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# The Relationship Between Family Factors and Academic Achievement Levels Among Hispanic Immigrant Students in the U.S.

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**The Relationship Between Family Factors and Academic Achievement Levels  
Among Hispanic Immigrant Students in the U.S.**

by

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

According to the United States (U.S.) Census Bureau (2017), the Hispanic population comprises 17.8% of the U.S. population, thus representing the largest racial minority. However, many Hispanic immigrant students encounter academic challenges, including academic achievement gaps between them and their White peers (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Gilbert, Spears Brown, & Mistry, 2017; Santiago, Gudiño, Baweja, & Nadeem, 2014). For example, in comparison with 73% of their White counterparts, only 59% of Hispanic students graduate with a high school diploma (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

To close this significant academic achievement gap, researchers have examined what factors affect the academic performance outcomes of Hispanic immigrant students. Numerous variables were found to have an impact on their performance, and the variables can be classified into the following three categories: social factors, family factors, and individual factors. This paper focuses on family factors because they are most consistently associated with academic achievement levels while also being known to promote emotional resilience among Hispanic students (Gong, Marchant, & Cheng, 2015; Roosa et al., 2012; Santiago et al., 2014). Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to review the literature that investigates the relationship between family factors and academic achievement levels among Hispanic immigrant students.

### **Family Factors**

Researchers have identified several family factors closely associated with the academic performance of Hispanic students, such as English spoken in the home, financial stress, parent-child conflict, and residential stability (Brabeck, Sibley, Taubin, & Murcia, 2016; Gordon & Cui, 2014; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). Among these factors, English spoken in the home and

residential stability were considered to be protective factors supporting the improvement of the academic performance of Hispanic students. For example, Hispanic students who spoke more English at home displayed higher levels of academic achievement (Eamon, 2005; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). Meanwhile, financial stress and parent-child conflict were risk factors contributing to lower academic achievement levels among Hispanic students. Studies have also shown that family factors can be used as predictors of Hispanic students' outcomes (Brabeck et al., 2016; Carranza, You, Chhuon, & Hudley, 2009; Gilbert et al., 2017; Gong et al., 2015).

Based on the analysis of family factors, some studies have provided suggestions on how to improve Hispanic students' school performance. For example, it has been suggested that practitioners should support immigrant families with social services, and that schools need to create supportive environments that also provide education for immigrant parents (Brabeck & Qingwen, 2010; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). In order to further support these suggestions, this paper explores how each family factor specifically influences Hispanic students' academic achievement levels at a general level.

### **Academic Achievement Levels**

According to Eng, Ornstein, and Zhao (2016), academic achievement is defined in terms of individual merits/potentials as measured by the following three indicators: 1) high school graduation rates, 2) college entrance rates, or 3) standardized measures, such as intelligence quotient (IQ) scores, grade point averages (GPA), *Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)* scores, or *American College Testing (ACT)* scores. Among the nine research studies selected in Chapter 2, GPA was used as an indicator of academic achievement levels in six studies (Brabeck & Qingwen, 2010; Gilbert et al., 2017; Gong et al., 2015; Patel, Barrera, Strambler, Muñoz, &

Macciomei, 2016; Portes & Zady, 2002; Roosa et al., 2012). Also, academic motivation as assessed by self-report questionnaires was considered as a measure of academic achievement levels in another study (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). Furthermore, one study (Eamon, 2005) used the *Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT)*, which is a standardized test designed to measure respondents' reading comprehension and mathematics skills. Lastly, the *Wide Range of Achievement-4 (WRAT-4)* test was used to evaluate the students' academic achievement levels in another study (Brabeck et al., 2016).

### **Guiding Questions**

Two questions guided the development of this starred paper:

1. Which family factors are correlated with Hispanic students' academic achievement levels?
2. How do the family factors affect the academic achievement levels of Hispanic immigrant students?

### **Focus of the Paper**

In this paper, I review studies on the influences of family factors on academic success among Hispanic immigrant students. Research participants included parents and students in kindergarten through Grade 12 from Hispanic/Latino/Mexican families. The terms "Hispanic" and "Latina/o" are used in this starred paper to ensure that there is consistency with the terms used in the research literature. In Chapter 2, I review only quantitative research studies which were published between 2002 and 2017 in the U.S.

