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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Is there a monolithic "Hispanic" Experience? Understanding the Latinization of a New Jersey school district from the perspectives of families, schools, and a community-based initiative by MAIA G. DE LA CALLE

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This dissertation disaggregates the "Hispanic" category to examine the various factors shaping the educational trajectories of students who encompass this large ethnic group. This project consists of three studies, each presenting the perspectives of principal stakeholders: families, schools, and a community-based educational initiative. All studies are situated in the highpoverty and racially/ethnically-segregated school district of New Riviera, NJ (pseudonym), whose Hispanic student body increased from 51 percent in 1999 to 90 percent in 2019.

The first study explores the experiences of "low-income, Hispanic" parents navigating the U.S. school system. I draw on data from forty parent interviews and employ qualitative methods to discern the sociocultural components shaping the families' relationship with the schools. Findings indicate that the factors allowing some families to forge resourceful relationships and to garner cultural values rewarded in schools - factors that ultimately facilitate their negotiation and navigation of the schooling system - include: higher than average income levels, higher rates of full-time employment and exposure to professionals, higher levels of education, integration to communities outside the local district, permanent legal status, longterm plans to reside in the U.S., immigrating from an urban area (as opposed to rural), and an understanding of education that aligns with U.S. values. The structure of the school system
benefited those families possessing the involvement strategies and the cultural and social resources that resemble those of dominant groups; thus, parents who adopted a U.S.-centric approach to their school involvement, negotiated their role in the schools with ease.

The second study examines how New Riviera schools responded to the major demographic change in the student body and how they support their diverse Hispanic student population. I combine three sources of data and use qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the District's policies and organizational structures, as well as the attitudes and practices of individual educators. The data sources include district records and periodicals dating from 1970 to 2019, interviews with current and former district staff, and a staff-level panel dataset. Findings suggest that the rise in Hispanic student population in New Riviera was accompanied by a diversification in terms of: country of origin, socioeconomic status, immigration status, home language, schooling histories, and parental level of education. In concrete terms, this occurrence manifested in variations in students' access to academic and non-academic resources, access to higher education opportunities, time availability and predisposition to engage in academic activities outside of school, and parents' ability to get involved in their children's education. Most policies and practices adopted by the District over the past decades to support their growing Hispanic population were generic and disjointed, failing to fulfill the community's demands and to recognize and support students' diverse needs. Findings also reveal that a deficit discourse permeates the internal order and social relations within the schools; the context set out by the District that is marked by low student expectations and teacher demoralization appears to hinder collective responsibility for student learning. Despite this, educators who possess a profound understanding of their students' lives and cultural backgrounds function with a certain degree of autonomy that allows them to engage in culturally responsive teaching.

The third study focuses on an after-school and summer program located in New Riviera to understand how a community-based initiative adapts to the varying needs of its majorityHispanic student population. This work also examines the initiative's effects on social capital development and on students' academic performance. I employ a mixed-method approach using program records, a student-level panel dataset, student focus groups, and program personnel interviews. Findings suggests that program personnel recognize the cultural and circumstantial diversity present in their student population and respond to students' differing needs by implementing various purposeful, culturally-sensitive practices, such as allowing students to bring their siblings to program sessions and fostering trusting relationships with parents. The program's organizational structure, particularly its collaboration with locally based organizations and institutions, strengthen its capacity to extend students' social networks and facilitate the formation of life-enhancing bonds.

From an academic standpoint, the results from this dissertation demonstrate that the treatment of Hispanics as a homogeneous population obscures the reality of diverse educational paths: shared ethnicity does not manifest in a monolithic experience, as a host of social, economic, political, and cultural in- and out-of-school factors affect students' trajectories. From a policy standpoint, this project sheds light on the differing needs of students comprising the "Hispanic" group and shows that schools need to increase their efforts to learn about the realities of their students' lives, and adopt context-dependent and culturally-sensitive practices to connect with students and parents. At the same time, this work recognizes that schools do not operate in a vacuum, and that factors affecting Hispanic students' schooling trajectories transcend education policy and reflect larger, structural societal problems.

## Dedication

To my son, Julien,
a grounding force and an infinite inspiration.

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## CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

Hispanics represent the largest minority group in the U.S. and constitute the majority of the population in many cities across the country (Krogstad, 2016) ${ }^{1}$. This growth in population has been accompanied by an increase in within-group diversity. Despite these changing demographics, education policy research frequently treats this population as a homogeneous group, which carries many negative consequences. On a broad scale, it results in a culturally and historically diverse population being described through impractical group averages that overlook relevant patterns in educational attainment. Furthermore, because these studies are often outcome-driven, they obscure the reality of diverse educational experiences and lead to the generalization of all Hispanics as underachievers or not academically inclined (Hidalgo, 1999). This generates a vicious cycle, as it influences how school staff perceive and treat the students and families they work with, which, in turn, shapes student performance (as argued by Borman \& Dowling, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2015). Additionally, the monolithic view of Hispanics obfuscates the experiences of vulnerable communities and leads to the development of inadequate policies that fail to address the needs of different subgroups (Noguera, 2009).

My dissertation complicates the "underachievement" rhetoric by highlighting the many social, economic, political, and cultural nuances that affect "Hispanic" students' educational trajectories. The project is comprised of three studies, each presenting the perspective of different actors (family, school, and a community-based initiative) to fully understand the academic experiences of students making up this large ethnic group. The first study focuses on the families' experiences navigating the school system; the second study concentrates on the

[^0]viewpoint of the District's staff and the strategies employed to serve its diverse student population; and the third study incorporates the vantage point of a community-based out-of-school-time program designed to bolster students' social capital and academic performance. All studies are situated in the high-poverty, racially/ethnically-segregated school district of New Riviera, NJ (pseudonym), whose Hispanic student body increased from 2,706 (51\%) in 1999 to $8,314(90 \%)$ in 2019. The District is also characterized by its high proportion of low-performing schools (NJDOE, 2019) and its limited funding (ELC, 2020): In 2019, New Riviera's per-pupil spending was "below adequacy" by $\$ 5,118$ based on New Jersey's weighted student funding formula, ${ }^{2}$ (ELC, 2020).

The project's primary objective is to disentangle the Hispanic category by identifying the various mechanisms that shape educational trajectories of students comprising this ethnic group- including the "outliers" who successfully navigate the schooling system but are habitually neglected in academic literature. It incorporates the perspective of multiple agents to better understand the institutional and structural contexts in which students complete their schooling, and to bring attention to what each agent can offer. By recognizing the efforts made by families, schools, and a community-based initiative, I am able to develop well-thought-out policy recommendations that take into consideration the needs of all students comprising the "Hispanic" group, so that schools and other stakeholders can incorporate context-dependent and culturally-sensitive practices.

[^1]
## Problem statement

While Hispanics constitute the youngest and second-fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, their income and poverty rates attest to the group's harsh social and economic realities (Flores, 2015; Lopez \& Velazco, 2011). As of 2015, 30.5 percent of Hispanic children below 18 years of age lived under the federal poverty line (Flores, 2015). Exacerbating matters, the educational inequalities sustained by this group (e.g., underfunding, overcrowding, ill-equipped classrooms) limits their prospects for social mobility (Noguera, 2009): "More often than not, Latino students are trapped in the worst schools, and more than other ethnic groups, Latinas/os are likely to attend schools that are segregated on the basis of race and class" (Noguera, 2009, p. 208). Contributing to the issue of educational inequality, the homogeneous portrait of such a culturally diverse group in education literature has often obscured context-dependent problems, while perpetuating negative stereotypes and leading to ineffective policy interventions. Research that groups and "predicts educational failure for Hispanics" (Lew 2007), is subject to the interpretation that "underachievement" is a consequence of the students' background (Auerbach, 1989). While a vast amount of research has examined the impact that socioeconomic status has on Hispanics' academic outcomes, less is known about (1) how the diversity in immigration experiences and historical/cultural background among this group shapes educational trajectories and (2) how institutions respond to the group's diversity.

Over the past three decades, studies on the educational functioning of Hispanics have pointed out that generalizations across individuals of such different racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds pose a major limitation to this body of work (e.g., Hill \& Torres, 2010; Liu \& White, 2017; Suarez-Orozco, 1987). Therefore, this dissertation aims to dissect the narrative of Hispanic academic achievement by recognizing some of the social, economic, and cultural nuances (that affect educational experiences) within this large ethnic group. The
rationale behind this research is consistent with Nieto's (2009) contention that the focus placed on institutional deficiencies "in no way minimizes the responsibility of Latina/o families and communities," but rather "reaffirms the traditional responsibility of U.S. schools to educate all students" (p. 224). Thus, the current project incorporates the perspective of multiple agents to better understand the families and community that the school district is working with, to bring to attention what each agent can provide, and to focus on what can be changed.

## Why is it necessary to disaggregate the "Hispanic" group?

Since the release of the 2000 decennial census, Hispanics have been recognized as the largest minority group in the U.S.; as of 2018, they constituted 18.3 percent of the nation's total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The rise in the U.S. Hispanic population has been accompanied by geographic dispersal and diversification (Taylor et al., 2012). At the present time, the "Hispanic" category is comprised of individuals from various immigrant generations (e.g., 1st, 2nd, and 3rd) representing all Latin American nations and Spain (Flores, 2015; Mora, 2014). Consequently, by incorporating various immigrant generations, spoken language is no longer a common denominator across this group.

The depiction of "Hispanics" as a homogeneous group is most problematic considering that the notion of a Hispanic "panethnicity" itself was developed in the US. ${ }^{3}$ (Guzman \& Valdivia, 2004; Mora, 2014). In Making Hispanics, Mora (2014) asserts that the Hispanic category became institutionalized in the 1970s as bureaucrats, activists, and media executives formed networks and worked together to build panethnic organizations that popularized the notion of a Hispanic identity and that diluted the political agendas of Latin American subgroups in the US. The definition of who was a "Hispanic" was purposefully left ambiguous to match organizational

[^2]goals; this allowed for the inclusion of individuals from over 30 Caribbean and Latin America nations, and from all immigrant generations:

Activists, media executives, and census officials never really defined who Hispanics were, nor did they argue definitively that characteristics like language, place of birth or surname made Hispanics Hispanic. Instead, they reiterated that, above all, Hispanics were Hispanic because they shared a common set of values and a common culture (Mora, 2014, p. 156).

Contesting the idea of a monolithic culture, a 2012 Pew Research Center study (Taylor et al., 2012) suggests that the grand majority of "U.S. Hispanics" discredit the existence of a Hispanic culture: Using a nationally representative sample of 1,220 adults, this study found that only 24 percent of individuals falling under the "Hispanic" label identify as such. Additionally, 69 percent of the respondents refuted the idea of a common Hispanic culture. As expressed by a former Census official, Hispanics "didn't really identify with one another and they didn't really know what ‘Hispanic' meant!" (as quoted in Mora, 2014, p.3). Commonly, Latin Americans think of their national heritage as their ethnic identity and use the nationality label to differentiate themselves from other Hispanic subgroups (Aparicio, 2009).

The development of a Hispanic panethnicity also overlooks differences in racial identity among group members: there is wide variation in racial identification among Latinos (Taylor et al., 2012), partly fueled by large waves of Asian and West European immigration to Latin America in the $20^{\text {th }}$ century (Mora, 2014). The attitudes adopted by the three principal subgroups comprising the U.S. Latin American diaspora in the 1960s (Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans) illustrate the variations in racial identity among U.S. Hispanics: In general, Cuban Americans actively distanced themselves from the "person of color" label, and mainly identified as White/European. In contrast, Mexican American groups acknowledged a mixed indigenous-European background, while Puerto Rican nationalist groups embraced the island's African heritage (Mora, 2014). Thus, assumptions that historically all Hispanics shared
the same racial identity are misguided. Note, however, that country of origin does not determine one's racial identity, as all Latin American countries have a diverse racial composition.

Due to structural racism and discrimination, the racial heritage diversity of U.S. Hispanics translates to disparities in experiences, opportunities, and outcomes. For instance, a study by Arce and colleagues (1987) on Mexican Americans found that individuals with light skin tones and European features had a significantly higher probability of receiving high earnings as a result of intra- and inter-group prejudice. Similarly, a study by Gomez (2000) using the 1994 Boston Social Survey Data found a negative association between dark skin and wages of Puerto Rican and Dominican men. Deeply-ingrained racial discrimination also generates conflict within the Hispanic panethnic group. For instance, "Puerto Ricans are continuously racialized by many other Latinas/os for their Caribbean Spanish, for their darker skin color, and for their high poverty rates" (Aparicio, 2009, p. 45). These occurrences demystify the notion of group unity and solidarity, as well as the idea of a universal racial experience among Hispanics.

In addition to obscuring racial differences, the ambiguous classification established to define the "Hispanic" group has also erased all variations in cultural backgrounds, immigration histories, political agendas, and post-immigration social contexts (Mora, 2014; Noguera, 2009). For instance:

A Dominican arriving in Washington Heights [NY] can function in a monolithic [national] culture for quite some time. However, for Latinas/os who settle in a community that is more diverse, new forms of affiliation may emerge and the significance attached to national identities may melt away (Noguera, 2009, p. 208).

Moreover, the potential benefits arising from residing in close-knit immigrant communities depend on "international political factors... and on the history of earlier arrivals and the types of communities they have created" (Portes \& Rumbaut, 2014, p. 148). Thus, place and time of settlement shapes experiences and adaptation paths of immigrants.

Though the immigration literature has attempted to explain the differences in academic performance across major ethnic groups and immigrant generations (e.g., Kao \& Tienda, 1995; Ogbu, 1991; Portes \& Rumbaut, 2001), "this framework never really worked for Latinas/os" due to their overwhelming diversity in history (Noguera, 2009, p. 207). The circumstances in which Hispanics moved to the U.S. vary by nation, social class, and time period, amongst others. For instance, within the "Hispanic" category, there are "non-voluntary" communities, such as Chicanos or Puerto Ricans, who found themselves in the United States as a result of colonization or conquest (Noguera, 2009). In other cases, especially in the 1980s, Latin American groups arrived on a quasi-voluntary basis, fleeing for their lives from the effects of war, oppressive dictatorships, and poverty (Gonzalez, 2000). Salvadorians perfectly illustrate this group: despite being the smallest country in Latin America, the extreme violence resulting from the 1979 civil war and other internal conflicts has led the population to become the third largest Hispanic national subgroup in the U.S., increasing from 100,000 individuals in 1980 to over 2,000,000 in 2014 (Gonzalez, 2000; Pew Research Center, 2014). In contrast, other national subgroups, such as recent immigrants from South America, for the most part, moved to the U.S. on a fully voluntary basis. Overall, the "Hispanic group" exhibits a wide diversity of economic conditions, racial identities, group memberships, cultural backgrounds, immigration histories, and adaptation paths, which complicate the notion of a monolithic "Hispanic" identity and call into question studies that assume such uniformity.

This dissertation project will study the variations in educational trajectories of "Hispanic" students in New Riviera, NJ through the lenses of the family, the schools, and the community. Chapter 2 contextualizes the research by examining the experiences of lowincome, minority students attending urban schools in the current state of increasing school segregation. This review of literature on educational inequality concentrates on the central in-
and out-of-school factors affecting educational experiences. In-school factors refer to withinschool phenomena that have been empirically shown to impact student experience; these include variations in funding, classroom materials, teacher qualifications, student-teacher ratios, and course offerings. Out-of-school factors, such as family income, neighborhood of residence, and social capital, determine access to educational opportunities and, simultaneously, shape experiences at school. The chapter concludes by identifying the limitations of existing literature and the project's contribution.

Chapters 3 through 5 present the three studies comprising this dissertation. Chapter 3 concentrates on the families' home and school life to identify the factors molding family-school relationships affecting the day-to-day experiences of students. Through an analysis of interviews with 40 low-income, Hispanic parents residing in the urban school district of New Riviera, this chapter sheds light on the variations in family-school relationships within the low-income, Hispanic group. It also explains how families garner social and cultural capital, and how these forms of capital transform family-school interactions. The findings from this study establish the markers for diversity in the Hispanic group utilized in the following two chapters.

Chapter 4 focuses on the New Riviera Public School district, which faced a tremendous influx in the number of Hispanic students in the past three decades, to examine whether the organizational structures, practices, and staff attitudes reflect an adaptation to (and possible capitalization on) the diverse cultural assets and needs of their student population. Combining three sources of data (longitudinal staffing dataset, staff interviews, and archival records) and using qualitative and quantitative methods, this chapter studies the District's response to the major demographic shifts in their student body and examines if the response incorporated practices that targeted the needs of specific Hispanic subgroups.

Chapter 5 studies Nurture-thru-Nature (NtN), a community-based out-of-school-time program that seeks to promote STEM interest in New Riviera's youth. This study employs a mixed-method approach, incorporating the following data sources: a longitudinal (ten-year) student-level dataset, in-depth interviews with key program personnel, ten-years of program records, and student focus groups. The chapter begins by identifying how this community-based initiative addresses the varying needs of their Hispanic community. Subsequently, it evaluates the initiative's effect on social capital development and on participants' cognitive skills at varying levels of program exposure.

To conclude, Chapter 6 summarizes and connects the findings of all three studies to present a complete picture of the diverse education trajectories of low-income, Hispanic youth. The chapter also addresses the study's limitations, offers policy recommendations for inclusive education, and provides suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER 2.

## Contextual framework: Educational experiences of low-income, minority

## youth

The current dissertation project is situated in a context in which "many young people in the United States, especially those who are low-income students of color, do not receive even the minimum education needed to become literate and join the labor market" (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 318). In the current state of increasing school segregation, inequalities in funding, classroom materials, teacher qualifications, student-teacher ratios, and course offerings, amongst others, can be observed in schools across the nation. Despite numerous measures taken to overcome this enduring educational crisis and to reduce the socioeconomic and racial/ethnic "achievement gap", basic issues such as low academic quality, unequal access to opportunities, low attendance, grade repetition, and high drop-out rates, remain unresolved. Considering this situation, the following review examines the principal in- and out-ofschool factors shaping the educational experiences of low-income, minority ${ }^{4}$ students. "Inschool" factors refer to within-school phenomena that have been empirically shown to affect student experience. Similarly, "out-of-school" factors, such as economic status or social capital, determine access to educational opportunities and, simultaneously, shape children's schooling trajectories. Figure 2.1 illustrates the dynamic relationship between these two sets of factors.

[^3]Figure 2.1: In- and out-of-school factors shaping the educational experiences of low-income, minority students


The pyramids in Figure 2.1 depict each set of factors, while reflecting their synergistic nature. Within the in-school factors, we find that school segregation influences funding amounts, which in turn affects teacher quality and course offerings. The unidirectional arrow between the two pyramids indicates that out-of-school factors influence in-school factors. For instance, a family's social capital influences their access to educational opportunities, such as high academic tracks, which tend to be instructed by high-quality teachers.

Before proceeding to examine these two sets of elements, it is important to note that:
(1) students' "family background", which became a point of interest after the publication of the

1966 Equality of Educational Opportunity Study ("the Coleman Report"), is reflected across all listed out-of-school factors. (2) There are other important elements shaping schooling experiences, such as special learning needs or gender, which exceed the scope of this project and will not be covered. (3) The lined background of Figure 2.1 symbolizes the historical and
structural forces that shape individuals' lives, such as institutionalized discrimination, which perpetuate housing and educational segregation (amongst other adverse impacts).

## In-School Factors

Over the past fifty years, considerable empirical evidence has emerged to show that schools fail to provide all students with equal access to a good-quality primary and secondary education (e.g., Anyon, 1997, 2005; Bowles \& Gintis, 1976; Condron \& Roscigno, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Jencks, 1972; Orfield et al., 2003). One of the central factors contributing to this occurrence is profound and persistent educational segregation (Orfield \& Lee, 2005). As noted by Persell in 1977, U.S. schools tend to be racially and socioeconomically homogeneous, with lower-income and ethnic-minority children grouped in the same institutions. Decades later, this phenomenon remains in force and levels of segregation continue to rise: A 2016 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office indicates that the percentage of students attending high-poverty, segregated schools ${ }^{5}$ has increased from 9 percent in academic year 2000-01 to 16 percent in 2013-14.

The homogeneity of U.S. schools is a product of larger structural forces affecting neighborhood organization and geographic concentrations of poverty. Residential segregation, compounded with school catchment area policies ${ }^{6}$, has led to the current state of affairs (Ball, 2003; Dumas, 2009; Massey \& Denton, 1993; Orfield \& Lee, 2005). According to Massey and Denton (1993), "the organization of public schools around geographical catchment areas, ... reinforces and exacerbates the social isolation that segregation creates in neighborhoods" (p. 141). The relationship between school and neighborhood is complex and dynamic: low-quality

[^4]schools generate neighborhood-flight, leaving "migrant, low-income and inner-city urban families entrapped in lower funded schools because of low property values in those areas" (Ostrander, 2015, p. 271). At the same time, neighborhoods with high levels of concentrated poverty host the most resource-depleted schools (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Furthermore, contemporary policies aimed at redressing educational segregation by promoting enrollment in non-neighborhood schools (e.g., magnet, charter, and private) have led to augmented levels of isolation (Lubienski et al., 2009; Sohoni \& Saporito, 2009). For instance, a study by Sohoni and Saporito (2009), which mapped current school enrollment patterns and contrasted them to catchment area patterns, demonstrated that "public schools would be less racially segregated if all children living in a school district attended their local, neighborhood schools" (p. 569). Overall, the growing isolation of low-income, minority students in high-poverty neighborhood schools sets the stage for variations in educational experiences across institutions. Some inschool factors affecting student experience, such as peer groups, discipline policies, teachers, and funding, are closely linked to school location and student body composition; thus, the following pages examine each of these factors in detail.

## A. Funding and school resources

The current educational landscape in the U.S. reveals profound disparities in resources across school districts. Much of this variation is explained by states' funding formulas, which generally rely on property tax revenues as the predominant source of school funding (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Ostrander, 2015). Situated in the context of residential segregation, the dependence on local revenues means that districts with high property values have greater means to support the schools within their borders (Baker \& Corcoran, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2015). Though states attempt to compensate for disparities in local revenue through direct assistance to districts, wealthier districts count on greater non-property sources of revenues, which "are rarely equalized through the state aid formula" (Baker \& Corcoran, 2012, p.3). Further widening
resource gaps, schools located in high-poverty districts face greater expenditures resulting from serving a larger number of children with greater needs (e.g., more low-income students) (Leachman et al., 2016).

While each state implements its own funding configuration to distribute resources across school districts, national statistics show the prevalence of inequality in school funding in the U.S. (e.g., Borman \& Dowling, 2010; Condron \& Roscigno, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Leachman et al., 2016; Kozol, 2005; Ushomirsky \& Williams, 2015). For instance, Condron \& Roscigno (2003) find that nationally, "the wealthiest districts spend as much as three times the per-pupil amount of the most economically disadvantaged districts" (p.18). Similarly, a recent report by Ushomirsky and Williams (2015), identified discrepancies of about $\$ 1,200$ in annual per-pupil spending between high- and low- poverty districts. A closer look at individual states reveal the magnitude of these resource inequalities. Edgert and colleagues (1998), for instance, reported a disparity in per-pupil spending of $\$ 4,480$ among districts in California. Similarly, Kozol (2005), compared the annual per-pupil spending of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to its nearby suburb of Highland Park, IL and indicated a difference of $\$ 8,809$ - CPS spent about $\$ 8,482$ and served $87 \%$ minority students, while Highland Park spent about $\$ 17,291$ and served 90\% White students. These studies on California and Illinois identified a consistent association between funding inequalities and the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic composition of the student body: schools serving high concentrations of low-income, minority students tend to be underfunded.

Considering this dissertation project focuses on a district of New Jersey, it is important to examine the state-specific school finance structure. New Jersey's school funding history is characterized by a court-driven approach and dominated by two cases: Robinson v. Cahill and Abbott v. Burke. In the Robinson I decision, dating back to 1973, the New Jersey Supreme Court
ruled that the state's public education funding scheme violated the constitutional mandate to provide a "thorough and efficient" education for all students (Robison v. Cahill, 1973). The Robinson rulings extended to 1976 and resulted in the issuing of the Public School Education Act of 1975 , which introduced a funding formula aimed at reducing inter-district resource disparities (Lichtenstein, 1991). In 1981, the Education Law Center filed the historic Abbot v. Burke case on behalf of twenty New Jersey's urban school students; this litigation challenged the school funding scheme dictated under the 1975 Act, arguing that it violated the "thorough and efficient" education clause due to severe inter-district funding inequalities (ELC, 2019). The Abbott rulings (a total of 22 rulings issued by the New Jersey Supreme Court from 1985 to 2017), repeatedly found the state's urban districts to be significantly underfunded and ordered equalized funding in 31 high-poverty districts - commonly known as Abbott districts (Gruber, 2012; ELC, 2019).

The 2009 Abbott XX decision replaced the Abbott funding remedies with the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA), which applied a weighted student funding formula that accounted for district size and students' needs. The SFRA determines an "Adequacy Budget" by calculating "the level of spending for each district based on the cost of educating all students to achieve state standards, along with the cost of programs for low-income students, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities" (ELC, 2019, p.1). According to the Education Law Center (2019), New Jersey's "commitment to fully funding the [SFRA] formula lasted only one year [2008-09], and since that time the Abbott districts have fallen further and further behind" (ELC, 2019, p. 2). In academic year 2019-20, 78 percent of low-wealth districts in New Jersey spent below the adequacy budget dictated by the SFRA formula, compared to only 6 percent of high-wealth districts (ELC, 2020). Thus, while New Jersey stands out for its progressive school funding system when compared to other states in the U.S. (Baker et al.,
2019), the state's history of funding equity is volatile and complex: In the past decade, the gaps in state aid and local levy have widened, resulting, once again, in significant spending disparities between high-poverty and low-poverty districts. Currently, Abbott districts' per-pupil spending stands below the "level approved as constitutional by the Supreme Court" (ELC, 2019, p.1).

Although fair funding ${ }^{7}$ does not automatically translate to good-quality education or high academic gains (Hill, 2017), it shapes a school's social and learning environment. Interschool differences in educational funding are reflected in classroom materials, course offerings, student-teacher ratios, and teacher qualifications, amongst other factors (Condron \& Roscigno, 2003). Over the past decades, studies measuring inequalities in tangible resources across schools have found discrepancies in facilities and building maintenance (Herriott \& St. John, p. 1996), reading materials (Dumas, 2009; Oakes, 1990), science laboratories (Edgert et al., 1998) and classroom technologies (Oakes, 1990). In general, the spending disparities between highand low-poverty districts manifest in a series of factors affecting the day-to-day experiences of students. One crucial factor, discussed in detail in the following paragraphs, pertains to the heftiest expenditure area for schools: salaries and benefits for teachers and staff (Baker et al., 2014).

## B. Teachers and school leadership

Over the past three decades, the amount of research focusing on teacher quality has vastly increased (Kington et al., 2014). While various studies have concentrated on effective teaching techniques or teacher assessment, educational inequality literature has demonstrated the

[^5]prevalence of "striking differences in the qualifications of teachers across schools" (Lankford et al., 2002, p. 37). Numerous empirical works have found that in comparison to low-poverty districts, schools located in high-poverty areas have a lower concentration of highly credentialed teachers (Clotfelter et al., 2006; Hanushek et al., 2004; Lankford et al., 2002; Oakes, 1990; Ostrander, 2015). The unequal distribution of highly-trained and experienced teachers has been documented for decades. For instance, the results of a national study on the distribution of math and science opportunities in primary and secondary schools (Oakes 1990) revealed that students in high-minority, low-income institutions have teachers with fewer years of teaching experience and who are significantly less likely hold a degree or a teaching certificate in their subject areas. A subsequent study by Lankford and colleagues (2002) on teacher distribution in New York State supported Oakes' findings; the authors asserted that minority, low-income students have less exposure to qualified instructors ${ }^{8}$.

The high-levels of teacher turnover faced by schools serving low-income, minority students partly explains the disparities in teacher quality distribution. Research on teacher mobility has shown that instructors working in high-poverty areas have a greater likelihood of transferring out of their districts (Ingresoll, 2001). Low retention rates pose a problem for various reasons: first, the disorganization and interruption resulting from personnel turnover negatively impacts student learning (Simon \& Johnson, 2015). Second, schools facing teacher turnover tend to resort to staffing less-experienced and less-effective teachers, canceling course offerings, and/or increasing class sizes (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Ost, 2014).

Due to the robust positive relationship between salaries and teacher quality (Ferguson, 1991; Ostrander 2015), various studies have examined whether teachers' attrition decisions

[^6]stem from compensation reasons. Earlier studies (e.g., Hanushek et al., 2004) suggest that students' race and achievement are better predictors of turnover than salary. However, more recent work has incorporated measures of schools' organizational context, finding that "the poor working conditions common in America's neediest schools explain away most, if not all, of the relationship between student characteristics and teacher attrition" (Simon \& Johnson, 2015, p. 29). A six-study review by Simon \& Johnson (2015) suggests that the central factors influencing teachers' permanence decisions include inter-faculty cooperation, school leadership, and school culture (e.g., student safety, discipline policies, and commitment to students). Research on teacher satisfaction and retention, therefore, sheds light on the importance of strong school leadership. Corroborating these findings, a recent longitudinal study employing five years of data on 278 of New York City's middle schools demonstrates a robust association between strong school leadership and reductions in teacher turnover: "Given the average turnover rate among middle school teachers in NYC is 15.1\%, a one standard deviation increase in the quality of leadership alone is associated with approximately an $11 \%$ reduction in turnover" (Kraft et al., 2016, p. 1429). These studies exemplify how schools' resources and organizational structure not only shape the experiences of students, but also the experiences of teachers.

Assuming a disparity in teacher quality by students' race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, numerous studies examined how those inequalities affect student outcomes (Clotfelter et al., 2007; Felter, 2001; Goldhaber \& Brewer, 2000). Evidence from this body of research suggests a strong correlation between high-quality teachers and student academic gains. For instance, Clotfelter and colleagues (2007) analyze ten years of student and teacher data from North Carolina to evaluate the links among teacher characteristics, teacher credentials, and student achievement. Results from this longitudinal study reveal that years of experience and
type of license are consistent predictors of students' math and reading performance. Additional research has found that fully certified teachers are more effective, yielding positive effects on students' academic performance (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber \& Brewer, 2000). Felter's (2001) study of California's high schools also indicated a positive association between novice teachers and dropout rates.

Not only do teachers' experience and training shape student outcomes, but research has also shown that teacher' expectations and attitudes toward students affect learning (e.g., Anyon, 1997; Borman \& Dowling, 2010; Neckerman, 2007). Teachers tend to hold lower expectations for low-income, minority students (Borman \& Dowling, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010); this exacerbates existing inequalities given the strong positive correlation between high teacher expectations and student performance (Kraft et al., 2016). Racial mismatches and cultural misunderstandings between teachers and students partly explain the documented biases favoring White, Asian, and upper-class students (Borman \& Dowling, 2010; Ehrenberg et al., 1995; McGrady \& Reynolds, 2013). Empirical work measuring the effects of teacher-student racial pairings support such arguments; these studies establish a positive correlation between racial match and student achievement ${ }^{9}$ (Clotfelter et al., 2007; Dee, 2004). For instance, by examining the test score data from the Tennessee STAR experiment, Dee (2004) found that assignment to own-race teachers significantly increased standardized test performance of Black and White students. Overall, research on teacher distribution and expectations suggests that low-income, minority students are placed at a further disadvantage due to their limited access to skilled teachers and to being subjected to settings of high teacher turnover and lowexpectations.

[^7]
## C. Class size and peer effects

Disparities in school resources and teacher attrition rates also affect class size and student-
teacher ratio variations ${ }^{10}$. Underfunded and resource-depleted schools that serve low-income, minority populations tend to have larger class sizes compared to schools serving majority White students (Darling-Hammond, 2004). A recent nationwide report on school funding demonstrated important student-teacher ratio differences across states (Baker et al., 2014):
"Thirty-two states have PTR [pupil-to-teacher ratio] Fairness Ratios that suggest that greater staffing resources are provided to higher-poverty districts, though for many states the differences are minimal" ( p .35 ). Despite serving a greater proportion of students with special needs (Rowan, 2011), high-poverty districts in eighteen states have, on average, a lower number of teachers and support personnel per student than low-poverty districts.

Empirical studies on the effects of class-size on student learning find that the number of students per instructor shapes the experiences of both students and teachers. A study using data from 1000 teachers in California (Loeb et al., 2005) found that being assigned to classrooms with more than 32 students significantly increases teacher turnover rates; this, in turn, negatively affects classroom dynamics and disrupts the learning environment. These results illustrate the paradoxical relation between teacher turnover and class size: poor teaching conditions, in the form of large class size, contribute to teacher attrition; at the same time, schools facing issues of teacher attrition respond by establishing large class sizes.

[^8]Numerous empirical studies have analyzed the effect of class size on student achievement, yielding mixed results (e.g., Ferguson, 1991; Hoxby, 2000; Mosteller, 1995; Nye et al., 2002). Results from various experimental- and quasi-experimental studies demonstrate a negative correlation between class sizes and student outcomes (Molnar et al., 1999; Mosteller, 1995; Nye et al., 2002). Due to its magnitude, depth, and rigorous design approach, Project STAR represents one of the most influential studies on the subject. This study employed an experimental design, randomly assigning approximately 6,500 students to different-sized classes to assess the impact of class size in early school grades. Findings from this study showed that a small class size ${ }^{11}$ was a statistically significant determinant of high academic achievement, particularly for minority students (Mosteller, 1995).

While large class sizes modify learning experiences and outcomes, the educational trajectories of students in high-poverty districts are also affected by peer influences. Given the ethnic/racial and socioeconomic homogeneity of U.S. schools, numerous authors have examined the effects stemming from such segregated settings. The "Coleman Report" (Coleman et al. 1966), one of the first nationwide studies focusing on this issue, found "peer effects" to be a central factor negatively impacting the academic performance of low-income, minority students. Subsequent studies and reviews arrived at similar findings, suggesting that exposing students to a highly disproportionate number of schoolmates facing economic hardships, disruptive life events, and high-residential mobility, amongst others, "filters into both their own and peers' school behavior and academic performance" (Vigdor, 2011, p.446; Rowan, 2011; Rumberger, 2003). Due to the methodological challenges of isolating the effects of "problematic students", a recent review of the Coleman Report (Hill, 2017) suggested that "many other explanations might hold" for the peer effect findings on academic performance, including "a

[^9]slower-paced curriculum, lower-quality instruction, lower teacher expectations, and implicit racism" (p. 21). Despite inconclusive evidence on the effect of peer influence on student achievement, research has consistently found that the grouping of disadvantaged children disrupts individual learning and the classroom environment (Carrell \& Hoekstra, 2010; Duncan \& Magnuson, 2011; Sacerdote, 2014).
D. Discipline policies

In the past four decades, a large body of research has documented how exclusionary discipline policies, such as school suspension or expulsion, have transformed the educational experiences of low-income, minority youth (e.g., Fenning \& Rose, 2007; Skiba et al., 2014; Wehlage \& Rutter, 1986). Evidence from this literature highlights the disproportionate impact of disciplinary exclusion on marginalized groups, especially African American males. "Nearly 40 years of research has almost universally found Black students, Black males in particular, to be overrepresented in the use of exclusionary discipline, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion" (Skiba \& Williams, 2014, p. 3). A study by Welch and Payne (2010), which employed a national sample of 294 public middle- and high-schools, suggested that the racial/ethnic composition of the student body determines the likelihood of the usage of punitive disciplinary actions: "Schools with a larger composition of black students are more likely to respond to student misbehavior in a harsh manner and less likely to respond restoratively" (p.40). These occurrences, coupled with the fact that zero-tolerance discipline policies are becoming increasingly common at schools (Toby, 1998; Welch \& Payne, 2010), have driven various studies to explore the factors contributing to the racial disparities in discipline and its consequences on the students' schooling trajectories.

Discipline literature examining whether the behavior of minority students explains the discrepancy in discipline rates find no evidence that these students engage in serious
misbehaviors with greater frequency than non-minority students (e.g., Fenning \& Rose, 2007;

Skiba et al. 1997). In fact, various scholars have found that, on average, Black and Hispanic students receive harsher punishments than their White counterparts for the same offence (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009; Skiba et al., 2011). Other empirical works indicate that minority students are more frequently disciplined for subjective and nonviolent offenses (i.e., disrespectful attitudes) than their White peers (Fenning \& Rose, 2007; Wallace et al., 2008). According to an in-depth review of school discipline literature by Skiba and Williams (2014), "the fact that race remains a significant predictor of discipline after controlling for a range of disciplinary infractions strongly suggests that factors related to student behavior are not sufficient to account for racial/ethnic disparities in discipline" (p. 4).

In terms of the effect of discipline on student learning and outcomes, studies have found that suspension and expulsion does not deter future misbehavior (Costenbadera \& Marksona, 1998; Raffaele Mendez, 2003), but rather, high rates of exclusionary discipline are positively correlated with school dropout rates (Wehlage \& Rutter, 1986), grade retention (Safer, 1986), poor academic achievement (Skiba et al., 2003), and juvenile justice involvement (Skiba et al., 2014). Moreover, ethnographic research by Casella (2003) revealed that students faced serious challenges after serving their expulsion or suspension: for the most part, students were not allowed to return to their regular day-school program and, instead, were redirected to alternative education programs, such as GED programs, afternoon schools, or even boot camps and lockdown facilities.

Studies analyzing the factors contributing to racial disparities in discipline point to issues related to institutional racism (Hannssen, 1998), cultural capital and group membership (Hirschfield, 2008), student-teacher racial mismatch (Skiba \& Williams, 2014), and weak academic programs (Scott et al., 2001). For instance, Casella (2003) found that "in many
instances, school officials labeled students as dangerous because they did not function well in the traditional public school and displayed a range of behaviors that conflicted with the norms of the school" (p. 68). Furthermore, studies argue that federally mandated reforms, such as high-stakes testing, have added pressure to schools to "take care of" those students who cannot adapt to the common norms (Fenning \& Rose, 2007).

## E. Curricula and tracking system

Another major factor affecting the schooling experiences of low-income, minority youth pertains to inequalities in course offerings and academic track options. Research on this matter spans over the past five decades, consistently finding that disadvantaged students face restricted access to quality curricula- such as college-preparatory or advanced courses (e.g., Anyon, 1981; Alexander et al., 1978; Eder, 1981; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Jones et al., 1987; Oakes, 1990, 2007; Persell, 1977; Rosenbaum, 1975). These disparities in course enrollment derive from two sources. First, resource-depleted schools serving low-income, minority students "offer smaller academic tracks and larger remedial and vocational programs than do schools serving Whiter, more affluent student bodies" (Oakes, 1992, p. 13; Spade et al., 1997). Second, students from disadvantaged backgrounds have a lower probability of being placed in advanced track courses than their less-disadvantaged schoolmates, even after controlling for academic performance (Gamoran, 2009; Jones et al., 1987). Thus, inequalities in course enrollment by student background exist at an inter- and intra-school level. A two-year study by Jones and colleagues (1987) employing enrollment data from 14,825 high school students demonstrates a strong correlation between students' socioeconomic status and academic track location. Findings indicate that high-performing high school seniors from the lowest-socioeconomic quartile have a 52 percent chance of being placed in a top academic track, compared to 80 percent of seniors with equivalent performance from the highest-socioeconomic quartile. These
discrepancies in course enrollment ultimately result in an unequal distribution of knowledge (Anyon, 1981), heavily shaping the schooling experiences of low-income, minority students.

Summary: In-school factors
In sum, this section has presented the various in-school factors affecting the educational trajectories of low-income, minority youth. Residential segregation, coupled with school choice and catchment area policies, has led to the prevalence of ethnic/racial and socioeconomically homogeneous schools. In this context, students attending institutions in disinvested communities have limited access to quality classroom materials, skilled teachers, or challenging academic curricula. Moreover, these students' learning experiences and academic growth are negatively affected by peer influences, high rates of teacher turnover, and low teach expectations. The last two subsections also showed that students from disadvantaged backgrounds systematically endure disproportionately harsh discipline and exclusion from enriching academic opportunities. The following section examines additional mechanisms that contribute to the educational experiences of low-income, minority youth.

## Out-of-School Factors

Since the publication of the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study in 1966 ("the Coleman Report"), which suggested that in-school factors alone fail to explain discrepancies in academic outcomes across ethnic/racial and socioeconomic groups, a vast amount of education policy literature has focused on the impact of family background on educational achievement. Thus, the following section examines the elements related to students' lives and environments that affect schooling experiences and outcomes. It elaborates on the factors that restrict lowincome, minority students' access to valuable resources and opportunities, and, in turn, place them at a disadvantage in school. Specifically, the section explores the influence of family
income and structure, place of residence, social and cultural capital (including parental education level), and immigration processes in shaping schooling experiences.

## A. Economic capital and family structure

For several decades, researchers have documented the effect of family income on school performance. Countless studies comparing academic achievement across different socioeconomic status groups reveal that impoverished students do not perform as well in school as students from better-positioned families (Berliner, 2007). This finding is particularly problematic considering that, as of 2016,18 percent of children under the age of 18 live in poverty in the United States (Semega et al., 2017). Moreover, recognizing the urgency of this issues, Apple (1996) suggests that every year a child spends living in poverty increases the probability that he/she will perform below grade level.

The link between poverty and academic achievement might not come as a surprise, considering the aforementioned in-school factors affecting the educational experiences of disadvantaged youth (e.g., poorly equipped schools, less-qualified teachers, limited curriculum offerings). Additionally, family socioeconomic status influences neighborhood mobility and place of residence, which determines school options and the environment where children spend most of their time. For instance, research employing a counterfactual causal framework to measure "neighborhood effects" indicates that children residing in high-poverty environments have a higher probability of dropping out of school (Harding, 2003). Moreover, neighborhood of residence has been shown to affect children's long-term outcomes, such as earnings and college enrollment (Chetty \& Hendren, 2018).

To comprehend the full magnitude of the impact that family income has on schooling, one must also consider its link to cognitive development:

Income allows parents to provide their children with safer, more stimulating home environments; to live in communities with better schools, parks, and libraries and more
challenging peers; to afford tuition and other expenses associated with higher education; to purchase or otherwise gain access to higher-quality health care; and in many other ways to buy the things that promote the health and development of their children (Duncan \& Brooks-Gunn, 1997, cited in Anyon, 2005, p. 75).

Hence, family income regulates multiple aspects of home life that directly influence schooling experiences and cognitive growth, such as safety, health, nutrition, and intellectual stimulation. In a review of studies on the effect of poverty on education, Anyon (2005) stressed that examining how income affects cognitive development does not imply that poor children are less intelligent or less academically capable. Rather, "the studies point to the power of the economy - and of economic hardship - to place extremely high hurdles to full development in front of children who are poor" (Anyon, 2005, p. 76). Elaborating on this argument, Payne and Ortiz (2017) suggest that intra-state and intra-district variations in academic outcomes among lowincome children attest to the importance of educational practices to mitigate the detrimental effects of poverty.

Family structure represents another aspect of family life associated with schooling experiences and outcomes. As the number of U.S. children living with both biological parents decreased over the past six decades (reaching 65 percent in 2015) ${ }^{12}$, hundreds of studies were published linking single-parent households to low educational achievement (e.g., Amato \& Anthony, 2014; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994; Pong, 1997). The detected association between parental configuration and school performance particularly affects minority and low-income youth: "by 2014, approximately 29\% of non-Hispanic White children, $53 \%$ of Hispanic children, $71 \%$ of Black children, and $40 \%$ of all children in the USA were born outside marriage" (Browne1 \& Battle, 2018, p. 78). Studies explaining the association between low educational attainment and single-parent household structures point to several contributing factors, including a

[^10]decrease in material and non-material parental resources (Brown, 2010), a reduction in "quality of parenting" (McLanahan and Percheski, 2008), and disruptiveness of the rupture event on school life (Amato et al., 2015).

Though a vast amount of research has found that U.S. students living in single-parent households perform more poorly on academic measures than their counterparts who live with both parents, this body of work is frequently criticized for failing to establish whether this relationship is causal or spurious (Amanto et al., 2015). According to McLanahan and Percheski (2008), much of this literature overlooks the potential for omitted variable bias and reverse causality threats. Selection bias is one of the greatest issues with this body of work; for instance, parents' personal traits predicting low academic outcomes for their children, such as personality disorders, are also predictors of family structure disruptions. Thus, to attain a clearer understating of the relation between family structure and education achievement, McLanahan and colleagues (2013) conducted a review of studies employing "innovative" and rigorous research designs that addressed these validity threats. Their review found a strong negative association between father absence and high school graduation, concluding that "the effects on educational attainment operate by increasing problem behaviors rather than by impairing cognitive ability" (p. 416).

