

1-1-2008

Parenting Circles Program: The Key Elements for the Meaningful Engagement of Spanish-Speaking Parents to Support their Children's School Success

Catalina Beatriz Garcia
Ryerson University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.ryerson.ca/dissertations>

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Garcia, Catalina Beatriz, "Parenting Circles Program: The Key Elements for the Meaningful Engagement of Spanish-Speaking Parents to Support their Children's School Success" (2008). *Theses and dissertations*. Paper 110.

This Major Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Ryerson. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Ryerson. For more information, please contact bcameron@ryerson.ca.

***PARENTING CIRCLES PROGRAM: THE KEY ELEMENTS FOR THE MEANINGFUL
ENGAGEMENT OF SPANISH-SPEAKING PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL SUCCESS***

by

Catalina Beatriz García, BA, University of Guelph, 2006

A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2008

© Catalina Beatriz García 2008

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this major research paper.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this paper to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Signature

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this paper by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Signature

***PARENTING CIRCLES PROGRAM: THE KEY ELEMENTS FOR THE MEANINGFUL
ENGAGEMENT OF SPANISH-SPEAKING PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL SUCCESS***

© Catalina García, 2008

Master of Arts
Immigration and Settlement Studies
Ryerson University

ABSTRACT

The present paper examines the *Parenting Circles Program* as a successful intervention for parental involvement and the *Early Authors Program's* transformative framework for the creation of personal books. The question to be answered throughout this paper is, how did the participation of Spanish-Speaking parents in the workshop highlight elements that facilitated their meaningful engagement in their children's education? The design of the project included newcomer Spanish-speaking primary caregivers with a child or grandchild younger than thirteen years of age, who were required to attend at least five of six weekly workshops dealing with topics related to education. The main conditions were that the parents felt free to fully express themselves and exchange ideas, their children were part of the process, they gained access to valuable information and they took on the role of co-leaders. Implementing lessons learned from this study will result in future successful parent interventions.

Keywords: intervention; parental engagement; immigrant; Spanish-speaking; children's school success

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Judith Bernhard, for her continual support and guidance. Moreover, I wish to thank her for all the constructive criticisms and the opportunities she has given to me to grow intellectually as well as professionally throughout the process.

Also, the members of the research team who were a great source of support during the project, Stefany Pinkus, Elsa Lopez, Alana Butler, Camille Henry, and, most importantly, Gloria Fait-Roberts and Judith Bernhard. They were all a pleasure to work with and each provided me with invaluable comments to move my work forward. I am also grateful to the parents who took part in the study as they inspired and taught me a great deal about myself.

Finally, I would like to thank my family who joined me on this journey and always encouraged me. I would like to draw special attention to my mother, Cynthia Garcia, for her continuous support and tremendous generosity over the years. I would also like to acknowledge my friends who were the source of great stress relief and laughter when I really needed it.

Table of Contents

Author's declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Chapter One: Literature Review	1
I. Personal background	3
II. Theoretical framework	4
III. Selected Freirian American intervention programs	8
IV. Selected Freirian Canadian intervention programs	11
V. Research questions	13
Chapter Two: Methodology	14
I. Participants	14
a. Recruitment process	14
b. Participant information	15
II. Procedure	17
a. Location	17
b. Facilitator training	17
c. Facilitation of parent groups	18
d. Final event	19
III. Measures	20
Chapter Three: Findings	23
I. Parents felt free to fully express themselves and exchange ideas in the group	23
a. Moving beyond the differences	24

b. Removing barriers to communication	25
II. Children were important participants in the process	29
a. Books becoming a new form of communication with children	30
b. Transferring book authoring to the home environment	33
III. Parents gained access to valuable information	34
IV. Parents benefited from role as co-leaders	37
a. Expanding their social network	39
b. Starting their own group	40
V. Summary of findings	43
Chapter Four: Discussion	45
References	50
Tables	
1. Participant information	16
2. Population by Mother Tongue for Toronto- Ontario- Canada (Spanish)	56
3. Immigrant population by place of birth (2006 Census)	56
4. Languages spoken most often at home for total population and age groups, 2006 counts for Toronto- 20% sample data.	57
5. Mother Tongue for total population and age groups, 2001 and 2006 census for Toronto- 20% sample data	58
Figures	
1. Map of 2001 Latin American Population in the City of Toronto	59
Appendix	
A. Recruitment flyer: Spanish version	60
B. Recruitment flyer: English version	61
C. Initial intake survey template: Spanish version	62

D. Initial intake survey template: English version_____	
E. Registration form: Spanish version_____	64
F. Registration form: English version_____	65
G. Initial questionnaire: Spanish version_____	66
H. Exit interview questionnaire: Spanish version_____	73
I. Exit interview questionnaire: English version_____	75
J. Completion certificate: English version_____	77
K. Book samples _____	78

Chapter One: Literature Review

Canada is known internationally for being an optimal destination for migrants by promoting and encouraging diversity. However, it seems as though this rhetoric is not a true reflection of the reality that many immigrants face once they arrive in Canada. For instance, issues surrounding their underemployment (Lo, Preston, Wang, Reil, Harvey & Siu, 2000), immigrant status (Bernhard, Landolt & Goldring, 2005), access to health (George. & Michalski, 1996), housing (Murdie & Teixeira, 2000) and lack of civic participation (Siemiatycki, 1998). It is not only the adults who are combating these obstacles to settlement, but also those who migrate as young children or are born in Canada to newcomers, such as dropout rates, special needs, and literacy development. It has been said that over 20% of all newcomers are children and that nearly half of the students in the Toronto Board of Education represent over seventy-six different languages (Simich, 2000). Therefore, the low academic achievement of children of Spanish-speaking immigrants (Brown, 1994; Drever 1996; Ornstein 1997; Pacini-Ketachaw, Bernhard & Freire, 2001) should not be ignored. According to the 2006 Census, there were 345,345 people in Canada that indicated that Spanish was their mother tongue, of those 160,275 live in Ontario, and of those 108,380 live in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census) (*see Tables 2-5 for Census statistical data*). It is important to note that the term 'Latino' is a concept that incorporates a shared bond of culture, history, language, and often, social oppression and inequality (Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005). This paper will use the terms Latino, Latin American and Spanish-speaking interchangeably.

In the context of the United States and Canada Latinos have had very different histories. The United States' geographical proximity to Mexico, and other Latin American countries, has

resulted in a long documented history of migration and the formation of ethnic enclaves (Goldring, Berinstien & Bernhard, 2007). On the other hand, Latino migration to Canada is much more recent and therefore the available literature in the area is relatively smaller. Over the last fifteen years there has been an extremely rapid increase of Latin American migration to Canada. Most are choosing to settle in major urban centres and this will eventually lead to areas that are more culturally concentrated, such as ethnic enclaves. In Toronto, and other large suburban areas, a number of businesses and services have developed aimed at the Latino community, or what Goldring (2006) refers to as “Latinized” areas (p. 199).

There have been many debates surrounding the academic achievement of immigrant children, or lack thereof, and how to best ensure their success. It becomes problematic when the existing educational system seems to primarily promote the values of the dominant culture which is symptomatic not only of the problems encountered by newcomers but by all students (Bernhard, Freire, Pacini-Ketachbaw & Villanueva, 1998). Numerous strategies have been recommended to solve these issues, however many students are still failing to meet the provincial standards. It has been determined that increasing parental involvement in the educational system of their children seems to be the best way to combat most of these problems (Moore & Lasky, 2001), however overcoming logistical (time, money, safety, child care) and attitudinal (uncertainty, dissatisfaction, communication problems) barriers to gain their active participation needs to be addressed (Sosa, 1997).

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), that deals with the quality of publically funded schools in Ontario and reports to the Minister of Education, created a partnership model which outlines six broad ways in which parents can become involved in their children’s education: Some of which include, learning at home through specific interventions,

decision making involving parents, developing leaders and collaborating with community services (Moore & Lasky, 2001). While this government organisation placed emphasis on the importance of moving away from the traditional models of teacher-parent interactions it begs the question of whether schools have successfully executed this model. Epstein (2002) and her colleagues identified six different types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. A harmonious relationship must be created between the home and school, as not only do the parents need to know what the school expects of their children, but vice versa (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2006).

This paper examines the use of the *Canadian Parenting Workshops* (2004) as a way to prepare children for school success and encourage active parental engagement through a set of workshops, developed, field-tested, and evaluated by Ryerson University. These workshops were coupled with a transformative literacy project to create the *Parenting Circles Program*. The goal was to provide the parents with relevant information about the local school system, how to access resources and networks of support in the community, as well as incorporating a creative book authoring element to encourage literacy and Spanish language maintenance. The eleven parents participated in various teaching and learning activities to support their children's development. Below is a brief statement about my personal background as it relates to the project, as well as an examination of literature in the areas of critical pedagogy, funds of knowledge, transformative pedagogy, social/cultural capital, parental engagement in the elementary school system and studies in the area of Latin Americans in Canada.

I. Personal background

Peters, Klein and Shadwick (1998) emphasise the significance of providing a sense of one's background, perspectives and motives to research. I was born in Ecuador and came to Canada as a small child with my family. My parents came with the goals of a better life, and this, for them, was the hope of academic success and a bright future. As time in Canada went by, they tried sending my brother and I back to Ecuador every few years in order to remain fluent in Spanish, however this became increasingly difficult as we got older. It was a struggle to preserve my mother tongue, which ultimately had an affect on my identity and left me with feelings of inadequacy as a member of the Latino community in Canada. It often seemed as though I was never 'Latina' enough for some, nor 'Canadian' enough for others.

I studied Political Science and Criminology in my undergraduate degree, and when I entered my Master of Arts in Immigration and Settlement Studies, at Ryerson University, I did not have a topic for my major research paper in mind. Within the first couple months, I realised that I wanted to break away from my previous studies and focus on the Latin American community in Canada. I was introduced to Judith Bernhard and she presented me with the opportunity to work on this project. The project allowed me to learn about myself and relate the discussions in the group to my family's settlement experience in Canada.

II. Theoretical framework

A main underlying framework of the *Parenting Circles Program* was based on the work of Pablo Freire (1971) in the area of education and empowering oppressed communities. Freire said that the oppressed should not be 'marginals' nor should they live 'outside' society. Therefore the solution was not to 'integrate' them but rather to transform the entire structure (Freire, 2000). He suggested that an educational program would only be successful when it began at the grassroots level and was built out of the community. Further, he held that the interaction between teacher

and student did not occur in a vacuum but rather in an elaborate social context in which the pupils did not passively reproduce the information presented to them. By empowering students and using cultural references, he tapped into sources of strength and ideals. The outcome was a positive way to counteract the effect of oppression. Ovando (2006) described Freire's work as a radical pedagogical framework that can be described as problem posing, reflective thinking, knowledge gathering, and collaborative decision making for its delivery. This involves being open to new paradigms such as ways to transform power relations inside and outside the classroom (Ovando, Combs & Collier, 2006). Many of these elements were reflected in De Gaetano's (2007) study that focused on a small group of educators that enlisted the participation of Latino parents in schools by drawing attention to their culture and background. The author concluded that for an educational program to succeed and engage parents, it must understand the ideas, language and culture of the community. She found that as the participants became more aware of the critical role they played as allies in their children's schooling, they began to feel more empowered.

Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) coined the term *funds of knowledge* to refer to “[the] historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). They examined how households use their funds of knowledge to deal with difficult and complex situations, as well as the way social networks are created and how these groups contribute to the member's knowledge. They noted that when the teacher visits the student's home, they have a more holistic understanding of the 'student' in that environment; while in the classroom the teacher has a limited perception of the child. In reality, teachers rarely draw on the resources available outside the classroom and fail to tap into the existing funds of knowledge in the community. Moll and

his colleagues (1992) also emphasized that children often appear to be passive bystanders in the classroom, however they are active in various ways once in their homes. Therefore, teachers would benefit from comprehending and incorporating the knowledge that their students are already equipped with and using this as a learning tool in the classroom (Moll, et al., 1992). The acknowledgement that children do not enter a classroom as a *tabula rasa* allows the teacher to capitalise on community resources and, ultimately, better bridge school and home. Moll's exploration of homework assignments produced literacy related interactions with parents and community members. For instance, an assignment would contain questions on bilingualism and the students were required to ask other family members for their opinions, feelings and knowledge on the topic. This was seen as vital as the student became better acquainted with the subject of bilingualism and their parent's knowledge is valued throughout the writing process.

Cummins (2000) outlines another important theoretical perspective, which he refers to as transformative pedagogy; a vision whereby the interactions between educators and students promotes collaborative relations of power. He speculated that the main underlying problem amongst 'marginalised' communities and students is a sense of disempowerment, therefore, a more collaborative approach to education may increase a sense of involvement and individual agency. Students are better able to relate to the curriculum content if it deals with issues that are relevant to their daily lives. Cummins identified eight components that affect the vision of transformative pedagogy: the curriculum must reflect the lives of the students; it should teach critical thought; there should be a social justice focus; it must be participatory and experimental in nature; engender hopeful and close relationships; encourage activism and reflect the diversity of people; be academically rigorous; and culturally sensitive (Cummins, 2000). This process is said to affirm the children's identity and inclusion in the system while at the same time

developing the linguistic and intellectual tools necessary for critical inquiry. He stressed that a child's positive self-image is crucial to academic success; therefore the devaluation of linguistic, cultural and academic identity will result in poor scholastic achievement. Using this analytic lens, helps explain why many immigrant children are not faring well in school and why they view their efforts as futile. It is vital that educators encourage culturally diverse students to continue to develop their language and culture, bringing this from home to the classroom to enrich all the students. In addition, some of the classroom barriers (for instance, racism, omission of marginalised groups from history) that groups face, must be addressed to create awareness by all students and encourage the marginalised groups to overcome them.