I used the databases Academic Search Premier, EBSCO, ERIC, Google Scholar, PsychINFO, and SAGE to conduct my research. The keywords I used to find studies on and

related to the topic included: 1) *Hispanic immigrant families*, 2) *family factors*, 3) *parental involvement*, 4) *academic outcomes*, 5) *academic achievement levels gap*, 6) *Hispanic students*, 7) *Latino students*, and 8) *Mexican students*. I also searched the tables of contents of four journals: 1) the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 2) the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 3) the *Journal of Community Psychology*, and 4) the *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*.

### **Importance of the Topic**

Even though the population of Hispanic students is rapidly growing and constitutive of the main immigrant population group, Hispanic students have had lower levels of educational achievement and higher drop-out rates in comparison to those of Asian, Black, and White students (Gong et al., 2015; Hill & Torres, 2010; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003; Roosa et al., 2012). This academic achievement level gap has aggravated efforts at establishing education equality in American society (Eng et al., 2016). Therefore, it is imperative to analyze factors that have had significant impacts on Hispanic students' academic success to overcome these disparities in education.

Researchers have specifically asserted that family factors, such as family characteristics or parent-child conflict, are closely linked to students' academic outcomes (Gong et al., 2015; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003; Santiago et al., 2014). Therefore, recent studies were reviewed to investigate precisely what types of family factors affect Hispanic students' academic achievement levels.



## Definitions of Terms

*Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT)*: a test used to measure a mother's intellectual ability (Eamon, 2005). The *AFQT* assesses mathematics and reading abilities with respect to the four parts of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery.

*Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS)*: refers to "a decade-old panel that followed a large sample of second-generation youths from early adolescence to early adulthood" (Portes & Rumbaut, 2005, p. 983).

*Family Economics Stress Model (FESM)*: refers to "a framework that describes the emotional and behavioral processes underlying the association between families' experiences of financial hardship and stress and child adjustment" (Gilbert, Spears, Brown, & Mistry, 2017, p. 1203).

*Multicultural Events Scale for Adolescent (MEAS)*: refers to "an 80-item life events checklist of chronic stressors faced by ethnically diverse adolescents living in low-income, urban environment" (Patel et al., 2016, p. 125).

*Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT)*: a measure of students' achievements in reading comprehension and mathematics (Eamon, 2005). Each reading comprehension and mathematics subscale has increasing difficulty to measure the content of concepts in standardized scores.

*Wide Range of Achievement-4 (WRAT-4)*: refers to "a norm-referenced assessment that measures academic skills through four subtests: 1) word reading, 2) sentence comprehension, 3) spelling, and 4) math computation" (Brabeck et al., 2016, p. 241).

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

The purpose of this paper was to investigate family factors that affect Hispanic students' levels of academic achievement. In this chapter, nine studies examined the following four factors: 1) English spoken in the home, 2) financial stress, 3) parent-child conflict, and 4) residential stability. The studies are reviewed in ascending chronological order.

### **English Spoken in the Home**

Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez (2003) examined the relationship between parenting, acculturation, and adolescents' academic achievement levels in Mexican immigrant families. This study took place at three high schools in Los Angeles. A total of 273 Hispanic students between the ages of 14 and 20 participated in the study. The data were collected by conducting self-report questionnaires asking for information on six content areas: 1) adolescents' academic motivation, 2) adolescents' educational aspirations, 3) parental educational attainment, 4) parents' ability to help with academics, 5) parental monitoring (e.g., "This parent knows where I am after school.") and support (e.g., "This parent seems to approve of and assist me with the things I do."), and 6) acculturation (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003, p. 228).

The spoken language in the home in the acculturation category was measured with two questions asking "which languages [the adolescents] spoke at home and which language was spoken most often in their home" (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003, p. 228). Adolescents' academic motivation levels and educational aspirations were regarded as adolescents' academic outcomes in this study.

Multiple regression analyses were also conducted to determine if the language spoken in the home was related to the adolescents' academic outcomes. The results indicated that language spoken in the home was significantly correlated with academic motivation and educational aspirations; adolescents who spoke more English at home showed improved academic outcomes. The researchers also concluded that adolescents who spoke less English at home may have had parents with limited English skills. Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez (2003) therefore suggested that future research should include samples from broader locations outside of Los Angeles, a deeper understanding of parental influences, and consideration of other possible factors, such as peer pressure, intellectual ability levels, and self-esteem.