Other research attempting to address the above-mentioned methodological issues include Amato and colleagues' (2015), which examines eleven years of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores to determine if the increase in single-parent households in the U.S. lowered the average levels of educational achievement. The authors find no evidence that the rise in single parenthood has influenced test performance; however, they show that the increase in percentage of Black students proved to be negatively associated with test scores. In light of these mixed findings, research employing an intersectional framework offer a greater
understanding on the relationship between education experiences and household structure of marginalized groups (Barbarin \& Soler, 1993; Battle et al., 2005; Brownel \& Battle, 2018; Dufur et al., 2013). These studies, mainly focused on Black students, suggest that "race, class, and gender are simultaneously intersecting categories in the family experiences and educational achievement process of Black students" (Brownel and Battle, 2018, p. 89). Thus, social forces concurrently shape Black household structures and education trajectories.

Overall, research on family structure and children's schooling offer strong evidence for the causal relationship between single-parent households and academic outcomes- in the form of high-school graduation rates (McLanahan et al., 2013). Studies on the matter fail to find robust evidence indicating that parental configuration influences children's cognitive development. Rather, the association between paternal absence and behavioral problems (Amato et al., 2015) explains the above-mentioned effects on graduation rates. Moreover, intersectional framework literature suggests that the effect of family structure on education experiences must be considered in tandem with other out-of-school factors affecting education experiences, such as cultural capital, gender, and socioeconomic status- especially when considering that single-parent configurations disproportionately affect disadvantaged students. B. Social and cultural capital

Research on the effects of family income and structure on schooling has revealed how these two factors produce stratification in educational opportunities and impact student outcomes; yet, as mentioned in the paragraph above, these elements are not the only aspects of family life influencing schooling experiences. Various scholars have assessed the role of social and cultural capital in shaping academic trajectories. One of the most widely accepted theories applied to examine the mechanisms in which schools reproduce social hierarchies is Pierre Bourdieu's forms of capital theory. According to Bourdieu (1986), we must delve beyond economic capital
to understand the "functioning of the social world" and consider how the possession of valued social and cultural capital results in the access of power and resources (p.242). Bourdieu's argument holds that these interconnected forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural) have the potential for being institutionalized and are convertible into tangible wealth.

Social capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1986), refers to a network of relationships and membership status that is "directly useable in the short or long term" (p. 250). In the education realm, social capital determines how much information parents have about schools, how to obtain financial aid and other resources, and the nature of the relationships between institutions, teachers, and families, among other benefits. One must be mindful, however, that the benefits gained from social capital possession (as well as the other forms of capital) depend upon the social setting and by the value attributed to different social objects (Lewis, 2003).

Empirical studies employing Bourdieu's theoretical framework reveal that social capital profoundly impacts educational opportunities and experiences (Ball et al., 1994; Brantlinger, 2003; Kao, 2004; Lareau, 2000; Lipman, 1997; Lewis, 2003; Lew, 2007; Noguera, 2004; Perez, 2009). According to Ball et al. (1994), the social capital of middle-class parents allows them to decode and manipulate the systems of school choice and recruitment, because they possess the knowledge, skills, and contacts to do so. Furthermore, parents' social capital plays a role in producing high achievement of children, because it shapes the relationships between institutions, teachers, and families (Noguera 2004; Perez, 2009). Research on this matter also finds that the social capital of upper- and middle-class parents allows them to influence and challenge institutional practices (Brantlinger, 2003; Lareau, 2000; Lipman, 1997). For instance, Brantlinger's (2003) study found that within a district, middle-class parents' social capital allowed them to mobilize to ensure that school choice programs excluded lower-income families of color. More recently, Putnam's work (2015) shows that social class continues to determine
social networks: he records how wealthy families provide their children with valued networks of "informal advisors" and professionals who help them further themselves in their education and careers.

In addition to the above-mentioned studies on social capital and schooling, numerous authors have drawn on Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital to examine the processes of social reproduction in the educational arena (DiMaggio 1982; DiMaggio \& Mohr 1985; Gamoran, 2001; Lareau, 1987; 2003; Lewis, 2003; Orr, 2003; Perez, 2009). The relation between cultural experiences and educational inequality arises from the fact that families and schools are institutions that store and distribute culture. The cultural experiences in the home facilitate the students' adjustment to school and their academic achievement, thereby transforming cultural resources into cultural capital (Lareau, 1987). For instance, when first starting school, "elite" children tend to be familiar with the linguistic structures, authority patterns, and types of curricula employed at these institutions (Lareau, 1987). While all students possess cultural resources, schools treat the cultural capital and habitus ${ }^{13}$ of the dominant groups as standard "and employ it as if all children have had equal access to it" (Apple, 2004, p. 31). Hence, "the cultural capital stored in schools acts as an effective filtering device in the reproduction of a hierarchical society" (Ibid.). Students belonging to dominant social groups find themselves at an advantage because educators tend to perceive their culture as the "natural and proper sort" (Perez, 2009).

Empirical research linking Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to the U.S. education field began to appear in the late 1970s and early 1980's. DiMaggio (1982), one of the first scholars to examine the relationship of high-status cultural capital to schooling in the U.S., finds

[^11]that this form of capital significantly affects academic performance (DiMaggio, 1982). Studies on cultural capital, however, are not limited to the application of "high-culture". For instance, Lipman (1998) suggested that most teachers are unprepared to teach children whose backgrounds (racial, ethnic, linguistic, and/or cultural) differ from their own. In addition, research shows that the possession of cultural resources at home also results in positive academic performance. Students whose families own reading material and frequently attend intellectually-stimulating events (e.g., visit libraries or museums) perform better on cognitive tests, attain higher grades, stay enrolled in school longer, and have a higher probability of being admitted at elite colleges, than students who lack this exposure (Gamoran, 2001; Kaufman \& Gabler, 2004; Lareau, 2003; Orr, 2003; Yang \& Gustafsson, 2004). Similarly, students whose parents possess high institutionalized cultural capital (i.e., educational degrees and certifications) tend to perform better in school due to the influence of parent education on expectations: Parents with higher levels of education tend to hold more accurate and optimistic expectations for their children's academic performance, leading to more positive academic outcomes (Halle el al, 1997). Moreover, research on how parental educational attainment shapes students' home environment suggests that the nurturing and academically-stimulating environment typically established by parents with high levels of education increases the likelihood of children's academic success (Davis-Kean, 2005).

Studies applying social and cultural capital concepts to understand educational inequalities reveal that the dominant group's forms of capital not only influence the expectations that educators have for their students, but also the expectations for the students' parents. Specifically, they find that the involvement of parents in their children's education differs by social class and level of social capital, and that the degree of parental monitoring and collaboration is a determinant of educational trajectories (Desimone, 1999; Gamoran, 2001; Lee
\& Bowen, 2006; Lew 2007; Lareau, 1987). According to Lareau (1987), working-class parents' participation in schools is not solely affected by time and financial constraints, but also by the ingrained belief that academic success is achieved by turning over the responsibility for education to the teacher. In contrast, Lareau (1987) found that middle-class parents saw education as a shared enterprise, and scrutinized, monitored, and supplemented the school experience of their children. In addition, the cultural capital of middle-class parents allowed them to understand and handle the diagnostic and instructional language used by teachers.

Lareau's ethnography, Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life (2003), sheds light on this issue by incorporating Bourdieu's forms of capital theory and closely examining the critical aspects of family life that give children an advantage at school. This research found a fundamental difference in childrearing practices by social classes. These different practices were manifested in the levels of enrollment in organized activities, language use, social connections, and interventions in social institutions. For instance, upper- and middle-class parents' "concerted cultivation" practices typically involved enrolling their children in extracurricular activities and promoting reasoning through conversation and extended negotiation. In contrast, in lower-class households, parents' "natural growth" practices entailed drawing strong boundaries between adults and children; adults gave directions to children and gave them freedom to spend their free time playing. Lareau's study revealed that children raised by the middle- and upper-class' "concerted cultivation" practices possessed an advantage in school. For instance, schools rewarded students with individualistic traits, which was one of the values traditionally passed on by these families.

Though Lareau's work on the relationship between social class, schooling, social and cultural capital, and parenting methods represent a critical contribution to the literature on the processes shaping educational disparities, it is limited by the lack of ethnic diversity in the
populations studied. Thus, the following subsection concentrates on the processes affecting the educational experiences of immigrant youth.
C. Immigration processes

The growth in representation and diversity of immigrant groups in the U.S. has led to the development of a vast body of literature examining the educational experiences of immigrant students (e.g., Gibson 1988; Kao, 2004; Kao \& Tienda, 1995; Liu \& White, 2017; Ogbu, 1991; Rumbaut, 1995; Schwartz \& Stiefel, 2011). Since the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 , which replaced the strict national quota system imposed by the Immigration Act of 1924, the share of foreign-born individuals living in the U.S. has risen from 4.7 percent in 1970 to 13.4 percent in 2015 (Lopez \& Bialik, 2017). Moreover, the Act of 1965 also represented an important shift in the region- of-origin composition of immigrants, changing from majority European groups to majority Asian and Latin-American groups. "Broadly, we see that today's immigrants are more likely to be Asian, Hispanic, poor, and limited English-proficient than immigrants from previous decades" (Schwartz \& Stiefel, 2011, p. 419).

By virtue of this diversification, education research began to explore how differences in economic and social contexts shaped adaptation patterns, and, in turn, affected academic achievement (Noguera, 2004). Much of this scholarship explored educational attainment variations across immigrant generations. The seminal work of Kao \& Tienda (1995), for instance, illustrated how adaptation processes influence schooling. Using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, the authors evaluated three preexisting hypotheses on the impact of adaptation on education. The first was the "straight-line assimilation" framework, whose basis was the immigration experience of early European immigrants (Noguera, 2004) and suggested that academic performance increases with generation status due to a total assimilation into American culture. Earlier studies employing this framework defined students' cultural
assimilation as participating in extra-curricular activities or speaking English at school (MatutueBianchi, 1986 cited in Kao \& Tienda, 1995). The second hypothesis examined was the "accommodation-without-assimilation" framework, which suggested that newer immigrant generations do better because they have learnt the skills to navigate the U.S. school system without being "tainted" from a complete assimilation into U.S. culture (Ogbu, 1991). The third and last hypothesis explored by Kao and Tienda (1995) was the "immigrant optimist", which predicted sanguine outcomes for recent generations. This framework was also tied to the influential work of Ogbu (1991), which suggested that the harsh realities sustained by voluntary immigrants positively influenced their attitudes towards education and social mobility. In contrast, "many minorities who have lived in the United States for many generations are disillusioned with the prospects of upward mobility because of their real experiences with discrimination" (Kao \& Tienda, 1995, p. 5). The results from Kao and Tienda's (1995) study supported the second and third hypotheses, though they found a differential effect of generational status on education achievement across ethnic/racial groups. First- and secondgeneration Asian students outperformed subsequent generations. While this was not the case for Hispanic youth, generation status influenced higher-education aspirations for these youth. Additional empirical work (e.g., Hirschman, 2001; Kao, 2004; Rumbauth, 1995) has found supporting evidence for the "accommodation-without-assimilation" and "immigrant optimist" theories. For instance, Rumbaut's study (1995) on immigrant students in California and Florida indicated a strong negative relationship between length of residence in the U.S. and educational aspirations, as well as a strong negative relationship between length of residence in the U.S. and GPA.

While studies on generational status and education performance elucidate the variability of student outcomes by generation, racial, and ethnic groups, less remains known
about the micro-level school processes influencing these outcomes. Achieving this task continues to be complex due to the diversity of immigrant populations, across and within racial and ethnic categories. Social class, for instance, is shown to be a significant factor influencing schooling experience, as it determines how immigrants garner and transfer economic, social, and cultural resources across generations (Lew, 2007; Portes and Rumbaut, 2014). Centering this discussion on the educational trajectories of low-income immigrant youth, the literature has discerned several inter-connected elements that specifically impact the schooling experiences of these students, including: (1) social networks, (2) language and cultural resources, and (3) immigration status.

The literature on immigrant students has focused on studying the types of social networks that immigrants have, and analyzing how these affect schooling experiences (e.g., Kao \& Rutherford, 2007; Lew, 2007; Liu \& White, 2017; Stanton-Salazar 2001). While close-knit immigrant communities represent a major source of social networks, there is mixed evidence on the economic and social capital benefits stemming from the formation of ethnic enclaves. Portes and Rumbaut (2014) understand ethnic enclaves as the principal source of social mobility of immigrant groups; at the same time, they argue that the potential benefits arising from these networks depend on global affairs and the trajectories of earlier arrivals. Lew (2007) elaborates on this notion by demonstrating how the benefits arising from ethnic enclaves are contingent upon social class- proving less beneficial for low-socioeconomic status individuals. This argument extends to the point of suggesting that ethnic enclave membership foments isolation, thus hindering one's rise on the economic and social ladder (Ellen et al. 2002; Borjas, 2006).

Consistent with the findings presented in the previous section (e.g., Ball et al., 1994; Lareau, 2000), low levels of social capital in working-class immigrant families limits their navigation of the schooling system (Kao \& Rutherford, 2007). Furthermore, research has shown
that parents' and students' lack of English language fluency limits their social network's range and, consequently, shapes students' schooling experiences (Smith, 2013; Stanton-Salazar \& Dornbusch, 1995). For instance, a study by Stanton-Salazar \& Dornbush (1995) on the social network of low-income Mexican students has indicated that language proficiency became a determinant of the emotional, personal, and informational support received from school personnel. "Because of language and cultural barriers, many immigrants are denied opportunities to acquire valued institutional support-even when their consciousness and their efforts may reflect and pay tribute to American ideals of hard work and material success" (Stanton-Salazar \& Dornbusch, 1995, p. 131). The authors found that in-school factors, such as grouping Spanish-speaking children in the same academic tracks, further hindered the integration of these students.

Immigration status is another important element influencing educational trajectories of individuals (Menjivar, 2008; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). In an in-depth examination of the factors weighing on the lives of children of undocumented immigrants, Suarez-Orozco and colleagues (2011) suggest that the economic hardships and harsh working conditions sustained by undocumented parents "contribute substantially to the lower cognitive skills of children in their families" (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011, p. 448) - note that this point parallels the previous examination of the effects of family income on education. Moreover, the fear of persecution deters undocumented parents from seeking outside resources (e.g., public preschool) or from becoming involved in schools. These circumstances pose a major challenge for policy-makers, considering that the "children of unauthorized immigrants represent a rising share of K-12 students" - even though the number of undocumented immigrants has not increased since 2009 (Passel \& Cohn, 2016, p. 1).

Additionally, a study by Menjivar (2008) elucidates how immigrant status impacts educational aspirations. By focusing on first-generation Guatemalan and Salvadorian immigrants, the author explored how prolonged uncertainty in legal-status adjustment affects academic prospects and career goals of this foreign-born population and their children. Using qualitative data obtained through thirty-four interviews with Guatemalan and Salvadorian individuals residing in Phoenix since the $1990 s^{14}$, Menjivar found that ambivalent legal positions discouraged individuals from pursuing higher education degrees. Moreover, parents lacked the resources and information to further their education or help their children with their schooling and/or careers. Menjivar also detected a "vacuum of information" on educational opportunities as a result of the social networks of these families, which included very few individuals who pursued higher education. Overall, undocumented and/or uncertain immigration status affects educational experiences due to its negative impact on parental involvement, academic aspirations, and access to educational opportunities and valuable information.

## Summary: Out-of-school factors

This section has presented the various out-of-school factors shaping the educational trajectories of low-income, minority youth. We have seen that family income impacts education experiences in a multitude of ways. In a direct sense, income level determines neighborhood of residence, influencing safety and schooling options. Moreover, it also affects the time and material resources that parents can provide their children to facilitate a healthy cognitive development. This section also evidenced that income influences other out-of-school factors. For instance, within immigrant populations, groups with higher incomes have more resources to compensate for deficiencies associated with their non-native status (such as lack of knowledge of the educational system or language limitations).

[^12]The second portion of this section has elucidated how an individual's social and cultural capital impacts academic performance and educational outcomes. Research has shown that schools reward the cultural capital of dominant groups, by accepting this culture as the norm. Therefore, cultural experiences in the home contribute to both the students' adjustment to schools and their academic achievement (Lareau, 1987). The structure of the educational system also disproportionately benefits those who possess social capital that provides them with the knowledge, skills, and contacts to decode and navigate it. In other words, social capital determines how much information parents have about schools' qualities, how to access these institutions, and how to obtain additional resources. The last section has focused on the impact that immigration processes have on schooling. We find that the experiences of low-income immigrant youth in school are impacted by their non-elite social networks, language and cultural barriers, and, often times, their restrictive immigration status.

## Literature limitations and dissertation significance

The schooling experiences of low-income, Hispanic students are affected by the in- and out-ofschool factors presented in this literature review. The empirical research examining these factors is helpful in that it records the inequalities sustained by many individuals in this ethnic group, such as exclusion from high academic tracks (Darling-Hammond, 2007) or inadequate classroom resources and poor learning conditions (Loeb et al., 2005). Moreover, these studies represent a significant step forward from the genetic and cultural-deficit theories employed to explain the racial and ethnic achievement gap in education (e.g., Bereiter \& Engelmann, 1966; Hess \& Shipman, 1965; Herrnstein \& Murray, 1996), which "place the locus of blame for failure on children and their families" (Persell, 1981, p. 30).

At the same time, the overarching treatment of low-income Hispanics as a homogeneous community (and the frequent grouping with other disadvantaged minorities)
obscures the micro-level mechanisms shaping these students' educational experiences. For instance, studies on the impact of cultural capital on education experiences suggest that Hispanics' cultural values are incongruent with the views of U.S. schools (e.g., Hill \& Torres, 2010; Strayhorn, 2010) - thus, reinforcing the notion of a monolithic group.

Existing research disaggregating Hispanic ethnic groupings to better understand schooling experiences mainly focuses on Mexican-origin individuals (Kandel \& Kao, 2001; Smith, 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001; Stanton-Salazar \& Dornbusch, 1995; Stanton-Salazar \& Spina, 2003). The emphasis on this national group is partly due to its size: Mexicans and Mexican Americans represent the largest immigrant community in the U.S. and comprise two-thirds of the total U.S. Hispanic population (Portes \& Rumbaut, 2014). Findings from education studies on Mexican Americans shed light on the internal order of schools and the role of social networks in shaping schooling trajectories of Mexican-origin students. For instance, studies by StantonSalazar (1997; 2001) reinforce the notion that schools legitimize the dominant culture. The studies' findings suggest that schools interpret Mexican parents' "insufficient participation" as a lack of interest in their children's education. However, the study revealed that the factors affecting these parents' level of participation included undocumented status, poor working conditions, and language barriers — not a lack of value for education (Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Though national identity may influence one's educational trajectories, the objective of this project transcends segmenting the Hispanic ethnic group by national origin/identity due to the inherent challenge of generalizing within national groups. For instance, the Mexican immigration stream is extremely culturally diverse, and includes a large portion of non- or limited-Spanish speaking indigenous individuals from Oaxaca and Chiapas (Hamann \& Harklau, 2015). Therefore, the first study in this dissertation considers the already registered in- and out-of-school factors affecting low-income Hispanic students' trajectories, while focusing on how
within-group diversity lead to different educational paths. To disaggregate the Hispanic group, I concentrate on empirically examined factors that affect the life prospects of the members of this group, such as economic status, English language proficiency, racial identity, group membership, cultural background, immigration history, and adaptation paths. The dissertation, as a whole, explores and documents the differential effect of ethnic enclave on educational experiences, understanding that where a person comes from, what ethnic and cultural groups they identify with, and where they decide to settle down, affects schooling trajectories and outcomes.

## CHAPTER 3

## From the parents' voices: The influence of social and cultural capital in shaping educational trajectories of "Hispanic" youth

Hispanics represent the largest minority group in the U.S. and constitute the majority of the population in many cities across the country (Krogstad, 2016). The rise in the U.S. Hispanic population since the 1990s has been accompanied by geographic dispersal and diversification (Taylor et al., 2012). Despite these changing demographics, education policy researchers frequently treat this population as a homogeneous group, which carries various negative consequences. On a broad scale, the use of averages obscures the reality of diverse educational experiences and inappropriately categorizes all Hispanics as underachievers or not academically inclined. This characterization is said to influence how school staff perceive and treat the families they work with, which in turn shapes student performance (as argued by Borman \& Dowling, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2015). Additionally, it leads to the development of policies that fail to address the needs of different subgroups (Noguera, 2009). Considering this, this study delves beyond the "underachievement" rhetoric by highlighting the many social and cultural nuances affecting Hispanic students' educational trajectories.

This chapter focuses on family-school relationships and recognizes the variations in schooling navigation experiences of families falling under the same socioeconomic and ethnic bracket (low-income and Hispanic). Drawn from Pierre Bourdieu's "Forms of Capital" theory (1986), this work maintains that an individual's social and cultural capital impacts school experiences and educational outcomes. Bourdieu's cultural and social reproduction theory notes how schools reward the cultural and social capital of the dominant groups, resulting in educational inequalities. Cultural resources in the home contribute to both the students'
adjustment to schools and their academic achievement (Lareau, 1987). Furthermore, the structure of the educational system disproportionately benefits those families that possess the social capital and the attendant knowledge, skills, and contacts to decode and manipulate it. In practical terms, the amount of social capital families possess can determine how much information parents have about schools' resources, how to negotiate these institutions, and how to identify opportunities for their children.

While Bourdieu's theoretical concepts provide a valuable lens to understanding educational trajectories, most empirical studies employing this framework to examine family influence and interventions at the school setting mainly center on minority/majority and high-class/low-class binaries (e.g., Lareau, 1987; Lewis, 2003; Calarco, 2014, 2018; Perez, 2009). Even when Hispanics are included in these analyses, they rarely explore within-group diversity in social and cultural resources within the same socioeconomic bracket ${ }^{15}$ (e.g., Arias \& MorilloCampbell, 2008; Contretas et al., 2015; Hill \& Torres, 2010; Julian et al., 1994; Lee \& Bowen, 2006). The treatment of "Hispanics" as a homogeneous entity is most problematic considering that the notion of a Hispanic "panethnicity" itself was developed in the U.S. ${ }^{16}$ (Guzman \& Valdivia, 2004; Mora, 2014). Currently, the "Hispanic" category encompasses individuals from various immigrant generations (e.g., 1st, 2nd, and 3rd), with distinct racial and cultural identities, representing all Latin American nations and Spain (Flores, 2015; Mora, 2014). Likewise, because the category incorporates various immigrant generations, spoken language is not even a common denominator across this group.

[^13]This study argues that the Hispanic population contains many layers of complexity that complicate the processes of social reproduction ${ }^{17}$ in the educational arena. Specifically, immigration histories and assimilation paths become a crucial determinant of schooling trajectories (Menjivar, 2008; Rumbaut, 1995; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Therefore, this study sheds light on how families garner social and cultural capital, and how these forms of capital transform family-school interactions. Thus, rather than focusing on the academic performance of Hispanic students from an outcome standpoint, the study concentrates on the families' home and school life to identify the factors molding family-school relationships affecting the day-today experiences of the students.

To pursue this objective, I use a high-poverty and racially/ethnically-segregated school district in New Jersey as a case study: The New Riviera Public Schools (NRPS) district. Over the past decades, the District has faced rapid demographic shifts in its student population as the Hispanic student body increased from 2,732 (51\%) in 1999 to 8,081 (89\%) in 2017. I interviewed forty Hispanic parents of children attending different local public schools in the NRPS District using purposeful selection. These immigrant families were heterogeneous in terms of demographic background and adaptation experiences - though most of the students were $2^{\text {nd }}$ generation immigrants. The variation in cultural values and social ties of the individuals comprising the group under study allowed for the examination of how different immigration paths and levels of resources shape families' navigation of the U.S. educational system.

The findings demonstrate that these families exhibit different parenting strategies and forms of school involvement. Though all informants valued education, the interviews indicated the existence of three subgroups characterized by specific degrees of knowledge about the U.S. educational system and distinct levels of school involvement. The first subgroup which

[^14]comprised 14 families, exhibited none-to-minimal involvement in the schools and possessed scant knowledge on how U.S. schools functioned. They displayed a profound trust and respect for U.S. schools and believed that the child must take full ownership of their education decisions. The second subgroup, also constituted by 14 families, displayed a moderate-to-full participation in school despite their lacking important information on how U.S. schools function. These parents, who were highly connected to the NRPS District immigrant enclave, frequently used the educational values and experiences acquired in their home countries as points of reference to approach and make sense of their children's schooling. The third subgroup of 12 families actively participated in their children's education, while possessing moderate-tocomprehensive knowledge of the U.S. schooling system. This last subgroup often embraced mainstream U.S. educational values with regards to parental roles in schools that facilitated the negotiation and navigation of this system.

The factors allowing some families to better integrate into the U.S. educational system and to garner the dominant cultural values that are rewarded in schools included higher rates of full-time employment, higher levels of education in country of origin, higher levels of income, social networks made up of professionals, integration to communities outside of the NRPS District, and exposure to urban areas in country of origin. While most informants worked bluecollar or office jobs, the third subgroup exhibited the highest share of full-time employed individuals; evidence points to jobs serving as a venue through which they could learn about the U.S. schooling system. Findings also indicated that income variations within the working-class bracket determined the access to material resources needed to support educational endeavors.

Overall, the findings confirm the existence of variations in family-school relationships within the "low-income Hispanic group" and point to several non-educational factors shaping parental involvement. Moreover, it suggests that schools must continue to adapt to the
changing demographics of their student body; the Hispanic population in the NRPS District possesses a plethora of cultural resources and social ties that are ignored by the school setting.

## Social capital, cultural reproduction, and educational inequality

In the last decade, policies aimed at reducing the problems of segregated and lowperforming urban schools have stressed the role of parental involvement. The emphasis given to the family is justified by the positive outcomes linked to higher levels of family engagement in education, such as greater teacher retention and satisfaction (Allensworth et al., 2009), lower dropout rates (Liu \& White, 2017), and superior academic achievement (Barnard, 2004; Liu \& White, 2017). Rather than being solely dictated by educational values, however, different forms and levels of parental involvement are often determined by economic, social, and cultural capital (Lareau, 1987). Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the forms of capital is one of the most widely accepted theories applied to examine the mechanisms through which schools reproduce social hierarchies and to explain how family background shapes the educational trajectories of students. Therefore, the following section begins by presenting Bourdieu's work on capital. The second part explores empirical studies employing these concepts to analyze family interventions in the educational field and summarizes existing research on the factors shaping family-school relationships of Hispanic subgroups.

## Theoretical framework

According to Bourdieu (1986), we must delve beyond economic capital to understand the "functioning of the social world" and consider how the possession of valued social and cultural capital results in the access to power and resources (p.242). Bourdieu's argument holds that these interconnected forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural) have the potential for being institutionalized and converted into tangible wealth. Social capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1986), refers to a network of relationships and membership status that is "directly
useable in the short or long term" (p. 250). In the education realm, social capital determines how much information parents have about schools, how to obtain financial aid and resources, and how to access academic and professional opportunities for their children. One must be mindful, however, that the benefits garnered from social capital possession (as well as the other forms of capital) depend upon how a specific social setting values one's network and membership (Lewis, 2003).

Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital has also been widely used to examine the processes of social reproduction in the educational arena (DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio \& Mohr, 1985; Gamoran, 2001; Lareau, 1987; 2003; Lewis, 2003; Orr, 2003; Perez, 2009). Cultural capital exists in three main forms: in the embodied state (long lasting habits of mind and body); in the objectified form (cultural goods and resources, such as art work or literature); and in the institutionalized state (degrees and credentials of the cultural capital held by a person) (Bourdieu, 1986). All three forms of cultural capital are linked to economic gains and advantages at the school setting; however, to comprehend how cultural capital materializes at the school setting, one must understand what Bourdieu refers to as the "habitus." The notion of habitus stresses the set of dispositions and taste toward culture, society, and one's future that the individual generally learns at home and then takes for granted: "Bourdieu suggests that differences in habitus give individuals varying cultural skills, social connections, educational practices, and other cultural resources, which then can be translated into different forms of value as individuals move out into the world" (Lareau, 2003, p. 276).

The relationship between cultural experiences and educational inequality arises from the notion that schools are institutions that store and distribute culture. As Lareau (1987) explains, "the cultural experiences in the home facilitate the children's adjustment to school and their academic achievement, thereby transforming cultural resources into what he [Bourdieu]
calls cultural capital" (p. 74). For instance, when first starting school, these children are familiar with authority hierarchies, language usage, and curricula employed at these institutions (Lareau, 1987). While all students possess cultural resources, schools take the cultural capital of the dominant groups as natural, "and employ it as if all children have had equal access to it" (Apple, 2004, p. 31). Thus, students belonging to the dominant social groups find themselves at an advantage because educators tend to perceive their cultural capital as the common and proper sort (Perez, 2009).

## Empirical evidence

Studies employing Bourdieu's theoretical framework reveal that social capital profoundly impacts educational opportunities and experiences (Ball et al., 1994; Brantlinger, 2003; Coleman, 1988; Lareau, 2000; Lipman, 1997; Lewis, 2003; Lew, 2007; Noguera, 2004; Perez, 2009). According to Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz (1994), the social capital of middle-class parents allows them to decode and manipulate the systems of school choice and recruitment, because they possess the knowledge, skills, and networks to do so. Furthermore, parents' social capital plays a role in producing high-achieving children, because it shapes the relationships among institutions, teachers, and families (Noguera 2004; Perez, 2009). Extant research also shows that the social capital of upper- and middle-class parents allows them to influence and challenge institutional practices (Brantlinger, 2003; Lareau, 2000; Lipman, 1997; Putnam, 2015). For instance, Ellen Brantlinger's (2003) study found that within a district, middle-class parents' social capital allowed them to mobilize to ensure that school-choice programs excluded lowerincome families of color. More recently, Putnam's work (2015) on the widening opportunity gap shows that social class continues to determine social networks: he records how wealthy families provide their children with valued networks of "informal advisors" and professionals who help them further themselves in their education and careers.

Empirical research tying Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to the U.S. education field acknowledges that (1) regardless of socioeconomic status, all individuals possess a plethora of cultural resources, and (2) the benefits stemming from cultural capital possession depend on the context and valued culture (Lewis, 2003). Research shows that possessing cultural resources at home results in positive academic performance: students whose families owned literary materials and exposed them to educational activities (e.g., visit libraries or museums) attained higher grades and completed more years of schooling than students lacking this home environment (Gamoran, 2001; Lareau, 2003; Orr, 2003; Yang \& Gustafsson, 2004). In addition, a study by Lipman (1998) suggested that most teachers are unprepared to teach children whose backgrounds (racial, ethnic, linguistic, and/or cultural) differ from their own.

Studies applying social and cultural capital concepts to understand educational inequalities reveal that the dominant group's forms of capital not only influence the expectations that educators have for their students, but also the expectations for the students' families. Moreover, these studies find that the involvement of parents in their children's education differs by their social class and level of social and cultural capital (Desimone, 1999; Gamoran, 2001; Lee \& Bowen, 2006; Lew 2007; Lareau, 1987; Calarco, 2014; 2018). For instance, research has found the cultural capital of middle-class parents allowed them to understand and handle the diagnostic and instructional language used by teachers (Lareau, 1987). Aside from the impediments that working-class parents tend to face, such as time and financial constraints, research shows that understanding of how to promote educational success differs by social class. For instance, Calarco $(2014 ; 2018)$ examines in a longitudinal ethnography how families impart class-based values that serve as tools for children to gain advantages at the school setting. Calarco finds that the problem-solving techniques transmitted in middle-class households allowed students to proactively seek help from teachers and staff and that, in turn,
this proactive approach fulfilled school expectations. In contrast, working-class families encouraged their children to honor teachers' judgments and refrained from interfering when facing issues - it was the families' understanding that challenging teachers' decisions or seeking assistance would be perceived as disrespectful.

Annette Lareau's ethnography, Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life (2003), sheds light on this phenomenon by incorporating Bourdieu's forms of capital and by closely examining the critical aspects of home life that benefit children at school. This research demonstrates how fundamental differences in childrearing practices by social classes shaped levels of children's enrollment in organized activities, language use, social connections, and interventions in social institutions. Middle- and upper-class parents implemented a form of childrearing denominated by Lareau as "concerted cultivation." In this practice, parents promoted reasoning through conversation and extended negotiation, and actively managed and supervised their children's educational endeavors - such as enrollment in extracurricular activities. In contrast, families in lower-class households practiced a "natural growth" parenting style, in which they drew strong boundaries between adults and children. In this setting, adults provided directions to children and allowed them to have the autonomy to make their own decisions and spend their free time playing. Lareau's study revealed that children receiving a "concerted cultivation" upbringing possessed an advantage at the school setting. For instance, schools rewarded students with individualistic traits, and this happened to be a value traditionally passed on by middle- and upper-class families.

The limitation of most empirical studies examining the effects of cultural and social capital on family interventions in education, including Lareau's work, is that they mainly focus on group binaries (e.g., in-group/out-group, high-class/low-class). These do not disentangle ascribed racial and ethnic categories. Even when Hispanics are included in parental involvement
analyses, they rarely explore within-group diversity in social and cultural resources ${ }^{18}$ within the same socioeconomic bracket ${ }^{19}$ (e.g., Arias \& Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Contretas et al., 2015; Hill \& Torres, 2010; Julian et al., 1994; Lee \& Bowen, 2006). For instance, a review by Hill \& Torres (2010) asserted that, while holding strong educational values, the expectations and cultural attitudes of Hispanic families clashed with those typically held by U.S. schools. Similarly, a mixed-methods study by Contretas et alia (2015) on low-income Latino students in Washington State suggested that parents are unable to "fully and completely access structures to both assist and advocate for their children" (p. 202). This overarching treatment of low-income Hispanics as a homogeneous community obscures the micro-level mechanisms shaping the students' educational experiences.

Furthermore, existing research on the forms of parental involvement within Hispanic subgroups overwhelmingly focuses on Mexican-origin individuals, due to their strong representation in the U.S. population (Kandel \& Kao, 2001; Smith, 2013; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001; Stanton-Salazar \& Dornbusch, 1995; Stanton-Salazar \& Spina, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). Findings from studies on Mexican-American youth shed light on the internal order of schools and the role of social networks in shaping educational trajectories. For instance, studies by Stanton-Salazar (1997; 2001) suggest that schools legitimize the dominant culture by misinterpreting Mexican parents' forms of involvement as a lack of interest in their children's education. The author found that the factors driving these parents' participation included immigration status, poor working conditions, and language barriers, among others - not a lack

[^15]of value for education (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Moreover, Valenzuela (1999) asserts that schools "subtract resources" from Mexican youth by rendering their high-levels of social resources useless through the exclusionary tracking system ${ }^{20}$ (p. 259). While these studies provide valuable information to understand how non-dominant networks and cultural values affect educational experiences, this study delves beyond segmenting Hispanics by national origin/identity given the inherent challenge of generalizing to national groups. For instance, the Mexican immigration stream is extremely diverse, and includes numerous non- or limited-Spanish-speaking indigenous individuals from Oaxaca and Chiapas (Hamann \& Harklau, 2015).

Due to its pronounced social and cultural diversity, the label "Hispanic" obscures underlying complexity to processes of social reproduction in the educational arena, as understood through the lens of Bourdieu's theory. Specifically, legal status and adaptation paths also are crucial determinants of how families gain social and cultural resources and, in turn, how this affects family involvement in education (Menjivar, 2008; Rumbaut, 1995; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). For instance, legal status directly and indirectly affects parental participation in schools: undocumented parents restrict their presence at their children's school due to fears of deportation (Suarez-Orozco et al., 1999). Their legal status also limits the quantity and quality of information received about school and community resources (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Additionally, a study by Menjivar (2008) reported how uncertainties in legal status of Guatemalan and Salvadorian immigrant families negatively influenced their educational aspirations. Furthermore, the social networks of these families typically included a limited number of individuals enrolled in higher education, creating a "vacuum of information" on

[^16]educational opportunities. Other works support the notion that ethnic enclave membership likely foments isolation and hinders one's access to valued information (Borjas, 2006; Ellen et al. 2002; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). For recent undocumented immigrants, "the majority in the social network may be unauthorized themselves, sharing lower quantity and quality of information about community and public resources" (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011, p. 448). Of course, one cannot assume that all Hispanic immigrants in a specific region are active members of the enclave, which justifies examining the differential impact of living in one.

In addition to immigration status barriers that discourage parental involvement, there are also linguistic and cultural factors that determine forms of parental involvement. StantonSalazar \& Dornbush (1995) reported that English fluency of Mexican families became a determinant of emotional, personal, and informational support received from school personnel: "Because of language and cultural barriers many immigrants are denied opportunities to acquire valued institutional support— even when their consciousness and their efforts may reflect and pay tribute to American ideals of hard work and material success" (p. 131). Variations in cultural understandings of schooling also explain why some Latino parents opt to abstain from becoming actively involved in their children's schooling; according to Suarez-Orozco and colleagues (1999) parents have "culturally ascribed reverence for teachers and schools, and would never dream of challenging them in any way" (p. 174). Overall, the evidence presented rejects the notion of a homogeneous educational experience for low-income Hispanic families, as they are shaped by several factors (i.e., immigration status, English proficiency, enclave membership, and cultural understandings of education).

My analysis contributes to this body of research by examining the variations in school involvement of low-income Hispanic families living in the same school district. The study employs Bourdieu's concept of capital to discern the elements shaping family-school
relationships that affect the day-to-day experiences of the students. I will pay special attention to the context in which Hispanic families garner social and cultural resources, as well as the role of the ethnic enclave in enabling these processes. I will also explore the ways in which Hispanic families' immigrant processes become critical to navigating mainstream schooling institutions. Ultimately, the study will address the following questions: (RQ 1) How do the experiences of low-income Hispanic families navigating the U.S. schooling system vary? (RQ 2a) What accounts for these variations and (RQ 2b) what is the extent of social and cultural capital these families possess? (RQ 3) How does the availability of cultural and social capital shape their relationships with the school?

## Data and Methodology

## Site Description

To pursue the project's objectives, I use the New Riviera (NJ) Public Schools (NRPS) District, as a case study. From 1980 to 2017, the proportion of Hispanic individuals (of any race) residing in New Riviera increased from 11 to 53 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 1980; 1990; 2000; 2010a; 2017a). As of 2017, individuals of Mexican-origin made-up the majority of New Riviera's Hispanic community (46\%). Table 3.1 displays the proportion in which other nationalities comprise the Hispanic population in 2017, while also showing how the composition of the group drastically changed over time. For instance, Hispanics of Puerto Rican origin went from representing $70 \%$ in 1980 to $12 \%$ in 2017 of the District's total Hispanic population. The most recent figures indicate that between 2010 and 2017, the Mexican-origin group ceased growing, while the number of individuals from "Other" nations continued to rise. According to the American Community Survey, in 2017 the "Other" group was mainly composed of individuals of Honduran $(4,917)$ and Dominican $(4,895)$ origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a). The decline in the percent of foreign-born Hispanics from 2010 to 2017 also points to a change in composition in
terms of generations: The Hispanic group kept growing, while the number of first-generation individuals declined.

Table 3.1: Hispanic Population by Origin and Nativity, New Riviera, 1980-2017

| Hispanic <br> origin ${ }^{21}$ | 1980 |  | 1990 |  | 2000 | 2010 | 2017 |  |  |  |
| :--- | :---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | :--- |
| Mexican | 141 | $3 \%$ | 548 | $7 \%$ | 7,364 | $39 \%$ | 14,104 | $51 \%$ | 13,820 | $46 \%$ |
| Puerto <br> Rican | 3,316 | $70 \%$ | 3,773 | $49 \%$ | 3,178 | $17 \%$ | 2,832 | $10 \%$ | 3,466 | $12 \%$ |
| Cuban | 317 | $7 \%$ | 383 | $5 \%$ | 254 | $1 \%$ | 273 | $1 \%$ | 216 | $1 \%$ |
| Other |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980; 1990; 2000; 2010; 2017a; 2017b
*Calculated from 2000 Decennial Census, from Category "Foreign born in Latin America"

A large wave of international Mexican migration partially explains the demographic shifts experienced in the District in the early 2000s. According to Listokin et alia (2016), the number of Mexican-born individuals in New Riviera, NJ increased from 23 in 1980 to 9,273 in 2010. The latter figure represented 47.5 percent of the District's 2010 foreign-born population. In contrast, Mexican-born individuals comprised 7 percent of New Jersey's 2010 foreign-born population. In fact, "by 2008, when the president of Mexico visited New Riviera, the community was home to one of the largest Mexican populations in the tri-state area" (Listokin et al., 2016, p. 61).

The spatial layout of New Riviera reflects its sizable Hispanic community, as it is home to an array of retail and service businesses catering to this population (e.g., small markets, restaurants, hair salons, community centers, and social service agencies). At the same time, New

[^17]Riviera is characterized by gentrification, and a large portion of the Hispanic community finds itself segregated in specific regions of the City. To illustrate this, Figure 3.1 shows the percentage of Hispanics living in each of the 11 census tracts that constitute New Riviera, as well as the redistribution of space as the community increased in size from 2000 to 2010.

The residential patterns displayed in Figure 3.1 indicate that New Riviera's Hispanic population is heavily segregated in the southwestern and central sectors of the City. In 2010, the tracts with low proportions of Hispanic households included the areas that host Rutgers University's campuses and off-campus housing, as well as downtown New Riviera.

Figure 3.1. Hispanic Population by Census Tract, New Riviera, NJ 2000-2010


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2000;2010; Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing Shape Files

The maps also reveal that as the size of Hispanic community grew from 2000 to 2010, it became further geographically concentrated in the six southern census tracts of the City. The spatial isolation of Hispanics in New Riviera poses several issues, including limited access to public transportation, to healthy and affordable food, and to employment opportunities. Consistent with how this community has been labeled as a food desert, residents living in the periphery typically resort to taking taxis or informal transportation services to get to the nearest supermarkets (Kratovil, 2015; Leslie, 2008). Moreover, many residents must take these modes
of transportation (including worker vans) to access low-skill employment opportunities, such as those provided by the mega-warehouses in South Brunswick (Leslie, 2008).

The composition of the student body in the NRPS District's public schools mirrors the above-mentioned demographic trends. The NRPS District's Hispanic student population increased from 2,732 (51\%) in 1999 to 8,081 (89\%) in 2017. As displayed in Table 3.2, by academic year 2016-17, nine out of the eleven traditional public schools in the District served over 85 percent Hispanic students. ${ }^{22}$

Table 3.2: Student Composition of New Riviera's Traditional Public Schools, 2016-2017

| School Name | Proportion of <br> Economically <br> Disadvantaged <br> Students ${ }^{23}$ | Proportion of Hispanic Students | Proportion of Black nonHispanic Students | Proportion of Students with Limited English Proficiency |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| A.C. Redshaw Elementary (PK-5) | 95\% | 92\% | 6\% | 39\% |
| Lincoln Elementary (K-3) | 94\% | 95\% | 3\% | 31\% |
| Lincoln Annex School (4-8) | 93\% | 96\% | 3\% | 7\% |
| Livingston Elementary (K-5) | 94\% | 92\% | 8\% | 20\% |
| Lord Stirling Elementary (PK-5) | 94\% | 92\% | 8\% | 22\% |
| McKinley Community School (PK-8) | 81\% | 73\% | 26\% | 14\% |
| NB High School (9-12) | 87\% | 86\% | 12\% | 16\% |
| NB Middle School (6-8) | 89\% | 92\% | 7\% | 15\% |
| Paul Robeson Community School (PK-8) | 89\% | 89\% | 10\% | 15\% |
| Roosevelt Elementary (K-5) | 93\% | 96\% | 3\% | 29\% |
| Woodrow Wilson Elementary (K-8) | 68\% | 70\% | 20\% | 5\% |

Source: NJ Department of Education, 2017

[^18]Overall, the demographic composition and spatial layout of the City of New Riviera and its schools allow for the study of the educational trajectories of "Hispanic" students residing in an ethnic enclave. The City's rapid demographic shifts, coupled with its high proportion of Hispanic residents and the diversity within this population, make it a suitable case-study site. In addition, the location has facilitated the formation of a heterogeneous ${ }^{24}$ sample of foreign-born Hispanic adults, whose children may or may not have been born in the U.S.