Kilbride (2000) published an exhaustive literature review on the educational implications of the human, social and cultural capital of immigrant children and their families. She found that a student's perception of their individual and family's social capital was highly correlated with their academic success; therefore, encouragement at school is vital for a student's positive self-perception and sense of value. Thus, the lines of communication between the parents and schools must be open, resulting in bonds not only with the school but also with their children. In addition, according to Kilbride, the social capital of the community to which they belong seemed to play a role in parents likelihood to engage in the school. She cited Furstenber and Hughes' (1995) argument that the extent to which the family is bonded to a protective social network can result in the support of a child's success that goes beyond the capital of the individual familial unit (Kilbride, 2000). Kilbride also noted that cultural capital is considered less often in the research on children's success in school. She used Aschaffenburg and Maas' (1997) definition of cultural capital as, "proficiency in and familiarity with dominant cultural codes and practices - for example, linguistic styles, aesthetic preferences, styles of interaction" (1997, p. 573). She

states that the current school system de-legitimizes immigrant children's cultural capital, therefore faculties of education must genuinely encourage communities to become involved in a collaborative and positive way (Kilbride, 2000). Many parenting programs exist; for example, *Project FLAME* (Rodriguez Brown, 2003) and *Family Initiative for English Literacy (FIEL)* (Quintero & Huerta Macias, 1990). However, these are not based on Freirian principles, thus for the purpose of this paper only three American and two Canadian interventions that do follow these frameworks will be reviewed.

III. Selected Freirian American intervention programs

Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2004) reported on an initiative called *La Familia* that was created with the goal of a more inclusive partnership between parents and schools in the San Francisco Bay area with Spanish speaking parents. It began as a small project of a five parents that later expanded to five other schools. The participants were motivated by the urgency to improve their children's schooling and enhance opportunities for a better future high school experience. They found that in order to achieve a more active voice they would have to organise independently from the school. Participation in *La Familia* was an opportunity for them to unite and garner a sense of cohesion, which ultimately led to their social empowerment. They strived for *confianza* (mutual trust) and, more importantly in this particular study, *convivencia* which referred to their collective creation, solidarity and bonding.

The first meeting of *La Familia* was held in a parent's home with the goal of creating a steering community to mobilise them. However, it did not take long before the parents decided to host a larger inclusive community meeting at a non-profit organization to introduce the *La Familia* initiative to a greater number of families to determine a general mission and create a plan for the new organisation. It was surprising that 112 families were represented at the

meeting. The sessions were hosted in Spanish. The non-profit organization that hosted the meetings and they wanted to share their expertise with the parents without taking on a leadership role. This organisation provided an independent avenue for school participation for a growing number of low-income newcomers, often given the label of “disengaged” from their children’s education.

As the program gained momentum, the hope of the participants was that the program would be institutionalised into the life of the school so the parent-activists could make their suggestions directly to the school. The final report of the *La Familia* initiative outlined eight principles for a successful partnership with the school: the parent’s engagement through *convivencia*; schools commitment to improving academic performance; focus on student achievement; institutionalisation and alternating leadership; joint practices of discovery among all stakeholders; open up school symbolic spaces to emerging communities; committed to organising work with feasible results; and sensitivity to other communities. The examination of *La Familia* initiative was by participant observations and interviews that lasted over a period of two years.

On a smaller scale, Dyrness (2007) investigated a group called *Madres Unidas* in Oakland, California, made up of five Latina mothers who meet weekly for one year around a kitchen table in one of the women’s homes. They created an educational space where they could critique, engage, and take action against the practices that alienated them from the school system. These activist mothers challenged the traditionally held views of home-school relations. This was a participatory research team comprised of immigrant mothers who helped start a new school for their children, however were eventually frustrated by their exclusion in the public meetings at the school. The meetings were run in a bureaucratic format that did not allow for

discussion or debate. They were not encouraged to discuss amongst themselves or comment on proposals, which did not allow for a sense of community to be established. The few parents that spoke out and questioned the system were labelled as ‘problem parents’ and thus it was crucial that *Madres Unidas* be created. Dyrness addressed three elements for a safe space: first, the use of personal experiences as the starting point for all learning and community building; secondly, the view of education as a collective undertaking, where relationships were based on *confianza*; finally, a critical analysis of school practices and discourses that maintain the subordination of Latino parents and students. While both the *La Familia* initiative and *Madres Unidas* were successful in getting the attention of the school, it is not known if it could work with non-activist parents. Further, only the school was expected to change and it is unclear if parents also received information they needed to change their behaviour.

In the United States one of the transformative education practices in the form of literacy development among young English Language Learners (ELL) were first implemented in 1986 in the Pajaro Valley School district serving Spanish-speaking rural students in Watsonville, California. The hope was to empower the students and parents to challenge the power relations in typical school-community interactions through monthly meetings on the topics of children’s literature, home language maintenance, valorisation of cultural heritage and emphasising the parent’s role as teachers (Cummins, 1996). While this was an important intervention, the lack of standardized measures and use of only anecdotal evidence leaves the one curious about making overarching statements with respect to the success of the study. One project that followed this transformative framework was the *Early Author’s Program* which merges effective teaching, appropriate recognition of the value of home language maintenance, and strong support for both cognitive engagement and personal identity investment in the learning process (Bernhard,

Cummins, Campoy, Ada, Winsler & Bleiker, 2006). The program was first implemented in Miami-Dade County, Florida, as a twelve-month intervention that focused on bilingual literacy in preschoolers from 800 families. The children and their families created dual-language identity texts based on family histories, the children's lives and their interests. This study included the use of a control group, random selection and standardised measures. By the end of the year, there were positive signs of language development, strengthened self-identity, and improved self-esteem (Bernhard, et al., 2006). In a forthcoming article by Bernhard, Winsler, Bleiker, Ginieniewicz and Madigan indicate that the children that were part of the intervention made significantly greater language advancements than those in the control group. However, one does not know to what extent the authoring of the books affected the parents.

IV. Selected Freirian Canadian intervention programs

Chow and Cummins (2003), worked in a school-community-university collaboration cosponsored by the Peel Board of Education, York University and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. The intervention, called the Thornwood Public School project, was designed to focus on elementary schools with ethnically, racially and linguistically diverse first-generation immigrants to Canada. They focused on valorization of multilingual and multicultural approaches to learning and encouraged non-English speaking parents to read stories to their children in their native language. The students created dual-language books as a way to transfer previous linguistic knowledge into English with the hope that this positive communication would eventually foster active collaboration between parents and teachers. Some of the goals of the study were to forge stronger home-school partnerships, stress that reading in any language develops literacy, encourage parents to read with their children at home, share experiences between parents and children. They noted that encouraging children to

maintain their home language is crucial as they are already feeling inadequate about their English proficiency. They suggested creating illustrated bilingual phrase books, encouraging parents to relate cultural narratives, posting multilingual signs around the school, teaching multicultural games, promoting bilingual students and parents to make important announcements over the intercom, and investing in multilingual word processing software. Although the children's parents were involved in the translation of the books into the home language, no parent component was planned. Further, there was no documentation of the affects of the program on the parents.

In an article closely paralleling the study examined in this major research paper, Bernhard, Freire and Pacini (1998) highlighted that partnership and collaboration with parents would promote home-school communication, help build positive strategies for helping children, decrease dropout rates and absenteeism. The group of twelve Spanish-speaking parents met in a community centre in Toronto, Canada, over an eight month period for two hour meetings conducted in Spanish. In their article, Bernhard and colleagues incorporated statements made by the mothers, which provided a better understanding of what these parents identified as barriers to their involvement in the educational system. Some of these barriers included issues of gender, race and class. For example, interestingly, the parents' alleged passivity was an outcome of the school structure rather than apathy. They had tried to be advocates for their children and failed. Through the sessions, the parents became aware of their marginalization in the system and were better equipped to resist pressures toward assimilation. The parents took action and made their voices heard. One mother was quoted as saying, "[t]his group has served as way for me to help friends who have problems with their children at school" (Bernhard, et al., 1998, p. 17). Ultimately, the goal was to promote the educational attainment of Latin American children

through social networks and parent-school collaboration. While the schools often espoused a partnership model it is difficult for school personnel to access the parents' *funds of knowledge*, however, by conducting further groups like these and using Freirian dialogue this can be overcome. While this intervention was a success, the lack of inclusion of their children brings to question whether they would be able to share with them. Although the value of language and Latin American culture was emphasised, it is difficult for the reader to assess how *funds of knowledge* were manifested.

In summary, while there have been successful Freirian based interventions, gaps still remain in the literature. First, it is unknown whether projects like *La Familia* and *Madres Unidas* would be successful if the participating parents were not experienced and devoted activists. Secondly, these interventions seemed to be based on the assumption that the main task of the parent groups is to put pressure on the schools to change, rather than a two-way street where the parents also have a role in increasing their knowledge base. Thirdly, there is the question of how a focus on identity and *funds of knowledge* would affect the parents ability to become advocates for their children.

V. Research questions

The questions that guided this research are as follows:

- 1) What are the key elements for the meaningful engagement of Spanish-speaking parents to support their children's school success?
- 2) To what extent and in what ways did the *Early Authors Program* affect the parents and their children?

Chapter Two: Methodology

The *Parenting Circles Program* was proposed as a means to provide parents with strategies to support their children's school success at the elementary school level and to connect these adults so that they could build strong support networks. As part of the project parents also took part in creative writing exercises and produced books to give to their children. The Ministry of Education generously awarded the research group with a *Parents Reaching Out* grant in order to carry out the following activities, which will be expanded on below: Recruitment, Location, Facilitator Training, Facilitation of Parent Groups, Final Event, Final Interview, and Data Analysis. The two groups included in this framework were Spanish-speaking and Black parents, as evidence has shown that children of these communities have lower academic achievement and higher-dropout rates. The Spanish-speaking parent group was called *Padres en Acción/Parents in Action* and the second group was called the *Organization of Parents of Black Children*. However, this major research paper focuses exclusively on the experience of the former group. Towards the end of the project *Parenting Circles* collaborated with Dr. Jim Cummins from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, for the production of a video based on the exchanges between the Spanish-speaking parent group. It is worth noting that this paper is part of a larger study in relation to the Spanish-speaking group. The present methodology was developed in collaboration with graduate student Stefany Pinkus. While the focus on this major research paper is on the key elements for the meaningful engagement of parents, Pinkus examined home language retention and parental involvement.

I. Participants

a) Recruitment Process

The recruitment criteria for the Spanish-speaking parent group was that they speak Spanish,

have been living in Canada for at least one year and are the primary caregiver of a child younger than thirteen years of age who is currently enrolled in a licensed setting or school. Flyers in Spanish were created for outreach and were displayed at the Centre for Spanish Speaking People (CSSP), St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Black Creek Community Centre, and Toronto Latino (a retail store). All sites are within the catchment area of the Centre where the *Parenting Circles* took place. The flyers stated that participants would be given TTC tokens, reimbursed for childcare and, if they attended five out of the six sessions, they would receive a \$200 honorarium (see *Appendices A and B for flyer samples*). Some of the parents in the group were referred through word-of-mouth by other group members. In total fifteen people applied, however, four people were turned down due to the distance of their area of residence and reasonable commuting time to get to the *Parenting Circles*, as well as the appropriate age of children. Each participant was provided with a detailed description of the project in Spanish and given the choice to either sign the consent form or decline to take part in the group. All sessions and forms were also in Spanish. In order to participate, the parents had to agree to be both audio and videotaped throughout the workshops. There was the concern that there was the possibility of a sample bias, as it is was likely that only those parents already oriented towards engagement would apply, however it was felt that the incentive of an honorarium and selection process helped to reduce this quandary (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 168).

b) Participant Information

Eleven parents participated in at least five of the six sessions as required by our recruitment process. There was an additional parent that attended only the first workshop and did not qualify for the honorarium. There were a total of one male and ten female participants in the parent group, including one grandmother. It should be noted that while there was one grandmother

participant for brevity sake this paper will refer to all members as “parents”. Their ages ranged from 29 - 55 and all had lived in Canada anywhere from one to nine years. Their countries of origin were six from Mexico, two from Colombia, and one each from Guatemala, Ecuador and Cuba.