In another study, Eamon (2005) identified how 1) socio-demographic conditions in school, 2) neighborhood context, and 3) parenting structure affect academic achievement levels among Latino adolescents from immigrant families. Among these three content areas, maternal and family characteristics in one's socio-demographic area were further divided into seven factors, which included: 1) mother's age at first birth, 2) mother's years of education completed, 3) mother's *AFQT* score, 4) mother's English language difficulties, 5) whether the mother was born in the U.S., 6) average adult-to-child ratio in the household, and 7) proportion of youth living in poverty. The researcher selected a final sample of 388 Latino students from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) for this study.

Mothers' English language difficulties were measured by using the *AFQT*, which is "frequently used in research as a measure of intellectual ability" (Eamon, 2005, p. 166). More specifically, mothers reported if they had trouble with getting jobs because of their English skills

in the *AFQT*. Also, students' academic achievement levels were measured by the *PIAT* reading and mathematics subscales.

The results revealed that a report of no English language difficulties by a respective mother was positively associated with a student's reading ( $\beta = 0.12$ ) and mathematics ( $\beta = 0.18$ ) achievement levels. Eamon (2005) therefore concluded that parents' limited English skills can hinder their youths' academic achievement levels. This finding suggests that social policies that financially support Latino families might improve Latino adolescents' academic achievement levels. The author also recommended that further research be conducted with Latino youths from more diverse backgrounds since the majority of the youths in this study were born in the U.S.

### **Financial Stress**

Recently, Patel et al. (2016) compared life stressors and academic achievement levels among immigrant youths from: 1) Latin America with approximately half (56.2%) from Central and South America, 2) Asia with approximately half (55.4%) from China, and 3) the Caribbean with approximately half (56.0%) from Haiti. The participants in the study were 57 individuals of Latino ethnicity, 65 of Asian ethnicity, and 25 Caribbean students in Grades 9 to 12, all originally from 11 different countries. The students attended two international public high schools in New York City.

The *MEAS* was conducted to measure students' life stressors, such as 1) family troubles, 2) economic difficulties, 3) school issues, 4) peer problems, 5) community violence/victimization, and 6) language struggles. Academic outcomes were assessed by examining GPAs in the spring semester in conjunction with school attendance records.

Participants completed the *MEAS* survey, and academic outcomes were gathered from school records.

Among the three ethnic groups, Latino students were significantly more impacted by life stressors ( $M = 0.91$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ,  $b = 2.726$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) including economic stress in comparison with both the Caribbean group ( $M = 0.80$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) and the Asian group ( $M = 0.83$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ). Also, the Latino students' life stressors were more negatively associated with lower GPA scores ( $M = 84.86$ ,  $SD = 8.39$ ,  $b = -0.275$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) than the GPAs of both those in the Caribbean group ( $M = 85.83$ ,  $SD = 5.02$ ) and those in the Asian group ( $M = 91.24$ ,  $SD = 6.52$ ).

The study concluded that Latino newcomers who had more life stressors demonstrated lower GPAs and more days of absence from school. In opposition to this result, previously conducted research found that Latino families who have stayed in the U.S. longer tend to be more involved in educational parenting, such as through directly teaching or monitoring the educational performance of their children (Hammer & Miccio, 2004). Patel et al. (2016) also recommended that both schools and the wider community should develop intervention programs to specifically support Latino adolescents and their families.

With similar objectives, Gilbert et al. (2017) examined how Mexican immigrant parents' financial stress levels and depression rates were negatively associated with students' academic achievement levels. The study took place at 19 schools in a southern suburban city. A total of 68 Latino students in Grades 3 and 4 and 68 of their parents of Mexican heritage participated in the study. Four factors were assessed via telephone interviews with parents,

including: 1) parents' English language fluency, 2) parents' depressive symptoms, 3) parents' financial stress levels, and 4) parental involvement (e.g., the level of academic monitoring). Academic achievement levels were measured via interviews with the children. The students' grades in language arts and mathematics were also reported in the interviews.