## Recruitment and selection of interviewees

This study is part of a larger project that works in conjunction with an educational out-of-schooltime science program called "Nurture-thru-Nature" (NtN), which seeks to promote STEM interest among NRPS District's youth. Established in 2010 and employing a classical experimental research design, NtN serves students in grades 4-12. As of 2018-19, the program served eight cohorts, all of which were formed in students' third or fourth grade years. The program groups include students who attend or have attended nine out of the eleven traditional public schools in the NRPS District. ${ }^{25}$ Additionally, the composition of the program groups reflects the configuration of the school district: 86 percent of the students are of Hispanic origin or descent, and 85 percent are considered low-income (Camasso \& Jagannathan, 2018; Jagannathan et al., 2018; 2019). ${ }^{26}$

The parents recruited for this study have children who participate in the NtN program. Given that the focus of the analysis lies in the educational experiences of low-income Hispanic families, the first step in the purposeful selection process involved identifying all parents belonging to this socioeconomic and ethnic group - socioeconomic status was determined based on current or recent participation in the free or reduced price lunch program. I

[^19]developed one list per cohort with the contact information of all the parents of students active in the program (both mother and father, when applicable) who qualified for the study. In January 2017, the program coordinator and I randomly selected sets of parents from each list. Subsequently, I began contacting them via phone to request an in-person interview. Only one parent needed to be present at the interview and each participant was compensated with a gift valued at $\$ 10$. The data collection process lasted from February 2017 to December 2018. It concluded after 40 interviews ( 5 per NtN cohort), when data saturation had been reached ${ }^{27}$.

## Sample description

The study group was comprised of forty mothers and five fathers (in five interviews, both parents were present). Two factors explain the homogeneity of the sample's sex distribution: First, in fifteen percent of the cases, the student did not live with their biological father. Second, even when both parents could be contacted, the mothers took on the commitment of participating as they were generally responsible for all their children's schoolrelated endeavors. Table 3.3 (see following page) summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participants; for comparison purposes, it omits the fathers' information.

The figures on Table 3.3 indicate that 97.5 percent of mothers participating in this study were born abroad. Though the majority of participants came from Mexico, the rest of the group represented Latin American nations throughout the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. The sample had only one U.S. born mother and she was of Mexican origin.

[^20]Table 3.3: Mothers' Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Migratory Characteristics

| Demographic and socioeconomic indicators |  |  |
| :--- | ---: | ---: |
|  | Mean or Share | Standard Deviation |
| Age* | 40.4 | $[6.2]$ |
| Years of school completed | 8.7 | $[3.4]$ |
| Married or cohabitating | $85 \%$ |  |
| Employed full-time | $63 \%$ |  |
| Employed part-time | $15 \%$ |  |
| Children received free lunch ** | $80 \%$ | $[6.8]$ |
| Children receiving reduced-price lunch ** | $8 \%$ | $[4.4]$ |
| Mothers' immigration information |  | $[1.6]$ |
| Years residing in the U.S.* | 19.2 |  |
| Years residing in New Riviera* | 17.4 |  |
| English language proficiency (0-5 scale) | $1.6 * * *$ |  |
| Emigrated from rural areas | $40 \%$ |  |
| Country/region of birth | $73 \%$ |  |
| Mexico | $13 \%$ |  |
| Caribbean | $7 \%$ | $5 \%$ |
| Central America | $5 \%$ |  |
| South America | $5 \%$ |  |
| U.S. | $95 \%$ |  |
| NtN student born abroad (DREAMers) |  |  |
| NtN student born in the U.S. |  |  |

*Age and years in U.S. and New Riviera are reported as of January 1, 2019
** Child received free or reduced-price lunch at time of interview
***Median = 1

Though several parents reported having more than one child, the interview mainly
focused on the parents themselves and the schooling experiences of the child who participated in the NtN program (the 'focal' child). The age of these forty NtN students ranged from 10 to 17 and included 22 females and 18 males. Collectively, these students experienced attending nine out of the eleven traditional public schools in the NRPS District. In addition, as indicated in Table 3.3, the sample included 95 percent U.S.-born students and five percent DREAMers.

## Data collection

Due to the exploratory approach of this study, the protocol was semi-structured to ensure that each interview systematically covered a similar set of questions with all participants while simultaneously providing the flexibility to go in-depth and inquire about each participant's
personal experiences (Brenner, 2006). Using open-ended and close-ended questions, the interview protocol inquired about the following: social capital, ${ }^{28}$ cultural capital, ${ }^{29}$ childrearing practices, ${ }^{30}$ relationship with teachers and school administrators, educational aspirations for their child, and satisfaction with child's educational trajectory. The protocol also explored the cultural resources and social ties ${ }^{31}$ of the focal child (see Appendices $\mathrm{C}, \mathrm{E}$, and H for the complete interview guide, as well as IRB Protocol and consent form).

I conducted the interviews in the parents' preferred language; thirty-seven were conducted in Spanish and three in English. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed by me. The participant selected the interview location; thirty-four took place in the families' homes and six took place at the NtN program sites. After each interview, I wrote field notes highlighting emerging themes and describing the setting. After I transcribed each interview, I created individual memos summarizing the information provided, themes, and comparisons to other interviews.

## Data analysis

To analyze the data, I uploaded the interview transcripts, field notes, and memos to NVivo 12 (a qualitative data management software). Given the exploratory nature of this study, the first step in analyzing the data entailed determining if and how the experiences navigating the school system varied by family. To achieve this, I developed five major categories and fully coded all materials; the categories included: general educational beliefs, school choice, parental

[^21]involvement, school conflicts, and higher education plans. Afterwards, I divided each category into inductive sub-categories (Patton, 2002). For instance, under "parental involvement," I included data on parent-teacher conferences, presence at school, and communication with school staff. After coding all transcripts and notes, I identified trends in each major category and divided the forty interviews into three groups based on school experiences, degrees of knowledge on the U.S. school system, and forms of involvement (Miles \& Huberman, 1994).

The second step in the analysis process involved discerning the elements shaping the experiences of parents in each subgroup. Thus, I identified (1) the influence of material and nonmaterial resources in dictating parents' approaches and (2) the circumstances allowing or constraining families to garner social, cultural, and economic resources that are useful at the school setting. This second stage of the analysis allowed me to discern how cultural and social capital possession shaped educational experiences.

## Findings

The participants in the study all lived in the City of New Riviera, fell in the same social class bracket ("working-class" ${ }^{32}$ ), and migrated to the U.S. from various cities across Latin America. Despite these similarities, the families exhibited different parenting strategies and relationships with schools. The analysis of 40 parent interviews revealed three subgroups distinguished by the degree of knowledge about the U.S. educational system and the levels and forms of school participation.

The first subgroup, Group A, comprising 14 families, exhibited none-to-minimal involvement in the schools and possessed scant knowledge on how U.S. schools function. At the same time, these parents revered their children's schools, deeply believing that by being in the

[^22]U.S. they are inherently of good quality. This notion, along with the shared value that the child is the principal decision-maker when it comes to his/her own education, has led these parents to play an extremely limited role in their children's formal education.

The level of involvement in Group B, which comprised 14 families, ranged from moderate-to-full participation, despite their lack of important information about how U.S. schools function. Instead, this group frequently used the educational experiences acquired in their home countries as a point of reference to approach and make sense of their children's schooling in the U.S. (see also Menjivar, 2008). Often, these families made school-related decisions in an information-vacuum, and their values and expectations frequently clashed with those of the schools'.

The third subgroup, Group C, comprised 12 families who actively participated in their children's education, while possessing moderate-to-comprehensive knowledge of the U.S. schooling system. This group embraced the dominant educational values of their current country of residence; the adoption of a U.S.-centric perspective on schooling facilitated these families' negotiation and navigation of this system.

The following findings section is divided into two parts: the first part explores the variation in these families' experiences navigating the U.S. schooling system (RQ1). It elaborates on how the differences in viewpoints and values of the above-mentioned subgroups manifested in the educational experiences of students and shaped the family-school relationship. The second part discerns the factors contributing to the possession of cultural and social capital rewarded at schools. It explores some of the cultural resources and social networks that these Hispanic families possess and examines how they shape their relationship with the school (RQ2a, RQ2b and RQ3).

Part I: Varying experiences navigating the US schooling system This section provides a glimpse into the educational experiences of forty immigrant Latin-American families whose children attend public schools in the same school district, broken down by the three groups mentioned above (Groups A, B, and C). To better understand the schooling paths travelled by these families, this subsection is further broken down into a chronological progression of the parents' journeys into their children's education careers: (1) general educational beliefs; (2) school selection; (3) involvement and in-school experiences; (4) educational aspirations and post-high school plans. Table 3.4 summarizes the findings presented in this section.

Table 3.4. Differences in Educational Experiences by Adopted Approach and Level of Understanding

|  | Group A (14 Families) | Group B (14 Families) | Group C (12 Families) |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Group Characteristics | Profound trust and respect towards US schools; minimally involved; possess scant knowledge on U.S. schooling system. | Latin-American-centric perspective on schooling; moderate to fully involved; possess limited knowledge on U.S. schooling system. | U.S.-centric perspective on schooling; fully involved; possess moderate to comprehensive knowledge on U.S. schooling system. |
| General <br> Educational <br> Beliefs | - Value education and take on role of provider. Child is the principal decision-maker. <br> - Expect child to take full ownership of their education. <br> - Principal concerns regarding schooling pertain to the child's behavior and the teachers' politeness. | - Value education and take on role of guide outside the school; however, child often acts as final decisionmaker. <br> - Focus on grades as measure of academic achievement <br> - Principal concerns regarding schooling pertain to the schools' strictness and communication with teachers. | - Value education and take on role of guide, inside and outside the school. <br> - See value in extracurricular activities and ask for help inside and outside of the school. <br> - Principal concerns regarding schooling pertain to the schools' dedication to students and communication with teachers |
| School <br> Selection | - Possess no information and feel confused over school assignment process. <br> - When possible, child decides where to study. | - Exercise school choice based on word-of-mouth information and/or immigration status. <br> - Selection often driven by safety concerns. | - Exercise school choice based on word-of-mouth information, direct observation, or research. |



| Educational <br> Aspirations <br> and Post- <br> High School <br> Plans | - Unfamiliar with higher education system; mainly possess word-ofmouth misinformation. <br> - Desire for child to go to college to pursue a "reputable career"; however, uncertainty about permanence in U.S. often interferes with postsecondary education plans. <br> - Child is responsible for finding resources and applying to college. | - Unfamiliar with higher education system; mainly possess word-ofmouth misinformation. <br> - Desire for child to go to college to pursue a <br> "reputable career"; however, uncertainty about permanence in U.S. often interferes with postsecondary education plans. <br> - Child is responsible for finding resources and applying to college. | - Mixed knowledge of higher education system; most possess information about resources that could help them and their children (e.g. career counselors, college fairs). <br> - Desire for child to go to college to pursue a "reputable career"; College perceived as natural next step. <br> - Parent and child share responsibility for finding resources and applying to college. |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |

## General educational beliefs

The narratives of all interviewees demonstrated how educational values and beliefs dictated their approach to navigating their children's schooling. These values or beliefs, acquired in the U.S. and/or in their home countries, reflected distinct viewpoints that manifested in the educational careers of their children (e.g., school selection and levels of parental involvement). Each of the three groups presented above displayed specific involvement patterns and beliefs regarding schooling.

The families in Group A highly valued education and trusted that most schools in the U.S. would adequately prepare their children for the future. They defined a "good teacher" as someone caring and compassionate towards them and their kids: "When I show up to the meetings, she [teacher] tells me nice things about Lara and she is very loving. She treats me well and is affectionate. That's how I know she is a good teacher." Moreover, these parents' expectations for their children mainly pertained to manners, morals, and behavior; they strived to provide them with a "proper upbringing" so that they would grow up to be responsible, respectful, and caring individuals. Several families expressed concerns about their children's behavior at school: "There is a lot of humiliation at school and children mistreat their peers. So, I tell my kids 'you've got to help them'."

In addition to the emphasis placed on behavior, these parents typically expected their children to take ownership and responsibility for their academic endeavors. Students had to inform themselves and make decisions regarding after-school activities, electives, or even which school to attend, amongst others. These expectations became stronger as the children grew older. The parents felt their role was to provide "food, clean clothes, and shelter" and made the children responsible for their academic affairs: "I tell them [her kids]: ‘I have covered the basics, so you have to learn at school, that is your inheritance, which you have to learn to be able to get ahead'."

If the student was not performing academically, it was typically perceived as their own fault: "The teacher told me that my girl is doing poorly and that made me very angry. I understand that it is not teacher's fault, the girl does not put much interest in learning." For these parents, academic success translated to "good grades" and "no complaints from the school." They could not identify the nuances of schooling experiences and often failed to find value in extra-curricular endeavors - six parents reported using their children's extra-curricular activities as leverage to negotiate with them: "Sometimes I tell him that I will remove him from the [NtN] program because he is not doing his homework, and he gets to work right away."

In contrast to the provider role exhibited by Group A, the parents in Group B assumed a guiding role in the children's academic paths. The majority claimed that they regularly supervised homework completion and helped as much as they could. They often asked family members who completed their schooling in the U.S., such as a cousin or an older sibling, to assist their child. Four parents stated that they prioritize enrolling their children in an afterschool program that helps with schoolwork, since their lack of English fluency precludes them from doing so themselves. Other parents proudly shared that they taught their children to read and write in Spanish. It is important to note that, for the most part, these families were actively involved in their children's education outside of the school setting. At the same time, their lack of understating of the U.S. school system often clashed with their guiding role. For instance, one parent explained that she sent her child to Mexico for one academic year to become fluent in Spanish. To her surprise, the child was held back upon returning. Other parents attempted to help their children academically based on what they had learned in their home country, only to meet resistance from the student: "Since she was little, I've always told her to memorize the multiplication tables, but she says she doesn't need to know that."

These parents actively supervised their children's academic lives, but still held high expectations of their children with respect to decision making. In various instances, the child was the final decision maker in school-related endeavors. In addition, parents demanded that their children be independent, perform highly in school, and stay on top of their school work: "I tell him [the child]: 'I'm not the student, you are, so you have to remember to do your homework"'; "their father would always tell them that they must focus on studying. They don't work and they don't have to do anything else, so just study hard and get straight A's." Similar to Group A, these families understood academic success as attaining high grades. They defined a "good school" as a "very strict" institution, often preferring small settings that best resembled the institutions in their home countries. Also, these parents defined a "good teacher" as someone empathetic, who "actively communicates with the family."

The educational values and beliefs of the families in Group C mirrored those in Group B in several respects, including adopting a guiding role and prioritizing education above other endeavors. For instance, several Group C parents reported teaching their children to read and write in Spanish. However, these parents' approach to schooling differed from Group B in that they were actively involved inside and outside the school. One mother explained that she prefers to talk in person with teachers and staff because "they like it when parents are so involved, and then they get a good impression of him [child]." More than any other group, these families frequently attended school events, parent-teacher organization meetings, and fundraising activities. They understood academic success as "acquiring knowledge" while "performing highly," which explains why they pursued and embraced learning opportunities beyond classroom activities for their children (e.g., trips abroad, field trips, extracurricular activities).

Most group C parents were highly critical of families that failed to inculcate strong educational values in their children. As one parent stated: "You are supposed to send your kids to school to study. Many times, the kids end up in trouble or dropping out because of their parents." They felt the need to supervise their children's schoolwork while encouraging responsibility and dedication. In various instances, they allowed the children to make decisions regarding their schooling; however, the parents had the last word.

These families also held high expectations for teachers and schools. They looked for schools that "make students their priority" and that "push students to work hard." A few parents mentioned preferring institutions with strong curricula. They also demanded teachers who "have potential," "show compassion," and who actively communicated with them. At the same time, these parents perceived teachers as "pseudo-parents" of their children and empathized with the difficulty of working with so many students.

## School selection

All forty participating families began navigating their children's education from the same baseline: by selecting their place of residence prior to considering schooling options. All parents indicated moving to New Riviera, NJ because they had family ties in the area; therefore, their housing location determined their schooling options and they initially enrolled their children in the local traditional public schools (TPS). However, as some students and families learned about school quality variations and school selection processes, they began exercising school choice.

The families in group C, who integrated mainstream U.S. educational viewpoints into their schooling decisions, grew aware of the freedom they had to select specific institutions. As a result, 10 out of the 12 families that comprised this group opted to move to a district with better-ranked schools or to enroll their children in charter schools or the local health science magnet school. Parents based their decisions on word-of-mouth communication, online resources, and information gathered at high school fairs. One mother succinctly explained her
rationale for the school change by stating: "This is the least I can do to ensure he receives a better education, because that setting will motivate him to continue studying hard." One of the two families that opted to stay in the TPS felt the need to justify their decision; they explained that their daughters were placed in high academic tracks and that success in school "depends on the children and the opportunities that they can take advantage of."

It is worth noting that two Group C families attempted to enroll their children at Rutgers Preparatory School, a highly-rated private institution in New Jersey. Though one of these parents quickly reconsidered her desire to enroll her child in a school with an annual tuition of approximately $\$ 35,000$, the other was determined to have her daughter attend Rutgers Prep.:

We looked into enrolling Ana at Rutgers Prep., and she was even accepted. The problem was that they awarded her a scholarship that did not cover all costs and we were supposed to pay $\$ 7,000$ per year. I know that considering the actual price $\$ 7,000$ is not much, but it really is a lot for us... even her teacher told us that Ana is an excellent student and should be in another school, so we will keep applying and see if we can get more financial help.

Ana's experience illustrates how lack of financial resources often impedes families from benefiting from their social capital possession (social networks and information). Moreover, the difference in approach between these two families that aimed for the same institution sheds light on existing variations in knowledge about the functioning of U.S. schools within Group C.

Numerous Group B families exercised school choice in response to their discontent with the local TPS, especially the middle and high schools, which they deemed as "dangerous," "impersonal," and "overcrowded." Seven of the 14 families changed the school their children attended: five enrolled their children in vocational high schools, one moved to the catchment area of a specific TPS in the NRPS District, and one sent their child to the local health science magnet school. Several of the parents exercising school choice mentioned safety issues as their key motive: "I don't know if they don't have enough cameras or police officers, but they
definitely don't take care of the students and there are so many problems of violence." In some instances, the students had to convince their parents to let them stay at the TPS:

I had planned to send him to the vocational school, but he told he didn't want to go. I don't know if you know, but as a parent I see that children do not finish high school anymore, they get someone pregnant or drop out. That is the problem. I wanted him to have a little career so that he could defend himself later in life. But he told me that he was going to stay out of trouble, so I gave him a chance to go there. My daughter is in the vocational school though.

Several testimonies, such as the one above, reflect the idea that vocational high schools provide students with careers after graduation. Moreover, parents concerned about the immigration status of their children were inclined to select this type of school over a traditional high school: "they [the school] offer the students training for jobs and they learn to quickly develop skills. This is the best option since they [her children] aren't from here."

In addition, the perceived impersonal nature of the middle and high schools drove some parents to send their children to any possible small-sized institution. All things considered, the central motives driving the Group B families' school choice were safety, educational quality, and practicality concerns. For the most part, they made their decisions based on anecdotal information and personal experiences.

In contrast to Groups B and C, Group A families possessed limited information on the opportunities for school selection. The responses from this group reflected a lack of consensus on how the process worked, often contradicting each other, yet generally communicating a lack of power over the selection process "it was a coincidence that they assigned me to the school closest to my house"; or, "you cannot select your child's school; they assign it to you based on where you live. If you want to change schools, you would have to move"; or, "the problem with New Riviera is that you must stay in the same school, so she had only been to one school all her life, since kindergarten to 8th grade. From there she went to the high school." Only one out of the 14 families in this group exercised school choice; they sent their daughters to a vocational
school and their son to the local health science magnet school. According to this parent, their children did not feel safe in the traditional high school and explored possible alternatives. Ultimately, the children conducted the research and selected which school to attend.

## Parental involvement

Various factors dictated parents' level of participation at their children's schools, such as job flexibility and household responsibilities. At the same time, educational values and beliefs continued to play a predominant role. The disparate levels of participation among groups $\mathrm{A}, \mathrm{B}$, and C stemmed from a fundamental difference in the understanding of the school's norms and expectations, including varying perceptions regarding opportunities for participation, parents' rights at the school, and the purpose of school events. For instance, while every parent claimed to attend parent-teacher conferences, they had different understanding of their purpose. Group A families interpreted the event to be a formality, in which they had to passively absorb the feedback of the teachers. As one parent put it, "I go to the conferences where they tell me how to raise my kids." Except in the cases when the administration called parents in, the extent of Group A parents' involvement at the school typically solely entailed attending parent-teacher conferences; by the parents' admission, their appearance at these events diminished after their children completed elementary school. Furthermore, half of the Group A parents considered the conferences to be superfluous if the student behaved well and performed highly: "as right now they [her children] tell me that they don't have bad grades, so it is not necessary that I go to speak with the teachers." Most parents appreciated when teachers directly contacted them to report if their children underperformed or misbehaved, since it served as a cue to attend the conferences. A few families pointed out that their children were not learning as much as the students in their home countries but dismissed this concern because "they are doing okay."

Most Group B families attended parent-teacher conferences regularly, as they relied on these quarterly events to assess how their children performed in school. These parents believed
that going to the school and talking to teachers or administrators aside from the conferences was only justified when there was a problem or when they were called in. Also, several parents expressed preference for their children's elementary schools over the middle school because "it's only one teacher per year and you get to know them very well."

In comparison to Groups A and B, Group C parents communicated with teachers and administrators frequently, regardless of the student's academic performance or behavior: "I always attend the conferences, even if she is doing well. There are some people that say, 'I don't need to go, my child is okay,' but I always make sure to go." Most parents reported engaging in an exchange with the teacher during conferences, often prioritizing talking to instructors who taught courses where there was room for improvement: "I always go to talk to the teachers who gave her a B or C, to ask why she is not improving...then I talk to Kara and we take care of it." Some families felt empowered to directly reach out teacher or show up to the school at any given day: "Anything that happens with Emilio, any little complaint, I'm there. Because I want him to know that I'm gonna always look after him and stand up for him." Parents often contacted teachers when the child was going to miss school or to discuss curricular issues. They understood that they had a right to get involved and were aware of alternative forms of participation: only Group C parents knew about PTO meetings, and three of them regularly attended such meetings.

As expected, English proficiency impacted the extent to which parents participated in their children's education; however, miscommunication with the school transcended language barriers. Over half of the informants had conflicts and misunderstandings with the schools' administrators and teachers, even when communicating with them in Spanish or via translator. The responses and resolutions of these conflicts varied by group.

Most Group A families felt that it was most appropriate for their children to address any in-school conflicts, as the parents did not feel they had a right to get involved. These parents initially stated that they had a good line of communication with the teachers, and that they would feel comfortable bringing up any issue to them; however, when probed about their child's satisfaction with the school, they mentioned bullying issues or teachers who practiced favoritism. Following up on an anecdote about favoritism, I asked the mother if she considered talking to that teacher or the teacher's supervisor to amend the situation, to which she replied: "No, because they don't want me to say anything. You are not supposed to say anything because then it's worse for them [kids]." Six other Group A parents shared stories of a similar nature. In all these instances, the parent did not intervene because they or their child felt it was inappropriate. In various instances the child insisted that the parents not meddle in their schooling - in fact, according to one parent, when her son learned that she was going to be interviewed for this study, he told her, "that's unnecessary; I can show you my report card if you want."

The experiences of Group B parents differed in that they got involved but reported feeling unheard by teachers and administrators; in their experience, the schools were not capable of resolving problems or they created additional ones. For example, Laura, the mother of a middle school boy, recalled being called into the school because her child's teacher believed that her child needed glasses. Laura went to the school and told the administrator that her son already filled a prescription for new glasses and that they were waiting for them. The administrator dismissed Laura's remarks and provided her with a referral for an eye doctor. Laura acknowledged not comprehending what the administrator said and ended up going back to the eye doctor so that they could explain the referral sheet. She concluded by exclaiming:
"We are speaking the same language [Spanish] but they do not understand what I am trying to say."

Miscommunication episodes required parents to be insistent and assertive with the school - a practice foreign to Group B parents. In a more serious incident, a mother named Johana reported that her child endured extensive bullying at the school to the point of expressing suicidal thoughts:

I was desperate, so I spoke to the principal and he called my son over and interrogated him. Apparently, he qualified for therapy sessions, but we never received that service. I do not know if I misunderstood the principal or what, but we just had a social worker come once to our home and then the whole thing was dropped... the therapy sessions never arrived.

Johana's limited financial resources and social network led her to depend entirely on the school to provide her with services and assistance for her child. Two other Group B parents reported similar experiences. The absence of a U.S.-centric perspective on parents' role and rights at the school did not allow them to access what they needed from the institution.

Johana's experience can be contrasted to Marina's, a Group C mother who also faced a serious mishap at the school when her six-year-old son was placed in the wrong classroom and retained there for over a month:

On the first day of school, we handed in a nametag that said 'Juan' [her son's name], signed an attendance sheet, and filled out some paperwork... A month into the school year, my son comes home and tells me, 'Mami, I am being told that I have a different last name. They said my last name is Hernandez'. I said "no!" ... He replied, 'I did tell them I am Juan Garcia, but they say that I am Juan Hernandez.'... The next day I went to the school, I gave them the name of my child and they could not locate his file anywhere-it was like it disappeared! So, I told them, 'My child is being told that he has a different name, and I want to know what the problem is.' I had to spend the whole day at the school trying to figure things out. The problem ended up being that there was another student named Juan who was assigned to the classroom next door to my son's. This kid never showed up to the school, and they confused him with my son. If I would not have gone to the school, my child would have stayed in the wrong classroom and been given a different name!

Though Marina laughed when recalling this occurrence, she indicated that at the time the situation had her feeling extremely concerned and disappointed. Marina responded to this occurrence by getting further involved in the school: "Since that incident, I always told him [the student] to let me know when something is wrong, and I will go there [to the school] and fix it right away." This attitude towards the school was prevalent among Group C parents.

At the same time, these families were not exempt from feeling unheard and frustrated with their children's schools. For instance, Lucia's parents reported that the school failed to address a "serious physical aggression against my child":

They gave preference to the other parents because they spoke English and could defend themselves more. But I told the school to not pay attention to whether they speak English or not, but instead to check the grades and records of the students.

Since Lucia's parents were familiar with how institutions function in the U.S., they ended up taking this issue to the local juvenile court and attained the desired resolution. Similarly, two Group C families who perceived that their children had learning disabilities met resistance from the school when they requested testing. However, these parents possessed the resources to circumvent the school's procedure and obtained a doctor's letter that forced the school to provide the necessary services.

The subject of disciplinary policies and school rules also came up in interviews with Group B parents - especially with mothers of male students. The parents disagreed on how the school handled behavioral issues and discipline procedures. One expressed disliking that the school did not "allow the kids to express themselves; instead they just yell at them and give them detention." The dissonance in expectations regarding disciplinary approaches can be best summed up with the following recollection:

Twice I have received calls from the school saying that my kid talks too much in class. What my friends and I don't understand is that the school always has a complaint. If he
talks, then that is a problem; if he doesn't talk, that is a problem too. We just don't know.

More than any other group, Group B parents' opinions on the educational system often involved comparisons to the schooling system in their countries of origin.

## Educational aspirations and post-graduation plans

A few themes were common across all the interviews, particularly regarding educational aspirations. For instance, almost every informant revealed and/or demonstrated that (1) they valued their child's education and (2) they believed that hard work in school leads to social mobility. Regardless of their educational beliefs, the parents' narratives on educational aspirations exposed a firm belief in meritocracy, as well an influence of their own status and identity. Over half of the interviewees used the same expression when asked about the academic aspirations that they held for their children: "I want my children to be someone in this life" ["quiero que sean alguien en esta vida"]. This popular Spanish expression was usually accompanied by a comment on how they would like for their children to attain a higher education degree and/or a "reputable career." Though parents expressed a desire for their kids to follow their passions, many wanted them to pursue lucrative careers, such as becoming "doctors, lawyers, or engineers."

The varying levels of involvement and educational beliefs across groups was reflected in the parents' approach to post-secondary education. Though most informants indicated not being familiar with the higher education system in the U.S., Group C families took advantage of the assistance offered in schools or asked help from peers and family members. For example, one Group C mother, who already had two children attending college, explained that she would take her children to college fairs and have them collect as much information as possible and follow-up on it online. On the other hand, Group A and B parents had little relevant information and felt that they had no right to interfere in their children's application process. They perceived
the process to be exclusively for students and expected the schools to assist the students without any involvement from the parents. One Group A parent summarized the processes as: "They do it in school, they got counselors, and they fill their FAFSA. They just needed my signature and that's it."

Group $A$ and $B$ families also possessed a great deal of word-of-mouth misinformation pertaining to higher education admissions and costs that threatened their hopes of sending their children to college. When asked about her knowledge on the subject matter, one mother claimed: "I have been told that to go to a university you have to have $\$ 30,000$ in the bank. But, again, I do not know. Only a person who went to college would know." Another Group B mother expressed concern for her son because she heard that U.S. born children who have undocumented parents do not qualify for scholarships and aid- as a result of this misinformation, she was considering making her documented sister the legal guardian of her child.

The parents' adaptation to and permanence in the U.S. also directly threatened the students' prospects of going to college. Various Group A and B parents explained how their children's post- graduation plans were shaped by their immigration status and their permanence in the U.S. As mentioned in the "school selection" section, some families encouraged their children to enroll in vocational high schools due to the uncertainties arising from their legal status; they did not consider college to be an option for their children and wanted them to have a career after high school. In other cases, the likelihood of returning to their home country impeded the development of college plans. For instance, a group A mother stated that she was determined to return to Mexico in a few years because her older children still live there: "Sometimes she [daughter] agrees to come with me, and then she changes her mind. She asks me what she is going to do there and tells me that her future is here. The concerns were not
typically shared by Group C parents, since their knowledge on the functioning of U.S. schools allowed them to assume that college was the natural next step for their kids. It is worth noting that parents in all groups shared anecdotes on how one or more teacher mentored their highachieving child. These students' school performance allowed them to stand out and receive guidance from their teachers, including assistance getting into extra-curricular activities, highacademic tracks, magnet schools, college, and scholarship programs.

Part II: Impact of social and cultural resource variation on academic paths
The findings presented in Part I demonstrate the variations in forms of parental involvement and educational experiences across the three groups, documenting that adopting a U.S.-centric perspective on schooling eased the parents' navigation of the educational system. Note that this study does not focus on student outcomes and, therefore, draws no conclusions on which approach results in greater academic success. Rather, having established these differences, the purpose of this section is to discern the factors that allowed some families to garner the social and cultural capital rewarded in schools.

The rich anecdotal data provided by parents suggest that various interrelated elements determined their social and cultural capital possession and, in turn, shaped their approach to navigating their children's schooling. These elements include employment status, financial resources, immigration status and permanence in the U.S., ethnic enclave membership, region of origin, and cultural understandings of education. Figure 3.2 illustrates this relationship:

Figure 3.2. Factors affecting levels of social and cultural capital rewarded at school setting
-Employment status
-Financial resources
-Immigration status/permanence in the U.S.
-Ethnic enclave membership
Region of origin (rural vs. urban)
-Cultural understanding of education

Table 3.5 complements the data on Figure 3.2 by the comparing demographic, employment, and social capital indicators across the three parent subgroups.

Table 3.5. Mothers' demographic, employment, and social capital indicators

|  | Group A <br> (14 <br> Families) | Group B (14 <br> Families) | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Group C } \\ & \text { (12 } \\ & \text { Families) } \end{aligned}$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Demographic and employment indicators |  |  |  |
| Age | 41.2 [6.9]^ | 41.4 [6.4] | 38.3 [5.0] |
| Years completed in school * | 7.6 [3.6] | 8.2 [3.2] | 10.5 [2.9] |
| Married or cohabitating | 93\% | 79\% | 83\% |
| Migrated from rural areas * | 64\% | 36\% | 13\% |
| Country/region of birth |  |  |  |
| Mexico | 64\% | 86\% | 67\% |
| Caribbean | 29\% | 0\% | 8\% |
| Central America | 7\% | 14\% | 0\% |
| South America | 0\% | 0\% | 17\% |
| U.S. | 0\% | 0\% | 8\% |
| Employed full-time * | 57\% | 43\% | 92\% |
| Employed part-time | 21\% | 14\% | 8\% |
| Children receiving free lunch * | 86\% | 93\% | 58\% |
| Children receiving reduced lunch | 0\% | 7\% | 17\% |
| Social capital indicators |  |  |  |
| Years residing in the U.S. | 20.6 [8.9] | 17.4 [2.1] | 20 [4.9] |
| Years residing in New Riviera | 17.4 [5.3] | 16.6 [2.7] | 15.8 [5.4] |
| English language proficiency (0-5 scale), Median * | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Feeling safe | 64\% | 64\% | 58\% |
| Trust in neighbors | 71\% | 79\% | 58\% |
| Church attendance (At least once per month) | 79\% | 50\% | 67\% |
| Community gatherings (At least once per year) * | 0\% | 29\% | 50\% |
| Political gatherings (At least once per year) | 7\% | 7\% | 25\% |
| Family/friends gatherings (At least once per month) | 50\% | 64\% | 58\% |

${ }^{\wedge}$ Standard deviation reported in brackets

* Indicators affecting possession of social and cultural capital rewarded at school setting

As depicted in Table 3.5, every mother in Group $C$ held a job- with 92 percent working
full-time. In comparison, 57 percent of mothers in Group A and 43 percent in Group B worked full-time. Though all employed mothers worked blue-collar or office jobs, evidence points to jobs serving as a venue through which they could learn about the U.S. schooling system and
garner social capital. For instance, one Group C parent working in the beauty service industry explained: "I have a customer who lives in New Riviera who at some point advised my son about college because she met him when he was in high school." Four other Group C parents also reported acquiring school-related information from colleagues, supervisors, and clients. One mother recalled motivating her children to work hard in school by using her clients as role models: "In my job I have clients who are professionals, so I have taken my daughters to see their houses and see what they accomplished. I show them that they [clients] studied and thanks to that they have those things." The employment status of the mother carried a heavier weight than the father's because in all cases mothers were the children's principal caretakers, which included overseeing all school-related endeavors.

The differences in levels of employment also directly affected families' financial resources. As evidenced by the group variations in share of children receiving free or reduced lunch (Table 3.5), Group C parents were financially better off than their counterparts. These differences became clear as I visited their homes. Higher shares of Group A and B families resided in poorer areas of the NRPS District and lived in overcrowded conditions. ${ }^{33}$ Greater levels of economic capital allowed Group C families to attain the material resources to match their adopted viewpoints on education. For instance, one parent paid out-of-pocket for her oldest child's college entrance exams, while another helped pay for her son's tuition at a community college. Therefore, even though at the time of the interview almost all participants exclusively fell into the last income quintile, the nuances within that bracket often translated to educational opportunities for their children. Ultimately, however, all participants faced financial obstacles. Even the parents who possessed knowledge of how to navigate the educational

[^23]system depended on governmental and/or institutional financial aid to support their children's educational careers.

Table 3.5 also indicates that the average years of schooling was lowest for Group A and highest for Group C mothers. Though no parent held a bachelor's degree, one Group B and three Group C mothers had earned an associate degree. Moreover, the average level of English language proficiency was highest for Group C. Both of these factors impacted the parents' ability to navigate and negotiate at the school setting. As evidenced by their language proficiency and employment status, Group C families were more established in the U.S. than any other group. This certainty in country of residence allowed them to tap into social networks that capitalized at the school setting and invest their time and resources in developing long-term education plans. In comparison, the permanence of some Group A and B parents in the U.S. was uncertain. Out of the 28 participants comprising these two groups, seven indicated that they intended to return to their home country within the next five to ten years. This uncertainty directly shaped the educational plans of the children, given that they lacked incentives to consider a long-term career in the U.S.

Though social networks allowed parents to access valuable school-related information, the size of each parent's network appeared to have no influence in the possession of social capital rewarded at the schools. While various Group A and B parents had sizable networks, their language and employment limitations often tied them to the local community and restricted their access to key connections and valuable outside information. In contrast, Group C parents' social capital was heavily influenced by the fact that (1) they had ties with individuals, often outside of the District, who provided them with crucial information that schools expect parents to have, and that (2) they were not fully integrated to the Oaxacan ethnic enclave in New Riviera. Every Group C parent had someone in their immediate social circle (family
member, colleague, or friend) who had attended college in the U.S.; these connections contributed to their social capital possession and bolstered their approach to their children's schooling. In addition, Group C was the most heterogeneous in terms of country and city of origin. Only two families had emigrated from Oaxaca, Mexico; the majority came from large urban areas across Mexico and South America. Overall, Group C families were the least attached to the local community: only 58 percent of them reported trusting their neighbors, compared to 71 percent and 79 percent of Group $A$ and $B$ families, respectively. In addition, while about 40 percent of families across all groups reported feeling unsafe in New Riviera, Group C parents were the only ones to act on it and a few were in the process of moving elsewhere.

Compared to Groups A and C, Group B families conveyed having the strongest ties to New Riviera. Eleven out of the group's 14 families reported deeply trusting their neighbors, and nine of them felt safe living in the area. Also, half of these parents belonged to a church and a few participated in community activities. Several parents mentioned that the familiarity with the people and businesses in New Riviera generated a sense of belonging. This closeness to the community is partially explained by the fact that half of the participants came from cities in the state of Oaxaca and claimed to have friends from their hometowns living in the area. For instance, one father explained that he felt comfortable living in New Riviera "because we have been living here for a long time and we know each other, we are from the same state of Oaxaca and we have never had any conflicts." Overall, the majority of Group B parents migrated from Mexico ( 86 percent) and 36 percent reported coming from rural areas.

Several Group B parents explained that they aspired to (or were in the process of attaining) a higher education degree in their home country but had to interrupt their plans due to political and social upheavals. At the same time, most had older children and/or other family
members who pursued university degrees in their country of origin. Due to these experiences, Group B parents admitted being well acquainted with the education system in their home countries. Therefore, since the majority of parents had been previously exposed to large-scale educational systems, they possessed a vague familiarity with the NRPS District's system, but they navigated their children's schooling the same way they would back home; their anecdotes on how they navigated their children's upbringing and education revealed a pattern of persistent comparison and negotiation between the old and the new. For instance, when asked about their children's social life, one mother stated: "I don’t let them go to other kids' houses. My kids get together with their classmates only if it's a school project and they do it at the library. But in Mexico, we don't have our kids go to other people's homes unless we know the family very well." This comparative approach predominated across the families' networks and directly manifested in the educational realm, as it reinforced their viewpoints regarding schooling and generated a misinformation-vacuum. Various parents mentioned that their friends shared their sentiments regarding the schools, which validated their positions and dissatisfaction with the institutions and restricted the integration of different points of view.

The place attachment levels and social ties of Group A families differed from the other two in the following respects: on average, they had been living in New Riviera the longest (17.4 years) and they were the most involved in their local churches (79 percent reported attending at least once a month). Group A parents' accounts of how they navigated their children's education indicate that their wide social networks, including the church community, did not come to fruition at the school setting. In fact, various Group A families reported preferring to keep their personal affairs to themselves and not discussing school-related issues publicly. A few parents instilled this attitude in their kids and described their children as very "quiet and reserved." One mother explained why she transmitted these values and expressed regrets:

The way we were brought up back then was, you know, you are home, you go to school and come back home. That's the way our parents brought us up and that's the way I brought them up, and I think now is biting me. Because now, they don't go nowhere, they don't do nothing... Now I see that even if I meant something good, it didn't work.

In most cases, the social capital of Group A parents did not materialize at the school setting: they did not gain any information or connection that enhanced their navigation of the local schooling system.

Though nationality differences across groups did not clearly manifest in variations in family-school relationships, the families' region of origin (rural vs. urban) dictated their cultural understandings of education and shaped how they garnered cultural capital in the U.S. For instance, only 13 percent of Group C parents migrated from rural areas in Latin America, which meant that the majority had ample exposure to large-scale educational systems. This exposure is linked to the possession of cultural capital valued at schools because it allowed the parents to decode the functioning of these institutions and comprehend their rights at the setting- recall from Findings Part 1, that Group C parents acted on their right to intervene and communicate with school staff, often fulfilling the schools' expectations. In contrast, the majority of Group A families (64 percent) migrated from rural places without ever having experienced large-sized schooling systems themselves. This lack of exposure heavily limited the accumulation of cultural capital rewarded at schools and precluded their involvement and understanding of their children's educational paths.

This section has shed light on the diversity in cultural and social resources possessed by low-income Hispanics, and how those differences manifest in the school setting. The factors that appear to be most relevant for determining social and cultural capital possession rewarded at schools are high employment rates, greater financial resources, permanence in the U.S.,
network membership that extends beyond the ethnic enclave, and cultural understandings of education that align with local expectations. ${ }^{34}$

## Discussion

In evaluating the experiences of low-income, Hispanic parents navigating the U.S. schooling system, this study supports the notion that, far from sustaining a homogeneous trajectory, this group faced notable variations in their forms of educational involvement. One subgroup, denominated in this study as Group C, navigated their children's schooling via an approach similar to one that the literature typically attributes to families from dominant social groups (Lareau, 2003). Group C parents monitored and supervised educational endeavors, often meeting schools' expectations, and understood that academic success extended beyond grades. Generally, these families pursued learning opportunities for their children outside of school, exercised school choice, and felt empowered to approach teachers and school staff.

Another parent subgroup, Group B, operated using what Menjivar (2008) denominates as a "bifocal lens": they applied their institutional knowledge and experiences gained in their home countries to navigate their children's schooling in the U.S. The levels of educational involvement of parents in this groups ranged from moderate-to-full participation; however, the forms of involvement rarely corresponded to the expectations of traditional U.S. schools due to their lack of understating of the functioning of these institutions. For the most part, these families participated in various in-school activities, but refrained from showing up "uninvited." They also relied heavily on word-of-mouth information to make school-related decisions and often felt unheard by school personnel.

[^24]The third subgroup, Group A, displayed a restrained involvement in school-related affairs that exuded an attitude of deep trust and respected towards U.S. schools. This attitude stems from what Suarez-Orozco and colleagues (1999) define as a "culturally ascribed reverence for teachers and schools" that preclude families from challenging institutional decisions (p. 174). In addition, these families generally exercised a "natural growth" parenting approach, granting their children full autonomy to make education-related decisions (Lareau, 2003). These parents possessed scant knowledge on the local schooling system. They showed up at the school occasionally, and only when invited, to passively absorb feedback from teachers.

This study's premise suggests that differences in cultural and social resources, both acquired in the countries of origin and in the U.S., manifested in these different schooling experiences. Although student outcomes are not documented in this study, the literature suggests that resources valued at the school level transform into capital and generate an advantage for students. The following elements appear to be connected to greater social and cultural capital possession, and, in turn, shape the parents' forms of participation in their children's education: employment status, financial resources, immigration status and permanence in the U.S., ethnic enclave membership, region of origin, and cultural understandings of education.

Group C parents, who navigated the educational system with greater ease than their counterparts, displayed higher rates of full-time employment (92 percent vs. 43 percent for Group B and 57 percent for Group A). Narrative evidence points to jobs serving as a venue through which parents could learn about educational opportunities. Through their own employment, or the professional job positions of family members, parents gained cultural capital. In practical terms, this acquisition translated to attaining valuable school-related information and providing children with "informal advisors" (Putnam, 2015). In addition, the
higher rates of full-time employment contributed to the possession of greater financial resources (as compared to the other two groups). While it is difficult to discern if these families possessed more resources prior to moving to the U.S., their current levels of economic resources often allowed them to act on the knowledge about educational opportunities and front the costs of educational-related endeavors (e.g., college entrance exams, exam preparation courses, tuition costs). In other words, income variations within the denominated "working class" manifested in disparate educational opportunities. Ultimately, however, all participants faced financial obstacles and depended on governmental and/or institutional financial aid to fully support their children's education careers.

Immigration status and permanence in the U.S. also impacted parents' approach to education in various phases of the children's academic careers. A lack of legal status impacted the families' network reach, bounding them to New Riviera and to dead-end jobs without social capital resources. Congruent with Suarez-Orozco's and colleagues' findings (2011), having social networks mainly comprised of other undocumented immigrants limited the families' information about educational opportunities. In addition, a lack of legal status generated instability among these families, directly impacting schooling trajectories (Menjivar, 2008). Various parents indicated that they enrolled their children in vocational high schools due to the uncertainties about their future in the U.S. Moreover, the transnational nature of these families' lives impeded them from developing long-term career plans for their children; several families reported planning on returning to their home countries in the upcoming years because they have other children or nuclear relatives residing there. Given that immigration status affects private transport mobility, financial resources access, work opportunities, higher education financial aid, and many other factors, undocumented families faced a great deal of obstacles to garner social, cultural, and economic capital. The struggles pertaining to being undocumented
and/or transient were exclusively conveyed by Group A and B parents. This is not to say that all Group C families were documented; however, their access to valuable information and economic resources fueled long-term plans in the U.S., in which college become the natural next step for their kids.