Table 1. Participant Information *

** Parent Name	Area of Residence	Country of Origin	Length of time in Canada	Education	Children’s Year of Birth	Marital Status and Income level
Beatriz (Mother)	Toronto	Colombia	1 year and 6 months	Post-secondary	1999	Married or living with a common law spouse. Income level (Below \$15K)
Berenice (Mother)	Toronto	Mexico	6 years and 10 months	High school	1989 1996 2004	Married or living with a common law spouse. Income level (Below \$15K)
Carolina (Mother)	Miss***	Mexico	3 years and 7 months	Some post-secondary	2000 2005 2006	Married or living with a common law spouse. Income level (34K – 38K)
Cintia (Mother)	Miss***	Mexico	7 years	Some post-secondary	1998 2000 2005	Married or living with a common law spouse. Income level (38K – 42K)
Jimena (Mother)	Miss***	Cuba	1 year	High school	1997 2001	Married or living with a common law spouse. Income level (15K – 22K)
Josefina (Mother)	Toronto	Mexico	9 years	High school	1992 1994	Separated. Income level (Below \$15K)
Juan (Father)	Toronto	Guatemala	1 year	Post-secondary	1998	Married or living with a common law spouse. Income level (\$23K- \$28K)
Maria (Mother)	Toronto	Mexico	2 years	High school	1996 1999	Separated. Income level (Below \$15K)
Marta (Mother)	Toronto	Ecuador	1 year	Post-secondary	1997	Single. Income level (Below \$15K)
Monica (Mother)	Toronto	Mexico	2 years	High school	1990 1994	Separated. Income level undisclosed.
Natalia (Grand-mother)	Toronto	Colombia	2 years and 6 months	Elementary	1989 1995	Marital status undisclosed. Income level (Below \$15K)

* These data are from information collected from parents in the intake form May 2007

** All participants' names have been changed to protect their identity

*** This is an abbreviation for Mississauga

It is worth noting that more than half of the participants were recent newcomers with low income levels. Further, more than half of the participants completed high school or less, however, this paper does not analyze these indicators. In terms of length of time in Canada, this paper will not compare newcomers to those in the sample that have been in the country longer without knowing their level of integration and settlement history. Nor will it analyze income differences as there is no way to verify individual household resources (other sources of income or familial support, transnational links, remittances). Finally, there will not be a discussion of differences in participants educational levels as all parents have 'funds of knowledge' to offer their children regardless of academic achievement.

II. Procedure

a) Location

The Spanish *Parenting Circles* took place at the CSSP at 2141 Jane Street in North York, Ontario. This site was selected for three specific reasons: First, this project is community based research and it was vital to engage the CSSP as a partner. They were responsible for the recruitment process by outreaching to their clientele. Secondly, it is a recognized service provider in the community and provides a neutral and welcoming space. Finally, the centre is located in an area of high concentration of Spanish-speaking people (*see Figure 1*).

b) Facilitator Training

The effective training of the facilitators was crucial to the project in order to ensure the least amount of intrusion and greatest amount of meaningful participation by the parents. The bilingual facilitators for the Spanish-speaking parent group were one of the principal

investigator's of the project and three graduate students from Ryerson University. The graduate students working on the project were required to read the *Canadian Parenting Workshops* (2004) as a guideline for the *Parenting Circles*, which was written and designed by Dr. Judith Bernhard, Dr. Marlinda Freire, and Vicki Mulligan. In the *Canadian Parenting Workshops* there are ten modules that are fully scripted to guide facilitators as well as learning activities for the parents. While these modules were helpful in the training of the facilitators in areas such as school curriculum, special needs, child protection and the application of parenting strategies that support school readiness, once the groups began the parents determined what topics were of interest to them and each session catered to those choices.

c) Facilitation of Parent Groups

As a result of time constraints for the completion of the project, it was decided to hold weekly sessions instead of the originally intended bi-weekly sessions. Parents met in order to share their experiences, learn from the facilitators about the Ontario school system, and develop strategies to enhance their children's overall success. The first meeting was held on Thursday, 10 May 2007, at seven o'clock in the evening the Spanish parent group met with four parents in attendance at this initial information and recruitment meeting in the CSSP. At the end of this session the parents were asked about the convenience of the day and time and, if not, were invited to propose alternatives. This was a strategy to encourage the parents to take ownership of the group. Subsequent meetings were held as per group vote on Wednesdays at five o'clock in the evening for a total of six two-hour sessions. Parents who attended the sessions were provided with adult bus tokens, child bus tickets, child care reimbursement if applicable, and light refreshments.

While the *Canadian Parenting Workshops* book served as a foundation, the process was

participatory in that the topics developed out of the interests of the parents. Workshop topics addressed were: Child discipline, bullying, guide to the school system, guide to parent teacher interviews, settlement and adaptation issues, home language retention and literacy development. In the third session parents were motivated to practice early literacy development through a creative book project introduced to them by guest speakers Dr. Alma Flor Ada and Dr. Isabel Campoy. Both are world renowned professors and authors of bilingual children's books including the book *Authors in the Classroom* (2004). Originally developed in California, the program was also implemented in thirty-two child care centres in Miami-Dade County, Florida. Ada and Campoy conducted the workshop with the Spanish-speaking parents and helped them create their own books as a strategy to encourage literacy development for their children. The focus of the texts was on affirming the linguistic and cultural identity of their offspring and covered such themes as, *My Name, This is who I am, Story of My Name, A Special Person in My Life, Hopes and Dreams for my Child*. As a result of the great success and interest in authoring the books, the group worked on them for a total of three sessions and created thirty-three texts. In addition, at the end of each session parents were tasked with homework assignments which were to be completed by the next meeting. These covered activities related to topics discussed throughout the workshops and dealt with strategies to promote their children's academic and social success.

d) Final Event

A final event was held on 20 June 2007 to celebrate the completion of the project which brought together both *Parenting Circles*: the Black and the Spanish-speaking parent groups. A total of forty-two individuals attended the final celebration, which took place at the CSSP from six until nine that evening. Attendees at the final event included the parent participants, representatives from the Ministry of Education Office of Parent Engagement, Citizenship and

Immigration Canada, Faculty from Ryerson University, and staff from Radio Voces Latinas. The selection of the location for the final event was consulted with both parent groups and the decision was determined based on availability of space, parent's willingness to travel and their availability. Artistic performances from the Caribbean and Latin American communities were a meaningful way to celebrate the heritage of both groups. Refreshments were also provided representing both cultural cuisines. During the final event each parent received a framed certificate of completion and several parents shared their experiences about their participation in the project as well as detailing what they had learned. In addition, samples of books created by both parent groups were presented on an overhead projector, and there was also a power point slide show playing in the background to showcase photographs of the sessions and examples of several texts.

III. Measures

The data were collected through the intake form (*see Appendix C and D*), registration form (*see Appendix E and F*), initial participant survey (*see Appendix G*), as well as the transcription of videos of the sessions and final interviews (*see Appendix H and I*). The intake form was used as an expression of interest to participate in the study and included basic demographic information: Name, area of residence, ages of their children and marital status. The registration form was used to formally enrol the parents in the program and it was an expansion of the intake form which included information such as, income and education level. The initial participant survey asked parents to self-assess in various parenting strategies (opinions with regards to child development, aspirations for their children, discipline styles, parent-child shared activities), and knowledge of social and school resources. As some activities were done on loose paper by participants, and flip charts were used by facilitators in some group activities, all paper-based

materials were collected for analysis by the researchers. Colour copies were made of book samples that were produced in the group (*see Appendix J*). All of the workshop and interview sessions were both video and audio-taped. Most of these tapes were transcribed, sealed and placed in a secure locked location.

Initially a paper evaluation survey was created to be completed at the end the *Parenting Circles*. It was to assess parents in contrast to the initial survey responses as an evaluation tool. However, the parents determined the topics for discussion and the final questionnaire was changed as the original one was no longer relevant. Furthermore, the research team eventually determined to conduct the survey as a one-on-one interview to allow the parents to expand on their answers thereby obtaining more thorough information. Two sets of interviews were conducted; the first consisted of a questionnaire directly related to the *Parenting Circles*, to evaluate the workshop and ask parents to discuss what they had learned. All eleven participants were interviewed, eight of which were conducted at the participant's homes and the remaining three were completed at the CSSP, which was ultimately dependent on the parent's choice and on interviewer availability. The interviews were conducted by two of the Ryerson graduate students who also facilitated the workshops. On 20 June 2007 at the CSSP before the start of the final event, the second set of interviews were conducted relating to questions around 'Home language maintenance' as it was an issue of particular interest to the Spanish-speaking parent group. The researchers considered it worth investigating further and these interviews were conducted by a doctoral student working with Jim Cummins of OISE, University of Toronto. Two facilitators were present at each interview and an additional consent form was signed by each of the parents.

The arduous task of video production, archiving and editing began on 5 June 2007. They

created a slideshow presentation for Judith Bernhard that was presented on 14 June 2007 at a conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia. These slides were also used at the final event of the *Parenting Circles* which allowed the families to witness some of the inspiring work created throughout the weeks.

Chapter Three: Findings

I. Parents felt free to fully express themselves and exchange ideas in the group

When asked what they valued most about participating in the group, the majority of the participants indicated that the free exchange of views, whether similar or opposing, was an extremely important condition for their active contribution. These positive feelings *confianza* and *convivencia* allowed them to share sometimes painful memories in the creation of the bilingual books for their children.

While some parents may have had differing views on various topics, the exchange of ideas, in general, was an empowering exercise. The fluid nature of the topics themselves allowed the parents to discuss their child(ren), families and any other issues they deemed worthy of contributing. When asked what she liked most about the group, one mother, Beatriz, who emigrated almost two years ago from Colombia, and the mother of an eight-year-old son, said:

En primer lugar el dinamismo, la confianza que nos dieron, lo que me brindaron, yo me sentí como muy segura, y me sentía como en mi campo... tuve mucha libertad para expresar tantas cosas... Entonces eso fue lo que me gusto y me llamo mucho la atención...y yo no quise perder ni una sesión y a pesar de mi trabajo, trataba de llegar y no me quería perder ningún momento de la clase.

In the first place, the dynamism, the mutual trust, that I was given, I felt very sure of myself, I felt that this is my place... I had a lot of freedom to express so many things... So that is what I liked and really caught my attention ... I did not want to miss even one meeting and even with my work, I made every effort to come and I didn't want to miss even one moment of the class.

Beatriz's feelings of *confianza* in the group resulted in her active participation. This being said, most of the eleven parents involved in the *Parenting Circles* felt empowered by their participation and did not miss any of the sessions, which helped maintain an ongoing sense of continuity, harmony and collaboration. The parents also shared similar opinions with respect to

their meaningful contributions and personal growth throughout the project. Jimena, a Cuban mother of two, when asked at the final interview if she enjoyed the session stated:

...La pase muy bien, al principio uno se siente un poco extraña, pero después me sentí como en una terapia de grupo, que cada semana ya quería ir. Sin estos grupos uno se desconecta... yo desconecte todos los problemas y entonces estaba todo tranquilo. Nunca escoges una hora para ti, ¿verdad? Y esa hora, ese tiempo era para mí.

... I had a really good time, at the beginning one can feel a little strange, but later I felt like it was a group therapy, and every week I wanted to go. Without these groups you get disconnected... I was able to disconnect from all of my problems and everything was calm. One never takes any time for themselves, right? And this hour, this time was for me.

Jimena overcame her initial feelings of trepidation and was a lively and positive contributor to the group. While it is understandable that the parents would feel uneasy at first, she overcame this because of her feelings of comfort in the group dynamics.

a) Moving beyond the differences

The Latino community in the Greater Toronto Area is heterogeneous and relatively fragmented. The participants' social, economic and political backgrounds differed, as well as their levels of education and regional origins. At times it seemed that their language was the only common denominator. For instance, while all the participants and researchers were originally from various Latin American countries, an overall sense of unity was ultimately created. The sharing of these different ideas and experiences by all the participants was crucial to the group's success. Juan, a father of a nine-year-old daughter and a professor of philosophy, eloquently expressed the importance of listening to others and partaking in these types of conversations:

Yo creo que la cosa más importante para mí ha sido la posibilidad de intercambiar ideas, de escuchar experiencias nuevas, al margen de que tú puedas concordar o discrepar...

I believe that what was most important for me has been the opportunity to exchange ideas, to listen to new experiences, to which you can agree or disagree...

He also recognised the role the facilitator in allowing participants to express these differences:

A veces por más eficiente que sea el coordinador del taller, su perfil o ciertas características de su personalidad inhibe a los otros haciendo que no participen ¿no? En este caso no.

Sometimes, no matter how efficient the group facilitator may be, their profile or certain characteristics of their personality inhibits others so that they don't participate, right? In this instance, this did not happen.

This acknowledgement that a facilitator can negatively impact the overall group dynamic if they are too focused on their own agenda, thereby disallowing the participants to fully engage, was a concern also shared by the researchers. Maria, a Mexican mother of two sons who emigrated approximately two years ago, further confirmed the positive feelings engendered by everyone's participation, saying:

Me gusto el taller, definitivamente... Por la mañana estoy muy ocupada y siempre tengo muchas cosas que hacer, pero se me hizo bonito el taller, se me hizo activo... toda la gente participo en el taller y eso es una cosa muy bonita.

Definitely, I liked the workshop... In the morning I am very busy and I always have many things to do, but I really liked the workshop, I found it very interactive... everyone participated in the workshop and this is really a beautiful thing.

Maria like other parents, had a busy schedule, however this did not take away from their engagement in the project. Ultimately, it was this active exchange that confirmed to the researchers that the chosen environment was open and supportive so the parents could freely express themselves and focus on the issues that united them: the education of their children.

b) Removing barriers to communication

All of the parents in the group recounted previous occasions when their limited English had caused difficulties in engaging with teachers and school personnel. The sessions were held in Spanish so that the parents would be able to fully participate in the manner in which they felt most effective. For example, Jimena recounted the difficulties she often faced when meeting with her child's teacher:

Siempre tienes que ir a la escuela y hablar con el profesor. Que también eso es un poco difícil, yo misma con el inglés mío me es un poco difícil a veces llegar a la maestra. Ella a veces me explica pero yo digo no entendí bien, pero bueno yo espero que con el tiempo mi inglés mejore.