The *FESM* model was used to analyze if the risk factors influenced the students' academic achievement levels. First, parents' financial stress levels were positively associated with parents' rates of depression. High rates of depressive symptoms were also risk factors for decreased parental involvement in students' academic progress. Thus, the findings concluded that parents' financial stress negatively impacted Latino students' academic achievement levels. However, given the limited framework, the authors further suggested that future research should be conducted with larger sample sizes and extended to broader school boundaries.

### **Parent-Child Conflict**

In a 2002 study, Portes and Zady investigated how depression, parent-child conflict, and discrimination impact Spanish-speaking adolescents' self-esteem and school achievement levels. The data were drawn from Portes and McLeod's Hispanic identity formation research conducted in 1996. A total of 5,264 second-generation students in Grades 8 and 9 participated in the study. The participants from 77 different nationalities attended 42 different schools in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and San Diego.

Students answered surveys asking questions on demographic, psychosocial, and individual factors. The psychosocial factors examined included issues regarding: 1) parent-child conflict, 2) depression, 3) familism, which is "a willingness to move away from family for higher status or a job" to support the needs of one's family (Portes & Zady, 2002, p. 315), and

4) self-esteem. GPAs and academic motivation levels were considered to determine academic outcomes.

Regression analyses were conducted to study the variance of six predictors, which were: 1) limited English proficiency, 2) GPA, 3) performance on standardized achievement tests, 4) father's presence (i.e., as living in the home), 5) mother's presence, and 6) span of time living in the U.S (Portes & Zady, 2002, p. 306). Among the predictors, the findings showed that the presence of parent-child conflict was significantly associated with lower levels of self-esteem. Also, specifically for female Nicaraguan students, academic motivation was a key predictor of self-esteem; the higher the levels of academic motivation that students had, the higher the levels of self-esteem the students showed. The authors explained that the reason why parent-child conflict was the main predictor of low self-esteem among the Mexican group was because self-esteem was negatively associated with familism.

Along similar lines, Gong et al. (2015) examined the relationship between family factors and academic outcomes for Hispanic and Asian immigrant students. The data were obtained from Portes and Rumbaut's *Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS)* conducted in 2007. A total of 1,664 Hispanic students and 3,022 Asian students in Grades 10 to 12 participated in the study. The second-generation immigrant students attended public and private schools in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and San Diego.

The adolescents were asked to answer the survey questions on: 1) family income, 2) parents' levels of education, 3) child and parent educational aspirations, 4) English proficiency, 5) family cohesion, 6) parent-child conflict, and 7) school performance. Parent-child conflict was assessed with the following three statements scored along a Likert scale

ranging from 1 to 4: “My parents and I often argue because we do not share the same goal,” “My parents are usually not very interested in what I say,” and “My parents do not like me very much” (Gong et al., 2015, p. 452). School performance was based on GPAs from high school records.

The results of hierarchical multiple regression revealed that parent-child conflict was a significant predictor for Hispanic students’ GPAs ( $\beta = -0.06$ ,  $T = -2.58$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), whereas parent-child conflict did not significantly impact Asian students’ GPAs ( $\beta = -0.04$ ,  $T = -1.63$ ,  $p = ns$ ). Instead, parental educational aspirations for their children were positively correlated with Asian students’ GPAs ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $T = 3.56$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), but not with Hispanic students’ GPAs ( $\beta = 0.01$ ,  $T = 0.50$ ,  $p = ns$ ). The authors suggested that future studies needed to account for familial and cultural differences to further support the development of immigrant student interventions.

### **Residential Stability**

With a different focus in mind, Brabeck and Qingwen (2010) identified that parents’ levels of legal vulnerability impacted the family environment and children’s well-being. The participants consisted of 132 Latino immigrant parents who were 18 years or older with at least one child under the age of 18 living at home; families resided in the northeastern region of the U.S.

Parents replied to a survey asking about their legal vulnerability, family environments, and children’s well-being. Legal vulnerability was assessed in terms of five categories:

- 1) legal U.S. residents or citizens, 2) legal U.S. residents or citizens who have had a family member detained and/or deported, 3) undocumented immigrants without a



personal or family history of detention/deportation, 4) undocumented immigrants with a family member previously detained and/or deported, and 5) undocumented immigrants with a personal history of detention and/or deportation and a family member's history of detention and/or deportation (Brabeck & Qingwen, 2010, p. 349).