Closely linked to the issue of undocumented status, ethnic enclave membership also determined social networks' reach (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Group B families reported having deep social ties to New Riviera and to its sizable Oaxacan community (half of the participants came from cities in the state of Oaxaca and claimed to have friends from their hometowns living in the area). This attachment and membership often hindered the families' access to valued school-related information and reinforced navigating the educational system through a bifocal lens: parents shared their dissatisfaction with the schools with other local families, often drawing comparisons to the schooling system in their countries of origin. The lack of integration of different perspectives, led Group B parents to make school-related decisions based on anecdotal information and personal experiences. Though Group A parents were not as integrated to the local community as Group B families were, their general isolation from other communities in the state significantly limited their sources of information about educational opportunities. Consistent with Newman (2009), the findings indicate that this level of isolation led Group A parents to possess a great deal of word-of-mouth misinformation pertaining to school selection, parental involvement rights, and higher education admissions/costs. In contrast, Group C families reported functioning well in their local community and actively participating in neighborhood affairs; however, they were not fully integrated to the Oaxacan ethnic enclave (by virtue of not being from Oaxaca) and possessed ties to professionals outside of the enclave.

While all the elements covered so far determined the availability of social capital, the
families' region of origin and their cultural understandings of education affected how they garnered cultural capital in the U.S. Though all families possessed rich cultural resources, families migrating from rural areas in Latin America lacked exposure to large-scale educational systems. This limitation negatively impacted their understanding of the functioning of U.S. schools and their rights in that setting. Most Group A families (64 percent) came from these areas, in comparison to 36 percent of Group B families and 13 percent of Group C families. Cultural understandings of education were also demarcated by group. These understandings led Group A parents to adopt a reverence for schools that limited their participation (Suarez-Orozco et al., 1999). Group B parents, many who were exposed to large-scale educational systems, navigated their children's schooling the same way they would in their home countries. This approach proved, in numerous instances, to be incompatible with schools' expectations: they repeatedly clashed with the schools' staff, disapproved school values and policies, and encountered difficulties resolving school-related issues. These occurrences reinforce the idea that the benefits garnered from possessing cultural resources depend upon how a specific setting values them (Lewis, 2003). In contrast, Group C parents understood their rights in the school setting and often fulfilled schools' expectations. They were not afraid to make demands of the schools and contest institutional decisions. In addition to having migrated from large urban areas, Group C parents had higher levels of education than the other groups and may have acquired some of this knowledge and strategies from their own schooling experiences. While Group C parents also had slightly higher average levels of English proficiency than any other group, they still felt unheard and at a disadvantage at the schools for not being native speakers. However, their familiarity with how U.S. institutions function allowed them to circumvent school procedures and resolve their school-related issues through other means.

Overall, this study is consistent with Bourdieu's thesis- the structure of the school system benefited those families possessing the strategies and the cultural and social resources that resemble those of dominant groups. The schools functioned under the assumption and expectation that parents held the resources necessary to decode the educational system; this explains why Group C parents, who adopted a U.S.-centric approach, negotiated their role in the schools with greater ease. By including and disaggregating a group of Hispanic parents, this study also illustrates how divergent assimilation paths impacts access to economic, social, and cultural resources that directly manifest at the school setting.

The wide range of extra-educational factors affecting family-school relationships (e.g., labor, immigration, and welfare policy) point to the challenges faced by education policymakers and practitioners when forced to resolve academic issues in isolation. One of the central takeaways is that New Riviera schools have yet to adapt to the changing demographics of their student body. Even when serving a majority-Hispanic population, parents had to adopt dominant U.S. viewpoints and strategies to successfully navigate their children's schooling. The Hispanic population in New Riviera possessed a plethora of cultural resources that were dismissed in the school setting. Language accessibility only attended these parents' "needs" nominally; the miscommunication between them and the schools transcended the language barriers.

Given that this study focused on processes rather than outcomes, it is uncertain whether the students with parents who smoothly navigate the school system enjoy the benefits of parental involvement reported in the literature (e.g., lower drop-out rates and superior academic achievement). Though Group C parents supported their children by negotiating on their behalf and resolving school-related conflicts, the extent of their influence in their children's
educational trajectories was limited by their income (e.g., helping their children get admitted to an elite private school, but not being able to enroll them due to high tuition costs).

Methodological limitations of this study pertain to its sampling technique and sample size. While the New Riviera after-school program from which the sample of parents was selected employs an experimental design, this study uses purposeful selection to ensure that all parents shared the same ethnic and socioeconomic background. In addition, parents willing to be interviewed had children who actively attended the program - meaning that highly-involved parents are over-represented. Thus, the subgroup distributions presented in this paper cannot be generalized. Rather, the details about each subgroup can help the reader understand the various factors shaping the educational involvement of low-income, Hispanic families. Additionally, the present study does not include the perspective of teachers' and administrators,' which is necessary to fully understand family-school relationships. In response to this shortfall, chapter 4 incorporates the voices of district staff.

## CHAPTER 4

## Latinization of New Riviera Public Schools: Individual and Institutional Responses to Shifting Student Demographics

Far from being a monolithic group, U.S. Hispanics ${ }^{35}$ display differences in cultural backgrounds, racial group membership, immigration histories, political agendas, and post-immigration social contexts that condition their academic success and economic fortunes (Aparicio, 2009; Mora, 2014; Noguera, 2009). This diversity has become more pronounced as the U.S. Hispanic population reached a record high of 59.9 million in 2018 (Flores et al., 2019). Even as far as back as 2006, Hispanics accounted for the majority of students in various school districts across the country, and the U.S. Census projects that by 2050 "there will be more school-age Hispanic children than school-age non-Hispanic white children" (Fry \& Gonzales, 2008, p. 1).

The rapid growth of the Hispanic population and its diversity in cultural and racial background, socioeconomic status, and immigration histories implies that the needs and challenges faced at school vary among students of this ethnic group. For instance, research suggests that undocumented students confront challenges and obstacles at school that directly pertain to their legal status, including lacking access to social services (Yoshikawa, 2011), facing heightened anxiety from concerns about family separation and/or deportation (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008), and having parents who abstain from active involvement in their education because of fears of repercussions (Cross et al., 2019). In addition, newcomers -regardless of immigration status - frequently struggle to adjust to an unfamiliar system of high-stakes testing (Menken, 2008) and to "participate and compete in mainstream classrooms" (Suarez-Orozco et

[^25]al., 2010, p. 614). They are regularly isolated from mainstream curricula and academic opportunities (Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2001), teachers hold lower expectations for them (Contreras et al., 2015), and they are more susceptible to being bullied than their peers (SuárezOrozco et al., 2008).

Despite their increasing representation in the general U.S. population, few studies examine how schools have adapted to the rapid influx of Hispanic students and how well they cater to the needs of specific Hispanic subgroups. Furthermore, empirical research rarely explores this phenomenon from both organizational and individual standpoints. This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature and employs a multi-level approach to investigate how one predominantly Hispanic and low-income school district in New Jersey responded to major demographic shifts in its student body. Guided by two different frameworks (organizational habitus and teacher expectations), it explores the District's organizational structures and leadership, as well as the actions of individual educators.

The study's premise is that culturally-responsive educational practices that ensure the learning of all students must be systemic and necessitate a profound understanding of students' needs and cultural background. Moreover, the responsibility to adapt to student population changes falls on both the institution and individual actors. While an individual's understanding and attitudes affect student learning (Lee \& Loeb, 2000), the beliefs embedded in organizational structures also influence [the individual] teachers' expectations and collective responsibility for student learning (Halvorsen et al., 2009). Supporting this notion, research has found that educators working in organizations that promote deficit-oriented beliefs, such as that "underachievement" is a natural consequence of the students' background, tend to hold low expectations and do not feel accountable for their students' success (Diamond et al., 2004).

This study combines three sources of data and uses qualitative and quantitative methods to present an in-depth historical overview of the District's response to the influx of Hispanic students, and to explore teachers' and leaders' attitudes towards these demographic changes. The data sources include: archived materials located in the District's central office and in the local public library that date back to 1970 (e.g. periodicals, minutes of school board meetings, Superintendent's reports, and performance evaluations); fifteen semi-structured interviews with current or former teachers, school-level administrators, and district administrators; and historical data on the District's staffing patterns from 1996 to 2016, a period that saw a rapid demographic shift in its student population. The findings are divided into three sections, each providing a different focus: the first section on policies and practices adopted since the initial influx of Hispanic students in the 1970s, the second on organizational structures, and the third on individual teacher attitudes.

## Background

Nationally, research on school districts' responses to rapid increases in Hispanic student populations indicates a tendency to apply generic approaches driven by bureaucratic procedures (e.g., Contreras et al., 2015; Harklau \& Colomer, 2015; Suarez-Orozco \& SuarezOrozco, 2015). These studies point to the failures faced by school districts when implementing policies and practices in isolation, and "trying to provide required services to Latino students while minimizing the change in procedures required for doing so" (Wortham \& Rhodes, 2015, p. 178). For instance, Harklau and Colomer's (2015) study on Georgia schools revealed that, on top of their traditional responsibilities, Spanish language teachers were tasked to serve as translators and liaisons for Spanish-speaking families. They also found that teachers were dissatisfied with their institutions' limited outreach to parents, acknowledging that their work in the classroom would be more effective if administrators clearly conveyed the school's
expectations and rules to families. Other empirical research suggests that as schools struggle to meet standardized test demands, they frequently opt to expose their Hispanic student population to a narrow curriculum centered on teaching to the test (Contreras et al., 2015). The utilization of generic approaches to respond to students' needs is accompanied by school staff's misunderstanding and/or disregard of the diversity within the "Hispanic" group (Hill et al., 2009; Ramirez, 2003). In a study on parental involvement, Ramirez (2003) found that "teachers expressed that Mexico was the same as Guatemala or El Salvador as far as culture, language, and customs" (p. 103).

Contrasting these findings, David Kirp's (2103) recounting of Union City's (New Jersey) academic success illuminates the innovative district- and school-based practices implemented to foster learning of all Hispanic youth. Two major district-wide implementations stand out from Union City's case: the recruitment of former students as staff and a multi-step, culturally-sensitive bilingual education program. Union City schools generated a "culture of caring" that encouraged close family-school relationships and a nurturing environment. The District's capacity to create such an environment was primarily due to its hiring practices: "You won't find any Teach for America recruits on a mission to reinvent urban education-at Washington, as in every Union City school, almost all the teachers grew up within hailing distance of the community" (Kirp, 2013, p. 17). Therefore, various teachers and top administrators are first- or second-generation Latino immigrants who attended the District's public schools; this proximity allows them to understand their students' needs, connect with the community, and encourage fellow educators to raise their expectations. Union City also has a nationally-recognized bilingual education program. The program was initially implemented in the 1970s and its structure has been subjected to constant revisions to respond to different student populations' needs. The most recent structure begins with a "port-of-entry class", followed by two transitional language courses, and culminates in
traditional English-only instruction. The "port of entry class," ensures that the student is proficient in their native language and incorporates lessons on the students' cultural background (e.g., "history lesson about Latin America or reading a book on salsa dancing") (Kirp, 2013, p. 159). Graduation rates suggest that the efforts yielded positive results ${ }^{36}$. Moreover, in 2012, the local high school ranked among the top 12 percent in the country, based on a study of 22,000 high schools (Kirp, 2013).

## Theoretical frameworks

Though existing research on how school districts and staff adapt to an increasing and diversifying Hispanic population remains limited, its findings underline the importance of examining this phenomenon from an organizational and individual standpoint. Considering this, two frameworks guide this study: the first concentrates on the meso-level to explain how organizational practices regulate actions and expectations, thereby influencing collective responsibility for student learning. The second focuses on the micro-level to illustrate how teachers' expectations, and their understanding of their student population, determine classroom strategies.

Organizational habitus and collective responsibility In the past decades, scholars have adopted the concept of "organizational habitus" to explore the link between school structures, teacher expectations, and collective responsibility for student performance (Diamond et al., 2004; Horvat \& Antonio, 1999; McDonough, 1998). The organizational habitus concept, defined as a "set of class-based dispositions, perceptions, and appreciations transmitted to individuals in a common organizational culture," is derived from

[^26]Bourdieu's notion of the habitus ${ }^{37}$ (Horvat \& Antonio, 1999, p. 320). While Bourdieu's work centered around class-based dispositions, the authors employing the organizational habitus concept in their research extended it to race and ethnic dispositions (Diamond et al., 2004; Horvat \& Antonio, 1999; McDonald \& Wingfield, 2008).

The organizational habitus framework aims to capture the intricacies of organizational contexts; it assumes the organization to be a force that provides meaning through rules and practices, while having the power to structure social interactions and influence individual habitus (Horvat and Antonio, 1999; McDonough, 1998). Organizational habitus shapes expectations and dispositions that ultimately "can affect not only what types of issues are addressed within an institution, but how those issues are raised, and the available avenues for pursuing them" (McDonald \& Wingfield, 2008, p. 31). In concrete terms, the expectations embedded in the school structures mold teaching practices, legitimize teachers' actions, and shape collective responsibility. Moreover, research suggests that schools with high levels of collective responsibility among staff have a more positive and equitable impact on student learning, thus showing how organizational habitus affects individual student experiences (Lee \& Loeb, 2000; Lee \& Smith, 1996).

Various authors contend that school leadership can deliberately change and improve a school's organizational habitus (Diamond et al., 2004; Halvorsen et al., 2009; Patterson et al., 2007). By making teachers' roles broader and more flexible, school leaders can enable teachers to revise their expectations and instill a sense of responsibility for learning. Furthermore, teachers take greater responsibility of student learning when they feel supported and

[^27]empowered by their principals to make curricular adaptations and take ownership of their practices (Halvorsen et al., 2009).

Empirical research, however, finds that in most schools, leadership and organizational structures fail to provide teachers with the necessary resources to revise their dispositions and adapt their teaching practices (Diamond et al., 2004; Patterson et al., 2007). Despite serving a high number of minority, low-income students, U.S. schools continue to retain a culture based on White, middle-class values, with a predominantly White teaching staff and Euro-centric curricula (Deschenes, Cuban, \& Tyack, 2001; Horvat \& Antonio, 1999; Patterson et al., 2007; Sleeter, 2001). Some studies have found that teachers in schools serving minority, low-income students display lower levels of collective responsibility (Diamond et al., 2004; Lee \& Loeb, 2000; Patterson et al., 2007). Teachers have low expectations of students in settings imbued by deficit-oriented beliefs, where teachers feel that students' family background and limited skills hinder their ability to teach effectively (Diamond et al., 2004, p.93). Diamond and colleagues' (2004) ethnographic study of five urban elementary schools found that at one institution the leaders redirected the organizational habitus to contest deficit-oriented expectations. At this site, "leaders steered teachers away from a situation in which acknowledging students' challenges was inevitably coupled with decreased responsibility for student learning," by integrating "easily overlooked forms of power," such as heightening communication among staff and improving the quality of professional development sessions (p. 77). While very few studies illustrate how school leadership can modify a school's organizational habitus, prior research highlights the significance of the organizational habitus in structuring actions and expectations, which in turn shapes collective responsibility, and, ultimately impacts students learning.

Teacher expectations and classroom practices
Since the publication of Rosenthal and Jacobson' pivotal Pygmalion in the Classroom study (1968), an extensive body of literature has demonstrated that teachers' beliefs and expectations about students' academic potential shape classroom interactions and instruction (e.g., Anyon, 1997; Ferguson, 2003; Rist, 1970; Roscigno \& Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). For instance, Oakes' (2005) in-depth analysis of the tracking system demonstrated that teachers' expectations based on students' academic track affected classroom practices: they were less thorough, stimulating, and ambitious when teaching and setting goals for low-track students. In addition, research on teacher expectations suggests that these are often guided by racial and class biases: teachers tend to hold lower expectations for low-income, minority students (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Sbarra \& Pianta, 2001; Tenenbaum \& Ruck, 2007). Said biases exacerbate existing inequalities, given that high teacher expectations have a strong positive correlation with student performance (Kraft et al., 2016). Disentangling the "minority" category, Tenenbaum and Ruck's (2007) meta-analysis on how students' ethnic and racial profile modifies teachers' attitudes, reveals that teachers held higher expectations and directed more positive speech towards Asian American and European American students than African American or Hispanic students.

The documented biases favoring White, Asian, and middle- and upper-class students are explained by insufficient teacher training and cultural misunderstandings between teachers and students (Borman \& Dowling, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Ehrenberg et al., 1995). "Teachers who enter teaching without adequate preparation often wind up resenting and stereotyping students whom they do not understand, especially when these teachers' lack of skills renders them less successful" (Darling-Hammond, 2015, p. 208). A quantitative study by Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999), which analyses data from two waves of the National Education Longitudinal Survey, showed that the returns of cultural and educational resources to GPAs
were lower for minority students due to low teacher expectations. In other words, the mismatch between the cultural resources of minority students and teachers' expectations hindered students' academic success. Specifically pertaining to Hispanic youth, Katz's (1999) year-long ethnography of eight first-generation Latino students in California revealed that students attributed their teachers' negative dispositions towards them (which were founded on stereotypes) as the main reason for their disengagement from school: "the students expressed the sentiment that no matter how hard they tried, they could not overturn their teachers' negative perceptions" (p. 826).

Empirical research measuring the effects of teacher-student demographic match posits that racial/ethnic pairings promote greater teacher expectations and more positive teacherstudent interactions ${ }^{38}$ (Clotfelter et al., 2006; Dee, 2005; McGrady \& Reynolds, 2013). For instance, using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Dee (2005) found that demographically mismatched teachers are significantly more likely to give students negative behavioral evaluations than same-race and same-sex teachers. More recently, Gershenson et alia (2015) explored the link between student-teacher demographic match and teachers' expectations by analyzing a 2002 nationally representative data set of $10^{\text {th }}$ grade students that included variables on teachers' expectations of students' "ultimate educational attainment." The authors found that, compared to White teachers, Black teachers were significantly more likely to expect their Black students to complete a four-year college degree.

While little empirical work has examined the impact of teacher-student demographic matching on long-term outcomes, existing research supports the argument that teachers who can understand their students' social and cultural background hold higher expectations and, in turn, engage in more positive interactions. However, low levels of minority teacher recruitment and

[^28]retention (Ingersoll \& May, 2011) stymie the potential for teacher-student demographic matches. The critical shortage of Hispanic teachers is in part explained by the low-quality education provided to U.S. Hispanic youth (Irizarry \& Donaldson, 2012). In the context of limited pools of Hispanic teachers, "schools are unable to attract sufficient numbers of teachers who speak students' languages, are connected to their communities, and have the potential to increase the academic achievement of Latina/o youth," thus creating a vicious cycle of underrepresentation of Hispanics in the educational sector (Irizarry \& Donaldson, 2012, p. 186).

## Overview of current study

The rapid influx of Hispanic students to the U.S. schooling system remains a somewhat recent and unexplored phenomenon. Very few studies examine the responses adopted by school leadership and staff, and those that do rarely focus on strategies and practices targeted at different Hispanic subgroups. Considering the lack of a monolithic Hispanic identity, this chapter focuses on a school district that faced a major increase in the number of Hispanic students in the past three decades ${ }^{39}$ to examine whether the organizational structures, practices, and staff attitudes reflect an adaptation to (and possible capitalization on) the diverse cultural assets and needs of their student population.

While the research on how organizational structures and teacher expectations shape student experiences seldom concentrates on Hispanic students (let alone Hispanic subgroups), it provides a valuable foundation for an examination of how a school district can adapt to a major demographic change in the student body (e.g., actively changing their organizational habitus, hiring teachers who share the same cultural background with their students). This study examines if the District's leaders and teachers comprehended the assets and challenges faced by their students, and if their response to the demographic shifts incorporated practices that

[^29]targeted the needs of specific Hispanic subgroups (e.g., newcomer immigrants or particularly vulnerable groups, such as Central American refugees). Combining three sources of data (longitudinal staffing dataset, staff interviews, and archival records) and employing a mixedmethods approach, the chapter will address the following questions:

1. Historically and currently, what practices has the school district endorsed to support its majority-Hispanic population?
2. How did the District's responses shape collective responsibility for student learning?
3. Currently, how do teachers' individual expectations and understanding of their student populations affect classroom practices?

## Data and Methodology

Site Description
To pursue the project's objectives, I use New Riviera, NJ as a case study. From 1980 to 2018, the proportion of Hispanic individuals (of any race) residing in New Riviera increased from 11
to 50 percent (see Table 4.1).
Table 4.1: Population by Hispanic Ethnicity and Nativity, New Riviera, 1980-2018 ${ }^{40}$

|  | 1980 |  | 1990 |  | 2000 | 2010 | 2018 |  |  |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Population <br> total | 41,442 | $100 \%$ | 41,711 | $100 \%$ | 48,573 | $100 \%$ | 54,578 | $100 \%$ | 56,084 |
| Hispanic <br> population | 4,755 | $11 \%$ | 7,769 | $19 \%$ | 18,947 | $39 \%$ | 27,553 | $50 \%$ | 28,099 |
| Foreign Born <br> Hispanics | 1,051 | $22 \%$ | 2,665 | $34 \%$ | 12,505 | $* 66 \%$ | 18,185 | $66 \%$ | 15,271 |

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980; 1990; 2000; 2010; 2018a; 2018b
*Calculated from 2000 Decennial Census, from Category "Foreign born in Latin
America"

[^30]Table 4.2: Hispanic Population by Origin, New Riviera, 1980-2018

| Hispanic origin ${ }^{41}$ | 1980 |  | 1990 |  | 2000 |  | 2010 |  | 2018 |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Mexican | 141 | 3\% | 548 | 7\% | 7,364 | 39\% | 14,104 | 51\% | 12,158 | 43\% |
| Puerto Rican | 3,316 | 70\% | 3,773 | 49\% | 3,178 | 17\% | 2,832 | 10\% | 3,372 | 12\% |
| Cuban | 317 | 7\% | 383 | 5\% | 254 | 1\% | 273 | 1\% | 228 | 1\% |
| Other | 981 | 21\% | 3,065 | 39\% | 8,151 | 43\% | 10,344 | 38\% | 12,341 | 44\% |
| TOTAL | 4,755 | 100\% | 7,769 | 100\% | 18,947 | 100\% | 27,553 | 100\% | 28,099 | 100\% |

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980; 1990; 2000; 2010; 2018a; 2018b

Table 4.2 displays the proportion in which other nationalities constituted the Hispanic population in 2018, while also illustrating how the group's composition changed drastically over time. For instance, the representation of Puerto Ricans in New Riviera's Hispanic community decreased from $70 \%$ in 1980 to $12 \%$ in 2018 . The most recent figures indicate that, between 2010 and 2018, the Mexican-origin group ceased growing, while the number of individuals from "Other" nations rose. According to the American Community Survey's 5-year estimates, in 2018 the "Other" group was mainly composed of individuals of Honduran $(4,542)$ and Dominican $(5,681)$ descent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a). In addition, the decline in percent of foreign-born Hispanics from 2010 to 2018 depicted in Table 4.1 (from 66\% to 54\%), indicates a change in group composition in terms of nativity: The Hispanic group grew, while the number of firstgeneration individuals decreased.

[^31]A large wave of international Mexican migration partially explains the demographic shifts experienced in the City in the early 2000s. According to Listokin et alia (2016), the number of Mexican-born individuals in New Riviera increased from 23 in 1980 to 9,273 in 2010. The latter figure suggests that in 2010 Mexican-born individuals made up 47.5 percent of the City's total foreign-born population (Hispanic and non-Hispanic). In fact, "by 2008, when the president of Mexico visited New Riviera, the community was home to one of the largest Mexican populations in the tristate area" (Listokin et al., 2016, p. 61). In contrast, Mexican-born individuals comprised 7 percent of New Jersey's 2010 foreign-born population.

The composition of the student body in New Riviera's public schools mirrors the abovementioned demographic trends. Electronic student enrollment files, available since 1998, indicate that New Riviera's Hispanic student population increased from 2,706 (52\%) in AY 199899 to $8,314(90 \%)$ in AY 2018-19. Figure 4.1 depicts this upward trend, indicating that every public school in the District experienced a rise in their Hispanic students population, regardless of their starting point ${ }^{42}$.

Figure 4.1: Share of Hispanic Students by School, New Riviera, 1998-2019


Source: NJ Department of Education, 1998-2019

[^32]Table 4.3: Student Composition of New Riviera Traditional Public Schools, 2018-2019

| School name | \% Economically <br> Disadvantaged <br> 43 | \% <br> Hispanic | \% Black <br> non- <br> Hispanic | \% English <br> Language <br> Learners |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| A.C. Redshaw Elementary (PK-5) | 85.8 | 94.3 | 4.7 | 45.0 |
| Lincoln Elementary (K-3) | 91.5 | 95.3 | 3.2 | 48.8 |
| Lincoln Annex School (4-8) | 89.0 | 94.0 | 3.7 | 9.6 |
| Livingston Elementary (K-5) | 87.6 | 92.4 | 6.7 | 34.8 |
| Lord Stirling Elementary (PK-5) | 91.7 | 92.1 | 7.5 | 34.9 |
| McKinley Community School (PK-8) | 79.0 | 73.3 | 24.9 | 26.1 |
| NB High School (9-12) | 81.0 | 88.7 | 9.8 | 17.3 |
| NB Middle School (6-8) | 82.7 | 94.3 | 5.2 | 17.0 |
| Paul Robeson Community School <br> (PK-8) <br> Roosevelt Elementary (K-5) <br> Woodrow Wilson Elementary (K-8) | 88.5 | 91.0 | 8.3 | 24.4 |

Source: NJ Department of Education, 2019a

Moreover, according to the latest enrollment data available (see Table 4.3), nine out of the eleven traditional public schools in the District served over 85 percent Hispanic students in AY 2018-19. ${ }^{44}$ Note that the discrepancies in the proportion of English language learners, shown in the last column of Table 4.3, are explained by size differences in the bilingual education programs across schools.

## Data sources

This study relied on three sources of data that complement one another to get a complete picture of the District's responses to their shifting student demographics: archival documents, quantitative data from New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), and fifteen semi-

[^33]structured interviews with current and former teachers, school-level administrators, and district administrators. The archival documents, stored as paper files, were collected from two sites: New Riviera Public Library and the New Riviera Public School's (NRPS) central office. These documents included newspaper clippings, minutes of school board meetings, school board resolutions, superintendent's reports, internal and external evaluations of schools and programs, and petitions. I reviewed all documents that dated from 1970 to 2019 and scanned (using a mobile device) the materials relevant to this study.

The quantitative data used to track changes in the demographic composition of the District's student population and teaching force were collected from the NJDOE website. I created a panel dataset by appending NJDOE's staffing files, which were available from 1996 to 2016. The resulting dataset included demographic ${ }^{45}$, job status ${ }^{46}$, and expertise ${ }^{47}$ variables for every individual who worked in the District between 1996 and 2016. Additionally, I generated a unique identifier for each individual to record their tenure in the District. Subsequently, I merged the staffing dataset with data from NJDOE's student enrollment files; these files, available from 1998 to 2019, contained school-level enrollment and performance indicators, such as enrollment by ethnic and racial group, free/reduced lunch program participation, and average standardized test scores in Math and English (when applicable).

The third source, interview data, was collected through semi-structured, in-person interviews with fifteen former and current NRPS teachers, school-level administrators, and district administrators. After receiving approval from the NRPS's Independent Research Request Committee in November 2018 (see Appendix D), I used snowball sampling to recruit a

[^34]convenience sample of participants (Vogt \& Johnson, 2015); this process lasted from January to May 2019. I began the recruitment efforts by asking colleagues who have ties to NRPS to forward an invitation to participate in this study to their contacts; this yielded the recruitment of three district employees, who subsequently referred me to fellow coworkers. In the process of recruiting interviewees, I ensured that the sample included a diverse group of individuals with respect to work experience, job position, and racial and ethnic background. Table 4.4 summarizes the interviewees' profiles.

Table 4.4: Interviewees' demographic and professional characteristics

| ID | Sex | Race/Ethnicity | Job positions held in the district | Years of experience in district | School level |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1 | F | Black, nonHispanic | Teacher, school-level administrator, \& district-level administrator | 25 | High school, districtlevel |
| 2 | F | White, Hispanic | Paraprofessional educator \& teacher | 23 | Elementary school |
| 3 | M | Black, nonHispanic | Teacher \& school-level administrator | 19 | Elementary/ middle school |
| 4 | F | Black, nonHispanic | Teacher \& school-level administrator | 20 | Elementary school |
| 5 | F | White, Hispanic | School-level administrator \& district-level administrator | 5 | Elementary school \& district-level |
| 6 | F | Two or more races, Hispanic | District-level administrator | 4 | District-level |
| 7 | M | Black, non- <br> Hispanic | School-level administrator | 10 | Elementary/ middle school |
| 8 | F | White, nonHispanic | Teacher | 1 | High school |
| 9 | F | Asian, nonHispanic | Teacher | 3 | Elementary/ middle school |
| 10 | F | White, nonHispanic | Teacher \& school-level administrator | 19 | Middle school |
| 11 | F | White, Hispanic | Teacher | 8 | High school |
| 12 | F | Two or more races, Hispanic | Teacher \& district-level administrator | 19 | Elementary/ middle school \& district-level |
| 13 | F | White, nonHispanic | Teacher \& district-level administrator | 6 | Elementary school \& district-level |
| 14 | F | White, nonHispanic | Teacher \& district-level administrator | 17 | Elementary school \& district-level |
| 15 | F | Black, non- <br> Hispanic | Teacher | 12 | Elementary/ middle school |

These interviews were conducted in the educators' preferred language (eleven were in English and four in Spanish) and took between 45 to 60 minutes ${ }^{48}$. Interviewees selected their interview location; thirteen took place at their workplace and two at Rutgers University. I used semi-structured protocols to ensure consistency with the topics covered in the interviews, while also allowing me to inquire about each informant's specific position at the district and their personal experiences (Brenner, 2006). The protocol included questions about the individual's job responsibilities, teaching strategies and classroom management techniques, institutional support, perceived changes in the student body, interactions with students, and expectations for student and parents (see Appendices C, F, and I for the complete interview guide, as well as IRB Protocol and consent form).

Data analyses
The first step in the qualitative data analysis consisted of using an open-coding process to identify themes and information pertaining to policies, programs, and practices implemented at the institutional level as a result of the shifting student demographics (Patton, 1990). To complete this initial step, I coded all data from the archives and interviews using a qualitative data management software, NVIVO 12. Four central themes emerged from the initial policy/program/practice identification: curricular modifications, parent outreach, hiring, and professional development. Subsequently, I broke down these four central themes two subthemes: "supporting all Hispanics" or "supporting specific Hispanic subgroups" (e.g., "curricular modifications supporting all Hispanics" and "curricular modifications supporting specific Hispanic subgroups"). An additional review of the archived documents allowed me to discern implementation challenges and the community's response to the District's practices. These were coded under each of the four central themes mentioned above.

[^35]The second step entailed formulating data codes based on the organizational habitus framework - this procedure also used archival and interview data. To assess attitudes and dispositions towards students embedded in the organizational habitus, I borrowed from previous work (Diamond et al., 2004) and coded all implicit and explicit attitudes toward students as either deficit-oriented, asset-oriented, or neutral. Subsequently, to understand how these attitudes shaped collective responsibility for student learning, I coded interview transcripts and archival documents for the factors identified in related research as determinants of collective responsibility, such as "teacher empowerment," "institutional support," and "teachers' perceptions about collaborations" (Diamond et al., 2004; Halvorsen et al., 2009; Patterson et al., 2007).

The third and last step in the qualitative data analysis only involved interview data. This procedure entailed ranking each interviewee by the expectations they held for their students (high, medium, or low). In the process of ranking these respondents, I found that understanding of the student population was closely coupled with teacher expectations. Thus, I coded all interviews for "awareness of diversity in Hispanic student population," "knowledge about students' background and needs," and "beliefs about students." Out of fifteen respondents, I considered eight as highly understanding of their students and holding high expectations. To be considered "high" in understanding and expectations, educators had to demonstrate high awareness of diversity in Hispanic student population, deep knowledge about students' background and needs, and positive attitudes towards students. Seeking to examine how educators acted on their understanding and beliefs about their students, I looked for patterns between high understanding and expectations, and specific teaching practices. This examination yielded two themes: "culturally sensitive practices" and "targeted teaching practices".

The quantitative data from the NJDOE was analyzed using Stata 15.0 software to identify changes in the NRPS district's hiring practices. Specifically, I applied descriptive statistical methods to examine the racial and ethnic distribution of teachers and administrators from 1996 to 2016, as well as the changes in the ratio of Hispanic students to Hispanic teachers by school. In addition, I employed the panel data to analyze retention patterns by racial and ethnic group. The results obtained from these analyses are used to complement the qualitative analysis of hiring policies and practices.

## Diversification of Hispanic student population

Prior to examining how the District responded to its student population changes, one must understand how these demographic shifts translated to changes in student needs. While Census data indicate that the Hispanic population in the City of New Riviera grew and diversified rapidly since the 1970s (see section above), interview data illustrate in great detail how these demographic changes manifested at the school level. According to various NRPS employees, the first influx of Hispanic students took place in the mid-70s, after the arrival of several Puerto Rican families - prior to that event, the District was "predominantly Black and White." Over the next two decades, the number of Puerto Rican students receded, while the number of students arriving from Mexico and the Dominican Republic rose. From the early 2000s until 2019, the District's Hispanic student population continued to increase, both in share and absolute number, while diversifying in terms of country of origin: Schools began receiving many students from Central America, especially from Honduras and El Salvador, as well as students from South America and the Caribbean. As of 2019, most of New Riviera's Hispanic students have been born in the U.S. (i.e., they are second or third generation Hispanics); however, given that Spanish remains the students' predominant home language, there is still a high demand for ESL
(English as a Second Language) and bilingual education services. Also, the District continues to receive first-generation students- mainly children arriving from Honduras.

The diversification of country of origin among the District's Hispanic population has been accompanied by greater variations in immigration status, language, and levels of education. Several teachers reported increasingly having to work alongside Hispanic parents who are illiterate, or alongside Latin American families who only speak an indigenous language or dialect (no Spanish or English). The changes in language needs of NRPS students and families is best summarized by a former teacher: "if we think back to the Puerto Rican families, most of them did speak English. As the number of Latino students from other countries increased, especially in proportion, there is many more parents who don't speak English at all." At the same time, while immigration status was not a major concern among most Puerto Rican and Dominican families (Puerto Ricans have U.S. citizenship and "Dominicans came with visas"), the stress related to threat of deportation or inability to visit family abroad affected many of the new arrivals from Latin America. Specifically, several teachers mentioned that in the last decade they have (1) seen many parents wearing electronic monitoring devices issued by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and (2) taught several students who were separated from their parents and came to the U.S. as unaccompanied minors. As one teacher explained, "so many of our undocumented parents live with high levels of anxiety and they transfer that anxiety to their children." In addition to the trauma related to immigration experiences, the number of students who sustained trauma in their countries of origin also grew over time, reaching an all-time high in 2019: one interviewee reported that " 89 percent of recent immigrant students [at NRPS] endured some form of trauma. Almost all of them witnessed someone getting killed or some other act of violence." As a result of the high levels of violence occurring in the home countries of most recent immigrant students, administrators have noticed
a sharp spike in the number of students arriving with significant interruptions in education (i.e., not receiving formal education for 3 or more consecutive years) and needing special services to catch them up to grade level.

Last but not least, NRPS staff has also observed a diversification of the District's Hispanic population in terms of socioeconomic status. Closely linked to immigration status issues, an increasing number of New Riviera's Hispanic students live in overcrowded conditions and lack basic needs: "There are students that live in houses with four other families. We have seen that they have five relatives in a room. We have even seen mattresses in the bathtubs." Several teachers and administrators mentioned that those students living in residences with multiple families do not get proper sleep, in part, because families have to take turns to cook and eat, so "kids are having dinner as late as 11 pm. . Furthermore, teachers reported that numerous middle and high-schoolers work or take care of younger siblings until late hours of the night to help their families.

Overall, since the mid-70s, the District has encountered a diverse Hispanic student population with very distinctive needs and different capacities to form strong family-school relationships. Teacher and staff interviews reveal that the District currently serves many students who lack access to proper nutrition, housing, and learning tools (e.g., internet); students who cannot engage in academic activities after-school due to work or household responsibilities; students who fear deportation and/or are anxious about being separated from their parents; students who do not live with their parents; students whose parents are overworked, overburdened, and unable to help them with school work; and students with interrupted education and substantial exposure to trauma.

## Practices adopted by the NRPS district to support its majority-Hispanic population

Since the 1970s, the New Riviera Public School district developed and adopted an array of policies, programs, and practices to support the rapid influx of Hispanic students. More specifically, the shifts in student population led to changes in school and after-school curricula, parent outreach activities, hiring practices, and professional development. The following section offers an overview of the policies, programs, and practices implemented at the schooland district-level ${ }^{49}$ from 1970 to 2020 (see Table A. 1 in Appendix A for summarized list). It also explores the limitations faced by the District and schools during these processes, as well as the public's reception.

## Curricular modifications

1970s - For several decades, numerous school districts throughout the nation have experienced an increase in Hispanic students (Fry \& Gonzales, 2008). Individual states and the federal government responded to these demographic shifts by mandating curricular modifications, especially pertaining to English language instruction. According to a former school board member, the New Riviera school district first added bilingual education to their curricula in 1976-1977 (Messinger, 1979). Around the same time, the District began implementing curricular initiatives focused on Puerto Rican culture. As mentioned in the "site description" section, New Riviera's Hispanic population in the 1970s was predominantly Puerto Rican. Compared to any other Hispanic subgroup in the City, the Puerto Rican community possessed the political power necessary to impact education policy: Their citizenship status, as well as the support they received from local social service agencies and representatives of the

[^36]Commonwealth, allowed for a politically-active population. For instance, in 1972, a student class boycott demanding curricular changes brought about the incorporation of a Puerto Rican history course and additional bilingual teachers at the high school ("New Riviera High May Add Swahili Class," 1972). Moreover, the district began hiring Puerto Rican advocacy groups (such as the Puerto Rican Action Board and the Puerto Rican Congress of NJ) as subcontractors to provide ESL instruction and other student services (NJPRC, 1987; School Board Committee, 1981). Official District reports from the early ' 80 s also indicate that the District held special activities every November $19^{\text {th }}$ to celebrate Puerto Rico Discovery Day (New Riviera Public Schools [NRPS], 1981a;1983a). Overall, archival and interview data suggest that Puerto Ricans were the only Hispanic subgroup in New Riviera to benefit from curricular modifications that were directly relevant to their cultural background and history.

1980s - As the City's Hispanic population continued growing and diversifying in the 1980s, curricular adaptations began treating all Hispanics as a monolithic group. For example, by the mid-80's, the district's schools stopped commemorating Puerto Rico Discovery Day and instead celebrated Hispanic culture month (School Board Committee, 1986a). According to the school board's resolution, during November, schools were to "recognize the notable achievements and cultural contributions of Hispanics through class instruction and school and community programs" (School Board Committee, 1986a, p. 1). The District partnered with local organizations and began offering extra-curricular activities that targeted Hispanic youth, such as Hispanic Culture Club meetings or events run by the Raritan's Introduction of Minorities to Engineering Program (Farkas, 1989). According to a former district-level administrator, the Knights of Columbus in New Riviera took a special interest in the Hispanic Culture Club and provided students with mentoring services and "a big scholarship for college." In the same decade, district-level language-focused initiatives began emerging swiftly, which included ESL
summer classes, evening school for non-English speakers, and U.S. citizenship preparation courses.

The speed at which the District had to meet state demands and address the needs of its changing population, coupled with budget limitations, often overwhelmed the system (NRPS, 1983b). For instance, a 1988 letter from the NJ Department of Education indicated that the District was running its Evening Schools for Foreign Born Residents program at a non-approved facility and employed uncertified staff (Simons, 1988).

1990s and 2000s-The arrival of thousands of non-English speaking Hispanics in the 1990s exacerbated the difficulties faced by the District to meet student needs. In fact, a 1991 external review of the District's activities suggested that "With the Hispanic enrollment of the District at $28 \%$ and so many areas of responsibility for the current ESL/bilingual supervisor, additional assistance will be necessary" (External Review Team, 1991, p. 13). At the time, language-acquisition efforts to support the growing Hispanic student population included ESL summer school (funded through an immigration grant), bilingual education, and "Port-of-Entry" classes for non-English dominant students who tested behind grade-level (External Review Team, 1991). These curricular modifications presented their own set of challenges: according to a district official, implementing "port-of-entry" classes at the high school level meant that the student would not receive any credits towards graduation until they transitioned to a "regular" classroom - "that was hard for the learner and the family to understand." Up to the end of the 1990s, the credit value of ESL and bilingual courses remained a contested topic: In a 1999 board meeting, one parent raised concerns about the lower value point of ESL courses, which "would preclude them [the students] from receiving valedictorian or salutatorian status" (Cardona as cited in School Board Committee, 1999). In addition, according to district administrators, another issue with the approach to bilingual ESL education was that it had students take two
language courses, which meant that students were often deprived from taking science, social studies, or elective courses: "that was the disservice to the student, but that is all we knew to do at the time." Eventually, the District adopted "the integration method," in which students were placed in small classrooms, exposed to all subjects, and were co-taught by an English-dominant teacher and a bilingual teacher.

Aside from English language acquisition initiatives, in the 1990s the District's schools endorsed various culture-related curricular adaptations. For example, in 1992, the high school offered an elective course that included a module on Puerto Rican and Mexican-American music (NRPS, 1992). Two years later, in 1994, they offered a course on Latino Caribbean studies "to meet the needs of students who want to learn the part people from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean play in history" (NRPS, 1994, p. 4). The proximity to Rutgers University also facilitated the formation of partnerships with the District's schools. For instance, in 1991 the Hispanic Engineers of Rutgers introduced high-schoolers to engineering (School Board Committee, 1991), while in 1996 the Rutgers Latino Cultural Center provided mentorship services at the Roosevelt School (NRPS, 1996a). Throughout the early 2000s, the District continued forming partnerships intermittently with local organizations to support its now majority-Hispanic student population. In 2008, the District made an agreement with the program "People and Stories" for them to read classic literature in Spanish and English to ESL students (School Board Committee, 2008). That same year, in partnership with Rutgers University, the District offered a 12-week exercise class for immigrant Latina women (School Board Committee, 2008).

Current - Teacher and staff interviews reveal that the District continues to institute some of the practices adopted since the 1970s, such as bilingual and ESL education, English language instruction for adults, after-school program encouraging Hispanic students in STEM
fields, Hispanic culture clubs, and the celebration of Hispanic Heritage month. In relation to this last practice, three teachers noted that the activities offered during Hispanic Heritage month are highly popular among students "because when students get a chance to hear about their native country being talked about or shown in a program, there is definitely a sense of pride that comes with that." Note, however, that the activities offered during this celebration are not uniform across schools: it is up to individual teachers in each school to volunteer their time to plan and execute these, as well as to determine whether they will celebrate "Hispanic" as a homogeneous or diverse ethnic group. One school administrator acknowledged that despite the importance of transmitting the notion that being bicultural is an asset, the District has "a lot more room to grow in terms of the celebration of it."

Aside from Hispanic Heritage month programs, one current culture-focused practice entails revising required reading lists to include books that relate to students' identities, cultures, and backgrounds (e.g., "The Color of Us," "My Name is Maria Isabel," and "Esperanza Rising"). According to a middle-school teacher, "there is an intentional shift to move to a more culturally relevant material to service students." Four other teachers confirmed this statement, and one school administrator explained that they are pushing a "'be proud of who you are' approach" after noticing that students struggled to accept and understand their heritage. Along these lines, a social studies teacher indicated that their curricula have been focusing more on "non-western history." In addition, various reading specialists and school administrators have recently formed a group called "Courageous Voices," which meets monthly to discuss issues pertaining to students' and staff's personal and cultural identity development, social justice, and culturally-sensitive teaching strategies. Aside from offering this space to engage in conversations, in February 2020, the group secured a grant to purchase books available to all

New Riviera staff "to help us learn and unlearn as we explore what antiracism, social justice, and equity mean for our students and community" (Sanchez, 2020).