You always have to go to the school and speak to the teacher. Also it is somewhat difficult, with my English, it is a little difficult to connect with the teacher. She sometimes tries to explain, but I say that I didn't understand well, but I hope that with time my English will improve.

Jimena's unsatisfactory encounters with her children's teacher clearly affected her yet she was still hopeful that with time she would be better equipped to deal with the school. Like many newcomer parents, Jimena's feelings when dealing with the school system and the resultant feelings of inadequacy and frustration took a negative toll on her. This became a disempowering exchange and she no longer felt comfortable meeting with school administrators to either advocate for herself or her children.

Another parent, Beatriz told the group how this was doubly frustrating since she came to Canada motivated to make changes in her life and the life of her son. But this was problematic due to her inability to communicate in English. She elaborated on her wish to be able to overcome this barrier and participate more actively in the school:

Nosotros entendemos el inglés, pero tenemos dificultad al hablarlo, pronunciarlo, pero nosotros entendemos todas las notas que le mandan al niño y tratamos de colaborar y participar... Pues, me gustaría mucho participar en la escuela de mi niño pero no me va bien con el inglés. Yo podría compartir muchas cosas muy bonitas, yo estuve hablando con la trabajadora social que habla

español, y hemos tenido dos citas con ella. Le comente que yo quería ayudar, compartir con los padres hispanos, porque había allí muchos padre hispano, y podíamos hacer unos talleres con mi esposo, dar unas charlas, entonces ella me dijo que esto ella lo anoto para tenerlo en cuenta para septiembre...

We understand English, but we have difficulty speaking it, pronouncing it correctly, but we understand all the letters they send with my son and we try to help and participate... Well, I would really like to participate in my son's school but I am not doing well with English. I could share so many wonderful things, I was speaking with the social worker who speaks Spanish, and we have had two appointments with her. I told her that I wanted to help, to share with other Hispanic parents there, and we could run some workshops with my husband, give some talks, so then she told me she would make a note of this to keep it in mind for September...

Beatriz's comment about the inability to adequately express herself in English was echoed by other parents. These quotes suggest that it would be counter-productive to have parents in mixed language groups leading to an inability to create a dynamic that is most beneficial for meaningful engagement. While Beatriz was constrained by her English proficiency she still wanted to contribute to her son's school, however the school was not rushing to take her up on the offer to organize meetings with other Spanish-speaking parents. Notwithstanding this, it is important that she felt that she had something valuable to offer other parents and she later stated that her church would be a good place for her to talk to and engage with other Latino families. It was imperative, therefore, that the language barriers that were already keeping parents from actively engaging in their children's school life would not also be an obstacle in the newly formed group.

The use of Spanish in the sessions also validated the importance of ensuring language maintenance while also trying to learn English during their settlement, which was something that was stressed throughout the sessions. Many of the parents felt assimilative pressures to teach their children English in order to better adapt to Canadian society, and during that endeavour many failed to teach their children the value of continuing to speak Spanish. Jimena expressed

how her understanding of the importance of language maintenance had been altered during the project:

Bueno lo que más me impacto fue, que en los talleres aprendí que es verdad que el idioma materno, en el caso de nosotros el español, los niños no lo deben de perder en la casa. Mantener hablando en la casa el idioma de nosotros español, la lengua materna, mantenérsela y seguir con las raíces de nosotros.

Well, what impacted me the most was that at the workshops I learned that it is true that the children should not forget their mother tongue, in our case, Spanish, at home. To keep on speaking our language, Spanish, at home, to maintain the mother tongue and to keep our roots.

The facilitators emphasised the positive significance of being multilingual and that the parents' expertise in Spanish was extremely valuable for their children's development. By the end of the sessions, Jimena and the other parents were all encouraging their children to use Spanish in the home. For the parents, their language and their roots were intertwined, therefore maintaining one would lead to the preservation of the other. Maria, in the following quote, elaborated on the group's impact on her children and herself:

Me gusto mucho el taller, como digo, fue una experiencia muy bonita, estoy agradecida de haber ido porque ahora comprendo un poquito mas de la importancia de nuestros raíces, somos de donde somos pero también todos somos hispanos ¿verdad? Y yo creo que es una base muy favorable para el desarrollo de mis niños y también el mío.

I really liked the workshop, it was a beautiful experience, I am thankful for having attended because I now have a better understanding of the importance of our roots, we are from where we are, but we are also all Hispanics right?, and I believe that this is a very favourable base for the development of my children and myself.

These expressions of emotion were common amongst the parents who felt that their linguistic was valued throughout the process. While the project ran over a relatively short time period, the sense of empowerment that developed within the focus group was inspiring and, even to some extent, surprising. Maria's belief that this was not only an experience for her children's

development, but also for hers, was the type of sentiment that was common amongst the participants of the *Parenting Circles Program*.

II. Children were important participants in the process

Many of the parents said that the physical presence of the children, having them witness them taking part in a group focused on education, was a positive condition to their participation. The parent's creation of texts for their children not only encouraged their offspring to maintain their Latin American identity but to also create books of their own (a total of thirty-three books were created over the six week period). This new form of positive communication was unexpected for the participants, but was something they were eager to share with others outside of the group.

Initially, the parents participated in order to discuss the academic achievement of their children; however it was the full inclusion of their children in the process that became vital for meaningful parental engagement. During the sessions the older children were able to play and use computers in a room adjacent to the area in which the *Parenting Circles* took place. While the facilitators had informed the parents from the outset that fees for childcare would be reimbursed, many of them still chose to bring their children to the sessions. Beatriz saw the benefits of including her child in the setting:

Me gusto, primero el lugar, el sitio, para mi me quedo muy cerca, amplio, y en mi caso no tenia con quien dejar a mi niño, lo pude traer y tenia como entretenerse, estar dedicado con las computadoras, o había el espacio y no había interrupción, me pareció excelente.

Well, first of all, I really liked the locale, the place because for me it was very close, it's very ample, and in my case I didn't have anyone with whom I could leave my son, and I could bring him and he was able to entertain himself, work on the computers, or there was lots of space and there weren't any interruptions, and I thought this was excellent.

This allowed the children the opportunity to make friends and they also felt comfortable attending the meetings. Fostering new relationships was not only important for the parents, but also for the children. The physical presence of the children had not been anticipated by the researchers as funds for childcare were available, however it ultimately resulted in a relaxed family-friendly environment that had only positive effects on the dynamic of the group. Marta, from Ecuador and the mother of an eleven-year-old son, looked beyond the physical presence of the children at the sessions and indicated that what was most important to her was the fact that her child witnessed her actively taking part in discussions surrounding his education:

Lo más importante fue que mi hijo haya participado, que el haya visto que los padres de familia asisten a reuniones sobre temas educativos. Ahora el sabe que si me hace una pregunta sobre su educación, yo lo puedo contestar. Me he sentado con mi hijo a establecer objetivos, para el futuro y uno de esos objetivos es justamente sobre su educación. Entonces es bueno porque el vio que yo estoy envuelta en eso.

The most important thing for me was that my son participated, that he saw the parents assisted these sessions to discuss educational themes. Now he knows that if he asks me a question regarding his education, I can answer him. I have sat down with my son and established objectives for the future and precisely one of those goals is dealing with his education. So it was good because he saw that I was very involved in it.

Marta now felt that if her child had questions about his education he would see her as informed and competent expert in his eyes with funds of knowledge that he could benefit from. The acknowledgement of this was empowering for Marta and further cemented her commitment to her child's education.

a) Books becoming a new form of communication with their children

The authoring of the books for and about the children was the activity that resonated most with the parents. Many were brought to tears and shared personal stories that went beyond the goals of the group. It showed them that the act of expressing their thoughts, feelings and

knowledge in writing had far-reaching benefits that they could not anticipate for their children and went beyond the immediate reaction they may have had. As the parents witnessed the positive feedback from their children, they began to fully comprehend how this was a new tool for positive communication. Marta eloquently concluded that:

Otra cosa que me gusto muchísimo fue la enseñanza que nos dieron sobre elaborar los libros como medio de comunicación dentro de la familia. Eso estuvo precioso, eso nunca me voy a olvidar. Mi hijo vio los libros y estaba estimulado, motivado y contento de las cosas que yo lo comuniqué... Es justamente la forma de comunicarse con fotos, con diseños, con creatividad, con texto, hacia nuestros hijos, la forma de comunicación por escrito eso es lo que me cayó de nuevo.

Another thing that I really liked was learning to make the books as a medium for family communication. It was a wonderful experience, and I will never forget it. My son saw the books and was stimulated, motivated and happy about the things that I communicated to him... It is exactly the way to communicate with photos, designs, creativity, with written text, for our children, this type of written communication is what was really new for me.

Marta had been a French teacher in Ecuador and, was surprised that as an educator, she did not know that writing a book about her child could be a positive medium to both motivate and stimulate her child. Marta and her son had very clear objectives for his education and were taking steps to achieve them. This group and the books were another instrument for her to encourage her son to continue on his academic path. She embraced this new form of communication with fervour, as did the other parents. Another mother who expressed this viewpoint was Carolina, a Mexican mother of three, who had this to say when asked at the final interview if she thought the books were a way for her children to maintain their Latino identity:

Definitivamente que sí. Porque ahí expresas...no solamente son palabras, entonces los libros...les estas transmitiendo a tus niños conocimiento, les estas transmitiendo amor, y les estas enseñando mucho mas vocabulario.

Definitely yes, because you can express... not only words, with the books we made... you are transmitting knowledge to your children, you are transmitting love and you are teaching them more vocabulary.

Carolina felt that the books not only conveyed love but also exposed them to Spanish vocabulary which, in turn, fostered bilingualism. She viewed this exercise not only as a way to express feelings and reinforce their Latin American roots, but also saw it as a learning tool. Maria also valued the book making component of the project, and she stated:

A mi me gusto cuando comenzamos a escribir los libros porque nunca he escrito en calidad de “yo” para compartir con mis hijos.

I really liked it when we began to write the books because I have never written anything as “me” to share with my children.

Maria also felt that the books were a way to convey thoughts, values, love and so much more with her children. The fact that she could now share something valuable with them was something that she had not experienced before.

Many of the parents hoped that their children would also be encouraged to write books about themselves and share them with the family. The wish to extend the project to other members of their family and friends was common amongst the parents. They could see how the sentiments behind these books could be passed on to others and were eager to begin new projects. One such mother was Beatriz who was deeply affected by becoming an author and sharing the books not only with her son but with others:

Y con mi niño, pues, fue algo muy hermoso porque yo nunca había escrito un libro para el y de pronto el me vio organizado sus fotos pero escribir una historia acerca de el, de su nombre, de alguien tan especial para mí. Allí me di cuenta que fue algo muy bonito, para mi niño fue algo muy hermoso, y a cada rato el quiere estar mirando su libro. Me ha dado pauta para hacer otros libros y idear como otras iniciativas. Lo he compartido con otras amistades, con otras amigas para que ellos lo hagan con sus niños, con sus esposos, que lo den como regalo del padre inclusive, ‘Hágale ese regalo a su esposo como un regalo del día del padre que es una cosa muy linda’. Y realmente, pues, aprendí algo nuevo de hacer los libros tan fácil que de pronto uno tiene muchas expectativas, tiene a veces mucho tiempo y uno no le aprovecha, y que bonito para hacérselo a sus

personas queridas con los que uno vive y decirles cosas tan lindas que uno las puede expresar.

And with my son, well, it was something really wonderful because I had never written a book for him and all of a sudden he saw me organizing his photos to write his history, about his name, of someone so special to me. Then I realised that this was something really beautiful, for my son it was something great, and he always wants to look at his book. This has given me the desire to write other books and think of other initiatives. I have shared this with other acquaintances, with other friends so that they can do this with their own children, with their spouses that they even give them as Father's Day presents, 'Give this gift to your husband as a Father's Day gift because it's really a beautiful thing'. And really, I learned something new when making the books was so easy, so that all of a sudden you have other expectations, sometimes you have a lot of time and you don't take advantage of it, and how wonderful to be able to do this for the people you live with and love and tell them such beautiful things that you can express.

Beatriz expressed the ease of making the books and their translatability was a positive aspect of the experience.

b) Transferring book authoring to their home environment

While the children's participation in the process proved to be important to the dynamic of the sessions, the transference of the books to their homes was also relevant. The parents were not only sharing the books with family members, but were also including their children in the creative writing process. Jimena stated:

Bueno es bonito hacerlo por ejemplo en la casa, la idea es muy bonita, sentarnos todos 'a ver vamos a hacer un libro', 'tu haces uno Lalito', con la foto que es una idea bonita, que ellos escojan, 'yo tengo las fotos que traje de Cuba ¿recuerdas?' Y que ellos escojan su foto, y digan '¿esta mamita?'

Well, it's wonderful to do this at home for example, the idea is really great, everyone sit down and say, 'okay we are going to write a book', 'you do one Lalito', it is a great idea with the photographs, that they chose the one. 'I have those photos that I brought from Cuba. Remember?' And that they chose the photo and say, 'what about this one Mommy?'

The expansion to and inclusion of the books into their homes showed that the parents valued the work that they were doing in the group and saw the benefits of creating time at home where they

could create books together as a family. Jimena emphasised the value of that the children selecting the pictures they may want to use or hear about, which would be empowering for them as well.

III. Parents gained access to valuable information

While the parents were provided with formal documents about various aspects of the educational system, it was the information obtained from personal exchanges that appeared to be the most useful for them. The lack of official information available to them in Spanish created the feeling of being ill-equipped to fully engage in their children's school. However when the parents' desire for more information was satisfied, they felt more competent to engage with the school personnel. The parents were eager to continue with this program in their own neighbourhoods and pass on the knowledge that they acquired from the sessions.

