés? ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐ Un poco

10. ¿Cuál fue el nivel más alto de educación que usted alcanzo?
    ☐ No graduado de escuela secundaria
        ☐ Graduado de escuela secundaria
        ☐ Algunos estudios universitarios o Titulo Asociado
        ☐ Graduado de la universidad
        ☐ Licenciatura o superior

11. Por favor, indique el motivo de su participación en este programa.
    ☐ Voluntario
    ☐ Por mandato judicial
    ☐ Otro: ___________________________________

12. Por favor, seleccione los problemas disciplinarios que se están experimentando actualmente con su hijo/a. Usted puede seleccionar más de uno.
    ☐ Absentismo escolar
    ☐ Mala asistencia escolar
    ☐ Pobre rendimiento académico
    ☐ Suspensión de la escuela
    ☐ La expulsión de la escuela
    ☐ Conflictos familiares
    ☐ Argumentos
    ☐ Arranques de violencia
    ☐ El estrés emocional
    ☐ Periodo de prueba
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13. ¿Está usted interesado en participar en este estudio?
   ☐ Sí  ☐ No  ☐ Inseguro

14. ¿Si respondió “sí” en la pregunta 13, está de acuerdo de ser observado por mi durante las clases por las próximas diez semanas?
   ☐ Sí  ☐ No  ☐ Inseguro

15. ¿Si respondió “Sí” en la pregunta 13, está de acuerdo de participar en dos grupos de enfoque después de clase para hablar sobre su experiencia de aprendizaje y cómo usted ha aplicado los conocimientos adquiridos en casa con su hijo/a? Los grupos de enfoque duraran una hora y tomaran acabo después de clase en la semana 4/5 y la semana 9/10.
   ☐ Sí  ☐ No  ☐ Inseguro

Por favor, proporcione su información de contacto, si está disponible para este estudio y / o si usted está considerándolo. Si me da esta información, no garantiza que me comunique con usted, pero usted se incluirá en el sorteo.

Nombre (primer nombre está bien.):

______________________________

Número de casa: _____________________________ Número de Celular: _____________________________

¿Qué número es la mejor manera de contactar me con usted?  ☐ Casa  ☐ Celular

¿Qué día y hora en que están más disponibles? ________________________________

¡Gracias! Me pondré en contacto con los padres que son seleccionados al azar para participar.
Appendix E

Classroom Observation Protocol and Activity Codes

1. Date:
2. Title of the day’s lesson and corresponding unit in curriculum:
3. Number of parents in attendance:
4. Name of instructor:
5. Class start/end times:
6. Activity Code Number (to synchronize both observation notebooks):
7. Activity Code:
8. Observational notes:

Legend of Activity Codes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>Repetition of a specific concept learned from the course workbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Play</td>
<td>One parent plays the role of the parent and applies a skill while another plays the role of the child in a hypothetical situation in front of the entire class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice in Parent Support Groups</td>
<td>One parent plays the role of the parent and applies a skill while another plays the role of the child in a hypothetical situation in the parent support group setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>Instructor uses humorous examples of parent-child interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Stories</td>
<td>Instructor shares a story from her personal experience relevant to the course matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Stories</td>
<td>A parent shares with the class his/her personal experience relevant to the course matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Examples</td>
<td>Instructor provides an example of an applicable parent response and/or action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Instructor introduces and summarizes new content in course workbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Instructor reviews and/or summarizes previously covered course content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Questions</td>
<td>Instructor asks parents open-ended questions to check for understanding of course concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>One parent reads from the course workbook aloud in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Activity</td>
<td>In the parent support groups, parents discuss and collaboratively answer “Group Activity” exercise in the course workbook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

Mid-Course Parent Focus Group Protocol (1 hour)

Part One – Opening

• Focus Group Disclosures and Reminders:
  o Participation in the focus group has no affect on their completion of parent training program. Please be honest and provide as much information as you can. Your identity will remain anonymous.
  o Everything that is shared in this focus group meeting should not be shared with anyone outside. Information shared here should not leave this room and remain confidential.
  o The parents’ responses will be used for research and they may share personal information that may cause embarrassment. So please try your best to give me as much information as possible.
  o Parents’ responses should reflect what they do, not their spouse.
  o Refrain from nodding because the focus group is being digitally recorded. Say “yes” or “no”.
  o One person will speak at a time.
  o The translator will translate researcher’s questions and parents’ responses.