In terms of district-led initiatives pertaining to language acquisition, the NRPS district recently implemented the Dual Language Bilingual Program. Launched in 2017-2018, this program offers students in Pre-K through Grade 4 the opportunity to become proficient in English and Spanish (Office of Bilingual Education, 2018). The program entails assigning equal numbers of native-English speakers and Spanish-language speakers to one classroom, where they receive instruction in English and Spanish at all times. Dual Language meets the demands and needs of second and third generation Hispanic students: "we have created the program to cater to those students who do not qualify to be in a bilingual classroom but whose parents want their children to learn Spanish." School administrators find this initiative to be of great value, given that it not only helps students develop fluency in two languages, but also, unlike traditional Bilingual education, "promotes awareness between cultures and integration of the English-speaking students and the non-English-speaking students." As is often the case with new initiatives, administrators initially had to "sell" the program to families to get them to sign up; however, in 2019, the program's demand peaked, and administrators anticipate having to set up a lottery system.

With regards to catering to specific Hispanic subgroups, the District has two programs in place for first-generation immigrants with interrupted formal education and/or emotional trauma. One of these programs, only offered at the middle school, centers around socialemotional learning; it provides students who experienced emotional trauma with a safe space to talk, as well as lessons on how to manage their feelings. In the second program, "Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education" (SIFE), students are placed in a classroom and cover a curriculum designed to address their learning gaps and catch them up to grade level
standards. Note that while SIFE is highly recommended by the Department of Education, it is not mandated- district administrators decided to implement this initiative as a response to the needs of its student population. Currently offered at one elementary school, the middle school, the high school, and the Adult Learning Center, the demand for spots in SIFE classrooms quickly rose due to the large influx of students from regions facing sociopolitical turmoil: "compared to past years, where we didn't reach maximum capacity, this year we are talking about 28 or 30 students per classroom." Many interviewees indicated that due to increased enrollment, students are prematurely removed from SIFE. Furthermore, they suggested that highly dense classrooms present a major challenge to SIFE teachers: they have to teach in mixed-ability classrooms, while having to spend valuable instructional time on classroom management because many of their students are unfamiliar with behavioral norms at school.

## Obstacles and reception from the community

The curricular modifications adopted by the District, or lack thereof, sparked tensions between the City's Hispanic community and district administrators, especially in the early years. Since the 1970s, various parents and agencies representing New Riviera's Hispanic community mobilized to keep existing programs from terminating, as well as to push for the development of new ones. In a 1981 petition to appoint two bilingual resource specialists to keep the Resource Rooms operating, community members expressed their discontent and claimed that "the Hispanic Community in New Riviera has suffered many losses due to the termination of many programs that provide direct and indirect instructional services to the children and adults in the District" (Petition, 1981). Over twenty years later, in 2002, a community member reiterated that "a major concern is that a lot of money is being spent on other programs, but not being put into any bilingual programs" (Salazar, as cited in School Board Committee, 2002c). The racial tensions surfacing from the shift in student population are embodied in a parent's accusation that the
school board members only "take care of Woodrow Wilson [an elementary school] because they get the white residents" (Neil, as cited in School Board Committee, 2011b).

The way in which the District administered its facilities also generated heated debates. In 2001, the Puerto Rican Action Board presented the school board with a petition in support of renaming Lord Stirling Community School "Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community School." Various Hispanic community leaders endorsed this change, claiming that "it would be a great service to the community" and that "the Latino Community has done more than any other group (i.e., petitions), and the community needs to be recognized" (Arocho, as cited in School Board Committee, 2002a). However, despite month-long negotiations, the resolution fell through on the grounds that "everyone" had to be a part of the renaming process. In addition to highlighting the District's resistance to change, this occurrence also points to the lingering influence of the Puerto Rican community in New Riviera given that the school was going to be named after a Puerto Rican educator, when very few Puerto Ricans lived in the City at the time. The following academic year, the school board and the public had another dispute pertaining to the placement of bilingual students with special education students as a result of overcrowding issues (School Board Committee, 2002b). The topic of segregated and overcrowded bilingual and ESL classrooms came up at various points in time, including in 1990, due to the grouping of students of "all ages" in a few bilingual classrooms at Roosevelt School and in 2010 due to the placement of Redshaw student at warehouses in lieu of a traditional educational facility (School Board Committee, 2010). One of the most recent conflicts between the public and the District (2016) pertained to the substantial reduction of school bus services. The decision to not provide most students with transportation directly impacted the Hispanic community given that "Hispanics don't have driver's licenses, walking to school is not safe, and the City is not safe for
children" (Vidal, as cited in School Board Committee, 2016). Though various community members appealed this decision, it remained in place.

Amidst the emergence of these concerns from the public, district administrators attempted to ease tensions within the community at various points in time by citing budget limitations as the central factor impeding substantial curricular modifications. For instance, back in 1977, Dr. Larkin, the then superintendent, asserted that "the real challenge is to provide a strong, quality education to an increasing pool of students without impacting the budget" (Dr. Larkin as cited in School Board Committee, 1997). In several other instances, former superintendent Dr. Larkin argued that the District was not receiving full funding from the state, as stipulated by law; even when funds came through, they "had to go for categorical programs, and you can't really be creative" (Dr. Larkin, as cited in Ascher, 1989). Furthermore, in 2006, a board member urged parents "to push back in Trenton letting them know we are not getting enough money for our students to get the services they need" (Cardwell, as cited in School Board Committee, 2006). Ultimately, over the past five decades, "budget limitations" resulting from insufficient funds, growth in student enrollment, higher student needs, and increased state-mandated academic standards became a recurrent theme in the District's reports and board meetings.

## Parent outreach and community engagement

Aside from implementing curricular modifications, the District and schools responded to the student population changes by redirecting their community engagement and parent outreach efforts. In the 1970s, one particular elementary school stood out for its strong relations with New Riviera's Hispanic community and its high educational quality: the Bayard School (Lazare, 1973). This school, described in the local newspaper as the site "where two cultures meet," served a majority low-income, Hispanic population - initially mainly Puerto

Rican, but by its closure one-third of the student population was Dominican and Mexican (Lazare, 1973; 1977a). Bayard teachers and staff integrated cultural celebrations, such as Puerto Rican Discovery Day, before any other district school. They also actively tried to bring parents to the school and made them feel welcome; for instance, they offered activities involving Spanish music and dances "to help bring about an easing of tensions and a more relaxed attitude on the part of the parents" (Cugat, as cited in Lazare, 1977a). Various newspaper articles praised the community involvement at Bayard school and claimed that parents' participation extended "well beyond parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings" (Lazare, 1973; 1977a; 1978). Teachers, most of whom were bilingual, fostered trusting relationships that allowed parents to reach out to them for advice or help: "When a mother gets beaten, they go to Principal Feinswog. If they can't find a welfare check, they tell Principal Feinswog" (Benincasa, as cited in Lazare, 1977a). Even with the diversification of Hispanic student population, teachers continued developing a strong rapport with parents.

The praise received by Bayard staff on their successful community engagement efforts did not stop the district from closing the school. According to an interviewee, the school's building needed major repairs and it was "financially unsustainable" to keep it in operation. This situation generated animosity between the Hispanic community and the district, especially because parents claimed that this was a unilateral decision made in a closed meeting (Lazare, 1977b). The school closure particularly mobilized the City's Puerto Rican parents, given that Bayard was "part of the heart of the Puerto Rican community" (Piniero, as cited in "Hispanics object to school transfer", 1977). Parents hired an attorney and appealed the District's decision at the State's Department of Education, backed by a representative of the Commonwealth: "The Puerto Rican government is very much interested in the problem here in New Riviera and it is at your disposal" (Nieves, as cited in Lazare, 1977b). Despite the rallying to contest the closure,

Bayard closed its doors at the end of academic year 1976-77 and its students were bused to different elementary schools.

Subsequently, district-wide efforts to reach and involve New Riviera's Hispanic parents to the schools commenced in the late ' 70 s (Board of Education, 1979). Most of these initiatives pertained to "parent effectiveness training" and increasing parent presence at schools. In 1991, an external review of the District's activities defined the communication between teachers and Hispanic parents as "difficult": "School staff expressed frustration in having to provide parenting skills to many of the parents as they try to address their child's school adjustment problems." (External Review Team, 1991, p. 8). On top of struggling with communication, school personnel indicated that local social service agencies were overburdened and that many families in need were not receiving support— this, in turn, exacerbated the difficulties faced by the staff (External Review Team, 1991). At the time, the District involved Hispanic parents by providing newsletters in Spanish and running the Bilingual Parent Advisory Council (External Review Team, 1991). Though these practices continued throughout the 1990 s, a 2000 needs assessment evaluation indicated that the District had to increase its efforts to involve Hispanic parents (McDonald, 2001). As a response, the District adopted additional programs, such as the "Reducing Communication Barriers Between Home and School" program:
[the program] came about when Lincoln Professional Development School conducted a comprehensive needs assessment and found that the Hispanic population had grown from $48 \%$ to $65 \%$ in four years... During the pilot, while the teachers were learning the conversations and vocabulary that they would need in Spanish, the parents were learning the same in English (McDonald, 2001, p. 3).

Another parental-involvement initiative implemented in the early 2000s included a rewards program at Redshaw elementary in which parents received "cool cash" for attending workshops and assisting at the school ("The early childhood program," 2000). Also, in 2004, the District offered instructional services at the Adult Learning Center to assist parents in "acquiring
the English Language, literacy and/or basic skills needed to become full partners in the education of their children." (NRPS, 2004, p.1). Currently, the District continues providing Spanish translations for all home communications, including newsletters, written notifications, and robocalls. The Bilingual Parent Advisory Council also remains in place, which holds quarterly meetings to inform fellow parents on how to navigate the local school system. As one district official explains, "we [the council] invite the parents to tell them about the requirements of bilingual education, the requirements of the high school, what does it mean to study or receive an education in the United States."

Almost all current parental-engagement activities are school-led; thus, each school experiences different levels of involvement. For example, some district schools have wellestablished Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs), while other sites recently initiated one or do not have one at all. In most cases, the PTOs are teacher-led and teacher-run, which means that the number of activities offered depends on the availability of teacher volunteers. Examples of these activities include food and clothing drives for families in need, academic-themed events (e.g., science nights), and family breakfasts. School teachers and administrators designed these events with the families' needs in mind. For instance, one administrator explained that they decided to offer morning events after noticing that parents' work schedules impeded their participation in the afternoons: "the only barrier I would say for participation is that our parents work long hours and sometimes it is not the parent who is picking up the student, it's a sibling or just a ride."

## Obstacles and reception from the community

While many of the family engagement programs offered in the past decades were shortlived, the main complaint from the public has pertained to language accessibility. According to community members, the lack of interpreters at board meetings, as well as the refusal to record these, serves to exclude Spanish-speaking parents: "the New Riviera community is not vocal
because a lot of people that would be vocal would if they can speak and understand what's being said" (Warren, as cited in School Board Committee, 2007a).

District staff, on the other hand, consider cultural misunderstandings to be one of the main obstacles hindering parental involvement. Currently active teachers and administrators believe that several Hispanic families are unaware of their right to become actively involved in their children's education or ask for help: "many of our parents think that things work like in our Latin American countries, where the parent is inferior to the educators." In addition, one teacher pointed out that "parents cannot speak up because they fear that they can do something to them at any time." Several staff members explained that they make active efforts to educate parents on their rights at the school setting, but combating ascribed cultural values proves to be a continuous challenge. For instance, one teacher recalled:

My positive phone calls did not get as readily understood as the phone calls when there was an issue. I think because they [parents] were not used to someone calling home with positive news, so it was throwing them off and making them worried.

Also related to cultural values, district staff noted that parental involvement drops drastically at the middle and high school level due to beliefs about autonomy and responsibility. Other constraints thwarting the effectiveness of family engagement activities, according to district personnel, include: parents' schedules (e.g., multiple jobs and/or long workdays), parents frequently changing phone numbers, parents' lack of transportation, and family structure (e.g., children not living with their parents, but instead a grandparent or other relatives). Teachers noted that these factors also negatively impact academic support at home.

## Hiring practices and professional development

In addition to making curricular modifications and redirecting parent outreach efforts, the NRPS district met the rise in Hispanic student population by altering hiring practices to incorporate more Hispanics to its staff. According to a former district official, the District initially
responded to the influx of Hispanic students in the late 1970s by hiring Spanish-speaking certified teachers who at that time worked for the Perth Amboy School District: "we were able to offer them a salary, a bonus, and full-time positions." Archived school reports reveal that in the 1980s and 1990s, the District hired several uncertified bilingual teachers and requested emergency bilingual certificates from the state on grounds that "the board of education has not been able to secure the services of a certified teacher suitable for the position" (School Board Committee, 1990). District administrators indicated that the practice of hiring bilingual teachers with no bilingual certificate and helping them get certified remains ongoing: "the District has been helping them either with tuition reimbursement or helping them receive their Certificate of Eligibility."

Figure 4.2: Racial/Ethnic Distribution of NRPS Teachers (full time or equivalent), 1996-2016


Source: NJ Department of Education, 1996-2016
Staffing data from 1996 to 2016 (Figure 4.2) corroborates that the District added a greater share of Hispanic teachers to its staff. Note that the staffing trends for Hispanic and Black non-Hispanic teachers move in opposite directions- as the share of Hispanic teachers reached an all-time high in 2015-16, the share Black non-Hispanic teachers diminished to an all-
time low ${ }^{50}$. Various administrators and teachers took note of this trend, mentioning in their interviews that the Black non-Hispanic teacher population decreased in concert with the Black student population.

An analysis of the hiring and retention patterns reveals that the steady proportion of White non-Hispanic teachers is not a product of long teacher tenures; rather, the District continued incorporating White non-Hispanic teachers to its staff, even as they actively tried to diversify their teaching force. Specifically, $26 \%$ of the total number of White non-Hispanic teachers who worked for the District between 1997 and 2015 left after two years or less. Similarly, $22 \%$ of Hispanic teachers left the District after two years or less. These values indicate that (1) the District continued hiring White non-Hispanic teachers despite serving an extremely low percentage of White non-Hispanic students (i.e., $3 \%$ in 1998-99 and 1\% in 2015-16), and (2) a high teacher attrition rate (22\%) stymied efforts to increase the representation of Hispanics in the force.

In addition, changes in the ratio of Hispanic students to Hispanic teachers by school (see Table A. 2 in Appendix A) suggest that some institutions were more successful in keeping up with student demographic shifts and attracting Hispanic staff than others. For instance, in 2015-16, one elementary school had a Hispanic student to Hispanic teacher ratio of 38:1, while another elementary school had a ratio of 127:1— both institutions had a general student-teacher ratio of 16:1 $1^{51}$. These observed differences in staffing by school are supported by interview data, which

[^37]reveal that some administrators made deliberate efforts to form teacher-student racial pairings and others did not. On the one hand, in some institutions, hiring officials acknowledged that employing Hispanic teachers was not a priority:

I think it is most important to find people that want to work in this type of community, so that they are willing to put the effort in to reach out to the students, regardless of being Black, White, Hispanic or whatever.

On the other hand, in some institutions, administrators confirmed that they prioritized students' identification with teachers: "We want kids to see themselves so we personally, especially here, push for cultural responsiveness and kids to see themselves [in their teachers]." All interviewed hiring officials, regardless of their stance on teacher-student racial pairing, admitted that because the pool of Hispanic teachers is extremely limited, they often had to resort to hiring bilingual staff (e.g., secretary, family liaison, and attendance officer) to fulfill the students' and families' language needs.

Another strategy to increase Hispanic representation has been appointing Hispanic community members to the school board. For instance, in 1981, an ESL teacher for the Puerto Rican Action Board was appointed to the position, after board member C. Roy Epps vouched for her: "In this District we have a 90\% Black and Hispanic enrollment, we should have a representative of those groups as an officer" ("Zarella and Torres are elected," 1981). In the past two decades, the District has also increased the share of Hispanic administrators, including officials working at the central office, principals and assistants, and supervisors (see Figure 4.3). The trends displayed in Figure 4.3 resemble those in Figure 4.2: the representation of Hispanic administrators increased, while that of Black non-Hispanics decreased, and the share of White non-Hispanic administrators remained steady.

Figure 4.3: Racial/Ethnic Distribution of NRPS administrators (full time or equivalent), 1996-2016


Source: NJ Department of Education, 1996-2016

Changes in hiring practices have also been complemented with training and professional development workshops aimed at increasing school staff's cultural sensitivity and improving teachers' capacity to work with multi-cultural students. For instance, in 1981, the District offered a workshop "to train teachers to adapt their classroom environment to foster learning in the bilingual bicultural child"; this involved developing teaching practices that encouraged English language development, while also acknowledging the students' cultures (Milchman, 1981, p.1). Throughout the next four decades, the District continued offering several other workshops in an inconsistent manner, including one in 1996 on designing classroom activities that reflect the history of a culturally diverse student population, one in 1997 on handling issues of prejudice and discrimination among students, one in 2005 on best practices in ESL instruction, and one in 2011 to understanding cultural diversity (NRPS, 1996b; 1997; School Board Committee, 2005b; 2011a).

Obstacles and reception from the community
At various points in time, New Riviera's Hispanic community contested the District's staffing practices and hiring decisions. For instance, in 1977, in the midst of funding cutbacks,
the Puerto Rican community mobilized to prevent the layoff of bilingual counselors: "We speak Spanish but we are American citizens, we want counselors who speak Spanish" (Sanchez, cited in Messinger, 1977). A similar occurrence took place in 1982: While discussing the 1982-1983 school budget, Hispanic parents challenged the board's proposed resolution to eliminate the services of Hispanic guidance counselors, which led the board to overturn its decision (School Board Committee, 1982).

The local community repeatedly raised concerns about the lack of Hispanic teachers and administrative staff in the District. A 1989 school assessment evaluation, which used parent surveys to assess public satisfaction with the school system, reported that parents were worried about the lack of bilingual staff at the schools: "we need bilingual administrators or someone who can help us when we go to the school" (NRPS, 1989, p.18). A 1991 external review of the District's activities bolstered these parents' argument by indicating that the influx of bilingual students from Latin America has generated a greater need for bilingual staff and additional space for services (External Review Team, 1991). Parents continued voicing their dissatisfaction with the lack of Hispanic administrators at board meetings in the 1990s and 2000s. In addition, another school assessment evaluation conducted in 1994 revealed that parents (1) did not participate in PTA or board meeting because "no one speaks Spanish" and (2) were upset about discriminatory attitudes from White administrators (NRPS, 1995, p.9). Overtime, parents' demand for additional Hispanic staff transcended language needs and centered around the importance of positive role models for students and teachers who understand the students' cultures: "students need a positive image teaching them to educate them about who he or she is" (Salazar, as cited in School Board Committee, 2002a).

The District's and City Hall's responses to the public's concerns often involved policies and practices that treated Hispanics as a monolithic population, or that grouped Hispanic and

Black students under the "minority" label. For instance, in 1977, Mayor Richard Mulligan appointed a Colombian social worker to the school board, who at the time had lived in New Riviera for one year and sent her children to private school ("Social worker," 1977). The Mayor's selection was criticized by the Spanish American Civic Association and the Hispanic Coordinating Committee of Middlesex County, who argued that even though they had submitted six candidates, their suggestions went unacknowledged, "and now he appointed a Hispanic nobody knows" ("Social worker," 1977). A few years later, in 1994, former superintendent Dr. Larkin responded to criticism from the community on the need for more Hispanic teachers by stating that "the Board has recruited more minority teachers than any other Board in the country... some principals and administrators are African-American or Latino" (School Board Committee, 1994, p. 6).

Despite the documented efforts to diversify the teaching force, the limited pool of certified Hispanic teachers has been a major obstacle since the 1970s until present day. According to a district official, "at the time [late 1970s] there weren't that many teachers available, and even now there is a high-need and low pool." The "low pool" problem intensifies when hiring bilingual educators, who need to have a special certificate in addition to the certification required for all teachers. This shortage is even more pronounced at the high school level given that teachers have to have a certificate for one specific subject (e.g., chemistry) in addition to the bilingual certification. As a result of this requirement, the District has resorted in the past five decades to hiring Spanish-speaking teachers without proper credentialing and supporting them as they complete the educational programming to get the bilingual certification.

A former district administrator explained that the teacher shortage experienced since the 1970s also stemmed from a lack of desire to work at an urban district:

Most of the times, the most qualified teachers really wanted to work in suburban school districts, so our competition was always East Brunswick or North Brunswick. Also, Rutgers was not of help to us in that regard. The Graduate School of Education did not attract minorities, they almost had all White, Middle-class students. And those students and their faculty at the Graduate School of Education were rather, I would say, afraid of the urban school and the factors that came with it. They really wanted to be able to just teach, but with us you had to be a social worker, a teacher, a counselor. But when you had that grit and that desire, it was a really good place to be.

The concerns around teaching at an urban district still persist; as one administrator indicates, "it is a harder job for teachers mainly because you see the difference between an urban and a suburban area, and our kids are much more limited to resources." Moreover, staff interviews revealed that the high demands of working at an urban district often influenced turnover rates. According to one teacher, high turnover in the language arts department explains why it took the District so many years before making changes to support their students (e.g., culturally inclusive reading list).

In addition to facing teacher shortage and turnover limitations, the District's funding constraints affected professional development opportunities. Furthermore, as one administrator explains, "worthwhile workshops" and training have to be integrated into the curriculum, embedded in the school's culture, and supported by staff at all levels: "professional development sounds good on paper but only really works when it is ongoing. It has to be based on needs and to be desired by the teachers." With regards to professional development, several teachers acknowledged that the District is moving in "the right direction," but that they have to strive for greater levels of collaboration.

In sum, the NRPS district's response to the influx of Hispanic students entailed making curricular modifications (e.g., language acquisition programs, cultural relevant courses and course materials, cultural celebrations, and extra-curricular programs), increasing parent outreach, hiring Hispanic staff, and providing professional development opportunities on culturally sensitive teaching. The findings parallel those of Wortham and Rhodes (2015)
regarding districts' tendency to implement practices and programs in a disjointed manner: New Riviera school adopted numerous initiatives since the 1970s, but none were comprehensive or built on each other. Most of the earlier practices treated Hispanic as a monolithic entity, except curricular changes that recognized Puerto Rican culture. As noted by the staff, and supported by archival data, it took decades after the initial influx of Hispanic students for the District to adopt non-generic and culturally relevant practices that directly responded to students' needs. Some of the current initiatives that stand out include the dual language bilingual program, the "courageous voices" group, family events planned with parents' work demands in mind, and the language arts curricula modifications.

The findings also reveal that several decisions made by the District generated tensions with the local Hispanic community, such as closing the Bayard School, cutting English language acquisition services, rejecting an appeal to rename the Lord Stirling school, failing to provide translation services at school events and board meetings, and suspending the busing system. At the same time, several factors, including budget restrictions and a narrow pool of Hispanic educators, limited the District's capacity to cater to its growing number of Hispanic students. Shaping collective responsibility for student learning

The following section examines if and how the diversification of the student body influenced the District's organizational habitus. Contrary to the previous section, which focused on policies and practices, this analysis pays attention to the impact that the leadership's attitudes and their imposed organizational structures had on collective responsibility for student learning.

An exploration of the expectations embedded in the District's organizational structures reveals that various administrators and leaders propagated a deficit discourse, which has been shown to fuel low-expectations for students and discourage teachers (Diamond et al., 2004;

Patterson et al., 2007). According to a former district employee, "in the 70s, 80s, and even into the 90s, the leadership personnel, especially White male school principals, would make very insensitive kinds of comments about the learners' backgrounds and family units." Archival data, including newspaper articles and school board meeting minutes, corroborate the stigmatization of Hispanic students. For instance, in a 1987 interview, former superintendent Larkin defined Hispanic newcomers as "a troubled population...who arrived able to speak only broken English. Others, though they may be citizens, are part of a transient population in which children are handed from one relative to another and from school to school" (Rearick, 1987, p. A10). On various occasions, and at various points in time, district officials cited the influx of Hispanic students to justify low levels of student achievement. For example, when parents raised concerns at a 2007 board meeting regarding standardized test results, a board member responded by blaming "nonspeaking Bilingual students that have to learn the English language" for low scores (Kaplan, as cited in School Board Committee, 2007b).

These attitudes and dispositions transmitted by school leadership are aligned with an organizational habitus that assumes White, middle- and upper-class culture as the norm. For instance, the language used on all resolutions approving field trips from 2007 to 2013 state that "many of our students lack normal, childhood experiences" (e.g., School Board Committee, 2008); the usage of the term "normal" demonstrates how, despite serving a majority Hispanic, lowincome student body, the dominant group's forms of cultural capital shaped the expectations that the District had for their students. This system of values is accompanied by an evident misunderstanding and disregard for the students' cultures and needs. For example, in the 80s and 90s, some students were erroneously placed in bilingual education classrooms "just because they had a Spanish last name," while others were erroneously placed in special education because they failed to fulfill traditional classroom norms. While the bilingual education placement process has
become more rigorous and standardized, recent immigrant students continue being incorrectly assigned to special education classes. One teacher claimed that the bilingual education staff has attempted to halt such practice, telling the administration that most students do not have learning disabilities, but rather "paralyzing trauma." In addition, two teachers acknowledged that, to this day, students continue being penalized for not fulfilling mainstream expectations, such as having to be outspoken in class: "what they [school staff] do not understand is that maybe the students are not comfortable. What do we know about them? Do they verbalize a lot in their home? Maybe they don't, maybe they have a lot of siblings, or maybe they just don't like to talk."

One interviewee suggested that the District should devote more time and resources to professional development workshops that explore "what it look like to be an anti-racist educator," while another pointed out that to adopt and encourage culturally-sensitive practices the District would first need to understand the diversity within the Hispanic group:

One of the things that I feel that we don't do right, and that is the District as a whole, as well as this school, is that no one ever breaks down where students are coming from. They lump them all together. And there is a big difference. You have to know who is from Puerto Rico, who is from Guatemala, who is from the DR. Because knowing that makes a difference in how you greet them, in how you talk about things, in how you approach their families. But they don't know, they just know that they are either Hispanic, Black, White, Asian, and that's it. They should know the demographics of their schools; it shouldn't be just a few teachers that know. So, until they figure that out, we are not going to do our best for our Hispanic kids.

The failure to understand the student population, coupled with ascribing low academic performance to student deficit, has created an environment that fosters apathy and low student expectations. As indicated in previous studies (Diamond et al., 2004; Lee \& Loeb, 2000), such an environment reduces levels of collective responsibility. For instance, a former district official recalled witnessing "a lot of tensions arising between the bilingual ESL teachers and the general academic teachers" in the 80s and 90s over student treatment, as well as resistance to form
collaborations to enhance student learning. According to a current ESL teacher, the structure of the ESL program and a lack of institutional support instigate these conflicts:

It's hard to feel ownership in a room when you [ESL teachers] spend 40 minutes in there and then go to five or six other rooms. The least we could do as the two teachers in the room is have a shared understanding of what does it look like to meet student needs and to respect their linguistic and cultural background. I think that having time to actually talk about those things would be very beneficial, but we don't get a lot of time to do that. We don't even have time to co-lesson plan.

In another example of the frictions across academic departments, an NRPS teacher launched a campaign in 1991 with nationalist rhetoric that called for the prioritization of English language instruction; the teacher argued: "our country is spending millions for ESL and I think we have plenty of reasons to spend money and time to develop a movement to help restore English as a first language" (Bugman, 1991, para.9). Recent district documents shed light on the persisting tensions around teaching non-native English speakers. For instance, in 2015, a community member approached the school board to decry that "students are afraid to speak Spanish at home due to what they are told in school" (Harris, as cited in School Board Committee, 2015). School- and district-level administrators noted these occurrences, suggesting that they would like to see more cultural awareness training and workshops. One administrator claimed that an increase in these programs "would go a long way in promoting empathy with our teachers, a deeper sense of understanding, and a deeper connection with the students and families." However, several district officials cited budget constraints as the central reason why these programs cannot pick up momentum, while school-level administrators cited a lack of support "from above."

Additional factors hindering collective responsibility include gaps in communication between central office officials, school administrators, and teachers. Specifically, interview data revealed contradicting understanding among teachers and central office staff regarding on-theground realities. For instance, administrators did not think that language barriers hindered
family involvement, whereas teachers believed that it did and that the District should hire more bilingual staff to increase parental participation rates. With regards to culturally sensitive practices, several teachers were unaware of the District's interest in providing cultural awareness workshops because "the focus has always been on instruction as opposed to training about cultures and where people are coming from." Another teacher explained that while administrators are "always pushing us to find ways to connect with our students' culture," they fail to provide clear guidance and the burden ends up falling on the teachers. In fact, most instructors concurred that all culture-related activities and events are a product of teachers who volunteer to plan and execute them. Given the fragmented lesson-planning system, teachers report a lack of collaborative efforts among teachers, as well as between teachers and administrators. When discussing cultural programs, one teacher explained: "We are doing so many things but that's it, we are doing these events for them [administrators] to just sit down, check a box, and write a report. They are not thinking cohesively about these things." Teachers describe that over time they find themselves having to "do more with less": more in-class and out-of-class activities, more students per class, more performance evaluations, and more administrative responsibilities, with less time, fewer resources, and less institutional support.

Increased demands on teachers have been accompanied by limitations in their agency. At a 2005 Board meeting, a bilingual teacher stated that the staff was "willing to do whatever it takes to improve teaching and learning in the classroom," but that to do so, the Board must include them in the decision-making processes (Sorensen, as cited in School Board Committee, 2005a). Moreover, some instructors indicated that they feel animosity from higher-ups when they advocate for their students and families. Ultimately, ascribing teachers to fixed roles and excluding them from decision-making processes generates a context that removes teachers'
power over their actions and inhibits their sense of collective responsibility for student learning and performance (Halvorsen et al., 2009).

## Individual expectations and teaching strategies

The previous section revealed that the District's leadership and organizational structures established an environment that legitimizes the dominant group's culture and perpetuates deficit-oriented beliefs. This finding is germane to the examination of teacher expectations, given that such an environment has been found to negatively dispose teachers towards their students (Horvat and Antonio, 1999). At the same time, it is important to recognize that organizational habitus does not entirely determine teachers' attitudes and dispositions- rather, it is the interaction between teachers' individual habitus and the organizational habitus that shapes expectations, which, in turn, structure relationships and teaching tactics (Oakes, 2005; Roscigno \& Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Thus, since teachers' habitus vary based on their own cultural background, life experiences, and cultural awareness, it is highly likely that under the umbrella of one organization you find a range in expectations and attitudes toward students. Note that the present study's sample cannot capture the full spectrum of student expectations and limits the generalizability of the results to all district's teachers; however, the following section shows how high student expectations and understanding of students' cultural background affect classroom practices.

The data gathered from 15 staff interviews indicated that teachers of Hispanic origin, teachers and administrators who had ties to Latin American individuals (worked locally or abroad with Hispanic communities or had a Hispanic spouse), and teachers and administrators who grew up in New Riviera (regardless of ethnic and racial background), demonstrated the highest level of understanding of their students' cultures and their current realities. This group,
comprised of eight individuals ${ }^{52}$, held high student expectations while being cognizant of the disadvantages that students face inside and outside of school. Though most Hispanic teachers did not share the same nationality and socioeconomic background as their students, their awareness of the diversity within the Hispanic population and their ability to speak Spanish allowed them to connect and empathize with their students and families. Non-Hispanic teachers and administrators who had ties to Latin Americans and/or spent the majority of their life in New Riviera could also appreciate the diversification of the local Hispanic population, as well as changes in the community's needs. As one teacher explains, "it is that understanding of the various Latin American countries that allows [us] to truly connect."

According to these educators, they intentionally hold high expectations for their students, in part, because they have witnessed the detrimental impact of holding low expectations:

If the teacher comes with the mindset of "they are Mexican, they are not gonna [sic] do well," they are just not gonna do well. But if we have those high expectations of them, they are gonna get better. I just find that people's expectations are getting lower and that we don't have time for people to feel sorry for them. And that's what I find that they do to our Hispanic students. They lump them and they lower them.

These individuals also noted that some teachers who cannot understand the background of their students are harsher and often dismiss conflicts as "language problems." One administrator indicated that these discrepancies in expectations have been occurring since the first wave of Hispanic migration to New Riviera in the 70s:

We had people who had the ethnic and racial understanding of the school population, so that worked for us. But we had to deal with the social dynamics of people tending to want to fail students based on preconceived notions of who the student achievers were.

[^38]Moreover, anecdotal data from currently active teachers suggest that low expectations for New Riviera's students and families often attract teachers to work for the District. For instance, one interviewee shared that a few newly-hired teachers admitted preferring to work in New Riviera over "Morristown or those places", because parents in New Riviera are not involved and would "not question them." It is possible, however, that continued exposure to the student population affects teachers' perceptions and expectations. This was the case for an individual who has been working for the District for 20 years and explained that initially she thought learning about her students' cultural background was irrelevant to teaching practices:

Part of me felt that not necessarily everybody was the same, but they all were here for the purpose of learning. After a while I learned that it is important that I know that they are here for learning but also need to know where they are coming from.

The eight individuals who held "high but realistic" expectations implemented a series of culturally-sensitive activities and targeted teaching practices. For instance, with regards to parental involvement, some educators identified which parents needed to be contacted with greater frequency and persistence, and reported speaking to them in a straight-forward manner (i.e., giving parents clear instructions and "making them aware of what they are doing wrong"). As anticipated, Spanish-speaking staff possessed an advantage in terms of communicating with families: "in parent teacher conferences where they [parents] see that that teacher can just speak to them directly it seems like it lets the pressure off and they [parents] open up." In contrast, non-Spanish-speaking staff relied on other teachers or administrators for translations. In consideration of this, one non-Spanish-speaking teacher decided to facilitate communication with parents by volunteering to run after-school activities: "because they [the students] stay and I get to bring parents in and talk to them informally, in a non-threatening type of way." Also pertaining to the enhancement of communication channels, two teachers decided to go on home visits after realizing that numerous parents miss school events "for the simple fact that
they work multiple jobs." In general, these eight educators valued getting to know their students' families, as they believed that these efforts enhanced students' academic work in the classroom and at home:

I get to know their parents and I get to know what they did before they came here, and that lets me know how much they can help their kids with schoolwork. I don't make assumptions based on where they are from or if they lack papers.

Aside from practicing effective communication with families, five of these eight educators devoted time and resources to execute classroom- or school-level cultural celebrations that highlight the diversity in the Hispanic population; examples include making daily announcements during Hispanic Heritage Month that recognized the contributions made by scholars and scientists from Latin America, or organizing a flag parade where "students get to see their flags and the countries that they represent."

In terms of targeted teaching practices, various teachers applied "individualized learning" and "small-group work." Some, for example, would pair up students with complementary skill sets, while others would have students work in groups while they provide one-on-one instruction to recent immigrant students "to break the language barrier." Four teachers reported implementing scaffolding to improve student learning; one bilingual teacher explained what this practice looked like in her classroom:

Sometimes I give my students different assessments. Just because a student cannot express themselves in writing, that doesn't mean that they don't know the content. Maybe they are just not familiar with the format. For example, instead of writing a research paper, I have let one student prepare a presentation and another a series of drawings.

This instructor noted that several administrators have asked her to disseminate her teaching strategies to others, recognizing that "most monolingual teachers use a cookie-cutter approach" that is not adaptable to multiple forms of learning. In addition to scaffolding, various teachers
also indicated integrating "culturally relevant materials" to their lessons, to connect with students' background knowledge; these materials included books, poems, and music.

Overall, the experiences shared by these eight educators demonstrate how understanding students' cultural background and needs fosters high expectations and facilitates positive classroom experiences. It is worth noting, however, that in the current climate of highstakes testing and accountability, the opportunities to design individualized learning plans and to implement innovative practices are limited (Hursh, 2008). Therefore, in this context, the efforts made by these eight educators to bridge cultural gaps and address students' needs, such as providing one-on-one instruction and scaffolding, stand out.

## Conclusion

In light of the growth and diversification of the Hispanic population in the U.S., this study examined how one school district (New Riviera Public Schools) responded to rapid demographic changes in their student body. The data gathered from interviews, archives, and periodicals suggested that the growth in the District's Hispanic student population experienced since the 1970s was accompanied by a diversification in terms of country of origin, socioeconomic status, immigration status, language, and levels of education. In practical terms, this occurrence translated to variations in students' access to resources, students' time availability and predisposition to engage in academic activities outside of school, and parents' ability to get involved in their children's education, amongst other factors.

To best understand the response to the above-mentioned student population changes, the study was divided into three sections, each providing a different focus: the first on policies and practices, the second on organizational structure, and the third on individual attitudes. The first section revealed that, in the context of budget constraints and increased state and federal demands, the NRPS district supported its diverse Hispanic student population by applying
curricular modifications (pertaining to English language acquisition and cultural awareness), expanding parent involvement activities, hiring Hispanic staff, and providing training on culturally-sensitive teaching. Consistent with Wortham and Rhodes (2015) and Contreras and colleagues (2015), the study findings demonstrated that the mostly-generic and disjointed policies and practices adopted by the District failed to support the needs of all Hispanic student subgroups and fulfill the community's demands. Supporting this finding, various interviewees acknowledged a lack of cohesiveness in the programs and practices implemented. Moreover, the District's fragmented structure, which allowed each school to respond differently to their students' needs, led to significant disparities in the support provided to Hispanic students. It is worth noting that there has been a recent push from administrators and teachers towards the implementation of culturally-sensitive practices and programs; some of these new initiatives include the dual language bilingual program, the "courageous voices" group, family events planned with parents' work demands in mind, and the use of literary materials that are relevant to the students' cultural backgrounds and lives.

The second section of this study delved beyond the examination of policies and practices to understand if the District's leadership and its organizational structure fostered collective responsibility for student learning. Drawing on research from Horvat and Antonio (1999) and McDonough (1998), which extend Bourdieu's notion of habitus to analyze organizations, this study found that the NRPS district's organizational habitus exalted dominant groups' culture. Furthermore, the data showed that several district leaders held and transmitted deficit-oriented beliefs about Hispanic students, while possessing limited understanding of the student population. The context set out by the District, marked by low student expectations and teacher demoralization, hindered collective responsibility for student learning - this was evidenced by staff's resistance to form professional collaborations and tensions across academic
departments. Additional structural factors that inhibited teachers' power and responsibility over student learning included (1) excluding teachers from decision-making processes and (2) gaps in communication between central office officials, school administrators, and teachers.

The third and last section concentrated on teachers and administrators at the individual level; it examined how their understanding of the student population and their expectations affected classroom practices. Marginally deviating from the teacher-student demographic match literature, the study found that the educators who demonstrated having the greatest knowledge about their students' background and holding high expectations did not necessarily share the same ethnic and social background as their students: some were Hispanic (of different nationalities and socioeconomic background as their students), while others were not Hispanic but had ties to Latin Americans and/or resided in New Riviera for most of their lives. This group of educators implemented a series of culturally-sensitive and targeted teaching practices to bolster parental involvement and student academic engagement. Some of these practices included: (1) reaching out to families through different mediums (e.g., phone, after-school, home visits) and clearly conveying their expectations; (2) strategically pairing students with complementary skill sets; (3) scaffolding; and (4) integrating culturally relevant materials to their lessons to connect with students' background knowledge.

The multi-level approach used to examine the response to student population changes revealed that, in a context that failed to implement a cohesive action plan and promote collective responsibility for student learning, individual actors were able to operate with a certain degree of autonomy that allowed them to engage in culturally responsive teaching. However, while teachers and administrators could control micro-level interactions, this was not sufficient to contest problematic narratives or unfair/inadequate institutional practices. The tendency to increase demands on teachers while excluding them from decision-making
processes further obstructs teachers' capacity to thoughtfully respond to the changing needs of their students - even if they reject the deficit-oriented expectations embedded in the District's organizational habitus. To effectively address the needs of specific Hispanic subgroups and provide all students with an equal chance of success, district leaders must challenge deficitoriented beliefs and establish spaces for staff to learn about anti-racist and social justice education (like the "Courageous Voices" group does, but on a larger scale). They should also act on their capacity to empower teachers and administrators, while promoting cooperation and trust among educators in different departments and positions.

Study limitations arise from the study's design and instrument: the study would have benefitted from the inclusion of classroom observation to increase its validity and better capture how teachers' understanding of their student population shapes their practices. Also, the interview questionnaire did not allow for a discussion about politics and corruption in New Riviera. In addition, the generalization of findings is limited by a small sample size for the interviews (15) and by the sampling method: if accepting to participate in the interviews reflects an appreciation for the subject matter and confidence in teaching practices, then the findings fail to present a complete and unbiased picture of the perspectives of district staff.

## CHAPTER 5

## Community-based approach to improving educational trajectories: A case study of the Nurture thru Nature (NtN) randomized experiment

In the past three decades, out-of-school time (OST) programs have evolved from being a smallscale alternative for unsupervised youth to a popular multi-service intervention capable of providing a wide-range of services. According to a comprehensive report by the nation's leading organization in promoting after-school education, Afterschool Alliance (2014), participation in these programs increased from 6.5 million children in 2004 to 10.2 million in 2014 (note that some of these programs extend into the summer). Despite growing enrollment, scholars have pointed out that empirical findings from evaluation studies yield mixed results and fail to justify the enthusiasm driving OST program expansion (Apsel, 2009; Kremer et al., 2014; Zief et al., 2006). Most researchers attribute the inconclusive impact of OSTs to the heterogeneity of interventions, under-powered interventions, poor conceptualization, and a lack of scientific rigor in program evaluations (Apsel, 2009; Fashola, 1998; Gottfredson et al., 2007; Kremer et al., 2014; Lauer et al., 2006; McCombs et al., 2017; Roth et al., 2010). This underscores the need for in-depth and methodologically rigorous studies that examine both implementation and impact of OST interventions. Moreover, amidst the increasing popularity of OST initiatives, little is known about the benefits of approaching these interventions from a place-based approachthough studies have demonstrated that serving the needs of the host community is paramount for the achievement of OST programs' goals (Durlak et al., 2010; Miller, 2011). Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the strategies of a community-based OST program and its impact on students' cognitive skills and social capital development.

The structure and design of the program examined in this study, titled Nurture thru Nature (NtN), presents a unique opportunity to explore the impacts of a community-based
initiative and to contribute to the existing body of OST program literature. NtN, an after-school and summer initiative that has been operating since 2010, aims to improve the basic science, mathematics, and language arts performance of students in grades 4 through 12. Its curriculum integrates community members, the physical neighborhood environment, and local businesses and organizations, which is characteristic of place- and community-based education (Smith and Sobel, 2010). The program, designed as a randomized control trial (RCT) with random assignment to treatment and control groups, is a partnership of Rutgers University faculty and students, the New Riviera school district, and a major local pharmaceutical company (Johnson \& Johnson). Inspired by the active learning philosophy of John Dewey $(1976,1990)$ and its extension in the forms of the outdoor education movement (Ord and Leather, 2011, Quay and Seaman, 2012) and wonders of nature teaching model (Camasso and Jagannathan, 2017, Jagannathan et al., 2018), NtN makes active use of the aesthetics readily found in nature to ignite students' imagination and engender a deeper scientific understanding of the interconnections among persons, community and the environment. Program participants receive academic support in all core course subjects, while also being exposed to an enriching science curriculum involving interactive lessons, hands-on experiments, outdoor activities, and learning excursions. For the past ten years, NtN has operated in a low-income neighborhood in Central New Jersey and has served socioeconomically disadvantaged minority youth, 87 percent ${ }^{53}$ of whom were of Hispanic origin.

Employing a mixed-method approach, this study is guided by the following objectives: (1) to identify NtN's strategies aimed at serving the needs of their diverse student population; and (2) to use a portion of the NtN experimental data to examine if and how NtN enhanced academic performance and facilitated the development of social capital of its students. The

[^39]demographic composition of NtN participants allows for a focus on a Hispanic student population, which is particularly meaningful considering the current context of Latinization of U.S. schools (Irizarry and Donaldson, 2012). In the following paragraphs, I review relevant OST program literature including key components and findings, and outline the study's theoretical framework.

## Background: OST programs

Out-of-school-time (OST) programs gained traction in the twentieth century as a means of providing a safe space for students and mitigating problematic behaviors associated with time spent unsupervised (Lauer et al., 2006). Over time, the perceived potential benefits of these programs expanded beyond safety and behavioral concerns (Fashola, 1998). By the 1990s, OST programs were implemented to bolster academic performance, foster socioemotional skills, and decrease dropout rates, amongst others.