It has been commonly held that Latino parents are apathetic with respect to their children's education and expect teachers to be chiefly responsible for this endeavour. However, the parents who participated in the *Parenting Circles* emphatically demonstrated their genuine desire to be fully engaged. Maria, a participant and employee of a settlement organisation that focuses on the Spanish-speaking people in Canada, was fortunate to have been afforded a great deal of access to various services due to the nature of her work, however even she had this to say about the information obtained in the sessions when asked what made her continue attending the meetings:

En muchas cosas, yo creo que el trabajo en grupo, el tener mayor información sobre el bienestar del hijo respecto a la educación, tener más información de como tomar decisiones en el futuro, esas cosas son lo que más me gusto.

In many aspects, I believe that group work, to have more information about your children's wellbeing about their education, to have more information on how to make decisions in the future, these are the things that I liked the most.

The desire for more information about their children and their development was the underlying theme throughout the sessions. It was something that the parents seriously valued and, in the end, resulted in the focus of much of the discussions. In addition to this, all the participants indicated that the interaction with other newcomer parents was very valuable to them. When Marta indicated that she would highly recommend the group to other parents, the interviewer asked her why this was the case, she stated:

Justamente por lo que había dicho anteriormente, es importante interactuar con otros padres de familia y trabajar en grupo, y conocer a otras experiencias y a otras personas y tener más información sobre todo de personas que están todo el día en eso...

Exactly what I said before it is important to interact with other parents and work as a group to get to know others experiences and other people, and have more information especially from people who are involved in this everyday...

Maria's interest in getting to know other parents and their experiences was echoed by the rest of the participants. Before the sessions began the parents primarily consulted with family and close friends about matters concerning their child's development. However the exchange of information with people other than kin was another positive step in their empowerment and expansion of their support network. Josefina explained who she consulted about matters concerning her children:

En primer lugar a mi mama es mi primer contacto, en segundo pues mi guía espiritual el padre de la iglesia. El ha formado una parte muy importante a mi como madre soltera entonces el ha sido como un guía. Le llamo la atención a su debido tiempo a mis hijas. Con mis hermanos que son como la parte de papa de mis hijas.

In the first place my mother is my first contact, in second place the priest from my church is my spiritual guide. He has become a very important part for me as a single mother he has become somewhat of a guide. And he will call attention to my daughters when necessary. With my siblings who are like the father figures for my daughters.

These types of answers were common amongst the group and the limitations to having such a small support network were eventually recognized by the parents. They began to verbalise the importance of meeting with other parents with similar goals who could share their experiences and contribute to their funds of knowledge.

The work that was being done in the group was new to the parents and while they may have had reservations at first, this was quickly quelled and they jumped into the project wholeheartedly. The new information that they obtained made a significant difference in their self-perceptions as experts in their children's education. Monica, a single mother of two who emigrated from Colombia, felt that:

Primero que nada me dio mucho gusto haber trabajado en este taller con las señoritas que lo organizaron. Es un apoyo muy importante para nosotros los padres que estamos recién llegados aquí. Muchos padres cometen el error de no enseñarles a sus hijos el español, eso también es muy importante para nuestros hijos. Me gusto mucho el trabajo que hicimos todos, y espero que esto siga haciéndose continuamente.

First of all I really liked participating in this workshop with the women who organized it. It is a very important support for newly arrived parents. Many parents commit the mistake of not teaching their children Spanish and this is very important for our children. I really liked the work we did together and I hope that this workshop continues on an ongoing basis.

Monica acknowledged the mistakes she had made, as a new immigrant and had already begun to make changes in her home. While her concern was over language maintenance, those of Cintia, a mother of three from Mexico, came in the form of reading to her children. When she was asked about the thing she learned most while taking part in the group, she stated:

...Cuando dijeron que teníamos que leerle a los niños, escucharlos y que ellos escucharan el inglés afuera de la casa, eso me sirvo mucho con el niño grande porque casi no se enfoca en las cosas y cuando le leo en español se esta tranquilo escuchando...

...When they said that we had to read to the children, listen to them and that they listen to English outside of the house, this really helped me with my oldest son because he hardly focuses on anything and when I read to him in Spanish he is relaxed and listening...

During the sessions the parents were exposed to information surrounding their role in instructing their children to listen at home. The parents saw the benefits of teaching their offspring, and for Cintia reading to her child was a way to also calm him down. While at times the facilitators felt as though a great deal of information was being exchanged and they feared that it may be overwhelming, they were mistaken. The parents were passionate about learning more and were all eager for more sessions, which was impossible due to the time constraints of the project. When Maria was asked whether she enjoyed attending the groups, she answered in the affirmative, and also stated that she still wanted more information:

Pero lo que me quedo más pegado... Ahora tengo la necesidad, tengo el deseo de saber un poquito más y informarme para yo poder continuar trabajando con mis hijos.

But what really stuck... Now I have the need, I have the desire to know more to become informed so that I can continue working with my children.

Maria said she felt compelled to learn more in order to continue working with her children to ensure their academic success. The parents were all enthusiastic about receiving information regarding all aspects of their children's education, whether it took the form of personal experiences or information about the school system that was translated into Spanish.

IV. Parent's as co-leaders

The question of getting parents to become meaningfully engaged in the process was facilitated by their immediate empowerment as co-leaders of the sessions. The parents embraced the challenge and, in the end, this was a principal reason for their continual participation. This could ultimately result in them starting their own groups and expanding their support network.

The parents realised the importance of moving beyond a small kin network to one that expanded into their children's schools and church.

It was vital to establish an empowering space so that the parents would become effective co-leaders of the group. The full collaboration with the parents began from the first moments in the initial session when the facilitators introduced possible topics and themes that could be addressed throughout the six weeks. The parents determined how to progress and could change the focus throughout the sessions. Cintia said this when asked what she liked most about the group:

Pues la convivencia, que uno puede hablar de los mismos temas que nos interesa a todos los papas que fuimos. Y que aprendí mucho.

Well the sharing with other parents, that one can talk about the same topics that are of interest to all the parents that attended. And that I learned a lot.

The parent's had the freedom to discuss any topic they deemed worthy of sharing in the sessions, and this was encouraged. The experience was meaningful to them as they were highly invested in the topics discussed and therefore could change the focus as they saw fit.

Another event that further cemented the sense of co-leadership occurred at the end of the first meeting when the researchers asked the parents if the time and day for the sessions was convenient for them. The parents indicated that the time was too late and they preferred a different day. Juan had this to say about the discussion that ensued:

Si, el horario me pareció bueno. Además que de manera democrática, no se si recuerdas que se escogió otro día y otra hora. Eso me pareció genial la posibilidad, la apertura que la gente mostró y eso me pareció genial.

Yes, the schedule seemed fine to me. In addition in a very democratic manner, I do not know if you remember, another meeting day and time were chosen. I thought it was a fantastic possibility the openness that the people participating demonstrated, and I really thought this was fantastic.

The negotiation around the schedule allowed the parents to come at a time better suited for them and consequently left them feeling as though they would be heard in the process.

a) Expanding their social network

The purpose of the group was to ensure that the parents were not only able to apply what they learned in the sessions, but to also create a support network and eventually administer their own *Parenting Circles* in their respective communities. When the parents were asked to comment on what suggestions they had for bettering the group, most said to add another session per week or increase the hours to meet. One such mother was Carolina, who wished that the sessions were longer so the parents would have more time to get better acquainted:

Me gustaría que cuando terminara, bueno, supongamos que empezamos a las cinco de la tarde, tomar dos horas o dos horas y medio para hacer el trabajo, y una media hora para conocernos entre nosotros. Porque terminábamos...por ejemplo, yo iba a los sesiones con mi prima, y con la cuñada de ella y una amiga. Ya nos conocíamos, entonces, podíamos platicar rapidito de cosas que ya sabíamos pero para conocer a otras personas cinco minutos, no. Como que al final de cada sesión que hubiera habido un poco de tiempo para los que quisieran estar se conociendo mas y los que no, no.

I would really have liked it if when we finished, well, if we began at five in the evening, and we could take two hours or two and a half hours to do the work and other half-an-hour to socialise and get to know one another. Because when we finished, well, for example, I would go to the sessions with my cousin, and with her sister-in-law and another friend. We already knew one another, so we could rapidly discuss certain issues, but to get to know other people, no, five minutes was not enough. So if like at the end of each session there would have been a little more time for those who wanted to get to know others could and those who didn't want to, did not have to.

Carolina had family members and a friend who were part of the group, which added to the dynamic, however their ability to meet new people with whom they could exchange ideas after the session was limited. The value of a family support network cannot be denied, however the addition of other people to consult is also an asset to them. This becomes increasingly difficult

when the community they feel most attached to and are able to communicate with are not concentrated in one physical location. Jimena felt that unfortunately the Latino community was fragmented:

Cuando uno se reúne así con padres aprendes y entras en contacto con la gente de tu mundo, en el sentido del idioma, tus raíces, los hispanos que somos completamente distintos a otros grupos, los árabes, los canadienses. Donde yo vivo en Mississauga, la comunidad hispana no la veo muy unida, está todo el mundo disperso. Por ejemplo donde tú ves una tienda donde hay indios, todos son indios, todos se ayudan. Pero los Latinos no los veo unidos.

When you get together with other parents you learn that when you are in contact with other people in your world, in the sense of a common language, roots, Hispanic people are totally different to other groups, like Arabic people, Canadians. Where I live in Mississauga I don't see that the Hispanic community is very united, everyone is dispersed, for example when you see a store where there are people from India, everyone is Indian, they all help one another. But I don't see Latinos as a united group.

Jimena's observations are accurate and as such make creating an expanded social network difficult to establish, for instance in the case of Cintia, Carolina and Jimena who travelled from Mississauga to attend the meetings. These types of support networks helped parents feel less alienated and allowed them to interact with other people who may have some insight into their current circumstances. Reducing their alienation is a crucial step not only to their successful settlement but to their children's positive adjustment to life in Canada. A group like this can connect other Latin American parents who want to encourage their children's academic success, and, with time, can make significant strides in uniting the entire community.

b) Starting their own group

The *Parenting Circles Program* was designed in such a way that once the parents completed the sessions they would feel empowered and prepared to establish their own groups. When this idea was first introduced at the beginning of the meetings, the participants did not

seem open to this possibility, however, as the weeks went by and the idea was brought up again in casual conversation. Our field notes suggest that towards the end of the program the parents were eager, and interested in beginning their own groups. By the final interview on week seven, all the parents indicated that they would continue with the sessions in their neighbourhoods. Juan said he was not yet ready and needed to clarify some information, however, once this was achieved he would be prepared to run his own sessions. Nevertheless, some parents felt ready to begin groups immediately and had already spoken to others who might be interested. Cintia took an active role in speaking to other people who may benefit from the group:

Ya había platicado con mi prima para ver si había la posibilidad de que aquí en la escuela de LINC nos ayudaran a formar un grupo, porque hay muchas personas que se interesan, aquí hay muchas personas, muchas mamás latinas y este, de ayuda sería pues para los materiales o para que alguien viniera a apoyarnos

I had already spoken with my cousin about the possibility of getting help here in the school LINC site to form a group, because there are many people that are interested, there are many people here, many Latin-American mothers. And we would need help to get supplies or for somebody to come and give us some assistance.

Cintia even began to think about the ways in which she could receive help from her Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program (LINC) in order to begin her group with other Latina mothers who have children in various schools. It was inspiring to witness the parent's transformation from being intimidated with the idea in the first few sessions, to fully embracing the possibility of conducting their own groups and helping other parents. María said this about starting her own group:

Más que nada tengo que informarme... yo estudio en college, y allí hay mucha gente que habla español, hay mucha gente Colombiano, mucha gente hispana en general. Empezar allí para mí, ¿no? Con ese grupo de señoras, y bueno también en la escuela de los niños.

...More than anything else what I need is to be informed, I study in college and there are a lot of people who speak Spanish, a lot of Colombians, a lot of Hispanics in general. For me, to start something there, no? With that group of women and also in the children's schools.

Maria's concern with respect to becoming more prepared as a facilitator before initiating a group was a great indication of her dedication to, and how seriously she took, the project. Her ability to conduct outreach in her college and in her children's school was seen as preparing her for a further expansion of her support network. Beatriz's commitment to the project was not exclusive to her child's school either, but included the church where she and her husband worked with other Latin American couples. She spoke to the priest about introducing the *Parenting Circles Program* to the couples they worked with:

Entonces mi esposo va a trabajar en lo que es la pareja, es lógico que se va a trabajar con la familia... se va a tratar de integrar, de unir este grupo, estos padres, estas parejas, y con ellos mirar las expectativas, que quieren, que se los capacita, en que quieren se les de charlas, en la parte psicológica, en la parte espiritual... estar informándoles a los padres, a esta parejas de este trabajo que lo hemos hecho. Entonces de allí miraría para hablar con ustedes para ver que vamos a necesitar, porque con ellos nos van a decir que día nos vamos a reunir, porque parece que se van a dar una vez al mes, y me imagino que debe ser en la Iglesia en el basement, y allí miraríamos que recursos ustedes nos pueden colaborar.