Part Two – Discussion Prompts for Research Question 1

1. Is this your first time taking this class? If not, how many times have you taken it?
2. Does your child currently live with you?
3. I’m going to go over some of the skills taught during the first two units. Please raise your hand if you tried using the skill at home with your child. (Researcher reads each skill, and counts and records the number of raised hands.)
4. Did anyone use zero of these skills? Why?
5. Which one of the lessons was the most memorable from the past two weeks? Why?
   a. What was the biggest change you saw in your child’s behavior so far? And which skill do you think caused that?
6. Which one of the lessons in the units was the hardest to use? Why?
7. Follow up based on the low and high number of votes.
   a. Follow up with MOST votes and LEAST votes:
      i. Why did people vote the most on ________?
         1. (Class) Was it easy to understand and learn this in class?
2. (Personal) Why was it easy for you to use?
3. Are there any other reasons?
4. How did your child respond when you used this skill?

ii. Why did people vote the least on ________?
   1. (Class) Was the concept difficult to learn in class?
   2. (External) Did you have enough time at home to use it?
   3. (Personal) Was it just difficult for you to use it? Why?
   4. Are there any other reasons?

**Part Two – Discussion Prompts for Research Question 3**

1. What method of teaching helped you to learn best?

2. Which learning activities helped you to learn? Which learning activities weren’t as helpful?
Appendix G

End-of-Course Parent Focus Group Protocol (1 hour)

Part One – Opening

- Focus Group Disclosures and Reminders:
  - Participation in the focus group has no affect on their completion of parent training program. Please be honest and provide as much information as you can. Your identity will remain anonymous.
  - Everything that is shared in this focus group meeting should not be shared with anyone outside. Information shared here should not leave this room and remain confidential.
  - The parents’ responses will be used for research and they may share personal information that may cause embarrassment. So please try your best to give me as much information as possible.
  - Parents’ responses should reflect what they do, not their spouse.
  - Refrain from nodding because the focus group is being digitally recorded. Say “yes” or “no”.
  - One person will speak at a time.
  - The translator will translate researcher’s questions and parents’ responses.

Part Two – Discussion Prompts for Research Question 1

1. What are the changes you’ve seen in your interactions with your child over discipline issues as a result trying the skills you learned in the program?
   a. What do you think are triggering those changes? Which skills?
   b. How did you implement them?
   c. To which skill did your child respond best? Worst? How did they respond?
   d. To which skill did you child not really respond to? Why not?
2. Which one of the lessons was the most memorable from the past 8 or 9 weeks? Why?
   a. What was the biggest change you saw in your child’s behavior so far? Which skill do you think cause that?
3. Which one of the lessons in the units was the hardest to use? Why?
Part Three – Discussion Prompts for Research Question 2

1. Please take a few minutes and list 5 reasons why it has been difficult to use any of the strategies and skills you learned in class. For example, they may be reasons relating to the way the class is taught, personal reasons, or other reasons that affect you. Please be specific.

2. Please share the biggest challenge from your list.

Part Four – Discussion Prompts for Research Question 3

1. What method of teaching helped you to learn best?

2. Which learning activities helped you to learn? Which learning activities weren’t as helpful?
Appendix H

Instructor Interview Protocol (30 min.)

1. What are the program’s goal(s)?

2. What are your goals for the parents? Why?

3. What activities and tasks do you assign to facilitate learning?
   a. Which learning activities and tasks do you find to be most effective in helping parents learn the parenting skills? Least effective? Why?

4. What teaching strategies do you use to teach the curriculum to the parents participating in the program? Why?
   a. Which teaching strategies do you find to be most effective? Least effective? Why?

5. Learning from and sharing with other parents in the group is an important part of the program. How do you help parents develop trust and bond with one another? How do help parents develop trust and bond with you?
Appendix I

Parent Participation Consent Form

University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
The Process of Change in Parents’ Interactions with
Their Disciplined Adolescent Child in an Urban Community

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Julie Kim Jhun sponsored by Dr. Jeffrey Wood, Dr. Diane Durkin and associates from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a parent of a high school child, participating in the parent training program offered by the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

This study will examine the experiences and thought processes of parents in the setting of a parent training program. This study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the process of change experienced by parents with respect to how they relate to their child and manage discipline issues.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

1. Take a short 5-10 minute demographics survey.
2. Participate in two focus group sessions with the researcher. An English/Spanish translator will be available during the focus group sessions. Each focus group will be one hour. Agree to be audio-taped during the focus group. All audio-recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research study.
3. Agree to be observed during each class session.
How long will I be in the research study?