As pressure mounted in the last decades to reduce the socioeconomic and racial/ethnic achievement gap and provide high quality education to all students, parents, school administrators, and government officials pivoted their attention to OST interventions (Black et al., 2008). For instance, from 1998 to 2002, federal funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which offer an array of personal-enrichment and academic-development activities outside of school hours to students nationwide, expanded from a \$40 million to \$1 billion (James-Burdumy et al., 2005). This program proliferation was met by a rise in enrollment, though the demand for spots far exceeded the available supply, especially in high-poverty neighborhoods (Afterschool Alliance, 2016).

Despite the increased demand and funding for OST programs witnessed in the past two decades, the definition of what constitutes an OST intervention remains unclear and unstandardized; there are no specifications on the timeframe, facilities, amounts of meetings,
activities, or duration of sessions that OST programs should provide (Apsler, 2009). In light of this, various studies have attempted to establish a common set of goals and standards of implementation for OST programs (e.g., Apsler, 2009; Miller, 2011; Roth et al., 2010). The basic structure of OST programs consists of delivery of multiple meetings per week during non-school hours, provision of adult supervision, and an offering of group-based activities (Lauer et al., 2006; Roth et al., 2010). According to Apsler (2009), programs are designed around one or more of the following goals: " 1 ) providing adult supervision and safe environments; (2) providing a flexible, relaxed, and homelike environment; (3) providing cultural or enrichment opportunities; (4) improving academic skills; (5) preventing behavior problems; and (6) providing recreational activities" (p.3). Although all populations utilize these services, there is a greater demand and enrollment from low-income families (Afterschool Alliance, 2016). Therefore, a substantial number of OST programs is designed to serve disenfranchised student groups, which encompass individuals attending low-performing schools, being a member of low-income households, and/or living in impoverished neighborhoods (Kramer et al., 2014). Within the category of programs for "at-risk" students, interventions can range from unstructured recreational activities to rigorous academic instruction and skill training.

The heterogeneity and scope of OST interventions present an enormous challenge when evaluating program effectiveness and determining what constitutes a high-quality program. Hollister (2003), Fashola (1998), and Lauer et al. (2006), among others, assert that the evaluation literature on OST programs shows that these programs are plagued by poor conceptualization and weak research design. In addition, the issues of underpowered design (i.e., small sample sizes) and underpowered treatment (i.e., low dosages due to short treatment periods and low student attendance) have also precluded evaluators from detecting positive effects (Somers et al., 2015).

For instance, a meta-analysis of 24 studies conducted by Kremer and colleagues (2014) examined program effects on school attendance and on externalizing behavior outcomes- the latter was operationalized as "any acting out or problematic behavior", including substance abuse and delinquency. For greater statistical power, the authors pooled all measures of externalizing behaviors. Despite applying a highly-rigorous and transparent method for study search and selection, only seven of the 24 reviewed studies used random assignment; furthermore, the risk of selection bias was categorized as "high" in 17 of the 24 studies. Results from this work indicate that the programs examined had minimal and non-significant effects on externalizing behavior and school attendance. Similarly, in a review of the 150 evaluations of after-school programs listed by the Harvard Family Research Project that includes such highly publicized endeavors as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and the Quantum Opportunities program, Levine and Zimmerman (2010) report a preponderance of disappointing results.

The structural and methodological limitations found in OST programs not only hinder the capacity to properly assess program impact, but also obscure the program elements associated with positive effects when they are found. Kremer et al. (2014) remark that the "lack of attention to intervention processes and implementation impedes our ability to examine program characteristics that may impact the effectiveness of after-school programs" (p.633). While few scholars assess implementation fidelity (Maynard et al. 2013), several authors have identified key elements affecting program effectiveness (e.g., Durlak et al., 2007; Gottfredson et al., 2007; Hirsch, 2005). For instance, Hirsch (2005) recommended that academic-focused programs strike a balance between structured-learning and unstructured-recreational activities. According to the author, rigidly structured programs that mimic school environments negatively impact the perceptions and interest of students, and student engagement and socialization
should take precedence over material coverage: "if a conversation moves a bit off course, as long as students are engaged, it is more important to follow their lead" (p. 137). Similarly, Fashola (1998) proposed that academic-oriented OST programs alternate between formal instruction and recreational/cultural activities.

Grossman and colleagues (2009) stressed the importance of "commitment to quality," as well as the following five factors: (1) a strong leadership, (2) multi-year goals-setting and stakeholder accountability, (3) building community-wide support for the program, (4) a reliable record-keeping system, and (5) an emphasis on high-participation rates. Other crucial implementation strategies include aligning the curricula with the schools' (Fashola, 1998), cultivating strong instructor-child relations (McCombs et al., 2017), and addressing barriers to program participation/engagement (Lauver et al. 2004). For example, programs should identify the obstacles affecting attendance (e.g., lack of transportation) and provide alternatives to circumvent them. Various authors have also highlighted the importance of maintaining stability in staffing and properly training program staff to achieve success (Fashola, 1998; McCombs et al., 2017; Roth et al., 2010). According to Fashola (1998), effective staff is one that receives pedagogical training, learns how to serve the needs of their student body, and knows how to implement program activities. Also, program staff is highly valuable in that they build relationships with students and often function as role-models, thus directly fostering the development of students' social capital (Hirsch, 2005; Miller, 2011).

Evaluations of OST programs that identify features moderating effectiveness reveal a recurrent theme: knowing your student population, addressing their needs, and involving the local community. While these features are characteristic of community- and place-based interventions, few studies focus on these types of programs. A case study by Miller (2011) on a youth entrepreneurship after-school program, for instance, provides insight on how to frame
research on community-based OST programs and the potential benefits of this type of intervention. The author found that by establishing ties with local, "well-established, resourcerich organizations," a community-based program helped students forge productive relationships and bolstered their social networks.

This study focuses on a community-based OST program (Nurture thru Nature, or NtN) that attempts to overcome the above-mentioned limitations of OST interventions by providing a clear conceptualization of purpose, sufficient treatment dosage, and a strong evaluation design (Jagannathan et al., 2018). The NtN program, described in detail in the 'Setting' section, features several of the elements identified in the literature as markers of effective interventions, including: balance between structured and unstructured activities, skilled and trained staff, a focus on student attendance, sustainable program model, community support and engagement, and a well-structured record-keeping system. NtN has a strong record of achieving its objectives, a record that has been documented in peer-reviewed journals in the education, economics, and evaluation fields (Camasso and Jagannathan, 2017; 2018; Jagannathan et al., 2018; 2019).

Findings from these published studies indicate that the program has a substantial, positive, and significant impact on participating students' math and science grades, and their prosocial behavior, higher order thinking, and conscientiousness, relative to the control group students. This paper seeks to extend the scope of NtN's previous evaluation by examining its strategies as a community-based program and its effect on participants' social capital and cognitive skills development as a function of varying levels of program exposure. Specifically, this study seeks to address the following questions:

1. Does the NtN program's strategies directly respond to the needs of its community? If so, how?
2. What types of social networks did students develop through their participation in NtN?
3. Do program effects on participants' cognitive skills vary by their participation levels (i.e., program dosage)?

## Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by OST program research, as well as literature on social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 1999; Portes, 1998). The concept of social capital was formalized in the 1980s through the writings of Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and James Coleman (1988). Bourdieu defines social capital as "possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (p. 21). According to the author, group membership results from a series of "investment strategies" to produce networks and relationships that are "directly usable in the short or long term" (p. 22). The emphasis that Bourdieu placed on group membership helps understand how investing in this form of capital can be used to maintain a certain social position and to reproduce social hierarchies. Coleman (1988), on the other hand, adopted a functionalist perspective to explain how "all social relations and social structures facilitate some forms of social capital" (p. 105). Based on this argument, all social structures consist of interpersonal relationships and these turn into social capital when they facilitate information-flow, trustworthiness, norms, and sanctions. Despite the different perspectives, both Coleman and Bourdieu understood the function of closed networks to be most advantageous for group members: From Bourdieu's social reproduction perspective, closed networks help preserve resources within the dominant group's bounds; Coleman understood closed networks as advantageous given their capacity to amplify the above mentioned benefits of trust, norms, information and sanctions (Lin, 1999).

Though Coleman's and Bourdieu's work set the foundation for the examination of social capital, the present study is mainly informed by the analyses of $\operatorname{Nan} \operatorname{Lin}(1999 ; 2002)$ and Alejandro Portes (1998) due to their direct relevance to the study's setting and population. These works have the flexibility of situating the analysis of social capital in the ethnic enclave where the NtN program takes place.

In contrast to Coleman's and Bourdieu's work
, which focus on networks of high-density and closeness, Lin (1999) explained how bridging social capital (i.e., connections to outside groups and bridges in networks) is most beneficial for tapping resources that are absent in the individuals' social circles. The author asserted that one's position in the social hierarchy determines the "access to and use of resources embedded in social networks" (p. 30). He highlighted four characteristics that provide individuals in these networks with a chance to "enhance the outcomes of actions," viz., that (1) networks support the flow of information; (2) group membership influences the perception of key stakeholder or gatekeepers; (3) the individual's social resources represent social credentials that may benefit the network; and (4) group membership reinforces identity and recognition. Lin's model of social capital assumes an unequal distribution of such resource, but also "emphasizes possible choice action in mobilization" (1999, p. 42). Thus, the model highlights how bridging social capital can grant an individual with access to better-positioned individuals. Lin's works is most relevant for understanding how NtN can represent a bridge that allows its students to extend their networks' range and access resources embedded in other networks.

While close-knit immigrant communities, such as New Riviera, represent a major source of social networks, Portes' (1998) extensive work on immigration recognized the existence of mixed evidence on the social capital benefits stemming from the formation of ethnic enclaves. On the one hand, studies on immigrant communities demonstrated that local networks provide
mobility and economic advancement opportunities, such as access to information about job openings or start-up capital (Portes, 1988; Zhou, 1992). For example, Portes (1998) highlighted that immigrant communities compensate for the lack of access to networks outside the community " with an emphasis on social capital in the form of familial support, including preservation of the cultural orientations of their home country" (p. 14). This form of in-group network, characterized by its homogeneity and its high levels of solidarity, is often referred as "bonding social capital" (Putnam, 2000). On the other hand, Portes (1998) recognized that the isolation of immigrant communities could hinder the social and economic mobility of the group through downward leveling of norms and/or outside discrimination. Therefore, the author argued that "sociability cuts both ways. While it can be the source of public goods, such as those celebrated by Coleman, Loury, and others, it can also lead to public 'bads'" (p. 18). Ultimately, Portes' work serves to understand the advantages and disadvantages emerging from the bonding social capital possessed by the families residing in the city hosting NtN.

Numerous empirical studies have highlighted the central role that social capital plays in facilitating educational opportunities and experiences (Brantlinger, 2003; Lareau, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Noguera, 2004; Perez, 2009; Putnam, 2015). Putnam's work (2015) on social mobility in the U.S. shows that wealthy families with extensive social connections provide their children with valued networks of "informal advisors" and professionals who help them further themselves in their schooling and careers. Moreover, social capital affects academic achievement because it determines how much information families have about educational opportunities and shapes the relationships among institutions, teachers, students, and parents (Noguera 2004; Perez, 2009). Extant research also demonstrates that the social capital of dominant groups allows them to influence and challenge institutional practices (Brantlinger, 2003; Lareau, 2000; Lipman, 1997; Putnam, 2015). In sum, social capital aids students'
educational development as it augments their academic and professional network, shapes their relationships with teachers and institutions, and moderates the quantity and quality of information they and their families possess about educational programs and opportunities.

## Data and Methodology

## Setting: The NtN intervention

The NtN program was initiated in 2010 as a community partnership of Rutgers University, Johnson \& Johnson, and the New Riviera Public School (NRPS) district. Aimed at enhancing the academic performance and STEM knowledge of underprivileged minority students, the program exclusively operates in the predominantly Hispanic, low-income district of New Riviera, NJ, where Hispanic students comprise 90 percent of NRPS district's population, and economically disadvantaged students constitute 84.2 percent of the student population (NJ Department of Education, 2019). The percentages displayed on Table 5.1 indicate that NtN's student composition closely mirrors that of New Riviera's, with nearly 87 percent of Hispanic heritage and a little over 90 percent receiving free or reduced lunch (low-income proxy).

Table 5.1: Demographic and academic profile of NtN students, 2018-2019

| Demographic and academic profile ( $\boldsymbol{n}=\mathbf{8 3}$ ) | Percentage |
| :--- | :---: |
| Female | 53.0 |
| Hispanic | 86.8 |
| Home Language is Spanish | 63.9 |
| Attending high school | 84.3 |
| Attending middle school | 15.7 |
| Receiving free or reduced lunch | 90.4 |
| Enrolled in special education | 15.7 |

The program, which is currently in its 10th year of operation and serving seven cohorts of about 12-15 students, was designed as a classical experiment with random assignment of students in their 3rd grade into the NtN and control groups. Students begin their NtN experience at the end of $3^{\text {rd }}$ grade and continue with the program until high school graduation; the inaugural cohort began the program in Summer 2010 and the last added cohort began in

Summer 2019. NtN provides students with grade-specific academic support and STEM enrichment activities each year until they graduate high school through after-school and summer programming. Program participants typically meet 2-3 times a week for 3 hours during the school year and 3 days a week for 7.5 hours per day in July and August.

NtN uses a focus on natural and environmental sciences to build elementary, middle, and high school children's knowledge and interest in STEM subjects and careers. The program traces its conceptual roots to John Dewey, who introduced an occupational approach to earlyyear education and emphasized the need to connect a student's prior knowledge and experience to learning experiences. Dewey also stressed the importance of situating learning in the "here and now," providing opportunities to apply mathematics and science to everyday situations (Dewey, 1976, Dewey, 1990). Dewey's philosophies on "active education" accept that children are never passive recipients of content but, rather, actively engaged agents in their own life's circumstances (1976). Following this Deweyan philosophy, NtN recognizes that teaching must take a personal approach and understands how students' interests and habits derive from their homes and neighborhoods. Thus, the program employs a community-based education approach by incorporating community members, the physical neighborhood environment, and local businesses and organizations into the curricula.

NtN has five core components, including: (1) a grade-specific STEM-centered curriculum aligned with the curriculum taught by public school science and math teachers; (2) after-school and summer components that reinforce school curriculum; (3) math, science and language arts tutoring; (4) the use of gardens/naturescapes and outdoor lab assets that extend indoor classroom learning; and (5) a commitment to keep parents involved in their child(ren)'s education. The program's gardens/naturescapes not only serve as a space for hands-on learning, but also for social gatherings of students, parents, program staff, and local educators and
stakeholders. The NtN curriculum for the last two years of high school also integrates school-tocollege and school-to-career activities such as SAT prep classes and college visits. By virtue of the support of local professionals and organizations, NtN exposes students to STEM fields and careers through guest lectures from Johnson \& Johnson employees and scientists from Rutgers University, as well as internship opportunities at various Rutgers professional schools and local non-profits.

Previous empirical studies on NtN have found that the program participants display higher levels of science knowledge, academic performance, and soft skills relative to control group students (Jagannathan et al., 2018; 2019). Specifically, a paper by Jagannathan and colleagues (2019) employs longitudinal data to examine student trajectories across the program's cohorts and finds that NtN increases student math and science grades relative to the control group by 0.4 standard deviations. Moreover, the results indicate that, relative to control group students, the program improves participants' soft skills, such as communication and teamwork, empathy, higher order thinking and problem solving, and conscientiousness, by 0.8 standard deviations. While most of the published work on NtN focuses on intention-to-treat (ITT) impacts (i.e., comparison of outcomes based on assignment to NtN and control groups), this study aims to identify the role that program attendance and exposure play in student outcomes. That is, it focuses only on NtN participants and excludes control students to examine whether participants who have higher levels of program exposure ('dosage') exhibit better cognitive outcomes. This study also broadens the scope of previous research by examining two additional program aspects: (1) implementation strategies to serve a diverse community, and (2) impacts on social capital development.

Data sources and analysis
To address the proposed objectives, I use four sources of data: NtN program records, two openended interviews with key program personnel, seven student focus groups (one per NtN cohort), and a longitudinal student-level data set containing demographic and academic information. The research questions guided the selection of data sources, which I collected over the course of August 2018 to April 2019. The nature of the phenomenon under study called for a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

To answer the first research question, i.e., examining NtN strategies to determine if and how the program responds to the needs of its community, I relied on program records and NtN staff interviews as the main data sources. Program records consisted of journal entries written by NtN instructors after every session held between 2010 and 2019, as well as each cohort's master calendars for the same time period. This archival data was retrieved from NtN's online portal and provided details on lesson plans and activities, field trips, and meaningful interactions among students and between students and instructors.

In addition to collecting these documents to learn about NtN's operations, I conducted semi-structured interviews with two key staff members to gather information on some aspects of the day-to-day program operations that might go undocumented. These two individuals were selected due to their long tenure with the program and the number of hours worked per week (they are NtN's only full-time employees). Each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes, took place at the program's administrative office, and were recorded and transcribed for analysis. A review of the program's logic model and other program documents guided the interview questions; the interview structure allowed me to capture information on each staff member's experiences while also covering the same topics in both interviews. The interview protocol included questions about the individual's job responsibilities as well as the strategies
he/she adopted to optimize attendance, participation, and academic achievement (see Appendices C, G, and J for the complete interview guide and IRB Protocol and consent forms).

The analysis undertaken to address the first research question involved coding all program records and interview transcripts in NVivo 12 (a qualitative data management software) using a deductive approach (Brenner, 2006). I established coding categories according to the implementation strategies for high-quality OST delineated by Grossman and colleagues (2009) and Fashola (1998), which included innovative and relevant curricula, strong leadership, community support and parental engagement, emphasis on high-participation rates, and enhancement of program participation/engagement. Subsequently, I narrowed these categories into three emergent themes: enhancement of program participation, cultivation of trusting relationships with students and parents, and provision of academic mentorship.

To address the second research question that entailed assessing NtN's impact on social capital development, I used focus group data. I conducted seven focus groups during August 2018 with all NtN students (one session per cohort) at the program sites during program hours. While these focus groups routinely take place on an annual basis as part of the program's impact evaluations, I modified the 2018 focus group schedule to obtain information about the networks and resourceful relationships that students forged as a result of their participation in $\mathrm{NtN}{ }^{54}$. Each session lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and were subsequently transcribed by me. Similar to the examination of program strategies, I applied a deductive coding procedure to analyze the focus group data and developed the following categories based on constructs of

[^40]social capital theory (Lin, 1999; Portes, 1998), viz., bridging relationships, horizontal relationships, and ethnic enclave networks.

To analyze the effects of program exposure on cognitive outcomes (the third research question), I used two data sets: (1) A longitudinal student-level data set containing a total of 697 individual-level observations on all NtN students from academic year (AY) 2010-2011 to AY20182019, with the number of observations per student depending on their cohort's starting date. (2) A cross-sectional data set consisting of 83 student-level observations for AY2018-19 program participants. Note that this second data set is a reduction of the longitudinal data set, therefore both databases contained the same variables; I opted to focus on AY2018-19 because it was the latest year for which data were available and it contained the greatest number of observations, compared to previous years. The data sets contained information gleaned from New Riviera Public Schools' academic records and from NtN's program records; specifically, they included the following information:

- Demographic profile: age; grade; race/ethnicity; gender; language spoken at home; free or reduced lunch program participation.
- Academic profile: special education status; course enrollment (only available for AY2018-19); number of days absent from school; number of days tardy to school.
- Academic outcomes: final grade in math course/s; final grade in science course/s; final grade in language arts course/s with grades measured on a 100point scale.
- Program information: NtN cohort; NtN participation rate ([number of sessions attended/number of sessions offered] $\times 100$ ).

Although the NtN program was designed as a classical experiment with random assignment to treatment and control groups, the dosage analysis undertaken in this study focuses only on NtN students (treatment group). This modification impedes my ability to draw causal inferences about program effects given that only random assignment can prevent selection biases by ensuring that threats of confounding causes are randomly distributed across treatment and control groups. Thus, since the dosage analysis necessitates statistical techniques that control for selection biases, I used two propensity score methods on the cross-sectional data set: traditional propensity score matching and generalized propensity scores. The first technique employed, the traditional propensity score matching (PSM), assumes the treatment variable to be binary (e.g., treatment vs. control) and implements the PSM estimator to pair students from each group based on similarity in the estimated probability of selection into treatment, where this probability is calculated based on observed covariates included in the model (Austin, 2018). The model then calculates the effect of treatment by taking the mean difference between the observed and estimated outcome values for each student. Since this study focuses on dosage, I had to modify the participation variable to conduct a PSM: I examined the distribution of the participation variable and generated a binary variable based on the median attendance rate ( 0 if the student's attendance falls below the median and 1 if it falls at or above the median); this technique treats the low attendance students as "control" group students, who, in effect, are receiving substantially lower levels of program instruction. I estimated the program effects using PSM by applying the TEFFECTS PSMATCH command in Stata 15.0; in the first stage of the PSM model, I used a logit-link function and included students' demographic and academic characteristics as covariates.

The second propensity score method employed, generalized propensity scores (GPS), is most appropriate for continuous treatment variables- thus, allowing for the estimation of
treatment effects by exact dosage (i.e., attendance) (Hirano \& Imbens, 2004; Li \& Fraser, 2015). I completed this analysis using the "doseresponse2" Stata 15.0 program that utilizes the doseresponse technique developed by Hirano and Imbens (2004). The purpose of the dose-response function is twofold: In the first stage, it estimates the propensity score by using a generalized linear model with normally distributed errors and an identify link function, with the continuous treatment as the dependent variable and all the covariates of interest as the independent variables. Similar to the PSM technique, I applied students' demographic and academic characteristics as covariates. A key assumption of the GPS technique is that the treatment (participation levels), conditional on covariates, is normally distributed; this assumption was met in the data set. After checking covariate balance, the linear regression model yielded numerous normal distributions, each one of which represents the probability of receiving each value of treatment given a set of covariates; thus, providing the GPS for each student.

In the second stage, the outcome of interest (final grades in math, science, language arts) is modeled as a function of the dosage propensity estimated in the first stage. After estimating the GPS and checking covariate balance, it fits a new linear regression model with the outcome of interest (final grades) as the dependent variable, and the following independent variables: participation level and GPS in linear and quadratic terms, an interaction of participation and GPS, and estimates the expected average outcome at a particular level of treatment; I specified the model to calculate final grades in math, science, and language arts separately for participation rates at 10 percent intervals, from 0 to 100 percent. The results from the quantitative analyses are reported in the last section of the findings.

It is evident from the description of the propensity score techniques applied that the effectiveness of these methods relies heavily on a large sample size and on the availability of a rich set of covariates for matching; however, the data set contained only 83 observations and a
restricted number of covariates that could be used for matching purposes. To overcome this difficulty, I exploited the longitudinal nature of NtN's data, which provides a greater number of observations (697), and estimated panel data regressions that guard against selection bias if it arises from unobserved, time-invariant student characteristics. Given the long duration of NtN (10 years), there is the strong possibility of student attrition overtime. Thus, before embarking on the longitudinal analyses, I examined attrition patterns using the XTDESCRIBE procedure on STATA 15.0 to determine whether there are systematic differences between the NtN students who left the program and those who stayed. The results suggest student attrition is independent of observed student characteristics.

In the panel data analysis, I estimated four random and fixed effects models to examine the effect of program exposure (dosage) on three different academic performance indicators. I performed a Hausman test for model misspecification comparing the fixed effects and random effects models, which indicated the fixed effects model as more appropriate. The sequence of the four fixed effects models detailed below allowed me to test variations in the measurement of time and dosage (categorical and continuous, and binary and continuous, respectively), as well as the inclusion of relevant interaction terms.

$$
\begin{gathered}
\text { [E1]: } y_{i t}=T_{t} \gamma+\text { PRate }_{i t} \beta_{1}+X_{i t} \beta_{2}+\alpha_{i}+\varepsilon_{i t} \\
\text { [E2]: } y_{i t}=Z_{t} \gamma+\text { PRate }_{i t} \beta_{1}+X_{i t} \beta_{2}+\alpha_{i}+\varepsilon_{i t} \\
\text { [E3]: } y_{i t}=Z_{t} \gamma+\text { HighAttendance }_{i t} \beta_{1}+X_{i t} \beta_{2}+\alpha_{i}+\varepsilon_{i t}
\end{gathered}
$$

[E4]: $y_{i t}=Z_{t} \gamma+$ HighAttendance $_{i t} \beta_{1}+X_{i t} \beta_{2}+\left(Z_{t} *\right.$ HighAttendance $\left._{i t}\right) \beta_{3}+\alpha_{i}+\varepsilon_{i t}$ In all four equations, term $y_{i t}$ denotes an outcome - the final grade in math, science, or language arts for student $i$ in year $t$; also, subscript $i$ represents each student and $t$ each applicable year. When measured continuously, time is represented by the term $T$ (as in Equation 1), and when measured categorically it is indicated by the term $Z$ as in Equations 2-4. PRate $_{\text {it }}$ in
equations 1 and 2 indicates each student i's program participation rate in year $t$, while HighAttendance, in equations 3 and 4, indicates whether student i's program attendance was at or above the median rate in year $t$. Term X represents a vector of academic profile variables, $\alpha$ represents a vector of student fixed effects (e.g., culture, upbringing, and sex), and $\varepsilon_{\text {it }}$ represents the traditional, idiosyncratic error term.

I completed the analysis using the XTREG procedure on STATA 15.0, specifying the fixed effects "fe" option, which uses a within-regression estimator. As mentioned above, the application of fixed-effects model ensures that the estimated dosage effects are not biased by omitted time-invariant characteristics among students. It also captures unobserved time-variant characteristics that affect all students, such as changes in per-pupil spending. However, results from these panel regressions can still suffer from selection or threats to internal validity if there were unobserved time-variant factors that affected the outcomes and were omitted from the model. Robust standard errors are calculated to adjust for over time correlation among individuals and cross-sectional/groupwise heteroskedasticity (Baum, 2001).

## Findings

NtN's place-based and culturally-sensitive practices The following section identifies the elements that NtN puts in place to involve the host community and to meet the specific needs of its student population. Due to its affiliation to local organizations and institutions (i.e., Rutgers University, the local school district, and Johnson \& Johnson), NtN's operational structure organically integrates the social and cultural environment that surround it. For instance, the program's curriculum incorporates community service projects (e.g., volunteering at the Farmer's Market), tours of neighborhood's businesses and institutions, and guest lectures from local professionals. Additional program features that are characteristic of community-based initiatives include the use of and contribution to the
neighborhood's natural landscape (e.g., building community gardens) and the inclusion of "community insiders" as staff members (Smith and Sobel, 2010).

The fact that a program is grounded in the principles of community-based education does not imply that it automatically responds to the specific needs of its student population (Smith and Sobel, 2010). In the case of NtN however, various purposeful, culturally-sensitive practices that target the needs of its students are implemented by the program; these strategies, detailed below, aim to enhance program participation, cultivate trusting relationships with students and parents, and provide academic mentorship.

Enhancing program participation- NtN serves a community in which many parents hold multiple jobs, work late shifts, do not have cars, and/or their immigration status does not allow them to obtain a driver's license. In addition, due to parents' busy schedules, several NtN students have to spend their after-school hours taking care of younger siblings. Program staff recognized that these circumstances led to high turnover rates and low attendance; they also noted that most of the local population "moves around a lot because they live in rental housing," and that the geographical distance from the program's site also negatively impacted attendance.

In consideration of these challenges, the program adopted a series of practices to bolster program attendance and retention, such as providing students with transportation to and from NtN. The program coordinator explained that this service often involves picking students up from locations other than their homes, such as a social gathering, doctor's appointment, a part-time job, or another extracurricular activity; for instance, the coordinator shared that "when students have a Quinceañera rehearsal, we have to go get them from there to come to the program."

Additional strategies to facilitate participation include offering incentives (e.g., awards, food, prizes), allowing participants to bring in their siblings as 'guests' of the program, hiring participants in high school as "student helpers" to assist with younger cohorts, and establishing strong communication ties with students and parents. The latter element entails contacting parents when a student does not show up to program within 15 minutes of start time. Given that "having the parent on board is key for good attendance," NtN instructors also call parents systematically to remind them about the program's upcoming activities. In addition, NtN staff discusses attendance issues directly with students and provide flexibility to those who want to participate in other extra-curricular activities by 'catching them up' on program activities.

Cultivating trusting relationships with students and parents- A recent study involving NtN families (see Chapter 3) found that serving an ethnically diverse community results in having to work with individuals who possess different understandings of the role of parents in schools. For instance, some NtN parents abstain from being actively involved in their children's education as a response to revering teachers and feeling inferior and/or out-of-place. Taking this diversity in educational values into account, the program implemented several mechanisms to connect with all of its participating families: one central mechanism was appointing a "community insider" as program coordinator. This staff member was born and raised in New Riviera, attended the local public schools, shares a similar cultural background with several NtN students, and speaks Spanish. This link and commitment to the community, as well as the status of "insider" and the language skills allows her to connect with parents, put them at ease, and build trusting relationships. According to this individual, her familiarity with the area and its institutions allows her to "better help families" because she knows of available resources and opportunities. For instance, in 2016, a local celebrity gave away gift cards to families in-need during Christmas, and she was able to secure one for an NtN family. Also, residing in the same
town as her students allows the program coordinator to connect with families by patronizing their businesses and meeting them in person whenever they need help. Many NtN parents rely on the program coordinator for assistance with personal matters, such as translating correspondence or making doctors' appointments for them—some have even contacted her to inquire about their kids' personal lives and ask her for advice. The NtN coordinator has even 'subbed-in' at parent-teacher conferences for some of the students.

NtN also develops strong relationships with the program's families by holding social gatherings at its community gardens. At these events, attendees can meet fellow community residents and enjoy food from local Hispanic restaurants. Moreover, NtN bolsters homeprogram communication links by virtue of having low staff turnover and keeping instructors working with the same cohort of students over time. As one NtN instructor explains:

It is not just about the relationship with the kids, it is about the family and the kids, and if you are a new teacher, they might not want to talk to you. So, it is actually really good to get to know the parents. They get to trust you and to know you. It makes the back and forth so much easier when you are with the same group for a long time. Recognizing the importance of mentorship and of cultivating positive relationships with students, NtN instructors dedicate time outside of program to assist students with nonacademic matters. For instance, one teacher took a student's cat to the vet, while another helped a student obtain her driver's license. According to a staff member, getting involved in the students' lives "is not required, but it helps build a bond. And that bond helps strengthen everything else, from their academics to their team-work skills." Thus, the program depends on a devoted team who can communicate openly with students, identify their needs, and respond accordingly.

## Provide academic mentoring to fulfill schools' expectations of parental support- As

 stated earlier, NtN serves a predominantly Hispanic, low-income community that includes several undocumented residents. Congruent with empirical work on the impact of immigration status on parental involvement (Menjivar, 2008; Suarez-Orozco et al., 1999; 2011), program staff has found that numerous NtN parents restrict their presence at their children's school due to fears of deportation and that their lack of legal status limits the quantity and quality of information regarding community resources. Aside from immigration status, variations in cultural understandings of education, economic hardship, and work demands affect NtN parents' involvement in their children's education. As one NtN teacher remarks, "a problem here in New Riviera is that a lot of parents are not involved at all. They are too busy with their own lives, either because of work, finances, or other reasons, but they are not involved."Given that local schools expect caregivers to provide students with academic support and career guidance (see Chapter 4), NtN staff responded to parents' time and resource limitations by providing program participants with extensive academic mentorship; as summarized by an NtN teacher, "we are their [students'] lifeline to all things academic." For instance, when students face issues at school, NtN staff communicate directly with their teachers. NtN students, and oftentimes NtN parents, reach out to program instructors for homework assistance and tutoring: "Whenever they [students] need help outside of NtN, even if it's the weekend, they would text us or call us." Some instructors routinely meet with academically struggling students outside of program hours. In addition, program participants often rely on NtN to provide them with school supplies such as poster boards for class projects.

Program instructors' familiarity with the community and local opportunities is also key to increasing student involvement in other enriching activities: "We [teachers] know of so many resources in New Riviera that they could benefit from." NtN personnel direct students to
educational resources, such as training or research opportunities - often physically taking students to these places. This ties back to the strategy of hiring dedicated staff, many of whom are "community insiders" and possess valuable information on available services and resources. In response to students' limited access to academic resources at home, NtN also facilitates college preparation by providing students with SAT courses and tutoring, taking them on college tours, and assisting them with admissions applications and financial aid forms. NtN directors, who are members of Rutgers University faculty, wrote letters of recommendations for NtN college applicants and helped with their college essays. According to a staff member, most of the students "are first generation graduating from high school and first generation going to college, and they have a lot of questions that their parents can't answer." Thus, NtN fills this information void by guiding students through the entire college application and admission process, informing them about scholarships and other local resources.

In sum, NtN implements a comprehensive set of strategies to bolster academic performance, including offering tutoring services and individualized instruction, communicating directly with teachers, connecting students to local resources, and providing them with school supplies and college admission counseling. Similar to the strategies to enhance participation and cultivate positive program-home relationships, the application of these academic-oriented strategies requires a committed team of instructors who are willing to go beyond their prescribed job duties to address student needs.

## Social networks and NtN

While the practices outlined above reveal a deliberate effort to facilitate academic learning and achievement, NtN's impact also extends to social capital development. Congruent with Miller's findings (2011), student focus group data suggest that the program's organizational structure enabled NtN participants to access different social networks and forge resourceful relationships
with diverse sets of individuals including student helpers, NtN staff, NtN directors, and local professionals. The following paragraphs examine how the program enhanced the bridging of social networks and the utility of each network.

Student helpers- As mentioned in the previous section, NtN offered students in older cohorts the opportunity to work with other NtN groups as "student helpers." This strategy was designed to keep high-schoolers engaged in the program, while providing them with a job opportunity and a source of income. However, the dynamics of exposing younger participants to student helpers has allowed both parties to establish useful, reciprocal horizontal bonds (Miller, 2011). Students in four focus group sessions asserted that having older NtN students in the classroom was an asset. In an explicit demonstration of the benefits gained from these relationships, two young students indicated that a student helper advised them on which high school to pick and how to apply to it. In general, students reported enjoying having student helpers in the classroom because they "got to make new friends," "got to know what high school would be like before starting," and will know "a lot of people at the high school." For the most part, helpers served as relatable role models who provided younger peers with schoolwork assistance and academic guidance (e.g., recommending which courses to take and what school activities to get involved in). Also, by being vocal about how they benefitted from participating in NtN, helpers encouraged participants to remain engaged in the program. At the same time, the reciprocal nature of these relationships benefitted student helpers, as they reported that working with younger students heightened their sense of responsibility to others.

NtN staff- The previous section on program strategies demonstrated that NtN staff prioritize cultivating strong relationships with their students by devoting time within and outside of program hours to support them with academic and personal matters. This type of guidance provided to students is denominated by Putnam (2015) as "informal mentoring," which,
according to the author, is a crucial element for attaining opportunities for socioeconomic mobility. Strong mentoring is particularly valuable for students living in minority, low-income communities, such as NtN's, given that they tend to possess a limited network of informal advisors and, in turn, this diminishes their professional and academic opportunities (Putnam, 2015). Furthermore, NtN's form of mentorship conforms with what Putnam (2015) defines as effective mentoring: one that "requires serious training, careful quality control, and above all, stability" (p. 259).

Focus group data reveal that all students forged positive relationships with instructors, though the extent of the productivity of these relationships depended on the students' grade level and length of enrollment in NtN. For instance, NtN's oldest cohort, who were about to embark on their senior year of high school at the time the focus group interview was conducted, claimed that they gained many opportunities related to college readiness from their NtN instructors-these included SAT preparation assistance, letters of recommendation for colleges and scholarships, and internship opportunities. While this group claimed that "every teacher has had an impact in our lives," they singled out the relationship with the instructor who had been working with them the longest as the most meaningful: "I think I can speak for everybody when I say that the biggest impact is from Ms. Gonzales. She became like our second mom. She has given us so much advice, a lot of opportunities, and support." Another student added, "and it wasn't just school, we could tell her [Ms. Gonzales] anything and she would be there for you." Note that the value attributed to this long-lasting relationship supports Putnam's (2015) point about the importance of stable mentorship.

Younger groups, who were not engaged in college preparation activities at the time and have had less exposure to NtN instructors, still acknowledged the benefits gained from the bonds built with NtN instructors. According to these students, NtN teachers were "the only
ones" who helped them with summer assignments from school and who provided them with "good school advice." Several students recalled instances in which NtN instructors tutored them outside of program hours or connected them to other community resources, such as the Teen Center. Aside from these tangible forms of help, NtN instructors, who, for the most part, were college students or recent college graduates, served as role models and motived students to strive for high academic achievements and successful careers.

Local professionals- Although the relationships with program instructors gave NtN students' access to resources that would otherwise remain untapped, the bonds forged with local professionals most clearly exemplified the concept of bridging relationships-i.e., relationships that extend students' social networks and facilitate the mobilization of resources (Lin, 1999). The exposure to Rutgers University professors and local professionals, such as Johnson \& Johnson executives, provided students with life-enhancing mentorship and opportunities. For instance, at a focus group session, a student shared how the relationship with one of the program's founders, who is a professor at Rutgers, helped her achieve an academic goal: "I wanted to take Chinese classes. So, she [program founder] talked to some professors and I was able to take the class and get college credits."

At the focus groups sessions, NtN students acknowledged the existence of these bridging relationships, characterized them as "motivating," and anticipated that they would yield positive outcomes: one student, for example, claimed that the program provided them with "connections to the outside world" and felt that this "will make it easier to get a job." Generating these connection and extending students' networks is particularly relevant when considering the context in which NtN participants live: In concert with Portes' work (1998) on the social connections of close-knit immigrant communities, a study on NtN families' social capital found that the majority (70 percent) only had access bonding social capital. Thus, while
most NtN parents possessed sizable networks made-up of people from similar cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic position, their lack of English fluency and limited employment options tied them to the local community and restricted their access to bridging connections and valuable outside information for their children (see Chapter 3 for more details). Considering this, by exposing students to life-enhancing individuals and resources, NtN counterbalances the "public 'bads'" associated with the social isolation of immigrant communities ${ }^{55}$ (Portes, 1998).

## Cognitive development and NtN

The following section presents the results of the quantitative analyses undertaken to assess if NtN's effect on participants' cognitive skills varied with rates of program exposure. Tables 5.2 shows the distribution of the variables in the panel data set employed in the first portion of the analyses, which includes observations for all students who participated in the NtN between

Summer 2010 and Spring 2019.
Table 5.2: Distribution of study variables across student-year observations, 2010-2019

| Variable | n | Mean | SD | Minimum | Maximum |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Demographic and academic profile (\%) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Female | 697 | 54.81 | - | 0 | 1 |
| Hispanic | 697 | 83.50 | - | 0 | 1 |
| Home Language is Spanish | 697 | 64.71 | - | 0 | 1 |
| Enrolled in special education | 697 | 14.90 | - | 0 | 1 |
| Participation and Academic Outcomes [Mean (Std. Dev.)] |  |  |  |  |  |
| Days absent from school per academic year | 659 | 7.02 | 6.42 | 0 | 100 |
| NtN participation rate | 697 | 60.46 | 31.96 | 0 | 100 |
| Final grade math | 648 | 77.97 | 10.76 | 37 | 99 |
| Final grade science | 637 | 81.42 | 9.61 | 38 | 99 |
| Final grade language arts | 649 | 78.05 | 9.44 | 48 | 97 |

[^41]Note that (1) the number of observations fluctuates across variables as a result of unavailable or non-existent academic data and (2) the number of observations per student depend on their cohort's starting date. The data set also includes students who dropped out of the program before Spring 2019 or joined a cohort after its inauguration; in these cases (attrition and/or late start), the participation rate for the inactive years are set to zero.

Tables 5.3-5.5 display the regression results from the four fixed effects models for each academic outcome (final grades in math, science, and language arts). The coefficients and standard errors of interest are shown in boldface.

Table 5.3: Fixed-Effects Regression Results for Final Grade in Math (Observations = 652)

| Regressor | Specification |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Model 1 |  | Model 2 |  | Model 3 |  | Model 4 |  |
| Participation rate | 0.02 | (.01) | 0.02 | (.01) |  |  |  |  |
| Time | -1.06* | (.24) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2010-2011 |  |  | 11.18* | (2.71) | 10.80* | (2.55) | 7.70 | (3.75) |
| 2011-2012 |  |  | 9.16 | (1.91) | 8.45* | (1.79) | 6.14 | (2.83) |
| 2012-2013 |  |  | 3.04 | (1.83) | 2.60 | (1.74) | 3.09 | (2.81) |
| 2013-2014 |  |  | 4.63 | (1.42) | 4.20* | (1.40) | 4.27 | (1.78) |
| 2014-2015 |  |  | 2.65 | (1.30) | 2.24 | (1.29) | 2.96 | (1.83) |
| 2015-2016 |  |  | 1.57 | (1.26) | 1.33 | (1.26) | 1.85 | (1.73) |
| 2016-2017 |  |  | 0.62 | (1.11) | 0.44 | (1.10) | 0.93 | (1.44) |
| 2017-2018 |  |  | -0.36 | (1.24) | -0.44 | (1.24) | -0.52 | (1.83) |
| 2018-2019 |  |  |  |  | (ba |  | (ba |  |
| High attendance (HA) |  |  |  |  | 2.07* | (0.71) | 2.44 | (2.18) |
| HA*2010-2011 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 4.87 | (4.80) |
| HA*2011-2012 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 2.48 | (3.76) |
| HA*2012-2013 |  |  |  |  |  |  | -0.75 | (3.69) |
| HA*2013-2014 |  |  |  |  |  |  | -0.01 | (2.72) |
| HA*2014-2015 |  |  |  |  |  |  | -1.19 | (2.87) |
| HA*2015-2016 |  |  |  |  |  |  | -0.96 | (2.71) |
| HA*2016-2017 |  |  |  |  |  |  | -0.93 | (2.55) |
| HA*2017-2018 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 0.12 | (2.76) |
| HA*2018-2019 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Constant | 83.31* | (1.87) | 74.97* | (0.99) | 75.19* | (0.90) | 74.99* | (1.09) |
| Adjusted R ${ }^{2}$ | 0.58 |  | 0.58 |  | 0.59 |  | 0.58 |  |

Note: Results in parentheses are robust standard errors
Adjusted $R^{2}$ calculated using AREG procedure in Stata, to include estimated group effects
*Significant at $\leq .05$

Table 5.4: Fixed-Effects Regression Results for Final Grade in Science (Observations = 640)

| Regressor | Specification |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Model 1 |  | Model 2 |  | Model 3 |  | Model 4 |  |
| Participation rate | 0.02 | (.01) | 0.02 | (.01) |  |  |  |  |
| Time | -1.32* | (.29) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2010-2011 |  |  | 10.63* | (2.77) | 10.83* | (2.75) | 9.24* | (3.86) |
| 2011-2012 |  |  | $9.44 *$ | (2.46) | 9.66* | (2.44) | 5.27 | (3.40) |
| 2012-2013 |  |  | 9.47* | (1.98) | 9.56* | (2.00) | 11.67* | (2.79) |
| 2013-2014 |  |  | 9.10* | (1.59) | 9.01* | (1.65) | 7.41* | (2.35) |
| 2014-2015 |  |  | 5.29* | (1.44) | 5.30* | (1.46) | 5.04* | (2.21) |
| 2015-2016 |  |  | 5.84* | (1.27) | 5.86* | (1.30) | 5.33* | (1.78) |
| 2016-2017 |  |  | 4.67* | (1.09) | 4.69* | (1.10) | 4.82* | (1.62) |
| 2017-2018 |  |  | 3.10* | (1.21) | 3.14* | (1.22) | 3.27 | (1.82) |
| 2018-2019 |  |  |  |  | (ba |  |  |  |
| High attendance (HA) |  |  |  |  | 0.81 | (0.77) | 0.27 | (2.20) |
| HA*2010-2011 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 2.24 | (4.60) |
| HA*2011-2012 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 5.04 | (4.17) |
| HA*2012-2013 |  |  |  |  |  |  | -2.94 | (3.55) |
| HA*2013-2014 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 3.34 | (2.96) |
| HA*2014-2015 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 0.58 | (3.07) |
| HA*2015-2016 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1.22 | (2.70) |
| HA*2016-2017 |  |  |  |  |  |  | -0.18 | (2.47) |
| HA*2017-2018 |  |  |  |  |  |  | -0.21 | (3.06) |
| HA*2018-2019 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Constant | 88.41* | (2.21) | 75.02* | (1.09) | 75.70* | (0.95) | 75.93* | (1.30) |
| Adjusted R ${ }^{2}$ | 0.47 |  | 0.48 |  | 0.48 |  | 0.47 |  |

Note: Results in parentheses are robust standard errors
Adjusted $\mathrm{R}^{2}$ calculated using AREG procedure in Stata, to include estimated group effects
*Significant at $\leq .05$

Table 5.5: Fixed-Effects Regression Results for Final Grade in Lang. Arts (Observations = 654)

| Regressor | Specification |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |  | Model 4 |  |
| Participation rate | 0.03* (.01) | 0.03* (.01) |  |  |  |  |
| Time | -0.63* (.24) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2010-2011 |  | 4.88* (2.69) | 5.21* | (2.31) | 1.56 | (2.82) |
| 2011-2012 |  | 3.84 (2.75) | 4.22 | (2.43) | -0.24 | (3.42) |
| 2012-2013 |  | 3.62 (2.35) | 3.80 | (2.05) | 2.27 | (2.53) |
| 2013-2014 |  | 3.79* (1.74) | 3.67* | (1.54) | 0.51 | (1.70) |
| 2014-2015 |  | 1.16 (1.54) | 1.20 | (1.37) | -1.54 | (1.71) |
| 2015-2016 |  | 0.23 (1.62) | 0.27 | (1.42) | -1.54 | (1.57) |
| 2016-2017 |  | 1.08 (1.41) | 1.11 | (1.23) | -0.76 | (1.53) |
| 2017-2018 |  | -0.34 (1.40) | -0.27 | (1.21) | -0.92 | (1.57) |
| 2018-2019 |  | (base) |  |  |  |  |
| High attendance (HA) |  |  | 1.23 | (0.65) | -2.89 | (2.52) |
| HA* 2010-2011 |  |  |  |  | 6.98 | (4.18) |
| HA*2011-2012 |  |  |  |  | 7.09 | (4.30) |
| HA*2012-2013 |  |  |  |  | 3.92 | (3.69) |
| HA*2013-2014 |  |  |  |  | 7.01 | (3.09) |
| HA*2014-2015 |  |  |  |  | 5.84 | (2.89) |
| HA*2015-2016 |  |  |  |  | 4.39 | (2.94) |
| HA*2016-2017 |  |  |  |  | 4.47 | (2.52) |
| HA* 2017-2018 |  |  |  |  | 2.05 | (2.93) |
| HA*2018-2019 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Constant | 80.21* (1.64) | 75.04* (1.20) | 76.11* | (1.08) | 77.79* | (1.26) |
| Adjusted $\mathrm{R}^{2}$ | 0.53 | 0.53 | 0.52 |  | 0.53 |  |

Note: Results in parentheses are robust standard errors
Adjusted $R^{2}$ calculated using AREG procedure in Stata, to include estimated group effects
*Significant at $\leq .05$

In general, the results for all three outcomes show a positive, albeit non-significant, relationship between participation rate and academic performance. Specifically, Table 5.3 reports the program's dosage effects on math performance. Note that models 1 and 2 employ a continuous treatment variable, thus, capturing the program effects on grades at a more granular level than in models 3 and 4 . Only model 3 , which uses a binary treatment variable ( 0 if the student's attendance falls below the median and 1 if it falls at or above the median), reveals a statistically significant program effect: levels of program participation at or above the median are estimated
to increase students' final grade in math by 2.07 points (out of 100). Models 1-3 estimate a large, statistically significant, and declining effect of time on grades; these results are consistent with analyses on NtN's impact by Jagannathan and colleagues (2019), which found a negative trajectory of math grade and that participating in NtN attenuated this decline in academic performance. The interaction between high participation levels and time, estimated in model 4, is not statistically significant.

