



Capitalizing on Mexican parents' cultural models of parental involvement from their children's perspectives

Micah Andrews*

Texas State University, 505 Village West Drive, TX 78666, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Available online 29 July 2013

Keywords:

Parental involvement
Mexican parents
Cultural models
Latino education
Critical discourse analysis

ABSTRACT

Educators have recognized the importance of parental involvement for students' academic success. At the same time, there is not a universal definition of parental involvement. In the U.S. parental involvement includes activities such as bake sales, fundraisers, PTA/PTO, and back to school nights. However, many immigrants do not share the U.S. notions of what counts as parental involvement. In especial, Mexican parental involvement differs from what U.S. schools accept as parental involvement. Using critical discourse analysis and drawing on the concepts of culturally relevant pedagogy, this study explores the cultural models of Mexican parental involvement from the perspectives of some recently arrived Mexican students at a U.S. high school. The study also discusses why cultural models of Mexican parental involvement are not valued by the school and explores how those cultural models described can be recruited by the school when dealing with Mexican students.

© 2013 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Studies on parents' involvement in their children's education indicate that it promotes academic success and good behavior at school (Chavkin, 1993; Domina, 2005; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Jeynes, 2007). In the U.S. parental involvement in mainstream¹ education goes beyond parental care and nurturance. In U.S. schools, parental involvement is seen as a form of social capital in the family (McNeal, 1999; Yan & Lin, 2005) that increases student achievement (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). An additional benefit of parental involvement is the establishment of social networks with other families and social institutions in society (Turney & Kao, 2009). Parental involvement receives much emphasis in U.S. schools and educators expect parents to be involved in their children's academic activities at home and in certain activities at school.

In fact, parents, students, and the school stand to benefit from parental involvement. Students develop a positive attitude toward education when they observe their parents' interest in education (Turney & Kao, 2009), get better grades and test scores, do more homework, have better attendance, have a positive attitude toward school, have higher graduation rate, and have a greater chance of attending postsecondary educational institutions (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Parents on the other hand, maintain control over their children by being informed of their activities in school and their academic progress through the relationships they establish with their teachers (Turney & Kao, 2009).

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 608 509 1751; fax: +1 512 245 7911.

E-mail address: mandrews@uwalumni.com

¹ Mainstream here means the dominant culture. It refers to middle class norms, values, beliefs, and expectations. Traditional education mainly follows middle class norms, values, beliefs, and expectations.

Immigrant parental involvement, especially Latino² parental involvement deserves attention. During the last few years there has been a high increase in the immigrant student population with Latino students being the largest group (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Capps, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel, & Herwanto, 2005; Gibson, 2002; Kochhar, Suro, & Tafoya, 2005; Wortham, 2001). Within the Latino group, Mexicans makes up the largest segment due to geographical proximity to the U.S. (Garcia, 2001; Stewart, 1993; Suarez-Orozco, 1987). However, the low academic performance of Latino students as a whole has caused some educators to place the blame on their parents (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Zarate, 2007) rather than on the disconnection of the school with the parents. Those educators, follow a deficit view by interpreting Latino parents' non-involvement in many mainstream activities as not caring about their children's education (Carger, 1997; Lopez, 2001; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006; Zarate, 2007). The assumption that Latino parents are not involved in their children's education stems from a discrepancy between the cultural models of schooling here in the U.S. and those Latino parents are familiar with back in their home countries (Valdes, 1996). Latino parents also need to make adjustments constantly in their new communities to function in the U.S. In addition, most Latino parents do not have the information to provide the type of assistance needed in U.S. schools. A proper understanding of Latino parental involvement is necessary in order to distinguish the ways in which Latino students negotiate the cultural differences at school and the role their parents play in their education.

In this paper, using critical discourse analysis (CDA) and culturally relevant pedagogy, I add to the study of Latino parental involvement by examining how a group of high school Mexican students' descriptions of their parents' involvement in their education reveal their parents' cultural models of parental involvement, how these control models guide the students interactions at school, why these cultural models are not valued by the school, and how the school could tap into these cultural models in its interaction with Mexican students. One of the contributions of this study in contrast with other studies is its attempts to infer the students' parents' beliefs about parental involvement in the students' stories. This approach contrasts with studies that discuss Mexican students' school problems which do not take into account their stories in a meaningful way (Fernandez, 2002; Pizarro, 1999). The students' interpretations of their parents' beliefs provide insights as to how they negotiate the cultural differences they encounter at school. In addition, a fuller picture of Mexican parental involvement is captured since these descriptions come from individuals who observe their parents' strategies and practices and are affected by them.

It is necessary to mention that in view of the difficulty in grouping students of Mexican origin together, I have followed Matute-Bianchi's (1991) classification of Mexican students' origin in educational institutes. Matute-Bianchi presents five different categories of Mexican students. Recently arrived students; those who have arrived approximately in the last three to five years or so, bilingual students who retain the Mexican identity and reject the Americanized Mexican students, students born in the U.S. and Americanized, Chicanos, and Cholos (Valdes, 1997) who are usually second generation Mexican Americans. I have chosen the first category for the study since students must also have had experiences in Mexico in order to present opinions that reflect knowledge that comes out of their experiences of both worlds.

I use Gee's (2011) tool of inquiry, cultural models³, to examine the cultural models of parental involvement some Mexican parents use at home and how these cultural models could be recruited by the school. At the same time, culturally relevant pedagogy, which highlights the mismatch between mainstream's cultural models of parental involvement and Mexican parental involvement, serves as a guide in providing suggestions of tapping into Mexican cultural models of parental involvement. Using cultural models as a tool of inquiry has motivated me to ask the following questions that guide the study: (1) What do students' descriptions of their parents' involvement in their education say about their parents' interest in their academic success? (2) How do students negotiate their home teachings with the cultural differences at school? and (3) Why Mexican parents' cultural models of parental involvement are not valued in educational settings? I also argue that the students' descriptions indicate that Mexican parents' approaches to parental involvement are heterogeneous rather than homogeneous, stable, and cohesive.

The following format is the roadmap of the study. I first begin by presenting some characteristics of what the school accepts as standard practices of parental involvement and characteristics of Mexican parental involvement. Next, the theories that guide the study are described followed by an explanation of the methodology. In the analysis section, the principles of CDA are applied to the data. The discussion section draws implications from the analysis for the field of education while answering the questions that guide the study. In it I will make mention of ways in which a culturally relevant approach to Mexican parental involvement would make use of Mexican cultural models of parental involvement discussed in this study. Lastly, I discuss ways in which Mexican parents can be socialized into the school's practices of parental involvement.

1.1. *Traditional parental involvement*

Generally, parental involvement in U.S. schools implies that parents are "in direct contact with their children's school" (Turney & Kao, 2009, p. 258). Parents follow a prescribed role endorsed by the school in which they need to perform certain duties. They are involved in fund raising activities such as bake sales and raffles, PTA/PTO, and back to school nights (Lopez, 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009). Parents are also expected to accompany their children to school events, volunteer for school

² The term Latino is used when referring to Spanish-speaking people from Latin America and the Caribbean.

³ Discourse models are referred to as cultural models in this study.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10315877>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10315877>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)