Higher levels of vulnerability were demonstrative of lower levels of legal stability. Children's academic achievement levels in relation to the child well-being areas were assessed via the parents' self-reports.

The results of multiple hierarchical regression revealed that the legal vulnerability of the parent(s) was significantly related to a child's well-being. More specifically, parents' legal vulnerability negatively influenced children's academic achievement levels and emotional well-being. Based on these findings, Brabeck and Qingwen (2010) suggested that educational service providers need to consider parents' legal statuses when working with immigrant students and families. The researchers further recommended that future studies include a larger sample, a longitudinal approach, and responses from child participants.

Concerning the same general issue, Roosa et al. (2012) identified four factors that affect academic achievement levels among Mexican American adolescents, which were:

1) family structure, 2) residential stability, 3) academically and occupationally positive family roles, and 4) individual characteristics. The data in this study were drawn from an earlier longitudinal study examining the lives of Mexican American families (Roosa, Liu, Torres, Gonzales, Knight, & Saenz, 2008). A total of 749 Mexican American adolescents participated in the study; participants were in Grade 5 at Time 1 (T1) and Grade 7 at Time 2 (T2). The participants were from 47 public and charter schools in a large southwestern metropolitan area.

Computer Assisted Personal Interviews were conducted to collect information on:

1) demographic characteristics, 2) human capital (i.e., parents' educational attainment), 3) positive family role models, 4) residential stability, 5) bilingualism, 6) child externalizing behaviors (i.e., indicators of symptoms of either conduct disorder or opposition defiant disorder), and 7) academic performance. To measure residential stability (e.g., immigrant status), an answer to a question regarding "how long they lived in the home in which they currently resided" (Roosa et al., 2012. p. 7) was reported by the mothers. Students' grades were collected by their teachers at both T1 and T2.

Contrary to the findings of the previous study (Brabeck & Qingwen, 2010), the results of zero-order correlations indicated that residential stability was not significantly associated with academic outcomes at T2. The researchers explained the results in terms of two possible reasons. First, families deciding to move to better schools to pursue more supportive academic environments may mitigate against the perceived costs of improved academic outcomes. Second, students' attendance rates may not always be related to residential instability. For these reasons, Roosa et al. (2012) suggested that future studies could examine other possible factors (e.g., school attachment levels) that may affect residential/school stability.

In another study, Brabeck et al. (2016) examined the relationship between an immigrant parent's legal status and a child's academic achievement level. The participants included 178 families from the Dominican Republic, Central America, and Mexico who had at least one U.S.-born child between the ages of 7 and 10. Among the families, 90 had at least one "authorized" parent (51%) while 88 had one "unauthorized" parent (49%). Parents who had 1) U.S. citizenship, 2) permanent resident status, or 3) any type of authorized visa were categorized as

authorized. Parents who did not have any of these three items were considered as unauthorized. Parents were interviewed and asked to report their 1) demographic information, 2) parental legal status, and 3) access to services. Parental legal status was determined via the self-report method. Children's academic achievement levels were evaluated by the *WRAT-4*.

The results of t-tests ( $t = -4.07, df = 175, p < 0.001$ ) and chi-square analyses ( $\chi^2 = 15.65, df = 1, p < 0.001$ ) revealed that students with authorized parents reported significantly higher scores ( $M = 100.40, SD = 10.45$ ) than students with unauthorized parents ( $M = 93.22, SD = 12.94$ ). The findings also showed that families with unauthorized parents used less social services (5.68%) than families with authorized parents (34.44%,  $t = -9.53, df = 139.96, p < 0.001$ ). Thus, the authors suggested that policies should consider and support every family, including families with unauthorized parents.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I reviewed nine studies that investigated the relationship between family factors and Hispanic immigrant students' academic achievement levels. The studies published between 2002 and 2017 revealed that family factors generally have statistically significant impacts on academic outcomes among Hispanic immigrant students. Table 2 summarizes the findings of the research which are further discussed in Chapter 2. Conclusions and suggestions for further research are discussed in Chapter 3.