The results presented in Table 5.4 indicate that NtN appears to have a nonsignificant effect on science course performance: none of the coefficients of interest are statistically significant in any of the four models. Moreover, the estimated program effects on science grade are smaller than those estimated for math grade when using a binary treatment variable. Similar to the results presented in Table 5.3, models 1 through 4 estimate a large, statistically significant, and declining effect of time on science grades. Note that out of all the regressions for each of the three outcomes, the four models specified to estimate the program effects on science performance have the lowest explanatory power.

Lastly, Table 5.5 displays the regression results for the program effects on language arts grade. Models 1 and 2 estimate a statistically significant positive effect of program exposure on language arts course performance: based on these results, for every percent increase in attendance rate, language arts grade increased by 0.03 points per year. However, when the models are re-specified to include a binary participation variable and an interaction between time and participation, the program's effect reduces to statistical non-significance.

Following the panel data analysis, two different propensity score methods were used to explore in depth the program effects by length of treatment in AY2018-2019 (the latest year with available data). Table 5.6 provides a summary of the demographic and academic attributes of the NtN student population in AY2018-2019. Note that, analogous to the panel data, the
number of observations in this cross-sectional data set fluctuates across variables as a result of unavailable or non-existent academic data; this occurrence is partly explained by the fact that high school students only need three years of math and science courses to be eligible for graduation.

Table 5.6: NtN student characteristic in AY2018-2019

| VARIABLE |  |
| :---: | :---: |
| Demographic and academic profile (sample size) | Percentage |
| Female ( $\mathrm{n}=83$ ) | 53.01 |
| Hispanic ( $\mathrm{n}=83$ ) | 86.75 |
| Home Language is Spanish ( $\mathrm{n}=83$ ) | 63.86 |
| Attending high school ( $\mathrm{n}=83$ ) | 84.33 |
| Attending middle school ( $\mathrm{n}=83$ ) | 15.66 |
| Receiving free or reduced lunch ( $\mathrm{n}=83$ ) | 90.36 |
| Enrolled in special education ( $\mathrm{n}=83$ ) | 15.66 |
| Enrolled in advanced coursework, Math ( $\mathrm{n}=80$ ) | 27.50 |
| Enrolled in advanced coursework, Science ( $\mathrm{n}=79$ ) | 22.78 |
| Enrolled in advanced coursework, Language Arts ( $\mathrm{n}=81$ ) | 25.93 |
| Attendance and academic outcomes (sample size) | Mean (Std. dev.) |
| Days absent from school in AY2018-19 ( $\mathrm{n}=83$ ) | 9.72 (8.77) |
| NtN participation rate ( $\mathrm{n}=83$ ) | 55.17 (25.61) |
| Final grade math ( $\mathrm{n}=80$ ) | 76.64 (11.52) |
| Final grade science ( $\mathrm{n}=79$ ) | 76.43 (10.93) |
| Final grade language arts ( $\mathrm{n}=81$ ) | 76.89 (11.08) |

The values displayed on Table 5.6 show that in AY2018-19, the majority of NtN's student population attended high school (83.33\%), were of Hispanic origin or descent (86.75\%), and were low-income (as indicated by the $90.36 \%$ of student receiving free or reduced lunch).

Table 5.7: Regression of NtN Attendance on Academic Outcomes, AY2018-19

| Academic Outcome | NtN Attendance $^{\mathbf{i}}$ |  |
| :--- | ---: | :---: |
|  | Coefficient | (Robust Std. Error) |
| Final grade math $(\mathrm{n}=80)$ | 4.19 | $(3.64)$ |
| Final grade science $(\mathrm{n}=79)$ | 0.16 | $(2.66)$ |
| Final grade language arts $(\mathrm{n}=81)$ | -1.57 | $(2.31)$ |

Note: Model controls for race/ethnicity, sex, free or reduced lunch program participation, special education program enrollment, grade level, and NtN group.
'NtN Attendance is 0 if student's participation rate falls below the median (58.5\%) and 1 if student's participation rate falls at or above the median.

Table 5.7 presents the results from the traditional propensity score models. Similar to those reported in the panel data analysis, the results suggest that high levels of program participation (at or above median levels) had a nonsignificant, but positive effect on academic performance in math and science. In contrast, the computed program effects on language arts performance are nonsignificant and negative. Complementing these findings, Table 5.8 shows the results from the dosage analysis, which estimates program effects by level of exposure using a continuous treatment variable- Figures 5.1-5.3 display the results from Table 5.8 pictorially.

Table 5.8: Average program effects by level of exposure, AY2018-19

| Intervention dose as percentage of offered sessions | Average outcome |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Final Grade Math Observations $=80$ |  | Final Grade Science Observations $=79$ |  | Final Grade Lang. Observations = 81 |  |
| 0 | 59.04 | (14.78) | 62.68 | (17.12) | 68.08 | (12.91) |
| 10 | 66.37 | (10.56) | 68.96 | (12.02) | 73.16 | (9.20) |
| 20 | 72.09 | (6.50) | 73.27 | (7.24) | 76.19 | (6.21) |
| 30 | 75.91 | (3.66) | 75.91 | (4.05) | 78.28 | (4.27) |
| 40 | 77.85 | (2.69) | 77.32 | (2.92) | 79.96 | (3.72) |
| 50 | 78.36 | (2.88) | 77.93 | (2.89) | 80.27 | (3.76) |
| 60 | 78.30 | (2.82) | 78.12 | (3.09) | 78.36 | (3.91) |
| 70 | 78.43 | (2.20) | 78.34 | (3.60) | 75.95 | (3.33) |
| 80 | 79.01 | (2.32) | 78.82 | (4.26) | 76.43 | (3.57) |
| 90 | 79.60 | (4.55) | 79.21 | (5.66) | 81.09 | (5.74) |
| 100 | 79.44 | (8.53) | 78.60 | (8.34) | 87.77 | (9.45) |

Note 1: Results in parentheses are bootstrapped standard errors
Note 2: In its first stage, model controls for race/ethnicity, sex, free or reduced lunch program participation, special education program enrollment, grade level, and NtN group.

Figure 5.1: Dose response function for math performance


Figure 5.2: Dose response function for science performance


Figure 5.3: Dose response function for lang. arts performance


The findings from the analyses using generalized propensity score (GPS) techniques reported in Table 5.8 and illustrated in Figures 5.1-5.3, indicate a positive relationship between program exposure and academic performance (see Table B. 1 in Appendix B for more details). For all three outcomes, greater program exposure, on average, increased academic performance; this correlation, however, was not linear. In addition, the wide confidence bounds at low and high treatment levels depicted in Figures 5.1-5.3, which are a product of the limited number of data points available, indicate high uncertainty in the estimation of the program effects.

The dosage analyses on math and science performance suggests that students' grade peak at an exposure of 90 percent. Although program effects slightly decline at the highest possible dosage, they do not return to low exposure levels (0 to 50 percent). Multiple factors could contribute to the detected nonlinear relationships, such as reporting inaccuracies or inconsistencies in program delivery, and this warrants further exploration.

The results from the dosage analysis on language arts performance slightly deviates from the ones on math and science. Based on the data presented in Table 5.8 and Figure 5.3, the relationship between program exposure and language arts performance is nonlinear and fluctuates, peaking at a treatment level of 50 percent and again at 100 percent. As noted by Li \& Fraser (2015), existing methods to study program effects with continuous treatment variables involve a series of arbitrary decisions from the researcher and necessitate further development. Overall, the direction and magnitude of the results obtained from the GPS method on academic performance concur with those obtained from the PSM technique and the panel data analysis.

## Conclusion

The expansion of out-of-school time initiatives over the past three decades has opened the doors to millions of students in the U.S. to participate in enriching programs after school and during the summer. Despite a large body of research evaluating some of these programs, few focus on community-based interventions; thus, this study has sought to contribute to the literature on OST initiatives by examining the implementation strategies and impacts of a community-based program, Nurture thru Nature (NtN), that mainly serves socioeconomically disadvantaged minority youth. Specifically, I draw on OST program research and social capital theory to examine how a program operating in a diverse majority-Hispanic community adapted to the differing needs of its student population and how it affected cognitive and social capital development.

Inspired by the active learning philosophy of Dewey $(1976 ; 1990)$ and grounded in the principles of community-based education, NtN's operational structure integrates the social, cultural, and natural environment that surround it. In addition, program records and staff interviews demonstrate that NtN's staff members understand the cultural and circumstantial diversity within their student population and respond to students' differing needs by
implementing various purposeful, culturally-sensitive practices. These practices are aimed at enhancing program participation, cultivating trusting relationships with students and parents, and providing academic mentorship to fulfill schools' expectations of parental support. Examples include providing transportation services to and from program sites; allowing students to bring their siblings to sessions; keeping older students engaged by hiring them to assist with younger cohorts; establishing strong communication ties with students and parents; hiring community insiders as instructors; keeping instructors working with the same cohort for several years; and holding social gatherings for families.

NtN's organizational structure, particularly its collaboration with locally based organizations and institutions, strengthened the program's capacity to extend students' social networks and facilitate resourceful relationships. A similar finding was reported by Miller's (2011) study on another community-based after-school program serving disadvantaged youth. Through special events and regular day-to-day activities, students forged productive bonds with peers, program staff, and local professionals. During the focus group interviews, students provided concrete examples of the benefits gained from establishing these bonds, such as receiving valuable advice and information on academic opportunities and acquiring careerenhancing resources. By enriching the composition of students' social networks and facilitating the formation of life-enhancing, bridging bonds (Lin, 1999), NtN counterbalances the "public 'bads'" associated with the social isolation of immigrant communities (Portes, 1998).

In terms of NtN's effect on students' cognitive development (measured as math, science, and language arts grades), the results from the quantitative analyses were optimistic but inconclusive: on average, greater program exposure led to higher academic achievement, but the estimates were not significant $\mid$ The detected dosage effects deviated from earlier intention-to-treat analyses on NtN, in that previous experimental analyses found moderate and
significant program effects (Jagannathan et al., 2018; 2019). In congruence with previous works, however, the data trends suggested that academic performance declines as students advance through an increasingly more difficult curriculum. All the methods applied, which included a panel data regression analysis, propensity score matching, and generalized propensity scores, yielded similar results in terms of direction and magnitude. Those obtained from the generalized propensity score technique (i.e., the most appropriate technique to study program effects with continuous treatment variables) stood out in that they indicated that the correlation between program exposure and academic performance was not linear. In the case of math and science performance, the students' performance peaked at an exposure of 90 percent of offered sessions and then slightly dropped. For language arts, grades peaked at an exposure of 50 percent and then again at 100 percent. Multiple factors could explain the detected non-linear relationships, such as reporting inaccuracies or inconsistencies in program delivery. Also, since NtN devotes entire sessions to provide academic assistance and tutoring, it is possible that students who struggle academically attend at higher rates to make use of those services.

Overall, NtN's small-scale operation, its philosophy, and its structure allows for the treatment of low-income Hispanic students as a heterogenous group. The program has identified the various mechanisms shaping their students' educational experiences and implemented various practices to ameliorate some of the disadvantages that the students face in school. This approach supports the premise that shared ethnicity does not manifest in a monolithic schooling experience, and that educational interventions need to increase their efforts to learn about the realities of their students' lives and adopt context-dependent and culturally-sensitive practices. As with most educational interventions, however, NtN's effects are conditioned by several external factors and its capacity to tackle systemic inequalities is limited.

Nonetheless, at a micro-level, NtN provides students with valuable resources to enhance their prospects of social mobility.

Methodological limitations of this study pertain to the study's design and some of its data sources. Although NtN was designed as a classical experiment with random assignment to treatment and control groups, the dosage analysis conducted in this study excludes control students - this threatens the internal validity of the quantitative analyses findings and limits the study's ability to draw causal conclusions. To address these methodological limitations, and to triangulate the findings, the study employs three statistical techniques: traditional propensity score matching, generalized propensity scores, and panel data analysis. Both propensity score methods and the panel data analysis can control for selection biases, but they all have their share of restrictions. On one hand, propensity score methods rely heavily on a large sample size and a rich set of covariates for matching, and the available data set did not meet these criteria. On the other hand, the panel data analysis used a data set with a greater number of observations, but the technique could still suffer from selection bias or threats to internal validity if there were unobserved time-variant factors that affected the outcomes and were omitted from the model.

## CHAPTER 6

## Conclusion

Hispanics constitute the youngest and second-fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, exhibiting a wide diversity of economic conditions, racial identities, group memberships, cultural backgrounds, immigration histories, and adaptation paths. Despite these circumstances, education policy research frequently treats Hispanics as a homogeneous group, which carries many negative consequences. On a broad scale, it obscures the experiences of vulnerable communities and leads to the development of inadequate policies that fail to address the needs of different subgroups. Furthermore, because these studies are often outcome-driven, they ignore micro-level school processes influencing academic outcomes and reinforce negative stereotypes by categorizing the group as underachiever or not academically inclined. This generates a vicious cycle, as it influences how school staff perceive and treat the students and families they work with, which, in turn, shapes student performance.

This dissertation complicates the "underachievement" rhetoric by disaggregating the "Hispanic" category to examine the varying factors shaping the educational experiences of students in New Riviera, NJ through the lenses of the family, the schools, and the community. Understanding the factors affecting the academic trajectories of Hispanic youth is critical, considering the high number of schools districts across the country serving majority-Hispanic student populations (Fry \& Gonzales, 2008, p. 1). In addition, compared to other ethnic/racial groups, Hispanic students are trapped in the most economically- and racially/ethnicallysegregated, underfunded, and overcrowded schools (Noguera, 2009). Thus, to enhance Hispanic students' prospects for social mobility and provide a high-quality education, it is crucial that schools (1) recognize the diverse realities and cultural backgrounds that Hispanic students bring to the schools and (2) respond to their varying needs.

## Summary of findings

A close examination of the academic experiences of Hispanic students in the highpoverty, racially/ethnically-segregated school district of New Riviera, NJ, has revealed that shared ethnicity does not manifest in a monolithic experience. In fact, a host of social, economic, political, and cultural factors affected students' educational trajectories. Despite serving a majority Hispanic student population (90\%, as of AY2018-19), the local district has struggled to recognize this diversity among Hispanic students, and its associated diverse needs; instead, the organization responded to the Latinization of its schools by implementing generic and disjointed policies and practices.

To better understand the in-school and out-of-school factors resulting in divergent educational experiences among Hispanic youth, this dissertation consists of three studies, each focusing on the perspectives of principal stakeholders: families, schools, and a community-based initiative. What follows is a summary of the findings from each study.

Study 1: From the parents' voices: The influence of social and cultural capital in shaping educational trajectories of "Hispanic" youth The first study, presented in Chapter 3, captured significant variations in family-school relationships within the "low-income, Hispanic" group. The analysis of forty semi-structured interviews with parents allowed for the formation of three subgroups based on their distinct levels of school involvement and knowledge about the U.S. educational system. The first subgroup, consisting of fourteen families, exhibited none-to-minimal involvement in the schools and possessed scant knowledge of how U.S. schools functioned. These families displayed an attitude of deep trust and reverence for teachers and schools that precluded them from challenging institutional norms or from openly communicating with school staff. They occasionally showed up at the school, only when invited, to passively absorb feedback from
teachers. In addition, these families generally exercised a parenting approach that granted their children full autonomy to make education-related decisions.

The second subgroup, also consisting of fourteen families, displayed a moderate-to-full participation in school, despite lacking important information on how U.S. schools function. These parents typically applied the educational values and experiences acquired in their home countries as points of reference for approaching and making sense of their children's schooling. The forms of involvement rarely corresponded to the expectations of traditional U.S. schools due to their lack of understanding of how these institutions functioned. For the most part, these families participated in various in-school activities but refrained from showing up "uninvited" and often felt unheard by school personnel. They also relied heavily on word-ofmouth information to make school-related decisions.

The third subgroup, composed of twelve families, actively participated in their children's education, and possessed moderate-to-comprehensive knowledge of the U.S. schooling system. These families embraced mainstream U.S. educational values with respect to parental roles in schools, often feeling like they met schools' expectations and understanding that academic success extended beyond grades. Generally, these families monitored and supervised educational endeavors, pursued learning opportunities for their children outside of school, exercised school choice, and felt empowered to approach teachers and administrative staff.

To discern the factors and processes leading to the above-mentioned variations in family-school relationships, this study examined how families garnered social and cultural capital, and how these forms of capital determined parents' knowledge about schools and their approach to school involvement. Interview data revealed that the factors allowing some parents to forge resourceful relationships and to garner cultural values that are rewarded in schools included: higher rates of full-time employment and exposure to professionals, higher levels of
income, higher levels of education in country of origin, integration to communities outside of the local district, long-term plans to reside in the U.S, immigrating from an urban area (as opposed to rural), and possessing cultural understandings of education that align with U.S. values.

Although several of the factors listed above are interconnected, such as income and employment, each had a direct impact on parental involvement in schooling. For instance, narrative evidence pointed to workplaces serving as a venue from which parents learned about educational opportunities. Through their own employment or the employment of family members, parents attained valuable school-related information and were able to provide their children with life-enhancing connections. In addition, the higher rates of full-time employment contributed to the possession of greater financial resources, which gave parents the flexibility to act on their knowledge about educational opportunities and front the costs of educationalrelated endeavors (e.g., college entrance exams, exam preparation courses, tuition costs). The findings suggest that income variations within the denominated "low-income group" manifest in disparate educational opportunities. Ultimately, however, all participants faced financial obstacles and depended on governmental and/or institutional financial aid to fully support their children's education careers.

Immigration status and long-term plans to reside in the U.S. also impacted parents' approach to education in various phases of the children's academic careers. Lack of legal status impacted the families' network reach, bounding them to New Riviera and to dead-end jobs with limited social capital resources. These families exclusively relied on bonding social capital, only possessing in-group networks composed of other undocumented immigrants, which restricted their access to information about educational opportunities. In addition, families with ambiguous legal status felt uncertain about their future in the U.S and refrained from
developing long-term career plans for their children. Given that lack of documentation affects private transport mobility, financial resources access, work opportunities, higher education financial aid, and many other factors, undocumented families faced a great deal of obstacles to garner social, cultural, and economic capital. This is not to say that all the parents who actively participated in their children's schooling were documented; the difference lay in their access to bridging social capital (i.e., between-group networks), and the valuable resources embedded in these networks, which fueled formulating long-term plans in the U.S., including college as a natural next step for their children.

Ethnic enclave membership also determined parents' access to valuable educationrelated information and opportunities. Families who exclusively established deep social ties to the local community navigated the educational system through a bifocal lens: parents shared their dissatisfaction with the schools with other local families, often drawing comparisons to the schooling system in their countries of origin. The isolation from other communities and the lack of integration of different perspectives led parents to possess a great deal of word-of-mouth misinformation pertaining to school selection, parental rights, and higher education admissions/costs; ultimately, these families made most school-related decisions based on anecdotal information and personal experiences. In contrast, families which bridging social capital, whose social networks reached communities and professionals outside of the enclave, navigated their children's schooling with more accurate information on strategies for academic success.

With respect to cultural capital, families' region of origin and their cultural understanding of education determined the extent to which they possessed values rewarded in the local schools. Though all families possessed rich cultural resources, families migrating from rural areas in Latin America lacked exposure to large-scale educational systems. This limitation
negatively impacted their understanding of the functioning of U.S. schools and their rights in that setting; these parents felt inferior and displayed a profound reverence for educators that limited their participation. Other families, many of whom immigrated from urban areas and were exposed to large-scale educational systems, navigated their children's schooling the same way they would in their home countries. This approach proved, in numerous instances, to be incompatible with schools' expectations: they repeatedly clashed with the schools' staff, disapproved school values and policies, and encountered difficulties resolving school-related issues. In contrast, parents whose cultural understanding of education aligned with U.S. values understood their rights in the school setting and were not afraid to make demands of the schools and contest institutional decisions. In addition to having migrated from large urban areas, these parents had higher levels of education than the other families and may have acquired some of this knowledge and strategies from their own schooling experiences.

Overall, by disaggregating a group of Hispanic parents residing in the same district, this first study illustrated how divergent life circumstances and assimilation paths impact access to economic, social, and cultural resources that directly manifest at the school setting. It also revealed that the structure of the schooling system benefited those families possessing the strategies and the cultural and social resources that resemble those of dominant groups. The schools functioned under the assumption and expectation that parents held the resources necessary to decode the educational system, which explains why parents who adopted a U.S.centric approach, negotiated their role in the schools with greater ease.

Study 2: Latinization of New Riviera Public Schools: Individual and Institutional Responses to Shifting Student Demographics The second study, presented in Chapter 4, examines from an organizational and individual standpoint how the New Riviera School district responded to a rapid influx of Hispanic students. It also explored if the District schools' catered to the needs of specific Hispanic subgroups.

Guided by two different frameworks (organizational habitus and teacher expectations), and combining three data sources (district records and periodicals dating from 1970 to 2019, fifteen semi-structured interviews with current and former district staff, and quantitative data on staffing patterns), the study analyzed the District's organizational structures and leadership, as well as the actions of individual educators.

The first wave of Hispanic students to the District took place in the mid-70s, after the arrival of several Puerto Rican families; by AY2018-19, Hispanic students made up 90 percent of the District's student population. This demographic shift was accompanied by a diversification in terms of: country of origin, socioeconomic status, immigration status, home language, and parental level of education. In practical terms, this occurrence translated to variations in Hispanic students' access to resources, students' availability and predisposition to engage in academic activities outside of school, and parents' ability to get involved in their children's education, amongst others. Teachers and administrators indicated that, as of 2019, the District served numerous students who lacked access to proper nutrition, housing, and learning tools (e.g., internet); students who could not engage in academic activities after-school due to work or household responsibilities; students who feared deportation and/or were anxious about being separated from their parents; students who lived with extended relatives; students whose parents were overworked, overburdened, and unable to help them with school work; and students with interrupted education and substantial exposure to trauma.

As a response to the increase in the Hispanic student population since the 1970s, the District applied a series of curricular modifications. Most of these pertained to English language acquisition and cultural awareness, such as offering a Latino Caribbean studies course or celebrating Hispanic Heritage month. In addition, the District expanded parent involvement activities, hired teachers and administrators of Hispanic origin, and provided professional
development training on culturally-sensitive teaching. These practices were mostly generic as they failed to fulfill the community's demands and to recognize and support the diversity in the needs of Hispanic students. The treatment of Hispanic students as a homogeneous group remained ingrained in the District's organizational structure throughout the years; this phenomenon and its consequences was best described by a long-tenured teacher:

One of the things that I feel that we don't do right, and that is the District as a whole, as well as this school, is that no one ever breaks down where students are coming from. They lump them all together. And there is a big difference. You have to know who is from Puerto Rico, who is from Guatemala, who is from the DR. Because knowing that makes a difference in how you greet them, in how you talk about things, in how you approach their families. But they don't know, they just know that they are either Hispanic, Black, White, Asian, and that's it. They should know the demographics of their schools; it shouldn't be just a few teachers that know. So, until they figure that out, we are not going to do our best for our Hispanic kids.

The District's fragmented structure which allowed each school to respond differently to their students' needs led to significant disparities in the support provided to Hispanic students; moreover, various interviewees acknowledged a lack of cohesiveness in the programs and practices implemented. To alter this trend, there has been a push in the past few years from administrators and teachers towards the implementation of culturally-sensitive practices and programs; some of the most recent initiatives include a dual-language bilingual program, family events planned with parents' work demands in mind, the use of literary materials that are relevant to the students' cultural backgrounds and lives, and the formation of a staff-led group called "courageous voices," which meets regularly to discuss issues pertaining to students' and staff's personal and cultural identity development, social justice, and culturally-sensitive teaching strategies.

An examination of the expectations embedded in the District's organizational structure revealed that a deficit discourse permeated the internal order and social relations within the schools. In addition, the attitudes and dispositions transmitted by school leadership reflected an
organizational habitus that exalted dominant groups' culture. The failure to fully understand the student population, coupled with blaming students' background for low academic achievement, created an environment that fostered apathy and low student expectations. This context set out by the District, marked by low student expectations and teacher demoralization, hindered collective responsibility for student learning — this was evidenced by staff's resistance to form professional collaborations and tensions across academic departments. Additional structural factors that inhibited teachers' power and responsibility over student learning included (1) excluding teachers from decision-making processes and (2) gaps in communication between central office officials, school administrators, and teachers.

The individual-level analysis that examined teachers' and administrators' understanding of the student population and how their expectations affected classroom practices found that the educators who demonstrated having the greatest knowledge about their students' background and who held high expectations did not necessarily share the same ethnic and social background as their students: some were Hispanic (of different nationalities and socioeconomic background as their students), while others were not Hispanic but had ties to Latin Americans and/or New Riviera. This group of educators implemented a series of culturally-sensitive and targeted teaching practices to bolster parental involvement and student academic engagement. Some of these practices included: (1) reaching out to families through different media (e.g., phone, after-school, home visits) and clearly conveying their expectations; (2) strategically pairing students with complementary skill sets; (3) scaffolding ${ }^{56}$; and (4) integrating culturally relevant materials to their lessons to connect with students' background knowledge.

Examining the treatment of Hispanic students at the meso and micro levels revealed that, within a context that failed to implement a cohesive action plan and to promote collective

[^42]responsibility for student learning, individual actors functioned with a certain degree of autonomy that allowed them to engage in culturally responsive teaching. However, while teachers and administrators controlled micro-level interactions, this was not sufficient to contest problematic narratives or unfair/inadequate institutional practices. The tendency to increase demands on teachers while excluding them from decision-making processes hindered their capacity to thoughtfully respond to the changing needs of their students- even if they rejected the deficit-oriented expectations embedded in the District's organizational habitus. It is important to consider that the New Riviera school district operates in a larger context that reinforces the implementation of generic and quick-fix solutions to complex issues, whether it is done by limiting funding or enforcing accountability systems that narrow the curricula. Thus, in the absence of systemic change, the study found that individual actors engaged in efforts to improve the academic experience of underprivileged students.

Study 3: Community-based approach to improving educational trajectories: A case study of the Nurture thru Nature randomized experiment The third study, presented in Chapter 5, concentrated on an after-school and summer program based in New Riviera, titled Nurture thru Nature (NtN). The program, established in 2010, has provided $4^{\text {th }}-12^{\text {th }}$ grade students with academic support in all core course subjects and exposed them to a comprehensive science curriculum involving interactive lessons, hands-on experiments, outdoor activities, and learning excursions. Inspired by the active learning philosophy of Dewey $(1976 ; 1990)$ and grounded in the principles of community-based education, NtN's curriculum integrates community members, the physical neighborhood environment, and local businesses and organizations. NtN's student composition mirrors New Riviera's: in 2018-19, 86.8 percent of NtN's students were of Hispanic origin or descent, and 90.4 percent came from low-income homes (according to the share of students eligible for free or reduced lunch). The program's student demographic composition allowed this study to focus on
how a small-scale, community-based educational initiative perceived and responded to diverse student needs. This work also broadened the scope of previous impact studies on NtN by employing a mixed-method approach to examine the program effects on social capital development and the exposure (i.e., dosage) effects on students' academic performance.

Program records and staff interviews demonstrated that, in addition to integrating the community's social, cultural, and natural environment into its curricula, NtN personnel recognized the cultural and circumstantial diversity within their student population and responded to students' differing needs by implementing various purposeful, culturally-sensitive practices. These practices aimed to make the program, and its intended outcomes, as inclusive and widespread as possible. For instance, NtN staff identified various obstacles precluding students from attending the program regularly, such as parents lacking private transport and/or working long hours, students having to take care of siblings or needing to work after-school, or families moving frequently. As a response, the program adopted a series of practices to bolster program attendance and retention, including: providing transportation services to and from program sites; allowing students to bring along their siblings; and keeping older students engaged, and employed, by hiring them to assist with younger cohorts. Program staff also perceived that NtN parents possessed different understandings of their role in their children's education and that many experienced significant time and resource limitations. In light of this, NtN applied several mechanisms to connect with all participating families and to provide students with extensive academic mentorship; these mechanisms included communicating with parents on a regular basis, hiring community insiders as instructors, holding social gatherings for families, and assisting students with academic and non-academic matters outside of program hours.

NtN's organizational structure, particularly its collaboration with locally based organizations and institutions, strengthened the program's capacity to extend students' social networks and facilitate resourceful relationships. Focus group data indicated that students forged productive bonds with peers, program staff, and local professionals through their participation in special events and regular day-to-day activities. Students acknowledged that forging these bonds allowed them to gain academic support, receive advice and information on educational and work opportunities, and access career-enhancing resources. Moreover, they characterized the bridging relationships with local professionals as "motivating" and anticipated that these would yield additional positive outcomes in the near future. Largely, NtN contributed to counterbalancing the "public 'bads'" associated with the social isolation of immigrant communities (Portes, 1998) by enriching the composition of students' social networks and facilitating the formation of life-enhancing bonds.

An examination of NtN's effect on students' cognitive development (measured as math, science, and language arts grades), yielded optimistic but inconclusive results: on average, greater program exposure led to higher academic achievement, but the estimates were not significant. The detected dosage effects deviated from earlier intention-to-treat analyses on NtN, in that previous experimental analyses found moderate and significant program effects (Jagannathan et al., 2018; 2019). In congruence with previous works, however, the data trends suggested that academic performance declines as students advance through an increasingly more difficult curriculum. All the methods applied, which included a panel data regression analysis, propensity score matching, and generalized propensity scores, yielded similar results in terms of direction and magnitude. Those obtained from the generalized propensity score technique (i.e., the most appropriate technique to study program effects with continuous treatment variables) stood out in that they indicated that the correlation between program
exposure and academic performance was significant but not linear. In the case of math and science performance, the students' performance peaked at an exposure of 90 percent of offered sessions and then slightly dropped. For language arts, grades peaked at an exposure of 50 percent and then again at 100 percent. Multiple factors could explain the detected non-linear relationships, such as reporting inaccuracies or inconsistencies in program delivery. Also, since NtN dedicates full sessions to providing academic assistance and tutoring, it is possible that students who struggled academically attended at higher rates to make use of those services.

Exploring the academic experiences of a sample of students in New Riviera served to triangulate the findings from the first study on parental involvement: the program staff identified various mechanisms shaping their students' educational experiences, many which coincided with those reported by parents. Overall, NtN's philosophy and operational structure allowed for the treatment of low-income Hispanic students as a heterogenous group. The program's small-scale allowed staff to respond to their students' differing needs. As with most educational interventions, the program's impact is conditioned by external factors, and its capacity to solve the deeply rooted societal problem is limited. Nonetheless, at a micro-level, NtN provided students with valuable resources to enhance their prospects of social mobility.

## Main takeaways

This dissertation has demonstrated that the treatment of Hispanics as a homogeneous population disregards differing student needs and diverse educational paths. All students whose schooling trajectories were examined in this project fell under the label of "low-income Hispanic," yet, the findings showed that they endured different obstacles and that their families provided varying levels of academic support. The lumping together of Hispanic students obscures their past experiences, some of which directly affect their schooling (e.g., recently
immigrating from violence-stricken countries and, as a result, having significant gaps in their formal education).

This project has also found that, despite the rhetoric of valuing diversity, schools excluded many Hispanic families and students by disregarding their cultural practices and imposing unrealistic expectations. In addition, it has also unveiled the forms of support and resources received by students who sustained positive experiences navigating the schooling system, viz, having parents who adopted a U.S.-centric approach to school involvement, possessing bridging social capital, and working with educators who engage in culturally responsive teaching.

## Policy recommendations

The studies comprising this dissertation have shed light on the differing needs of students comprising the low-income, Hispanic group, as well as on the efforts made by families, educators, and a community-based initiative to provide students with a quality education. The findings show that schools need to increase their efforts to learn about the realities of their students' lives and adopt context-dependent and culturally-sensitive practices to connect with students and parents. At the same time, this work recognizes that schools do not operate in a vacuum, and that factors affecting Hispanic students' schooling trajectories transcend education policy and reflect larger, structural societal problems. In addition, the schools faced a number of political and economic challenges that inhibited the implementation of reforms. While considering these issues, I propose three context-dependent policies that could enhance the tactics of local institutions.

The first two recommendations focus on increasing the cultural sensitivity of school staff, so that classroom and institutional practices shift to an asset-based discourse and reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds that students bring to the schools. For one, the District could
establish partnerships with community-based organizations to expose new hires to the geographic and cultural settings where children spend time, as well as to the realities and complexities of students' lives. Preliminary evidence on the effectiveness of these type of collaborations suggest that they provide educators with "opportunities to reconceptualize their understanding of children and their cultural, racial, and language-based affiliations" (McDonald et al., 2011, p. 1682). The second recommendation is based on the findings from the dissertation's second study, which suggests that teachers invested in the community developed strong connections with their students. In light of this, the District administrators could adopt schemes to recruit NRPS alumni to return as teachers. Considering that only one out of the seven individuals with hiring powers interviewed acknowledged the importance of hiring community members, the District can start by actively seeking to recruit alumni. In addition, they could offer qualified high school seniors teaching scholarships conditional upon returning to the District upon completing college.

The third recommendation pertains to the capitalization of local resources and community assets. The NRPS district is located in an area that hosts a major research university and the headquarters of a leading pharmaceutical company. Although the District has formed collaborations with these institutions and allowed them to sponsor scholarships, special events, and programs (such as NtN ), for the most part these initiatives are isolated. It would be beneficial for all stakeholders if the District appointed a school-community liaison to systematically coordinate existing initiatives while seeking new opportunities.

## Limitations of the studies

Considering that each study in this dissertation employs a unique set of data sources and methods, they each present their own share of limitations. One methodological limitation of the first study pertains to its sampling technique. The study recruited parents from the NtN
program using purposeful selection to ensure that all interviewees shared the same ethnic and socioeconomic background. However, parents willing to be interviewed had children who actively attended the program, which translates to an over-representation of highly-involved parents. Thus, while the subgroup distributions presented in this study cannot be generalized, the details about each subgroup can help the reader understand the various factors shaping the educational involvement of low-income, Hispanic families. A second limitation of the first study pertains to its design: it does not include the perspective of teachers' and administrators', which is necessary to fully understand the reciprocal nature of family-school relationships.

The main limitation of the second study, the one focusing on the NRPS district, also relates to its design. The study would have benefitted from the use of triangulation (Patton, 1999) to increase its validity and better capture how teachers' understanding of their student population shapes their practices. Particularly, classroom observation would have been of great value in complementing the archival research and semi-structured interviews. In addition, the generalization of findings is limited by a small sample size for the interviews (15) and by the sampling method: if accepting to participate in the interviews reflects an appreciation for the subject matter and confidence in teaching practices, then the findings fail to present a complete and unbiased picture of the perspectives of district staff.

The third study, on the NtN program, is also limited by its design and some of its data sources. Although NtN was designed as a classical experiment with random assignment to treatment and control groups, the dosage analysis conducted in this study excludes control students - this threatens the internal validity of the quantitative analyses findings and limits the study's ability to draw causal conclusions. Moreover, the data set used in the quantitative analyses had a limited number of covariates, which restricted the application of the statistical methods. As a whole, the central limitation of this project pertains to the exclusion of students'
voices. Although the third study incorporates student focus groups, these concentrated on students' perceptions and experiences in NtN, rather than on their experiences navigating the schooling system.

## Suggestions for future research

Education studies should continue to disaggregate the Hispanic category into relevant subgroups and explore variations in students' educational trajectories in other majority-Hispanic districts, such those located in Texas, Arizona, Florida, or California. Considering some of the limitations of this work, future research should incorporate the perspectives of students and include classroom observations. Also, additional research could extend the scope of this study and explore the relationship between different forms of parental engagement among Hispanics and academic outcomes.

To provide greater insight into the complexity of Hispanic immigration and shed light on how variations in adaptation paths shape educational trajectories, future education research should place a greater focus on the experiences of transnational groups, i.e., those with strong social, economic, and political ties to their country of origin and country of residence. Assuming that the profound connection to multiple communities affects how families garner social and cultural capital, transnationalism can have a direct impact on learning and schooling experiences.

Lastly, considering the limited body of research on community-based OST programs, additional research on the implementation and impact of these initiatives would be beneficial. In particular, studies that explore the nature of the collaborations between these programs and local institutions, and how establishing a reciprocal partnership could inform practice in schools.