So my husband is going to work with couples, it is logical that we are going to work with the family... we are going to try and integrate, to unite this group, these parents, these couples, and with them look at their expectations, what they want, to teach them, to give them talks on what they want, in the psychological part, in the spiritual part... keep informing the parents, these couples about the work they we did here. And then from there I could speak with you to see what we will need, because with them they will tell us what day they can get together, because now it looks like it will be once a month, and I imagine it will be in the church basement, and then we will see what type of help you can give us.

Participating in the group showed Beatriz that her knowledge was valuable and confirmed that she could have a positive impact in other parents' lives. The participant's roles as leaders were embraced and they were passionate about making the *Parenting Circles* their own.

V. Summary of findings

This major research paper focused on the elements that facilitated the meaningful participation of Latino parents in their children's education, as was determined from their participation in the *Parenting Circles Program*. One parent indicated that at first she felt strange at the first session and this was a concern for the researchers before the group began. If the parents did not feel free to fully express themselves and exchange ideas, than the group would not have been successful. Therefore an appropriate environment had to be created to ensure that the participants trusted all those attending the sessions and felt that their ideas were valued. The authoring of the books for their children also valorised the parent's knowledge, language and culture, and the positive effects of the text on their offspring, and themselves, has yet to be fully realised. In the group the parents were successful in moving beyond the differences of the individual members and were able to experience the benefits from the workshop. Additionally the exclusive use of Spanish during the entire project allowed them to be wholly integrated in the process by being able to express themselves in the most effective way. The second element was the importance of having their children incorporated into the process. While the parents were given the chance to be reimbursed for childminding a few decided to bring their children to the sessions, which was unexpected for the researchers. However, the children proved to be a positive addition to the group dynamic. Their physical proximity, while not in the direct vicinity, was calming for the parents and they were aware of the positive impact of having their children observe them participating in a group involved in their education. In addition, the authoring of the book as a means of expressing feelings and, ultimately, creating a new form of communication with their child(ren) was invaluable. The transference of the book authoring into the home environment was an affirmation of the benefits of such an activity. The third element

was that the parents gained access to information, whether it was about the school system or personal experiences of other parents. This seemed to be of particular importance as a means to combat the negative stereotype that Latino parents are apathetic when it comes to their children's education. The fourth element took the form of the parents assuming the role of active co-leaders of the group as the themes discussed every week came directly from their expressed concerns. Their active participation led them to expand from a small kin network to a much larger support network. The parents were, to varying extents, eager to begin their own groups and expand their support systems even further.

Chapter Four: Discussion

While the parenting challenges faced by immigrant parents have been documented, little has been written about the elements that lead to effective parenting support groups. Parents often feel powerless to express their concerns or question the school system. At a time when many school boards and ministries of education are embarking on ambitious efforts to engage families, our data suggests that when parents are provided with a space of openness, trust and the ability to dialogue with parents in their home language, they are able to depart from their position of powerlessness and become effective leaders.

The findings in this paper were all related to the key elements that facilitated the meaningful participation of Latino parents in their children's education. A space was created where the parents felt free to express themselves. For instance, many of the parents said that the feeling of trust and ability to exchange ideas, was vital for the group's success. Secondly, the incorporation of the children into the process was immeasurable for the parents. The parents had the option to be reimbursed for childcare fees but instead most chose to bring them to the sessions. Further, they viewed the authoring of the books for and about their children as the most poignant of the topics, acknowledging the implications these texts could have on their child's language maintenance, self-identity and self-esteem. Thirdly, the focus on information about the school system and the sharing of personal experiences valorised their new roles as important actors in their children's education. This was also a way to incorporate their *funds of knowledge* as a useful tool in their new support group. Finally, the parents embraced their roles as co-leaders of the sessions which were vital for the group dynamic. This was crucial so that they would begin their own groups in their community.

The incorporation of the parent's *funds of knowledge* as a valuable tool in their child's education was stressed throughout the project and the creation of the books helped cement these ideals. The *funds of knowledge*, a term coined by Luis Moll (1992) refers to a person's or a community's historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge. During the migration process, many people feel as though much of the knowledge they acquired while in their country of origin becomes irrelevant and should be forgotten in order to better adapt to their new environment. However, in the case of parenting, this would mean being at a loss as to how to parent a child, thus causing a great deal of emotional and psychological distress. It is clear that parents' previous experiences should be valorised and they should be encouraged to share their skills. Ultimately, this could also increase their human, social and cultural capital, thereby resulting in academic and personal benefits.

La Familia (Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2004) and *Madres Unidas* (Dyrness, 2007) were two parenting programs created by parent activists who were frustrated with the school system and wanted to mobilise the community towards solidarity. Ultimately they decided to organise independently from the school setting which helped foster social empowerment. Unlike the participants in these two studies, the parents in our study were not activists, however were still engaged in the process and able to excite change.

The participants in the two interventions cited above were adamant that only the academic institution was responsible for change; however the *Parenting Circles* differed in the assumption that both the parents and the educational system have to change in order to improve outcomes. Our data shows that the connection with their child's school is a two-way relationship and the parents also needed to alter their behaviour. Thus, it should not only be the parents who are taking part in the interventions but also the teachers and school administration.

In accord with the *Madres Unidas* study (Dyrness, 2007), we also saw education is a collective undertaking, where relationships were based on trust. One mother in our study, Beatriz, emphasised “*la confianza que nos dieron...*” [“the mutual trust that you gave us...”] was important for her as she felt as though she could be herself. The third element in the *Madres Unidas* study was a space where a critical analysis of school practices and the subordination of Latinos could be discussed. The *Parenting Circles* also took place off school premises so that the parents would feel free to critique the school system without the fear of repercussion for their children. The *Parenting Circles*, however, went further to include the creation of the books as an empowering tool not only for the parents but for their children as well. Similar to *La Familia*, our study also found that *convivencia* (collective creation, solidarity and bonding) was important for the parents. When Cintia, a mother in the *Parenting Circles* was asked what she liked most about the group she said, “*la convivencia*” as the parents could share with each other and talk about subjects that interested them.

It is worth highlighting the fact that, in Canada, there have been few Freirian studies documenting the key elements for the meaningful engagement of parents to support their children’s school success. Yet, the Latin American population in Canada is growing and there are no signs that this is slowing down, which will be reflected in continuing dropout rates if interventions are not more readily used. We believe that educational systems can do much to alleviate this problem by paying attention to the key elements of parenting groups described in this paper.

All studies have some limitations, and this project was no exception. The method of recruitment resulted in a snowball sample, thus the participants were not randomly selected nor were they representative of the Latin American population in Canada. As well, there was no

control or comparison group, thus one does not know which components in the project were necessary and which could have been left out. For instance, whether there would have been a difference if the book authoring component was removed. The lack of objective measures is also a limitation to the design of the project as one cannot determine the tangible outcomes such as, whether the teachers observed a difference or if the children's grades improved.

At the initial session the parents were asked to complete a survey and a similar questionnaire was to be administered at the end of the workshops. However, as the topics changed and developed out of the parents' interest, the original exit survey was no longer a useful tool for the researchers and a new exit interview was created. This was problematic as the two original questionnaires could not be compared to determine the parents overall growth throughout the sessions. Additionally, those who conducted the exit interview were the facilitators of the session and their presence could have altered the parents' responses. As a result, the parents may not have wanted to critique the project as they did not want to seem ungrateful.

Finally, due to the recent nature of the study the future implications and impact of their participation in the workshop has yet to be realised. One cannot yet determine whether these parents will become active in their children's school or whether the creation of the books helped with the issues of future language maintenance and self-esteem. Consequently the lack of follow up makes it difficult to determine the enduring success of this study. However, while beyond the scope of this major research paper, this has been acknowledged and the researchers will be connecting with parents to determine what changes they have made in their lives, if any.

Our study suggests that future researchers analyze the books created by the parents as a way to understand their goals regarding their children. Further, in future research, it would be

informative to include a longitudinal component to analyze the long term effects of the *Parenting Circles*, for instance, on grades or the family dynamic. It would also be important to develop a component that includes teachers and other school personnel to engage in dialogue with the parents.

References

- Ada, A.F. & Campoy, I. (2004). *Authors in the Classroom: A Transformative Education Process*. Boston, MA: Pearson Allyn and Bacon.
- Aschaffenburg K. & Maas, I. (1997). Cultural and Educational Careers: The dynamics of social reproduction. *American Sociological Review*, 62(August), 573-587.
- Babbie, E & Benaquisto, L. (2002). *Fundamentals of Social Research*. Scarborough, ON: Nelson a division of Thomson Canada Limited.
- Banks, J.A. & McGee Banks, C.A. (2006). *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives 6th Ed.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Inc.
- Bernhard, J.K, Cummins, J., Campoy, I., Ada, A.F., Winsler, A., & Bleiker, C. (2006). Identity Texts and Literacy Development Among Preschool English Language Learners: Enhancing Learning Opportunities for Children at Risk for Learning Disabilities. *Teachers College Record*, 108(11), 2380-2405.
- Bernhard, J.K, Winsler, A., Bleiker, C., Ginieniewicz, J., & Madigan, A. (In press). "Read my Story!" Promoting Early Literacy Among Diverse, Urban, Preschool Children in Poverty with the Early Authors Program. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*.
- Bernhard, J.K., Freire, M., & Mulligan, V. (2004). *Canadian Parenting Workshops: Preparing Children for School Success*. Toronto: Chestnut Publishing Group.
- Bernhard, J.K., Freire, M., & Pacini, V. (1998). Resisting Enculturation in Canadian Elementary Schools: Culturally Contested Issues of Latin American Parents. *CERIS Working Paper Series*, (2), 1-19.
- Bernhard, J.K., Freire, M., Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., & Villanueva, V. (1998). A Latin-American

- parents' group participates in their children's schooling: Parent involvement reconsidered. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 30(3), 77-98.
- Bernhard, J., Landolt, P., & Goldring, L. (2005). Transnational, multi-local motherhood: Experiences of separation and reunification among Latin American families in Canada. *CERIS Working Paper Series*, (40), 1-36.
- Bloemraad, I. (2006). *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Brown, R.S. (1994). *A follow up of the grade 9 cohort of 1987 secondary students survey participants*. Toronto, ON: Toronto Board of Education.
- Chow, P. & Cummins, J. (2003). Valuing Multilingual and Multicultural Approaches to Learning. In S.R. Schecter & J. Cummins (Eds.) *Multilingual Education in Practice: Using diversity as a resource*. (p. 32-61). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Cummins, J. (1996). *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society*. California: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. North York: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- De Gaetano, Y. (2007). The Role of Culture in Engaging Latino Parents' Involvement in School. *Urban Education*, 42(2), 145-162.
- Drever, N. (1996). *Frustrated learners: An ethnographic study of Spanish-speaking students at an inner-city high school in Toronto*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON.
- Dyrness, A. (2007) 'Confianza is where I can be myself': Latina mothers' constructions of community in education reform. *Ethnography and Education*, 2(2), 257-271.

- Epstein, J., Sanders, M.G., Simon, B.S., Salinas, K.C., Jansorn, N.R. & Van Voorhis, F.L. (2002). *School Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Herder and Herder.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition*. New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc.
- Freire, M. & Bernhard, J.K. (1997). "Caring for and Reaching Children Who Speak Other Languages. In K. Kilbride (Ed.) *Include Me Too! Human Diversity in Early Childhood*. (p. 160-176). Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company Canada, Ltd
- George, U. & Michalski (1996). *A Snapshot of Service Delivery in Organizations Serving Immigrants, Final Report*. Settlement Directorate, Ontario Region, Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
- Goldring, L. (2006). Latin American Transnationalism in Canada: Does It Exist, What Forms Does It Take, and Where Is It Going? In V. Satzewich & L. Wong (Eds.) *Transnational Identities and Practices in Canada*. (p. 180-201). Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Goldring, L., Berinstien, C., & Bernhard, J. (2007). Institutionalizing precarious immigration status in Canada. *CERIS Working Paper, (61)*, 1-40.
- Jasis, P. & Ordoñez-Jasis, R. (2004). Convivencia to Empowerment: Latino Parent Organizing at La Familia. *The High School Journal, December/January*: 32-42.
- Kilbride, K. (2000). A Review of the Literature on the Human, Social and Cultural Capital of Immigrant Children and Their Families with Implications for Teacher Education. *CERIS Working Paper Series, (13)*, 1-16.
- Lo, L., Preston, V., Wang, S., Reil, K., Harvey, E., & Siu, B. (2000). *Immigrant's Economic*

- Status in Toronto: Rethinking Settlement and Integrations Strategies*, March, CERIS, Toronto.
- Moll, L.C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141.
- Moore, S. & Lasky, S. (2001). Parental Involvement in Education. *Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Research Series*, (6), 1-23.
- Murdie, R.A. & Teixeira, C. (2000). *Towards a Comfortable Neighbourhood and Appropriate Housing: Immigrant Experience in Toronto*, March, CERIS, Toronto.
- Ortiz, R.W., & Ordoñez-Jasis, R. (2005) Leyendo juntos (reading together): New directions for Latino parents' early literacy involvement. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(2), 110-121.
- Ornstein, M. (1997, February). *Ethno-racial inequalities in Metropolitan Toronto: Analysis of the 1991 Census*. Paper presented at the Urban Forum on Immigration and Refugee Issues, Toronto, ON.
- Osterling, J.P. (2001). Waking the Sleeping Giant: Engaging and Capitalizing on the Sociocultural Strengths of the Latino Community. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 25(1 &2), 1-30.
- Ovando, C. J., Combs, M.C. & Collier, V.P. (2006). *Bilingual and ESL Classrooms*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., Bernhard, J.K. & Freire, M. (2001). Struggling to Preserve Home Language: The Experience of Latino Students and Families in the Canadian School System. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 25(1 & 2), 1-31.
- Peters, S.J., Klein, A. & Shadwick, C. (1998). From our voices: Special education and the