**Table 1****Summary of Chapter 2 Findings**

AUTHORS	STUDY DESIGN	PARTICIPANTS	PROCEDURE	FINDINGS
Portes & Zady (2002)	Quantitative, regression analysis	5,264 second-generation Spanish-speaking students (227 Colombians, 1,227 Cubans, 758 Mexicans, and 344 Nicaraguans) from 77 different nationalities in Grades 8 and 9 from 42 different schools in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and San Diego	Students answered the survey asking questions concerning psychosocial variables (e.g., levels of parent-child conflict, depression, familism, and self-esteem) and predictor variables (e.g., limited English proficiency, GPA, performance on standardized achievement tests, father's presence, mother's presence, and span of time living in the U.S.).	Parent-child conflict had a negative association with students' self-esteem. Also, self-esteem was a positive predictor of students' GPA and motivation for achievement.
Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez (2003)	Quantitative	273 Hispanic students, whose two parents were born in Mexico, between the ages of 14 to 20 from three high schools in Los Angeles	Students answered the self-report questionnaires consisting of 6 content areas: academic motivation, educational aspirations, parental education attainment, parents' ability to help with academics, parental monitoring and support, and acculturation variables.	The researchers found a positive relationship between parental monitoring and support, parental educational levels, English spoken in the home, and academic motivation.
Eamon (2005)	Quantitative	388 Latino adolescents between the ages of 10 and 14 who provided data for the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY)	Participants answered the self-administered survey consisting of four content areas of independent variables: youth characteristics, maternal and family characteristics (e.g., mother's English language difficulties and mother's U.S. birth), school and neighborhood environments, and parenting practices.	Mothers' English language difficulties were negatively related to both reading and math achievement levels as measured by the <i>PIAT</i> .

Table 1 (continued)

AUTHORS	STUDY DESIGN	PARTICIPANTS	PROCEDURE	FINDINGS
Brabeck & Qingwen (2010)	Quantitative, regression analysis	132 Latino immigrant parents from a Latin American country with at least one child under the age of 18 in the northeast region of the U.S.	Parents replied to a survey asking about parents' legal vulnerability, the impact of deportation on family environment, and the impact of deportation on child well-being. Parents' perceptions of their children's well-being, including academic achievement levels, were assessed via responses to this statement: "The existence of deportation affects how my child performs in school" (Brabeck & Qingwen, 2010, p. 350).	Parents' levels of legal vulnerability negatively affected children's academic achievement levels.
Roosa et al. (2012)	Quantitative, longitudinal study	749 Mexican American adolescents in Grade 5 at Time 1 and in Grade 7 at Time 2 in a large southwestern metropolitan area	Students were randomly selected from 47 public and charter schools and answered survey questions providing information on seven content areas: demographic variables, human capital, positive family role models, residential stability, bilingualism, child externalizing symptoms, and academic performance.	Being female, possessing substantial human capital, and having positive family role models were positive factors associating students in Grade 5 with higher academic achievement levels (assessed in terms of GPA) in Grade 7, while residential stability was not a significant factor influencing academic achievement levels.
Gong, Marchant, & Cheng (2015)	Quantitative, data analysis	1,664 Hispanic and 3,022 Asian students in Grades 10 to 12 from public and private high schools in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and San Diego. The data originated from the <i>CILS</i> (Portes & Rumbaut, 2007).	Students reported their answers in a survey which asked questions on seven content areas: family income, parents' levels of education, child and parent educational aspirations, English proficiency, family cohesion, parent-child conflict, and academic performance.	Low family income and significant parent-child conflict negatively affected Hispanic students' academic outcomes (measured in terms of GPA).