Participation in the study will be as long as the duration of the parent training program plus two extra hours after a class: one hour after the Week 4 or Week 5 class, and another hour after the Week 9 or Week 10 class to participate in the parent focus groups.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts. However, parents may feel discomfort revealing some of their current discipline techniques (like corporal punishment or deprivation) if they choose to reveal this information.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

You may benefit from the study by gaining more self-awareness about how you interact with your child as you implement, reflect, and share how you have learned and implemented the skills taught in the parenting classes.

The results of the research may help the program directors, instructors, and local school administrators better serve the students, parents, and families in our community as they gain a deeper understanding of how to help parents learn and implement important parenting skills.

Will I receive any payment if I participate in this study?

Each participant will receive a $15 gift card for participating in this study.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. All data obtained in this project will be coded to ensure confidentiality, and all code keys will be destroyed upon completion of this study. No parent names or student names will ever be attached to the data, and all hard copies of focus group transcripts
and observation notes will be destroyed within two years of the study to ensure confidentiality.

Withdrawal of participation by the investigator

The investigator may withdraw you from participating in this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If you drop from the parent training program and you no longer attend the parenting classes, you may have to drop out of the study, even if you would like to continue. The investigator will make the decision and let you know if it is not possible for you to continue.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty or loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.

You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may leave the study at any time without consequences of any kind. You are not waiving any of your legal rights if you choose to be in this research study. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can answer questions I might have about this study?

In the event of a research related injury, please immediately contact one of the researchers listed below. If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

**Julie Jhun**
Principal Investigator, Doctoral Student at UCLA’s Educational Leadership Program
Email: juliekim614@gmail.com  
Phone: (213) 268-5215

**Dr. Diane Durkin**
Adjunct Professor, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA
Email: durkin@humnet.ucla.edu  
Phone: (310) 825-0614
If you wish to ask questions about your rights as a research participant or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the researchers, please call the Office of the Human Research Protection Program at (310) 825-7122 or write to Office of the Human Research Protection Program, UCLA, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 102, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant ___________________________ Contact Number ___________________________

Signature of Participant ___________________________ Date ___________________________

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Name of Person Obtaining Consent ___________________________ Contact Number ___________________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent ___________________________ Date ___________________________
Usted está invitado a participar en un estudio de investigación realizado por Julie Kim Jhun patrocinado por el Dr. Jeffrey Wood, Dr. Diane Durkin y colaboradores de la Escuela de Licenciatura en Educación y Estudios de la Información en la Universidad de California en Los Ángeles. Usted ha sido seleccionado como posible participante en este estudio porque usted es un padre de un niño/a de la escuela secundaria, participan en el programa de entrenamiento para padres que ofrece el Condado de Los Ángeles Departamento de Parques y Recreación. Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria.

¿Por qué se realiza este estudio?

Este estudio examinará las experiencias y procesos de pensamiento de los padres en el establecimiento de un programa de entrenamiento para padres. Este estudio busca obtener una comprensión más profunda del proceso de cambio experimentado por los padres con respecto a cómo se relacionan con sus hijos y manejan los problemas de disciplina.

¿Qué pasará si tomo parte en este estudio?

Si usted es voluntario para participar en este estudio, la persona conduciendo este estudio (el investigador) le pedirá que haga lo siguiente:

1. Tome una encuesta corta 5-10 minutos.
2. Participe en dos sesiones de grupos de enfoque con la persona conduciendo este estudio (el investigador). Un traductor Inglés / Español estará disponible durante las sesiones de grupos de enfoque. Cada grupo de enfoque será de una
hora. Estar de acuerdo en ser grabados en audio durante el grupo de enfoque. Todas las grabaciones de audio y serán destruidos a la conclusión del estudio. Usted tiene el derecho de revisar la grabaciones de audio que se han hecho como parte de esta investigación para determinar si necesita ser corregido o borrado en parte o completamente.

3. Estar de acuerdo en ser observado durante cada sesión de clase.

¿Cuánto tiempo estaré en este estudio?

La participación en el estudio será, toda la duración del programa de entrenamiento para padres mas dos horas extras después de una clase: una hora después de la clase de la semana 4 o de la semana 5, y una hora después de la clase de la semana 9 o de la semana 10 para participar en el grupos de padres de enfoque.

¿Hay algún riesgo potencial o incomodidad que se puede esperar de este estudio?

No hay riesgos previstos o incomodidad. Sin embargo, los padres pueden sentirse incómodos revelando algunas de sus técnicas de disciplina actual (como los castigos corporales o privación) si desean revelar esta información.