- “After-Eagle” problem. In B. M. Franklin (Ed.), *When children don’t learn: Student failure and the culture of teaching* (p. 99-115). New York: Teacher’s College Press.
- Pinkus, S. (2008). *Parenting Circles Program: The effect of the program on home language retention and parental engagement*. Unpublished major research paper, Ryerson University.
- Quintero, E. & Huerta Macias, A. (1990). All in the family: Bilingualism and biliteracy. *The Reading Teacher*, 44(4), 306-312.
- Reitz, J. G. (1998). *Warmth of the Welcome: The Social Causes of Economic Success for Immigrants in Different Nations and Cities*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Rodriguez Brown, F. (2003). Reflections on family literacy from a sociocultural perspective. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33(1), 146-153.
- Siemiatycki, M. (1998). *Immigration and Urban Politics in Toronto*, paper present to the Third International Metropolis Conference, Israel.
- Simich, L. (2000). Towards a Greater Toronto Charter: Implications for Immigrant Settlement. *Maytree Foundation*, (September), 1-49.
- Sosa Salinas, A. (1997). Involving Hispanic Parents in Educational Activities Through Collaborative Relationships. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 21(2/3), 285-293.
- Statistics Canada. Canada’s National Statistical Agency. 2001 and 2006 Census.
Website: <http://www.statcan.ca/menu-en.htm> Retrieved: January 2008
- Taylor, L.K., Bernhard, J.K., Garg, S. & Cummins, J. (In press) Affirming plural belonging: Building on students’ family-based cultural and linguistic capital through multiliteracies pedagogy. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*.
- Van Hook, J., Frank, B & Jeffrey, P. (2005). “Unauthorized Migrants Living in the United

States: A Mid-Decade Portrait". Washington, D.C. Migration Policy Institute. Migration Information Source (1 September).

Veronis, L. (2006). Rethinking Transnationalism: Latino Americans' Experiences of Migration and Participation in Toronto. *CERIS Working Paper Series*, (51), 1-48.

Table 2. Population by Mother Tongue for Toronto- Ontario- Canada (Spanish)

Population by Mother Tongue for Toronto- Ontario- Canada (Spanish)		
	Single Responses	Multiple Responses
Toronto	108,380	112875
Ontario	160275	167135
Canada	345345	362120

Source: [Statistics Canada](#) 2006 Census

* Mother tongue refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the census.

Table 3. Immigrant population by place of birth (2006 Census)

Immigrant population by place of birth (2006 Census)	
Canada	6,186,950
United States	250,535
Central and South America	380,165
Caribbean and Bermuda	317,765
Europe	2,278,345
Africa	374,565
Asia and Middle East	2,525,160
Oceania and other countries	59,410

Source: [Statistics Canada](#) 2001 Census

*Latin American countries are located in North America (Mexico), Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Table 4. Languages spoken most often at home for total population and age groups, 2006 counts for Toronto- 20% sample data.

Languages spoken most often at home for total population and age groups, 2006 counts for Toronto- 20% sample data.	
Official Languages	
English	3,494,705
French	25,325
Top Ten Non-official Languages	
Chinese	1,363,690
Punjabi	103,555
Tamil	75,625
Italian	74,690
Urdu	70,780
Spanish	67,390
Portuguese	56,060
Tagalog	53,870
Russian	50,710
Persian (Farsi)	47,395

Source: [Statistics Canada](#) 2006 Census

*Single responses only, it does not include multiple responses that can combine official and non-official languages.

**Does not reflect mother tongue responses, as data was not available at the time of this publication. Mother tongue refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the census. Thus, not all Latin American community reflected in this table.

Table 5. Mother Tongue for total population and age groups, 2001 and 2006 census for Toronto-20% sample data

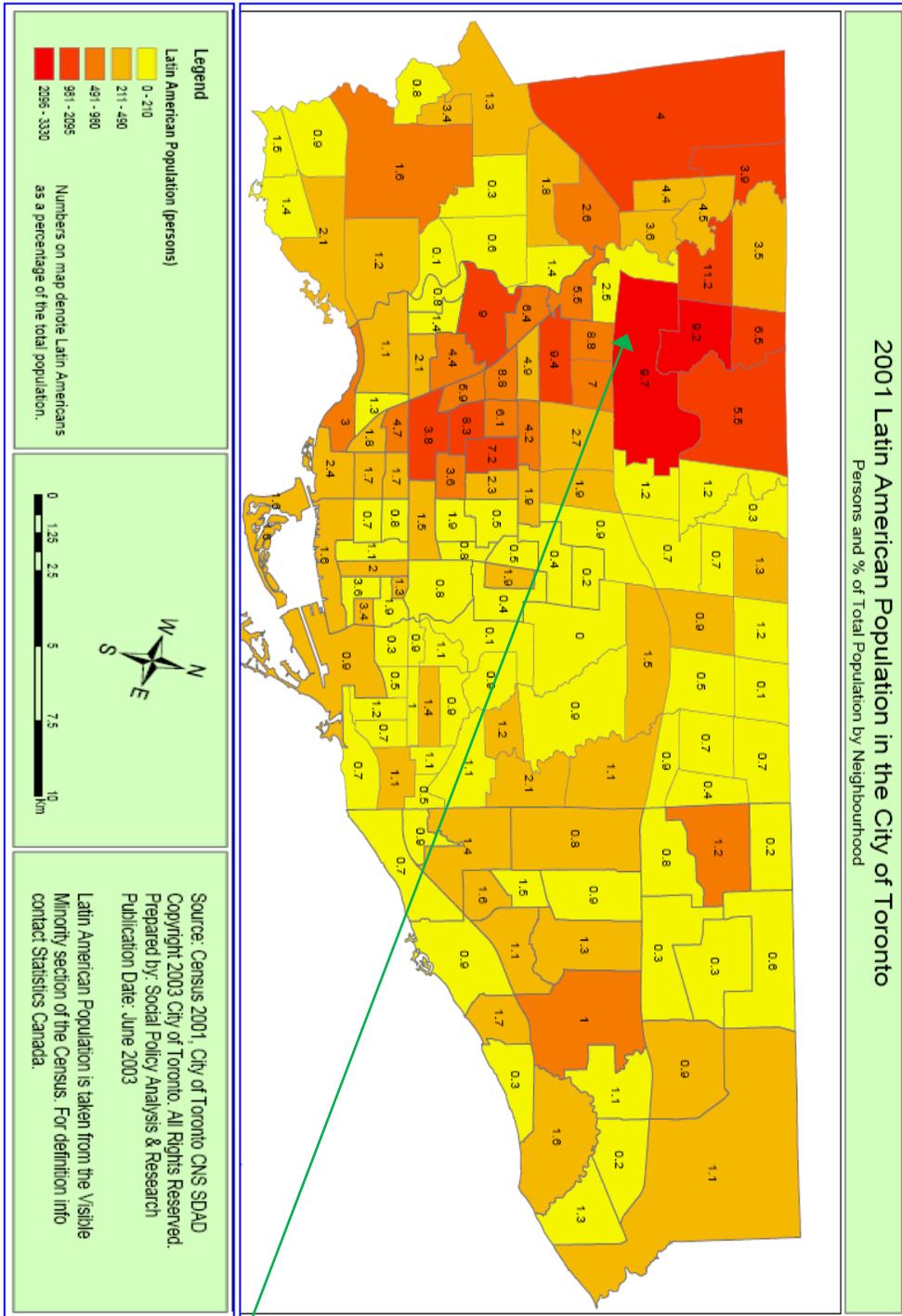
Mother Tongue for total population and age groups, 2001 census for Toronto-20% sample data	
Official Languages	
English	2,684,195
French	57,485
Top Ten Non-official Languages	
Italian	195,960
Chinese, n.o.s.	165,120
Cantonese	145,490
Portuguese	108,935
Punjabi	95,950
Spanish	83,245
Polish	79,875
Tagalog	77,220
Tamil	72,715
Urdu	53,890

Mother Tongue for total population and age groups, 2006 census for Toronto-20% sample data	
Official Languages	
English	2,684,195
French	57,485
Top Ten Non-official Languages	
Italian	185,760
Chinese, n.o.s.	172,045
Cantonese	166,655
Punjabi	132,745
Spanish	108,380
Portuguese	108,180
Tagalog	100,420
Urdu	98,575
Tamil	93,590
Polish	80,095

Source: [Statistics Canada](#) 2001 Census

*Mother tongue refers to the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at the time of the census.

Figure 1. 2001 Latin American Population in the City of Toronto



Location of Centre for Spanish Speaking People: 2141 Jane Street, North York, Ontario.

Familias latinoamericanas en Toronto

¿Su familia habla español en casa?

¿Actualmente, tiene bajo su cuidado hijos o nietos menores de 13 años de edad?

¿Los niños están en una escuela pública o Católica?

Si ha contestado sí a estas tres preguntas, quizás califica para participar en un grupo de entrenamiento para padres.

Para este estudio nos interesa saber cómo son las experiencias de las familias inmigrantes con la escuela pública. Queremos incluir al principal responsable del cuidado de los niños.

- Comparta las estrategias que utiliza para apoyar los estudios de sus niños
- Aprenda nuevas estrategias para facilitar el desarrollo educativo
- Conectase con otros padres para crear una red de apoyo
- Participe en un proyecto para escribir un libro
- Discuta problemas que afectan a sus niños dentro del sistema educativo

Participantes recibirán boletos para el TTC, reembolso de gastos para el cuidado de sus niños, refrigerios y un pago de \$200 al finalizar 5 de 6 sesiones.

Le invitamos a llenar el cuestionario adjunto a esta hoja para ver si califica como participante.

Si tiene preguntas o está interesado en participar en este estudio por favor llame a Elisa al 416-533-8545 y deje un mensaje. Le devolveremos su llamada a la brevedad posible.

Parents Wanted!

Are you the parent of a child 13 or younger?

Are you a member of:

The Spanish-Speaking Community?

Parenting Circles is a new Ryerson University project funded by the Ministry of Ontario's Parent Engagement Office. In 6 bi-weekly sessions, you will have the opportunity to:

- Share the strategies you use to support your children's success in school
- Learn new strategies to support your children's success in school
- Connect with other parents to develop parent support networks
- Participate in a creative book-writing project
- Discuss issues that affect your child's accommodation in the school system

Participants will be provided with TTC tokens, reimbursement for child care, refreshments, and a \$200 honorarium upon completion of 5 of 6 sessions.

Contact Project Co-ordinator: Alana Butler at abutler@ryerson.ca or 416-979-5000 x 7676

Appendix C. Initial intake survey template: Spanish version

La persona que le sugirió participar: _____ **Fecha:** _____

Muchas gracias por su interés en participar en nuestro proyecto. Las familias seleccionadas recibirán \$200 por su participación en el programa que durara dos horas por semana por 5 semanas. Le aseguramos que toda la información que usted nos brinde será manejada de forma confidencial y **su nombre jamás será usado en ningún reporte**. Para saber si su familia puede formar parte del proyecto, le pedimos que por favor responda a las siguientes preguntas. Nosotras nos comunicaremos con usted en los próximos días.

1. Nombre _____ Apellido _____

2. Su país de origen: _____

El país de origen de su pareja: _____

3. ¿Cuántos niños están a su cuidado? _____

¿Qué edades tienen los niños? _____

4. ¿Adónde están esos niños? Canadá _____ País de origen _____

5. ¿Cuál es su parentesco con los niños?

____ Uno de los padres

____ Tío/a

____ Abuelo/a

____ Otro (detalle)

6. Si los niños no están con usted, ¿por cuánto tiempo han estado lejos? _____ (detalle)

7. Si han estado separados, ¿cómo se dio esa situación?

____ Usted vino primero a Canadá

____ Mandó a sus hijos primero

____ Dejó a sus hijos en Canadá y volvió a su país

____ Otra situación (por favor descríbala) _____

8. ¿Hace cuánto tiempo vive usted en Canadá? _____

9. Es usted: Soltera(o) ____ Casada(o) o Unión libre ____ Viuda(o) ____ Separada(o) ____

10. Intersección o esquina de las calles principales cerca de donde usted vive:

11. Teléfonos donde podemos encontrarle: 1 _____ 2 _____

12. ¿Cuál es la hora más conveniente para llamarla(o)?

En la mañana ____ tarde ____ noche ____ fin de semana ____ no importa ____

Appendix D. Initial intake survey template: English version

The person who suggested you participate: _____ **Date:** _____

Thank you for your interest in participating in our project. The selected families will receive \$200 for participating in the program, that will consist of a 2 hour session every week for 5 weeks. We guarantee that all of the information provided will be kept strictly confidential and your name will never appear in any report. To determine if your family can participate in this program we ask that you answer the following questions. We will be in touch with you in the next few days.