Table 1 (continued)

AUTHORS	STUDY DESIGN	PARTICIPANTS	PROCEDURE	FINDINGS
Brabeck, Sibley, Taubin, & Murcia (2016)	Quantitative	178 families from the Dominican Republic, Central America, and Mexico who had at least one U.S.-born child between the ages of 7 and 10. Among the families, 90 had at least one “authorized” parent (51%) while 88 had one “unauthorized” parent (49%).	Parents were assessed via the self-report method for identifying their legal status and interviewed for assessment of their access to social services. Their children were evaluated via the <i>WRAT-4</i> to assess their academic achievement levels.	Unauthorized parental status was associated with lower academic achievement levels of the children. Also, social service use was a positive factor that moderated the negative relationship between parental legal vulnerability and child academic outcomes.
Patel, Barrera, Strambler, Muñoz, & Macciomei (2016)	Quantitative	57 Latino, 25 Caribbean, and 65 Asian students from 11 different countries in Grades 9 to 12 from international public high schools in New York City	Students participated in surveys with questions on six content areas regarding life stressors: family troubles, economic difficulties, school issues, peer problems, community violence/victimization, and language struggles. Academic achievement levels were measured using official GPAs and school attendance records.	Life stressors, including economic difficulties, were negatively related to GPAs. More specifically, life stressors were correlated with lower academic achievement levels among Latino newcomers more significantly than with other immigrant peers.
Gilbert, Spears, Brown, & Mistry (2017)	Quantitative, structural equation model	68 Latino students from Mexico in Grades 3 and 4 from a Southern suburban city	Parents participated in telephone interviews and answered questions on four content areas: parents’ English language fluency, parents’ depressive symptoms, parents’ financial stress, and parental involvement. Children’s academic results were collected via on-site interviews with the children.	Parents’ financial stress levels were closely connected with their depressive symptoms, and the higher the parental risk factors, the lower the parental academic involvement. Also, parental involvement was positively related to children’s academic outcomes.

### **Chapter 3: Conclusions and Recommendations**

The purpose of this paper was to evaluate the relationship between family factors and students' academic outcomes among Hispanic immigrant families. Chapter 1 presented the sociological background of the research on family factors and academic achievement levels. Chapter 2 provided a review of nine studies that examined the impact of family factors on academic achievement levels among Hispanic students. In Chapter 3, I discuss conclusions, recommendations, and implications that stem from the findings of the nine studies.

#### **Conclusions**

Four family factors, including 1) English spoken in the home, 2) financial stress, 3) parent-child conflict, and 4) residential stability, were investigated to determine how they affect Hispanic students' school performance in nine studies. The results demonstrated that English spoken in the home and residential stability were positively associated with academic achievement levels, while the other two factors, financial stress and parent-child conflict, were negatively correlated with Hispanic students' outcomes. In other words, when Hispanic students used more English at home, they demonstrated higher GPAs. Also, the more financial stress, parent-child conflict, and residential vulnerability Hispanic students were exposed to, the lower level of academic success they displayed.

Two studies examined how English spoken in the home influenced a child's academic achievement levels. Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez (2003) reported that adolescents demonstrated higher academic motivation when they used more English at home. In this study, academic motivation was considered as a main predictor of academic achievement levels. In addition,

Eamon (2005) discovered that parents' limited English skills appeared to have a negative impact on Hispanic adolescents' reading and mathematics scores on the *IPAT*.

Two of the nine studies compared financial stress levels and Hispanic students' school performance. Patel et al. (2016) found that economic difficulties were negatively correlated with lower GPAs and attendance rates in schools among Latino students compared to the corresponding achievements of Caribbean and Asian groups. According to Gilbert et al. (2017), parents' financial stress levels were also negatively associated with children's academic achievement levels. Financial stress caused higher levels of depression among parents, and the high levels of depression appeared to have caused passive parental involvement in schools.

Parent-child conflict was examined in two studies. Portes and Zady (2002) reported that parent-child conflict was negatively correlated with students' self-esteem. This study explained that student self-esteem was positively associated with high levels of academic motivation, which itself was a predictor of strong academic outcomes. Further, Gong et al. (2015) indicated that parent-child conflict was significantly related to Hispanic students' lower GPAs. In contrast, for Asian students, parental educational aspirations for children positively impacted Asian students' GPAs.

In terms of residential stability, two studies (Brabeck & Qingwen, 2010; Brabeck et al., 2016) indicated that parents' legal vulnerability was a risk factor affecting a child's academic outcomes. In Brabeck and Qingwen's research (2010), parents with higher levels of legal vulnerability reported that their children demonstrated lower academic performance levels and emotional well-being. Also, students with authorized parents reported higher scores on the



*WRAT-4* and more frequent use of social services than students with unauthorized parents. In contrast, Roosa et al. (2012) found no significant relationship between residential stability and the academic outcomes of Mexican American students. Because this result debunked that of the previous research (Brabeck & Qingwen, 2010), the authors suggested that future studies could consider other possible factors that may be indicative of residential or school stability.