¿Hay beneficios potenciales si participo?

Usted se puede beneficiar del estudio de ganar más conciencia de sí mismo sobre cómo interactuar con su hijo/a mientras usted implementa, reflexiona y comparte la forma en que ha aprendido y aplicado los conocimientos adquiridos en las clases para padres.

Los resultados del estudio puede ayudar a los directores de programas, instructores y administradores de las escuelas locales darles un mejor servicio a los estudiantes, padres y familias de nuestra comunidad a medida que adquieren un conocimiento más profundo de cómo ayudar a los padres a aprender y poner en práctica habilidades de crianza importantes.
¿Voy a recibir un pago si participo en este estudio?

Cada participante recibirá una tarjeta de regalo de $15.00 después del segundo grupo de enfoque por participar en este estudio. Un almuerzo ligero será proveído antes de cada grupo de enfoque.

¿La información sobre mí y mi participación se mantendrá confidencial?

Cualquier información que se obtiene en relación con este estudio y lo que lo pueda identificar será confidencial. Será compartida solamente con su autorización o conformidad con la ley. Todos los datos obtenidos en este proyecto se cifrarán para asegurar la confidencialidad, y todas las claves serán destruidas una vez completado este estudio. Nunca se adjuntara los nombres de padres o nombres de estudiantes los datos, y todas las copias de las transcripciones de grupos de enfoques y las notas de observación serán destruidos dentro de dos años del estudio para asegurar la confidencialidad.

Retiración de la participación de la persona conduciendo el estudio (el investigador)

La persona conduciendo el estudio (el investigador) puede retirar su participación en este estudio si surgen circunstancias que justifiquen hacerlo. Si se retira del programa de entrenamiento de padres y ya no asisten a las clases para padres, puede que tenga que abandonar el estudio, aunque le gustaría continuar. la persona conduciendo el estudio (el investigador) tomará la decisión y le hará saber si no es posible que usted pueda continuar.

¿Cuáles son mis derechos si参与到 este estudio?

Usted puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento e interrumpir su participación sin penalización ni pérdida de beneficios a los que tenían derecho de otra manera.

Usted puede elegir si desea o no desea participar en este estudio. Si usted es voluntario para participar en este estudio, puede retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento sin consecuencias de ningún tipo. Usted no renuncia a ninguno de sus
derechos legales si decide participar en este estudio de investigación. Usted puede negarse a contestar cualquier pregunta que usted no quiere contestar y aún así permanecer en el estudio.

¿Quién puede responder a las preguntas que pueda tener acerca de este estudio?

En el caso de una lesión relacionada con el estudio, por favor comuníquese inmediatamente con uno de las personas conduciendo el estudio (los investigadores) se enumeran a continuación. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta, comentario o inquietud acerca del estudio, usted puede hablar con una de las personas conduciendo el estudio (los investigadores). Por favor, póngase en contacto con:

Julie Jhun  
Investigador Principal, Estudiante de Doctorado en el Programa de Liderazgo Educativo de la UCLA  
Correo electrónico: juliekim614@gmail.com  Teléfono: (213) 268-5215

Dr. Diane Durkin  
Profesor Adjunto, Escuela de Licenciatura en Educación y Estudios de la Información de la UCLA  
Correo electrónico: durkin@humnet.ucla.edu  Teléfono: (310) 825-0614

Si desea hacer preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante de una investigación o si desea la voz de cualquier problema o preocupación que tenga sobre el estudio a otra persona que los investigadores, por favor llame a la Oficina del Programa de Estudios de Protección Humanos al (310) 825-7122 o escribir a la Oficina del Programa de Estudios de Protección Humana de la UCLA, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 102, Caja 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.
FIRMA DEL PARTICIPANTE DE ESTUDIO
Entiendo los procedimientos descritos anteriormente. Mis preguntas han sido contestadas a mi satisfacción, y estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio. Me han dado una copia de este formulario.

_____________________________________    ___________________________
Nombre del Participante                                       Número de contacto

_____________________________________   __________________________
Firma del Participante                                         Fecha

FIRMA DE LA PERSONA QUE OBTIENE EL CONSENTIMIENTO
A mi juicio, el participante es voluntaria y conscientemente dar su consentimiento informado y posee la capacidad legal para dar consentimiento informado para participar en este estudio de investigación.

__________________________________________   _______________________
Nombre de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento  Número de contacto

__________________________________________   _______________________
Firma de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento      Fecha
REFERENCES