1. Name: _____ Surname: _____

2. Your country of birth: _____

Your partner's country of birth: _____

3. How many children are under your care? _____

What are their ages? _____

4. Where are your children? Canada ____ Country of birth: ____

5. What is your relationship with the children?

____ One of the parents

____ Aunt/Uncle

____ Grandmother/Grandfather

____ Other (please specify)

6. If the children are not with you, how long have they been away/separated?

_____ (Please explain/clarify)

7. If you have been separated, how did this come about?

____ You came to Canada first

____ You sent your children first

____ You left your children in Canada and returned to your country

____ Other – please clarify/describe _____

8. How long have you lived in Canada? _____

9. Are you: Single ____ Married ____ Common-Law ____ Widow(er) ____ Separated ____

10. Nearest main intersection or corner to where you live

11. Phone numbers where we can contact you: 1. _____ 2. _____

12. What hour of the day is better for us to call you?

Morning ____ Afternoon ____ Night ____ Weekend ____ Any time ____

Appendix G. Initial questionnaire: Spanish version



ENCUESTA PARA LOS PADRES

Nombre: _____ **Fecha:** _____

Necesitamos saber si este programa es de utilidad, por lo cual le agradeceremos responda a las siguientes preguntas antes de comenzar el programa. La información es para investigación educacional y es absolutamente confidencial y anónima. Esto significa que nadie más que los investigadores y facilitadores del grupo tendrá acceso a la información, y que los nombres de los participantes jamás serán revelados. Las encuestas una vez hayan sido completadas, serán guardadas bajo llave y después de cinco años la información será destruída/borrada. Antes de cualquier publicación Ud. podrá revisar cualquier información que Ud. haya entregado en la encuesta, si Ud. así lo deseara.

La participación en este estudio y el completar la encuesta es voluntaria. Su decisión de participar o no participar, no influirá en las relaciones que usted pueda tener en el futuro con la Universidad Ryerson. Si Ud. decide completar la encuesta, Ud. no tiene la obligación de contestar todas las preguntas, y Ud. puede dejar de responder sin que exista penalidad o pérdida de beneficios que le hayan sido acreditados.

Es conveniente recordarle que en varias de las preguntas se le pide que elija un número entre el uno (1) y el siete (7). Por ejemplo:

EJEMPLO:

Creo que los niños son nuestro futuro.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totalmente de acuerdo

No estoy seguro

Totalmente en desacuerdo

Si Ud. está totalmente en acuerdo, haga un círculo en el # 1. Si Ud. está en general de acuerdo haga un círculo en el # 2 o 3. Si Ud. no está seguro, haga un círculo en el # 4 y así sucesivamente.

Gracias por ayudarnos a evaluar el Programa para Familias Recién Llegadas.

Apoyo Social

1. Busco apoyo de otras personas para saber como criar a mis hijos.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totalmente de acuerdo No estoy seguro Totalmente en desacuerdo

2. Converso con otras personas para saber como criar a mis hijos.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

nunca casi una vez 1-2 veces varias veces una vez muchas veces

nunca al mes a la semana a la semana al día al día

3. ¿De quién recibe apoyo para criar a sus hijos? (Marque todos los posibles)

Mi esposo _____

Mi/s padre(s) _____ Mi/s tía(s) o tío(s) _____

Mi/s abuelo(s) _____ Otros miembros del grupo de Familias Recién Llegadas

Mi/s hermano(s) o hermana(s) _____ Mi/s amigo(s) _____

Otros —¿Quién? _____

Desarrollo de los niños

Marque si está de acuerdo con cada frase haciendo un círculo en el número que corresponda del uno (1) al siete (7)

4. Los niños aprenden a través del juego

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totalmente de acuerdo No estoy seguro Totalmente en desacuerdo

5. Hablarle a los niños sobre lo que están jugando les ayuda a aprender.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totalmente de acuerdo No estoy seguro Totalmente en desacuerdo

6. Los niños aprenden jugando con adultos

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totalmente de acuerdo No estoy seguro Totalmente en desacuerdo

7. Los padres juegan un rol importante en ayudar a sus hijos a aprender.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Nombre de mi hijo/a: _____, edad _____		Tiene dificultades _____ Más o menos _____ Lo hace bien						
a.	Se lleva bien con otros niños	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b.	Tiene un lenguaje apropiado para su edad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c.	Sus destrezas motoras son apropiadas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d.	Lidia bien con problemas o conflictos	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e.	Lidia bien con los cambios	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f.	Se lleva bien conmigo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g.	Se siente bien con él/ella mismo/a	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h.	El/ella me habla acerca de sus sentimientos	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Totalmente de acuerdo

No estoy seguro

Totalmente en desacuerdo

8. Es importante pasarlo bien con los niños de uno.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totalmente de acuerdo

No estoy seguro

Totalmente en desacuerdo

9. Los niños aprenden de las historias que le cuentan sus padres sobre sus experiencias.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totalmente de acuerdo

No estoy seguro

Totalmente en desacuerdo

10. Yo se como ayudar a mi hijo/a para que esté preparado para empezar la escuela (apresto escolar).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totalmente de acuerdo

No estoy seguro

Totalmente en desacuerdo

11. Yo creo que hablar con mis niños en mi idioma, es una buena preparación para ellos para aprender el idioma que se habla en la escuela.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Totalmente de acuerdo

No estoy seguro

Totalmente en desacuerdo

12. Con relación a su hijo/a mayor dentro del grupo que va de los 2 a los 4 años de edad, encierre en un círculo el número que muestre donde Ud. ve a su hijo/a en las siguientes áreas:

13. ¿Si Ud. tiene una hija/s, cuales son sus sueños y esperanzas con relación a ella/s?

14. ¿ Si Ud. tiene un hijo/s, cuales son sus sueños y esperanzas con relación a él / ellos?

15. ¿ Los padres deberían tratar a sus hijas e hijos de la misma manera o en forma diferente?

___ igual ___ un poquito diferente ___ muy diferente

Por favor explique

16. ¿Cuán a menudo Ud. usa los siguientes métodos para ayudar a que su hijo/a tenga un comportamiento aceptable?

Por favor encierre en un círculo el número del # 1 al 7 para mostrar cuan a menudo Ud. usa cada método

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	nunca	casi nunca	una vez al mes	1-2 veces a la semana	varias veces a la semana	una vez al día	muchas veces al día
a Premiar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Distraer o redirigir	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C. Avisar con antelación (Ej. : es casi la hora de acostarse, entonces vamos a empezar a guardar los juguetes pronto)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Mandarlo a su pieza	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Ofrecer opciones limitadas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Resolver problemas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Ignorar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. Explicar lo que se debe hacer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. Crear reglamentos justos y no complicados	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Que hacen los padres y los niños juntos

Haga un círculo en el número que muestre cuan a menudo Ud. hace lo siguiente:

17. Yo hablo con mi hijo/a sobre lo que estamos haciendo mientras jugamos.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nunca			1-2 veces a la semana			muchas veces al día

18. Le cuento historias a mi hijo/a en español, francés o inglés.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nunca			1-2 veces a la semana			muchas veces al día

19. Miramos o leemos libros o revistas juntos en español, francés o inglés.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nunca			1-2 veces a la semana			muchas veces al día

20. Cuando vemos televisión juntos, hablamos sobre lo que estamos viendo.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nunca			1-2 veces a la semana			muchas veces al día

21. Pedimos prestado libros y grabaciones para niños de la biblioteca en español, francés o inglés.

Marque una de las siguientes:

nunca	_____	más de una vez al mes	_____
unas pocas veces al año	_____	todas las semanas	_____
todos los meses	_____		

22. Por sobretodo, mi hijo/a y yo nos llevamos bien

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
totalmente de acuerdo			No estoy seguro			Totalmente en desacuerdo

23. Cuando mi hijo/a hace muchas preguntas, me frustró.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totalmente de acuerdo			No estoy seguro			Totalmente en desacuerdo

Por favor explique.

Los jardines infantiles, la escuela y los servicios sociales canadienses

24. Comprendo bien:

a. Que es lo que quieren los maestros de mis niños cuando comienzan la escuela.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

b. Que es lo que los maestros esperan de los padres.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

c. Como ayudar a mi hijo/a a hacer lo que se espera de él / ella en la escuela.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

d. Acerca de la ayuda especial que mi hijo/a puede recibir en la escuela si él / ella lo necesita.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

e. Como obtener ayuda para mi hijo/a si tiene un problema en la escuela.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

f. Que el jardín infantil y la escuela son cosas separadas, entonces necesito conversar con ambas.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

g. Donde encontrar recursos o programas para mi hijo/a.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

h. Donde encontrar recursos o programas para mí.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

i. Acerca del rol de las sociedades de protección de los niños

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

j. Acerca de las leyes de protección del niño de donde yo vivo en Canadá

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

no del todo

de alguna manera

mucho

bastante

Conversando con el personal de la escuela y del jardín infantil

25. Sé muy bien sobre:

a. mi derecho a hablar con los profesores de mi hijo/a.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

b. como hablar con los profesores de mi hijo/a

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

c. que es bueno que los profesores de mi hijo/a sepan que nuestra cultura es diferente.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

d. cuando debo usar un intérprete profesional en lugar de amigos o mi hijo/a.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

e. como obtener un intérprete profesional si lo necesitara para conversar con el profesor de mi hijo/a/.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho	bastante

26. Me gusta compartir información sobre mi cultura con gente de otras culturas.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
no del todo			de alguna manera			mucho

27. Comentarios adicionales.

Muchas Gracias por completar esta encuesta.

Appendix H. Exit interview questionnaire: Spanish version

Cuestionario de “Los Talleres Para Padres Hispanos”

Nombre: _____ **Fecha:** _____

Gracias por completar este cuestionario. Esta información nos va ayudar a mejorar los talleres para otros padres.

Sobre los Talleres para Padres Hispanos

1. ¿Cuales son las cosas mas importantes que le sucedieron a usted al venir a los talleres?

.... ¿y a sus hijos?

2. ¿De donde obtiene información para tomar decisiones sobre la educación y desarrollo de sus hijos? ¿Quién le da consejos? Por ejemplo, en decidir si hablar ingles o español en casa, ¿de donde esta obteniendo información sobre los beneficios y los inconvenientes de cada opción?

3. ¿Cuanto le gusto atender el grupo?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

No me gusto

Me gusto algo

Me gusto mucho

4. ¿Que fue lo que mas le gusto sobre los Talleres para Padres Hispanos? Señale *sus tres primeras opciones*.

_____ 1. Lugar

_____ 2. Hora del día

_____ 3. Numero de Talleres

_____ 4. Numero de veces por semana

_____ 5. Como fue manejado los talleres

_____ 6. Tiempo para discutir

_____ 7. Comunicarse con otros padres informalmente

_____ 8. Tareas para hacer en casa

_____ 9. Los temas que se hablaron

_____ 10. Un tema en particular o temas- ¿cual tema o temas? _____

_____ 11. ¿Algo más? – por favor explique _____

5. ¿Que fue lo que le hizo continuar participando en los talleres?

6. ¿Si es que fue difícil venir a los talleres por cualquier razón, que podría hacerlo mas fácil?

7. ¿Que información, si la hubo fue nueva para usted?

8. ¿Que le gustaría cambiar del taller?

9. ¿Recomendaría usted los Talleres para Padres Hispanos a otros padres?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Definitivamente No

Tal vez

Definitivamente Si

10. ¿Por que recomendaría o no, el taller a otros padres?

11. ¿Consideraría usted comenzar su propio grupo? ¿Si es así donde? (El nombre del lugar, nombre de la escuela /colegio) ¿Que tipo de apoyo necesitaría usted?

12. Después de haber participado en el grupo, ¿que acción especifica tomaría para aumentar su participación en la escuela/ colegio de sus hijos?

13. Nos gustaría mantenernos en contacto con ustedes a través de los años. ¿Tiene algún número de teléfono suyo o de un familiar que generalmente no se cambia de casa?

14. ¿Va a mantenerse en contacto con los miembros del taller?

15. Por favor añada cualquier otro comentario que usted quiera decirnos.

16. Piensa usted que los libros le pueden ayudar a su hijo mantener su identidad hispana?

Questionnaire for The Canadian Parenting Project

Ryerson University and Ministry of Education Parental Engagement Office

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Thank you for completing this survey. This information will help us improve the workshops for other parents.

About the Canadian Parenting Circles

1. What were the most important things that happened for **you** because of coming to the workshops?

...for your child?

2. Who do you talk to when you need to make decisions about your children?

3. How much did you like attending the group?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all somewhat very much

4. What did you like most about the Canadian Parenting Circles? Check your top 3 choices.

- _____ 1. location
- _____ 2. time of day
- _____ 3. number of workshops
- _____ 4. number of times per week
- _____ 5. how the workshops were run
- _____ 6. discussion time
- _____ 7. talking informally with other parents
- _____ 8. the homework assignments
- _____ 9. the topics we covered

_____ 10. a particular topic or topics- which topic or topics? _____

_____ 11. something else- please explain

5. What made you want to keep coming to the workshops?

6. If it was hard to come to the workshops for any reason, what would have made it easier?

7. What information, if any, was new to you?

8. What would you like to see changed about the workshops?

9. Would you recommend the Canadian Parenting Circles to other parents?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Definitely Not

Perhaps

Definitely yes

10. Why would you recommend it or not recommend it to other parents?

11. After participating in the group, what specific actions will you take to increase your involvement in the school?

12. Have you considered starting your own group? If so where and so, please write the name and locations of the new group.

13. We would like to keep in touch with you over the years. Please give us a phone number of a relative who is not likely to move (here and in another country)

Name _____ Phone # _____ Relation to you _____

14. Are you planning to keep in touch with group members? Who?

15. Please add anything else you would like to tell us.

16. Do you think that the books are going to help your children maintain their Latin American identity?

Appendix J. Completion certificate: Spanish version

Appendix K. Book sample