In conclusion, the findings in the nine studies revealed that four main family factors (i.e., 1) English spoken in the home, 2) financial stress, 3) parent-child conflict, and 4) residential stability) had statistically significant relationships with students' academic achievement levels in Hispanic immigrant families. The results imply the necessity of studying the importance of intensive family support for Hispanic immigrants.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The reviewed research has revealed how each family factor can influence the academic performance of Hispanic students, and it has been made clear that the family factors were critical causes and predictors of students' academic outcomes. Nevertheless, follow-up studies should be conducted on the relationships between various family factors and academic achievement levels in Hispanic immigrant families due to the existence of limitations on the findings.

In the nine studies, seven focused only on Hispanic student groups, and two studies had Asian comparison groups. These two studies determined how Hispanic students are more vulnerable to parent-child conflict (Gong et al., 2015) and financial stress (Patel et al., 2016) in comparison with Asian student groups. If future studies could look at other ethnic groups, such as Black students, immigrant students from European countries, or White students, they might

find more significant factors that may influence academic success in the Hispanic student group.

Two of the above researchers recommended that additional studies implement larger sample sizes. Gilbert et al. (2017) considered the responses of a total of 68 Latino students and 68 their parents, and Brabeck and Qingwen (2010) used a sample with a total of 132 Latino immigrant parents. Because of the small sample sizes, their studies may have limited findings that may be unable to be generalized.

According to Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez (2003), future studies need to collect research data from a broader range of locations because 273 Hispanic students from three high schools in Los Angeles cannot be expected to represent all Hispanic immigrant students in the U.S. Therefore, future research should collect samples from various areas in the U.S.

Several researchers mentioned that future studies need to consider other factors that may affect Hispanic students' academic success. For instance, Gong et al. (2015) recommended that future studies could account for familial and cultural differences between different ethnic groups (e.g., Hispanic and Asian immigrant students). Also, Roosa et al. (2012) suggested that future studies could consider non-cultural factors, such as school attachment levels and peers' attitudes toward academic achievement.

### **Implications for Current Practice**

As an international special education teacher, I have found that Hispanic immigrant students demonstrate relatively lower academic achievement levels and are more frequently referred to special education services in comparison with other ethnic groups, including Asian, Black, and White students. The findings from the nine studies supported my hypothesis that

family factors are correlated with academic outcomes among Hispanic immigrant students. From the results, I have found several implications for the special education field.

My intentions are to apply the findings from the literature review to further examine how family factors are related to each other. As Patel et al. (2016) indicated, family troubles (e.g., parent-child conflict) and economic difficulties (e.g., financial stress) can be predictors for each other; students who had more family troubles reported high degrees of economic difficulty. Likewise, residential stability could predict if English is spoken in the home or if there is financial stress, and vice versa. Identifying the relationship between each factor is imperative because the results will be used as evidence to establish policies to support Hispanic immigrant students.

The findings can also be utilized when practitioners and researchers develop support programs for Hispanic immigrant families. For example, Brabeck et al. (2016) reported that Latino families with unauthorized parents use social services less frequently, and this under-use of social services negatively impacts the academic achievement levels of children. Thus, I will further reflect on the factors that influence Hispanic students' performance in my future studies to develop plans for parental education and intervention programs to meet the needs of Hispanic immigrant families.

### **Summary**

This literature review focused on research regarding the Hispanic population, currently the largest racial minority group in the U.S., and provided perspectives on the four types of family factors which affect academic success among Hispanic immigrant students. The findings in Chapter 2 revealed that each family factor was significantly related to student performance;

for instance, Hispanic students who speak more English in the home demonstrated higher academic achievement levels (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). However, other factors including financial stress, parent-child conflict, and residential instability negatively impacted students' outcomes. Future studies should consider these findings more carefully and in relation to one another in order to develop effective family support programs that can productively promote Hispanic students' academic achievement levels.

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