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## Chapter 3

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## Chapter 6

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## Appendix A: Chapter 4 Tables

Table A.1: Policies, programs, and practices implemented at the school- and district-level to support Hispanic Students and Families, New Riviera, 1970-2020 ${ }^{57}$

|  | Curricular Modifications | Parent outreach and community engagement | Hiring practices and professional development |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1970s | - Bilingual/ESL program <br> - Puerto Rican history course <br> - Celebration of Puerto Rico Discovery Day <br> - Partnerships with Puerto Rican advocacy groups that targeted Hispanic youth | - Bayard School activities <br> - Parent effectiveness training | - Talent-sharing with Perth <br> Amboy School <br> District <br> - Hiring Hispanic teachers and administrators |
| 1980s | - Celebration of Hispanic Culture Month <br> - After-school activities that targeted Hispanic youth (e.g., RIME and Hispanic Culture Club) <br> - ESL summer classes <br> - Evening school for non-English speakers <br> - U.S. citizenship preparation course <br> - "Port-of-Entry" course | - School newsletters in Spanish <br> - Bilingual Parent Advisory Council meetings | - Increase <br> Hispanic representation in school board <br> - Trainings and professional development workshops aimed at increasing school staff's cultural sensitivity |

[^43]| 1990s | - Latino <br> Caribbean studies course <br> - Puerto Rican and MexicanAmerican music course module <br> - Partnerships with Rutgers Latino Cultural Center and Hispanic Engineers of Rutgers | - Parent-Teacher organizations (at some schools) |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| $\begin{aligned} & 2000- \\ & 2020 \end{aligned}$ | - Partnership with <br> "People and <br> Stories" and <br> Rutgers <br> University that <br> targeted <br> Hispanic youth <br> - Dual Language <br> Bilingual <br> Program <br> - Students with <br> Interrupted <br> Formal <br> Education (SIFE) <br> Program <br> - Social-emotional learning program <br> - Expansion of required reading lists to included culturallyrelevant books <br> - Courageous voices group <br> - "Non-western history" included in social studies curricula | - Reducing <br> Communication <br> Barriers Between <br> Home and School program <br> - Spanish translations for all home communications <br> - Rewards program at Redshaw school <br> - Parenting classes at Adult Learning Center <br> - Parent-Teacher organizations (at some schools) <br> - Food and clothing drives <br> - Family breakfasts <br> - Academic-themed events |  |

Table A.2: Student-Teacher Ratio ("STR") and Hispanic Student-Hispanic Teacher Ratio ("Hisp. STR") by School, New Riviera, 1998-2016

|  | High School | Middle School |  | Elementary 1 |  | Elementary 2 |  | Elementary 3 |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  Hisp. <br> STR STR | STR | Hisp. STR | STR | Hisp. STR | STR | Hisp. STR | STR | Hisp. STR |
| 1998-99 | 11:1 44:1 | + | + | 15:1 | 50:1 | 13:1 | 316:1 | 15:1 | 206:1 |
| 1999-00 | * * | + | + | 13:1 | 46:1 | 12:1 | 350:1 | 16:1 | 226:1 |
| 2000-01 | 14:1 50:1 | + | + | 16:1 | 49:1 | 14:1 | 445:1 | 19:1 | 265:1 |
| 2001-02 | 12:1 47:1 | + | + | 13:1 | 33:1 | 11:1 | 64:1 | 15:1 | 99:1 |
| 2002-03 | 13:1 46:1 | + | + | 13:1 | 31:1 | 10:1 | 37:1 | 10:1 | 34:1 |
| 2003-04 | 14:1 55:1 | + | + | 13:1 | 35:1 | 9:1 | 30:1 | 9:1 | 34:1 |
| 2004-05 | 16:1 61:1 | + | + | 12:1 | 31:1 | 8:1 | 35:1 | 9:1 | 43:1 |
| 2005-06 | 15:1 64:1 | + | + | 9:1 | 27:1 | 8:1 | 40:1 | 9:1 | 38:1 |
| 2006-07 | 16:1 62:1 | + | + | 10:1 | 30:1 | 10:1 | 48:1 | 10:1 | 45:1 |
| 2007-08 | 14:1 65:1 | 11:1 | 35:1 | 10:1 | 41:1 | 10:1 | 63:1 | 11:1 | 46:1 |
| 2008-09 | 13:1 76:1 | 11:1 | 41:1 | * | * | * | * | 12:1 | 82:1 |
| 2009-10 | 15:1 90:1 | 11:1 | 38:1 | 12:1 | 47:1 | 12:1 | 98:1 | 12:1 | 83:1 |
| 2010-11 | 15:1 99:1 | 11:1 | 48:1 | 11:1 | 58:1 | 13:1 | 60:1 | 13:1 | 57:1 |
| 2011-12 | 14:1 91:1 | 11:1 | 49:1 | 12:1 | 59:1 | 13:1 | 60:1 | 15:1 | 62:1 |
| 2012-13 | 12:1 74:1 | 12:1 | 52:1 | 11:1 | 41:1 | 13:1 | 48:1 | 14:1 | 51:1 |
| 2013-14 | 11:1 62:1 | 12:2 | 57:1 | 11:1 | 47:1 | 13:1 | 50:1 | 13:1 | 48:1 |
| 2014-15 | 12:1 83:1 | 13:3 | 56:1 | 12:1 | 47:1 | 13:1 | 61:1 | 14:1 | 50:1 |
| 2015-16 | 15:1 87:1 | 17:4 | 67:1 | 14:1 | 52:1 | 17:1 | 60:1 | 15:1 | 64:1 |
| 1998-99 | $\begin{gathered} \text { Elementary } \\ 4 \end{gathered}$ | Elementary 5 |  | $\begin{gathered} \text { Elementary } \\ 6 \end{gathered}$ |  | Elementary 7 |  | $\begin{aligned} & \text { Elementary } \\ & 8 \end{aligned}$ |  |
|  | $\begin{array}{cc}  & \text { Hisp. } \\ \text { STR } & \text { STR } \\ \hline \end{array}$ | STR | Hisp. STR | STR | Hisp. STR | STR | Hisp. STR | STR | Hisp. STR |
|  | 15:1 112:1 | 15:1 61:1 |  | 14:1 32:1 |  |  |  | 12:1 105:1 |  |
| 1999-00 | 13:1 118:1 | 17:1 80:1 |  | 15:1 28:1 |  | $\begin{array}{rr} 15: 1 & 147: 1 \\ * & * \end{array}$ |  | $13: 1 \quad 112: 1$ |  |
| 2000-01 | 17:1 131:1 | 18:1 91:1 |  | 19:1 43:1 |  |  |  | 16:1 143:1 |  |
| 2001-02 | 14:1 106:1 | 13:1 67: |  | 12:1 23:1 |  | $\begin{array}{rr} * & * \\ 13: 1 & 101: 1 \end{array}$ |  | 11:1 100:1 |  |
| 2002-03 | 13:1 76:1 | 12:1 90 |  | 12:1 19:1 |  | $15: 1 \quad 115: 1$ |  | 14:1 87:1 |  |
| 2003-04 | 12:1 65:1 | 10:1 |  | 12:1 21:1 |  | $\begin{array}{rr} 10: 1 & 110: 1 \\ 11: 1 & 73: 1 \end{array}$ |  | $12: 1 \quad 44: 1$ |  |
| 2004-05 | 11:1 68:1 | 9:1 |  | 13:1 |  | $12: 1 \quad 80: 1$ |  | 12:1 42:1 |  |
| 2005-06 | 10:1 62:1 | 10:1 58 |  | 14:1 30:1 |  | $\begin{array}{ll} 12: 1 & 80: 1 \\ 12: 1 & 75: 1 \end{array}$ |  | 12:1 42:1 |  |
| 2006-07 | 11:1 89:1 | 9:1 56:1 |  | 14:1 29:1 |  | $10: 1 \quad 68: 1$ |  | 12:1 45:1 |  |
| 2007-08 | 10:1 93:1 | 10:1 49:1 |  | 13:1 26:1 |  | $11: 1 \quad 53: 1$ |  | 12:1 55:1 |  |
| 2008-09 | 11:1 104:1 | 12:1 93 |  | 11:1 27:1 |  | 10:1 62:1 |  | 12:1 | 94:1 |
| 2009-10 | 11:1 107:1 | 12:1 101:1 |  | 12:1 29:1 |  | 11:1 69 |  | 12:1 67:1 |  |
| 2010-11 | 11:1 81:1 | 13:1 103:1 |  | 12:1 31:1 |  | 11:1 81:1 |  | 13:1 57:1 |  |
| 2011-12 | 10:1 79:1 | 13:1 83:1 |  | 12:1 30:1 |  | 12:1 90:1 |  | 13:1 47:1 |  |
| 2012-13 | 9:1 75:1 | 12:1 108 |  | 12:1 30 |  | 12:1 92 |  | 13:1 53:1 |  |
| 2013-14 | 9:1 65:1 | 12:1 121 |  | 12:1 |  | 11:1 71:1 |  | 13:1 50:1 |  |
| 2014-15 | 12:1 82:1 | 13:1 101:1 |  | 12:1 32:1 |  | 11:1 75:1 |  | 13:1 52:1 |  |
| 2015-16 | 17:1 127:1 | 16:1 126:1 |  | 16:1 38:1 |  | 16:1 | 104:1 | 16:1 72:1 |  |

## Appendix B: Chapter 5 Tables

Table B.1: Dose response function for academic outcomes

|  | Academic Outcomes |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Regressor | Final Grade Math Observations = 80 |  | Final Grade Science Observations $=79$ |  | Final Grade Lang. Arts Observations = 81 |  |
| Participation rate | 0.80* | (0.35) | 0.84* | (0.34) | 0.90* | (0.33) |
| Participation rate ${ }^{2}$ | -0.005 | (0.003) | -0.006* | (0.002) | -0.006* | (0.003) |
| GPS | 194.16 | $(2,301.1)$ | -887.49 | $(2,135.4)$ | -2,563.59 | $(2,170.7)$ |
| GPS ${ }^{2}$ | 2,775 | $(110,429)$ | 29,813 | $(106,269)$ | 184,425 | $(104,278)$ |
| Participation rate*GPS | -13.88 | (14.24) | -8.03 | (13.64) | -34.30* | (13.18) |
| Constant | 58.65* | (11.37) | 64.15* | (11.65) | 71.68* | (10.65) |

Note: Results in parentheses are standard errors
*Significant at $\leq$
. 05

## Appendix C: IRB Research Approval



| Submission Type: |  | Research Protocol/Study | Submission Status: | Approved |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Approval D |  | 4/16/2018 | Expiration Date: | 4/15/2019 |  |
| Pregnancy Code: | No Pregnant Women as Subjects | Pediatric Code: | No Children As Prisoner <br> Subjects <br> Code:  | No Prisoners As Subjects |  |
| Protocol: | delaCalle_NonInterventional Research Protocol (HRP-503b) v.1.2.2018a.docx delaCalle_Interview Protocol.docx | nsent: | delaCalle_ConsentForm.docx.pdf delaCalle_Interview Protocol.docx.pdf delaCalle_Non-Interventional Research Protocol (HRP-503b) v.1.2.2018a.docx.pdf | Other Materials: | delaCalle_ConsentForm.docx |

## * Study Performance Sites:

Paul Robeson Community School- 199 Commercial Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 .
Lord Stirling Elementary School- 101 Redmond St, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 -A.C.
Redshaw Elementary School- 216 Livingston Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 -McKinley
New Community School- 15 Van Dyke Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 -Roosevelt Elementary
Brunswick School- 83 Livingston Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 -Lincoln Elementary School- 66
Schools Bartlett St, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 -Woodrow Wilson Elementary School- 133 Tunison
Rd, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 -New Brunswick Middle School- 1125 Livingston Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 -New Brunswick High School- 1000 Somerset St, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

## ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
2. Continuing Review: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.
3. Expiration of IRB Approval: If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued: All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.
4. Amendments/Modifications/Revisions: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects.
5. Unanticipated Problems: Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46,21 CFR 312,812 ) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: https://orra.rutgers.edu/hspp 6. Protocol Deviations and Violations: Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office ( 45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: https://orra.rutgers.edu/hspp
6. Consent/Assent: The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.

## RuTGERS

Offlce of Research and Regulatory Affair
orra.rutgers.edu/artscl Arts and Sciences IRB
Rutgers, The State Universily of New Jersey 732-235-9806 335 George Street / Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200 New Brunswick, NJ 08901

November 21, 2016

Radha Jagannathan
P.I. Name: Jagannathan

33 Livingston Ave, Suite 302
College Avenue Campus
Dear Radha Jagannathan:
Initial Amendment Continuation Continuation w/ Amend Adverse Event
Protocol Title: "Nurture thru Nature (NtN): Opening Pathways to Science \& Health Careers for New Brunswick Elementary School Children"

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

| Amendment Approval Date: | $11 / 21 / 2016$ | Expiration Date: | 10/6/2017 |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Expedited Category(s): | 5,7 | Approved \# of Subject(s): | 152 |

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- This Approval-The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;
- Reporting-ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- Modifications-Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- Consent Form(s)-Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- Continuing Review-You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;
Additional Notes: $\quad$ Administratively Expedited Amendment Approval per 45 CFR 46.110(b)(2) on 11/21/2016 for Addition of Personnel: Maia Delacalle

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.
Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,
"7nicithe Wophance
Acting For--
Beverly Tepper, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Food Science
IRB Chair, Arts and Sciences Institutional Review Board
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

## Appendix D: NRPS Research Approval



AUBREY A. JOHNSON, EA.D.
VANESSA R. PELLINGTON, Ed.D.
Superimendent of Schools
Director of Axressments, Plowning \& Progrant Evaluation

Independent Research Approval

| Project Title: | Understanding the educational trajectories of New Brunswick's <br> Hispanic youth: The schools' perspective |
| :--- | :--- |
| Researcher/Applicant <br> Name: | Maia de la Calle |
| Phone Number: | $305-766-9861$ |
| Email Address: | maia.delacalle@rutgers.edu |
| Institutional Affiliation: | Rutgers University |

The Independent Research Request Committee (IRRC) has reviewed and recommends the above research project to interview individuals holding different positions within the District ( 15 teachers and 5 administrators.) The interviews will take place at New Brunswick Public Schools or the Bloustein School at Rutgers University and will last approximately 30 to 45

Approval is limited to the specific use of instructional and non-instructional time. Only non-instructional time, beyond school hours, may be used to complete the interviews. The researcher agrees to abide by district procedures, conduct research as proposed in the Independent Research Application and provide an official copy of the findings upon completion of the research study.

## For District Use Only

## Approval Signatures



Dr. Aubrey Johnson
Superintendent of Schools


## Appendix E: Parent Interview Consent Form (English and Spanish)

Dear parent or guardian:
You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by me, Maia de la Calle, a doctoral student in the Bloustein School of Planning and Policy at Rutgers University. The project's title is: "Understanding the educational trajectories of New Riviera's 'Hispanic' youth: The parents' voices." The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships that Hispanic families in New Riviera established with the local schools. I am interested in learning about your family's daily activities, your life in New Riviera, and your experiences navigating your child's/children's education.

Approximately 40 parents will participate in the study. You will select the site of the interview; it could take place at your home, at an NtN site, or at my Rutgers office. An audio recording of your interview will be made to ensure that your responses are captured accurately. You may choose to participate without being audio-recorded.

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your first name and age. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. Digital information, such as interview recordings and interview transcripts, will be stored in a password-protected computer.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. No individual will be identifiable. All study data will be kept for 6 months after the data collection period culminates.
There are no foreseeable risks or benefits from participation in this study.
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. Your decision of whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your child's status at NtN. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable. If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact myself at 33 Livingston Ave., New Riviera, NJ 08901; (305)766-XXXX; maia.delacalle@rutgers.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Radha Jagannathan, at 33 Livingston Ave., New Riviera, NJ 08901; (848)932-2788; radha@rutgers.edu.
If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact an IRB Administrator at the Rutgers University, Arts and Sciences IRB:

Institutional Review Board
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200

335 George Street, $3^{\text {rd }}$ Floor
New Riviera, NJ 08901
Phone: 732-235-2866
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject (Print) $\qquad$

Subject Signature $\qquad$ Date $\qquad$

Principal Investigator Signature $\qquad$ Date $\qquad$

Estimado padre, madre, o tutor:

Usted está cordialmente invitado/a a participar en un estudio de investigación que está llevando a cabo yo, Maia de la Calle, una estudiante de doctorado en la Escuela de Planificación y Políticas Publicas de la Universidad de Rutgers. El título del proyecto es: "Comprendiendo las trayectorias educativas de la juventud "hispana" de New Riviera: las voces de los padres". El propósito de este estudio es explorar las relaciones que las familias hispanas en New Riviera establecieron con las escuelas locales. Me interesararia aprender a cerca de las actividades diarias de su familia, su vida en New Riviera y sus experiencias participando y transitando la escolaridad de su/s hijo/hijos.

Aproximadamente 40 padres participarán en el estudio. Usted seleccionará el sitio de la entrevista; podría realizarse en su casa, en una de las aulas de NtN o en mi oficina en Rutgers. Se realizará una grabación de audio de su entrevista para garantizar que sus respuestas se capturen con precisión. Puede elegir participar sin ser grabado/a.

Esta investigación es confidencial. Confidencial significa que los registros de la investigación incluirán cierta información sobre usted y esta información se almacenará de tal manera que exista algún vínculo entre su identidad y la respuesta en la investigación. Parte de la información recopilada sobre usted incluye su nombre y edad. Tenga en cuenta que mantendremos esta información confidencial al limitar el acceso a los datos de la investigación. Esta se mantendra guardada en un lugar seguro. La información digital, como grabaciones de entrevistas y transcripciones de entrevistas, se almacenará en una computadora protegida con contraseña.

El equipo de investigación y la Junta de Revisión Institucional de la Universidad de Rutgers son las únicas entidades a las que se les permitirá ver los datos, excepto según lo exija la ley. Si se publica un informe de este estudio, o los resultados se presentan en una conferencia profesional, solo se declararán los resultados del grupo. Ningún individuo será identificable. Todos los datos del estudio se conservarán durante 6 meses después de que culmine el período
de recopilación de datos. No hay riesgos o beneficios previsibles de la participación en este estudio.

Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Puede optar por no participar, y puede retirarse en cualquier momento durante los procedimientos del estudio sin ningun tipo de penalización. Su decisión de participar o no en este estudio no afectará el estatus de su hijo en NtN. Además, puede elegir no responder preguntas con las que no se sienta cómodo/a. Ante cualquier duda sobre el estudio o los procedimientos del estudio, puede comunicarse conmigo por teléfono al (305) 766-XXXX; en 33 Livingston Ave., New Riviera, NJ 08901; o por correo electronico a maia.delacalle@rutgers.edu. También puede comunicarse con mi asesora de tesis, Radha Jagannathan, al (848) 932-2788; en 33 Livingston Ave., New Riviera, NJ 08901; o por correo electronico a radha@rutgers.edu.

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante de esta investigación, comuníquese con un administrador de la Junta de Revisión Institucional de la Universidad de Artes y Ciencias de Rutgers:

Junta de Revisión Institucional
Universidad Rutgers, la Universidad Estatal de New Jersey
Dirección: Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200
335 George Street, $3{ }^{\text {rd }}$ Floor
New Riviera, NJ 08901
Teléfono: 732-235-2866
Correo electronico: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Se le entregará una copia de este formulario de consentimiento para sus registros.

Firme a continuación si acepta participar en este estudio de investigación:

Nombre del padre/madre/tutor (impreso) $\qquad$

Firma del padre/madre/tutor
Fecha

## Appendix F: NRPS Staff Interview Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Maia de la Calle, a doctoral student in the Bloustein School of Planning and Policy at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to determine the strategies adopted by the NRPS district to serve this diverse Hispanic student body. I am interested in learning about the experiences of NRPS staff working at the different district's public schools, who may come from varying ethnic and racial backgrounds, and who may hold different levels of work and training experiences.

Approximately 20 subjects will participate in the study, and each individual's participation will last approximately 30 minutes.

The study procedures involve an interview where you will be asked to answer question related to your experience working for the district and working with New Riviera Public School students and families. Some of the elements that I am investigating include:

- What changes in student population has the district's schools faced in the past 40 years?
- What strategies has the district adopted to accommodate its changing student population?
- What policies or programs are currently being implemented at the district-level to accommodate New Riviera's diverse Hispanic population?

You will select the site of the interview; it could take place at your office/workspace or at my Rutgers office. An audio recording of your interview will be made to ensure that your responses are captured accurately. You may choose to participate without being audio-recorded.

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your first name and work site. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. Digital information, such as interview recordings and interview transcripts, will be stored in a password-protected computer. If a report of this study is published, results will be presented in a grouped form. No individual will be identifiable. All study data will be kept for 6 months.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. No individual will be identifiable. All study data will be kept for 6 months after the data collection period culminates.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study.

The benefits of taking part in this study may be the opportunity to reflect upon the efforts made by the district and the education of Hispanic youth. However, it is possible that you may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.
If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact myself at 33 Livingston Ave., New Riviera, NJ 08901; (305)766-XXXX; maia.delacalle@rutgers.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Radha Jagannathan, at 33 Livingston Ave., New Riviera, NJ 08901; (848)932-2788; radha@rutgers.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact an IRB Administrator at the Rutgers University, Arts and Sciences IRB:

Institutional Review Board
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200
335 George Street, $3^{\text {rd }}$ Floor
New Riviera, NJ 08901
Phone: 732-235-2866
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject (Print) $\qquad$

Subject Signature $\qquad$ Date $\qquad$

Principal Investigator Signature $\qquad$ Date $\qquad$

## Appendix G: NtN Staff Interview Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Maia de la Calle, a doctoral student in the Bloustein School of Planning and Policy at Rutgers University. The project's title is: "Understanding the educational trajectories of New Riviera's 'Hispanic' youth: The community's perspective." The purpose of this study is to determine the strategies adopted by the NtN program to serve this diverse student body. I am interested in learning about the experiences of NtN staff who have been working at the program for several years.

The study procedures involve an interview where you will be asked to answer question related to your experience working for NtN and working with New Riviera Public School students and families. You will select the site of the interview; it could take place at your office/workspace or at my Rutgers office. An audio recording of your interview will be made to ensure that your responses are captured accurately. You may choose to participate without being audio-recorded.

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your first name and work site. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. Digital information, such as interview recordings and interview transcripts, will be stored in a password-protected computer. If a report of this study is published, results will be presented in a grouped form. No individual will be identifiable. All study data will be kept for 6 months.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. No individual will be identifiable. All study data will be kept for 6 months after the data collection period culminates.
There are no foreseeable risks or benefits from participation in this study.
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable. If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact myself at 33 Livingston Ave., New Riviera, NJ 08901; (305)766-XXXX; maia.delacalle@rutgers.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Radha Jagannathan, at 33 Livingston Ave., New Riviera, NJ 08901; (848)932-2788; radha@rutgers.edu.
If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact an IRB Administrator at the Rutgers University, Arts and Sciences IRB:

Institutional Review Board
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Phone: 732-235-2866
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject (Print) $\qquad$

Subject Signature $\qquad$ Date $\qquad$

Principal Investigator Signature $\qquad$ Date $\qquad$

## Appendix H: Parent Interview Guide (English and Spanish)

## English version

## PART 1: Demographics

Q1. Name

Q2. Age

Q3. Sex

Q4. Race \& ethnicity

Q5. City and Country of birth
If United States Is Selected as Country, Then Skip to Highest degree or level of school completed (Q5)

Q6. English proficiency level
O Level 0 - No proficiency (oral production limited to occasional, isolated words) (1)
O Level 1 - Elementary proficiency (has a vocabulary to only communicate the most basic of needs) (2)
O Level 2 - Limited working proficiency (can handle with confidence most basic social situations including introductions and casual conversations ) (3)
O Level 3 and 4 - Professional proficiency (able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most conversations ) (4)
O Level 5 - Native or bilingual proficiency (has a speaking proficiency equivalent to that of an educated native speaker) (5)

Q7. Number of years living in the US

Q8. Highest degree or level of school completed

Q9. Employment Status

Q10. Occupation Field

Q11. Household composition
O Single, never married (1)
O Married or domestic partnership (2)
O Widowed (3)
O Divorced (4)
O Separated (5)

## Part 2: Parents' Social Capital

Q12. Number of years living in New Riviera

Q13. How did you select New Riviera as your place of residence in the U.S.?

Q14. In the past year, how often have you engaged in the following activities

|  | A few <br> times a <br> week (1) | Once a <br> week (2) | Once a <br> month (3) | Once a <br> year (4) | Never (5) |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Working on a community project <br> Attending a public meeting to <br> discuss a community- or school- <br> related matter | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Attending a local club or <br> organization | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Attending a political meeting or <br> rally | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Attending religious services <br> Serving as a leader or as a <br> committee member for any <br> organization (outside of work) <br> Volunteering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Having friends or colleagues over <br> to your home | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Going over to friends' or <br> colleagues' homes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Q15. Do you feel safe in your community?
15a. What aspects of your community make you feel safe?
15b. What aspects of your community make you feel safe?

Q16. From 1 to 10, how much would you say that you can trust your neighbors?
16a. What makes you trust your neighbors?
16b. What makes you not trust your neighbors?

Q17. Do you/would you feel comfortable asking your neighbors for help when you need it? 17a. In which instances have you (or would you) ask them for help?

Q18. Approximately, how many family members and friends live in the same community as you?

Q19. Is there any other community that you have close ties with?
19a. Where is it located?
19b. How do you stay in touch?

## Part 3: Students' Social and Cultural Capital

## Q20. Describe your child's typical week day

Q21. What language does your child speak at home?

## If English Is Selected, Then Skip To Q23

Q22. Does your child know how to read and write in Spanish?
Q22a. (if yes) Where did he/she learn it?

Q23. In the past year, how often has your child engaged in the following activities

|  | A few times <br> a week (1) | Once a <br> week (2) | Once a <br> month (3) | Once a <br> year (4) | Never <br> $(5)$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Doing school work <br> Attending extracurricular <br> activities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Doing puzzles, arts and crafts, or <br> playing board games | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Watching TV or movies, playing <br> video games, or using the <br> computer | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Reading or writing stories | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Playing an instrument, singing, or <br> listening to music | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Playing sports, dancing, bicycling, <br> or going for a walk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Playing on a playground or in the <br> park | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Visiting friends and family <br> Taking care of siblings, taking <br> care of a pet, or doing chores <br> Volunteering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Q24. Which activities do you share with your child during the week?
Q25. Which activities do you share with your child during the weekend?
Q26. In the past year, how often have you helped plan or supervise the following activities for your child?

|  | A few times a <br> week (1) | Once a <br> week (2) | Once a month <br> (3) | Once a year <br> (4) | Never (5) |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| School work <br> Social activities ("play dates", <br> birthday parties, other social <br> events) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| After-school activities | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

## Part 4: Parents' relationship with school

Q27. Tell me about the process of selecting the school for your child.

Q28. Do you feel comfortable approaching and talking to your child's teachers? (make sure they use examples)

28a. What makes you feel comfortable?
28b. What makes you feel uncomfortable?

Q29. Do you feel comfortable approaching and talking to your child's school's administrators? (make sure they use examples)

29a. What makes you feel comfortable?
29b. What makes you feel uncomfortable?

Q30. Are you satisfied are you with the education your child is receiving at NRPS?
30a. What aspects of your child's education do you like?
30b. What aspects of your child's education do you not like?

Q31. In the past year, how often have you talked to a teacher or administrator at your child's school?

Q32. What educational aspirations do you have for you child?

Q33. Tell me about your familiarity with the higher education system in the US (admissions, programs, costs).

Q34. Do you have or know of resources that can help you and your child with college applications?

34a. What resources are readily available to you?

## Part 5: Parents' relationship with NtN program

Q35. Do you feel well-informed about on-going NtN activities and events?

Q36. In the past year, how often have you talked in person or on the phone with an NtN staff member?

Q37. Do you feel the NtN program is well organized?

Q38. Tell me some of the feedback and anecdotes about the NtN program that your child has shared with you.

Q39 If NtN offered activities/workshops for parents, would you be interested in attending? If "No", Then Skip To Q42

Q40. What time would work best for you?

Q41. From the following topics, tells me the ones that you would be interested in learning
O English literacy
O Starting and managing a small business
O Information about healthcare coverage and enrollment
O Information about the college admission process for your child/children
O Other $\qquad$

## Part 6: Parents' expectations from NtN program

Q42. When your child began attending NtN, what were your expectations from the program?

Q43. Do you feel that your child likes to participate in the program? (make sure they use examples)

Q44. Would you recommend the program to family and friends?
44a. What would you tell them about it?

Q45. If your child was not enrolled in the NtN program, what would she/he be doing afterschool?

45a. How about during the summer?

Q46. What program changes would you recommend?

## Part 7: Parents' perceived impacts from NtN program

Q47. What changes have you perceived (if any) in your child's behaviors and academic inclinations, resulting from her/his participation in the NtN program?

47a. Has it increased his/her interest in science? math? reading?

Q48. Do you feel that your child's grades have improved with her/his participation in the NtN program?

Q49. Do you feel that your child has made new friends from participating in the program?

Q50. Did you meet more parents who live in the same community as a result of your child's participation in the NtN program?

50a. (If yes) Approximately, how many?

Q51. Do you feel closer to the community, result of your child's participation in the NtN program?

Q51a. Which specific events made you feel closer to this community?

Spanish version
PARTE 1: Información demográfica
Q1. Primer nombre

Q2. Edad

Q3. Sexo

Q4. Raza y etnicidad

Q5. Ciudad y país de nacimiento
Si responde "Estados Unidos" como país, pasar a la pregunta Q8.

Q6. Nivel de dominio del inglés
O Nivel 0-Cero dominio (producción oral limitada a palabras ocasionales y aisladas) (1)
O Nivel 1 - Competencia elemental (tiene un vocabulario para comunicar solamente las necesidades más básicas) (2)
O Nivel 2-Competencia de trabajo limitada (puede manejar con confianza la mayoría de las situaciones sociales básicas, incluyendo conversaciones casuales) (3)
O Niveles 3 y 4 -Competencia profesional (capaz de hablar el idioma con suficiente precisión estructural y vocabulario para participar efectivamente en la mayoría de las conversaciones) (4)

O Nivel 5 - Competencia nativa o bilingüe (tiene una competencia de habla equivalente a la de un hablante nativo educado) (5)

Q7. ¿Cuántos años Ileva viviendo en los Estados Unidos?

Q8. ¿Cuál es el grado más alto que ha completado en la escuela?

Q9. Estado de Empleo

Q10. Campo de ocupación

Q11. Estado civil
O Soltero/a (1)

- Casado/a o conviviendo (2)

O Enviudado /a (3)
O Divorciado/a(4)
O Separado/a (5)

## Parte 2

Q12. ¿Cuántos años lleva viviendo en New Riviera?

Q13. ¿Qué lo/a llevó a elegir a New Riviera como ciudad de residencia?

Q14. En el último año, ¿con qué frecuencia ha participado en las siguientes actividades?

|  | Varias veces <br> por semana <br> $(1)$ | Una vez a la <br> semana (2) | Una vez al <br> mes (3) | Una vez al <br> año (4) | Nunca <br> $(5)$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Trabajar en un proyecto <br> comunitario | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asistir a una reunión pública <br> para discutir un asunto <br> relacionado con la comunidad o <br> la escuela | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asistir a un club u organización <br> local | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asistir a una reunión o <br> manifestación política | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asistir a servicios religiosos <br> Ser líder o miembro de un <br> comité para cualquier | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| organización (fuera del trabajo) <br> Servicio voluntario | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Invitar amigos o colegas a su <br> casa | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ir a la casa de amigos o colegas | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Q15. ¿Se siente seguro/a en su comunidad?
15a. ¿Qué aspectos de su comunidad lo/a hacen sentir seguro/a?
15b. ¿Qué aspectos de su comunidad lo/a hacen sentir inseguro/a?

Q16. Del 1 al 10 ( 1 siendo el más bajo y 10 lo más alto), ¿Cuánto confía en sus vecinos?
16a. ¿Qué le da confianza en sus vecinos?
16b. ¿Qué le da desconfianza en sus vecinos?

Q17. ¿Si fuese necesario, se sentiría cómodo/a pidiendo ayuda a sus vecinos?
17a. ¿En qué circunstancias le pediría o le ha pedido ayuda?

Q18. Aproximadamente, ¿cuántos familiares y amigos viven en la misma comunidad que usted?

Q19. ¿Hay otras comunidades con las que usted tiene vínculos estrechos?
19a. ¿Dónde están ubicadas?
19b. ¿Cómo se mantiene en contacto con esas comunidades?

## Parte 3

Q20. Describa el típico día de semana de su hijo/a

Q21. ¿En qué idioma habla su hijo/a en la casa?
Si responde "Ingles" como idioma, pasar a la pregunta Q23.

Q22. ¿Su hijo/a puede hablar con fluidez, leer, y escribir en [idioma]?

Q23. En el último año, ¿con qué frecuencia ha participado su hijo/a en las siguientes

|  | Varias veces por semana <br> (1) | Una vez a la semana (2) | Una vez al mes | Una vez al año | Nunca <br> (5) |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Hacer tareas de la escuela | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ |
| Asistir a actividades extracurriculares | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ |
| Hacer rompecabezas, artes y manualidades, o jugar juegos de mesa | O | O | O | O | $\bigcirc$ |
| Ver televisión o películas, jugar videojuegos o usar la computadora | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | O | O | O |
| Leer o escribir historias/cuentos | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ |
| Tocar un instrumento, cantar o escuchar música | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | O | O | O |
| Practicar deportes, bailar, andar en bicicleta o salir a caminar | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | O | $\bigcirc$ | O |
| Ir a jugar a un parque | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ |
| Visitar amigos y familiares | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ |
| Cuidar a los hermanos, cuidar de una mascota, o hacer tareas del hogar | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | O | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ |
| Servicio voluntario | $\bigcirc$ | 0 | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ | $\bigcirc$ |

actividades?

Q24. ¿Qué actividades compartes con tu hijo/a durante la semana?

Q25. ¿Qué actividades compartes con tu hijo/a durante el fin de semana?

Q26. En el último año, ¿con qué frecuencia ha tenido que planificar o supervisar las siguientes actividades para su hijo/a?

|  | Varias veces <br> por semana <br> $(1)$ | Una vez a la <br> semana (2) | Una vez <br> al mes <br> $(3)$ | Una vez <br> al año (4) | Nunca <br> $(5)$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Tareas de la escuela <br> Actividades sociales (salidas con <br> amigos, fiestas de cumpleaños, otros <br> eventos sociales) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Actividades extracurriculares | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

## Parte 4: Relación con la escuela

Q27. Cuénteme sobre el proceso de selección de la escuela primaria para tu hijo/a

Q28. ¿Se siente cómodo/a acercándose y hablando con el maestro/a de su hijo/a? (asegurarse de que usen ejemplos)

28a. ¿Qué lo hace sentir cómodo/a?
28b. ¿Qué lo hace sentir incómodo/a?

Q29. ¿Se siente cómodo/a acercándose y hablando con el director/a de la escuela de su hijo/a? (asegurarse de que usen ejemplos)

29a. ¿Qué lo hace sentir cómodo/a?
29b. ¿Qué lo hace sentir incómodo/a?

Q30. ¿Está usted satisfecho con la educación que su hijo recibe en NRPS?
30a. ¿Qué aspectos de la educación de su hijo/a le gustan?
30b. ¿Qué aspectos de la educación de su hijo/a no le gustan?

Q31. En el último año, ¿con qué frecuencia ha hablado con un maestro o administrador de la escuela de su hijo/a?

Q32. ¿Qué aspiraciones educativas tiene para su hijo/a?

Q33. Cuénteme brevemente que conoce sobre el sistema de educación universitario (ej. admisión, costos) en los Estados Unidos.

Q34. ¿Tiene o conoce sobre los recursos que pueden ayudarlo/a a usted y a su hijo/a con las solicitudes para la universidad?

34a. ¿Qué recursos están a su alcance?

## Parte 5: Vinculo con NtN

Q35. ¿Se siente bien informado/a sobre las actividades y eventos que transcurren en NtN?

Q36. En el último año, ¿con qué frecuencia ha hablado en persona o por teléfono con un miembro de NtN?

Q37. ¿Sientes que el programa NtN está bien organizado?

Q38. Cuénteme de algunas anécdotas sobre NtN que su hijo/a ha compartido con usted.

Q39. Si NtN ofreciera actividades o talleres para padres, ¿estaría interesado/a en asistir? Si responde "No", pasar a la pregunta Q42.

Q40. ¿Qué horario le quedaría mejor?

Q41. De los siguientes temas, cuales le interesaría aprender en dicho taller:
O Inglés
O Inicio y gestión de una pequeña empresa
O Información sobre la cobertura e inscripción a un seguro medico
O Información sobre el proceso de admisión a la universidad para su(s) hijo(s)
O Otro $\qquad$

## Parte 6: Expectativas de NtN

Q42. ¿Cuándo su hijo/a comenzó a asistir a NtN, cuáles eras sus expectativas del programa?

Q43. ¿Siente que a su hijo/a le gusta participar en el programa? (asegurarse de que usen ejemplos)

Q44. ¿Les recomendaría el programa a familiares y amigos?
44a. ¿Qué les dirías sobre el programa?

Q45. Si su hijo/a no estuviese inscripto en el programa NtN, ¿qué haría después de la escuela? $45 a$. ¿y en el verano?

Q46. ¿Qué cambios recomendaría para el programa?

## Parte 7: Impactos de NtN

Q47. ¿Qué cambios ha percibido (si alguno) en los comportamientos y las inclinaciones académicas de su hijo/a, como resultado de su participación en el programa de NtN?

47a. ¿Ha aumentado su interés por la ciencia? ¿Matemática? ¿Lectura?

Q48. ¿Cree usted que las calificaciones de su hijo han mejorado gracias a su participación en el programa de NtN?

Q49. ¿Siente que su hijo ha hecho nuevos amigos gracias a su participación en el programa de NtN?

Q50. ¿Conoció a más padres que viven en la misma comunidad como resultado de la participación de su hijo/a en el programa NtN?
50. (si sí) Aproximadamente, ¿cuánta gente nueva conoció?

Q51. ¿Se siente más cercano/a a su comunidad como resultado de la participación de su hijo/a en el programa NtN?

51a. (si sí) ¿Qué eventos / actividades le hicieron sentir más cercano/a a la comunidad?

## Appendix I: NRPS Staff Interview Guide

I am interested in learning about your experiences working in the New Riviera Public School district, particularly in learning how the district and its staff serve its majority-Hispanic student population. The interview is designed to take 30-45 minutes, but feel free to take as much time as you need to discuss your experiences. You may also decide to skip a question or stop the interview all together at any time. I will begin by asking a few demographic questions, followed by a set of questions about the nature of your job and training, and conclude by talking about the district's practices and its student body. Do you have any questions before we begin?

## Part I. Demographic information

1. Name
2. Age
3. Sex
4. Race \& ethnicity
5. Highest degree or level of school completed
6. (for teachers only) Years of teaching experience and certification type

Part II. Nature of work
7. How long have you been working for the New Riviera Public School district?
8. If you work with one particular school in the district, which one is it?
9. Can you describe the nature of your job, including job responsibilities?

Part III. District and school
10. During your tenure working in the district, what demographic changes have you observed in the student population, if any?
11. Describe the student population currently served, in terms of racial/ethnic composition and socioeconomic status.

12a. I understand that between the 1980s and 1990s, New Riviera's student population shifted from being predominantly African American to majority Hispanic. To the best of your knowledge, what kind of changes (if any) occurred regarding school policies and practices as a response to this shift?

12b. Has the district adopted any policy or practice that specifically focused on a Hispanic sub-group?
12c. If yes, which policy or practice and for which sub-group?
12d. [for each mentioned policy/practice] What would success in implementation look like?
13. In your opinion, what are some of the challenges the district (or school) faces to serve its ever-growing Hispanic population?
14. What practices are currently being implemented at the district-level or school-level to meet the needs of the student population?
15. In your opinion, what policies or practices would help ensure a high-quality education for all NRPS students?

## (Questions 17-20, for teachers only)

16. What practices do you implement at the classroom-level to meet the needs of the student population?
17. Tell me about the rewards and challenges you have experienced in serving this specific student population.
18. Tell me about your relationship with your students and their families.
19. Tell me about the expectations you have for your students and their families.
20. Tell me about the expectations that you feel that students and their families have of you.

## Appendix J: NtN Staff Interview Guide

I am interested in learning about your experiences working for the NtN program. The interview is designed to take a total of 30 minutes or less, but feel free to take as much time as you need conveying your experiences. You may also decide to skip a question or stop the interview all together at any time. Do you have any question before we being?

1. Number of years working for NtN
2. Describe the nature of your job, including job responsibilities
3. Have you taken on any responsibilities to ensure that all NtN students attend the program? These may or may not part of your official job duties.

3a. If so, which ones?
4. Have you taken on any responsibilities to ensure that all NtN students participate during the program? These may or may not part of your official job duties.

Q4a. If so, which ones?
5. Have you taken on any responsibilities to ensure that all NtN students succeed in school? These may or may not part of your official job duties.

Q5a. If so, which ones?

## Appendix K: NtN Focus Group Questionnaire

1. What made you get involved in the NtN program?
2. What did you learn from the program this last year?
3. Tell us about all the different NtN activities you did this past year:
a. Science Projects - Presentation at your school in Spring 2018
b. Nursing Presentation (Nursing Students)
c. Field Trip to Sterling Hill Mining Museum
d. Field Trip to Aviation Hall of Fame
e. Field Trip to Camelbeach Water Park
4. Did you know what activities were going to go on ahead of time? For example, did you know when you were going to the Sterling Hill Mining Museum? Or when you were going to have a party?
5. Thinking back to the beginning of the last year, are you glad you participated in the NtN program? If so, why? If no, why not?
6. Do you feel that the NtN program has enhanced you/r
a. Spelling?
b. Writing?
c. Math?
d. Getting along with others?
e. Observation?
f. Working in a team?
g. Taking criticism?
h. Eating healthy?
i. Following rules?
7. Has being part of NtN allowed you to meet other people outside of your school?

Whom?
8. Can you tell me of instances in which meeting these individuals has been helpful?
9. What do you usually say about NtN to your parents?
10. If you could change anything about the NtN program, what would you change?
11. What did you like best about NtN ? What did you like least about NtN?


[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ This text uses the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" interchangeably, as is done by a substantial portion of education and immigration literature.

[^1]:    ${ }^{2}$ New Riviera (pseudonym) is one of New Jersey's School Development Authority (SDA) districts, formerly known as "Abbott districts". As a result of the Abbott v. Burke rulings (1985-2017), 31 special-needs districts, including New Riviera, received state subsidies compensating for funding deficiencies in these low-income areas. In 2008, the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA), which applies a weighted student funding formula that accounts for students' needs, replaced the initial Abbott remedies. The SFRA "calculates an 'Adequacy Budget' for each district based on the size and characteristics of the student population", accounting for the share of English language learners, special education students, and students eligible for free or reduced lunch (ELC, 2020, p.1).

[^2]:    ${ }^{3}$ The terms "Hispanic" or "Latino" are infrequently used in Latin American countries (Taylor et al., 2012).

[^3]:    ${ }^{4}$ Education inequality literature generally employs the term "minority" to refer to non-Asian minority groups, particularly Hispanics and Blacks.

[^4]:    ${ }^{5}$ Segregated schools are defined as schools that are 75 to 100 percent Black or Hispanic, low-income students.
    ${ }^{6}$ The most vital educational policy relating to segregation is that of assigning students by geographic catchment area. Based on this ruling, students are assigned to public schools based on their region of residence (Lauen, 2007).

[^5]:    ${ }^{7}$ Fair funding refers to equity in distribution. In other words, funding that makes up resource gaps and also covers for the extra support needed by schools serving low-income, minority populations. According to Rothstein (1993), the "new" money going into education since 1965 has been used to cover expenses related to higher enrollment of special-education students, low-income students, fewer dropouts, transportation, smaller class size (but not small enough to make a difference in achievement), school lunches, and better teacher pay. In light of this, research on the effect of school funding on student achievement has transcended to focus on how education dollars are spent (Cohen et al., 2003, cited in Hill, 2017)

[^6]:    ${ }^{8}$ The measure of teacher quality was constructed from seven different items, including certification status, years of experience, highest-earned degree, and competitiveness of undergraduate/graduate institution.

[^7]:    ${ }^{9}$ Note that these studies generally focus on Black and White teachers and students.

[^8]:    ${ }^{10}$ The terms "class size" and "student-teacher ratio" are often erroneously used interchangeably in academic literature and education reports. According to a 2014 OECD report, the difference between class size and student-teacher ratio is that the former takes into account "the ratio of students to teaching staff, the number of classes or students for which a teacher is responsible, the amount of instruction time compared to the length of teachers' working days, the proportion of time teachers spend teaching, how students are grouped within classes, and team-teaching arrangements" (p. 447). As a result of the different measurements, U.S. elementary schools have an average student-teacher ratio of 15 , while the average class size is 21 students (OECD, 2014).

[^9]:    ${ }^{11}$ Small classes of 13 to 17 students.

[^10]:    ${ }^{12}$ Child Trends, 2015

[^11]:    ${ }^{13}$ The notion of habitus refers to the internalized set of dispositions and taste that structure an individual's actions and understanding of the world (Bourdieu, 1984).

[^12]:    ${ }^{14}$ All interviewees left their home countries at the age of eighteen or older.

[^13]:    ${ }^{15}$ In the past decades, a large body of literature demonstrated that variations in socioeconomic status within the Hispanic group impacts levels of parental involvement in school and academic outcomes (e.g., Altschul, 2012; Arellano and Padilla, 1996)
    ${ }^{16}$ The terms "Hispanic" or "Latino" are infrequently used in Latin American countries (Taylor et al., 2012)

[^14]:    ${ }^{17}$ Social reproduction, as applied in Bourdieu's theory, refers to the reproduction of social inequalities.

[^15]:    ${ }^{18}$ A detailed study by Stanton-Salazar (2001) highlighted the variations in the support networks of lowincome Mexican-origin adolescents that promote schooling success. At the same time, findings generally portrayed incongruence between parental involvement of all Mexican youth and school expectations. ${ }^{19}$ In the past decades, a large body of literature demonstrated that variations in socioeconomic status within the Hispanic group impacts levels of parental involvement in school and academic outcomes (e.g., Altschul, 2012; Arellano and Padilla, 1996).

[^16]:    ${ }^{20}$ According to Valenzuela (1999), the tracking system, which entails separating students in classrooms based on academic achievement and "ability," segregates English language learners (ELLs) from non-ELL students. There are no ELL honors or advanced placement courses offered in schools. Therefore, once ELLs reach fluency to be in non-ELL classrooms, they are moved to regular-track courses-what Venezuela defines as "horizontal mobility".

[^17]:    ${ }^{21}$ The 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010 Decennial Census were used to generate most of this table; therefore, the breakdown by origin mirrors the breakdown used in the Decennial Census.

[^18]:    ${ }^{22}$ Note that in addition to these eleven institutions, the NRPS District operates the Health Sciences Technology High School. I excluded this school from the analysis because it is a special admissions program.
    ${ }^{23}$ As measured by the share of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch.

[^19]:    ${ }^{24}$ The sample was heterogeneous in terms of country of origin, age, and period of entry.
    ${ }^{25}$ There are no students from Lincoln ES and Lincoln Annex
    ${ }^{26}$ Based on participation in free and reduced-price lunch program

[^20]:    ${ }^{27}$ Saturation was operationalized as redundancy in interview themes and comments.

[^21]:    ${ }^{28}$ Assessment of feeling of safety, relationship with neighbors, range and composition of social networks, involvement in local activities (e.g., organizations, community service, political manifestations, religious services) and out-of-area ties.
    ${ }^{29}$ Assessment of educational background, values and traditions, cultural consumption, and accessibility to cultural events.
    ${ }^{30}$ Mainly in relation to planning and supervision of child's activities.
    ${ }^{31}$ The assessment of the students' cultural and social resources included all of the items listed for the parent's assessment, as well as: involvement in extracurricular activities (sports, music, arts, and clubs), academic interests, activities shared with parents and other adults, hobbies and leisure activities.

[^22]:    ${ }^{32}$ Operationalized in this document as individuals possessing low-levels of income and education, and holding blue-collar occupations.

[^23]:    ${ }^{33}$ Based on U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2007) definition of more than 2 person-per-bedroom.

[^24]:    ${ }^{34}$ The cultural understanding results, in part, from immigration from urban regions that expose these parents to other large-scale educational systems.

[^25]:    ${ }^{35}$ This text uses the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" interchangeably, as is done by a substantial portion of the education and immigration literatures.

[^26]:    ${ }^{36}$ In 2013-14, Union City High School attained an $81 \%$ graduation rate, whereas another New Jersey high school with a comparable student population had a graduation rate of $63 \%$ (NJDOE, 2014).

[^27]:    ${ }^{37}$ The notion of habitus refers to the internalized set of dispositions and taste that structure an individual's actions and understanding of the world (Bourdieu, 1984).

[^28]:    ${ }^{38}$ Note that these studies generally focus on Black and White teachers and students.

[^29]:    ${ }^{39}$ From 2,706 (52\%) in academic year (AY) 1998-99 to 8,314 (90\%) in AY 2018-19 (NJ Department of Education, 1998-2019).

[^30]:    ${ }^{40}$ Note that 1980 marked the first time the Decennial Census asked about Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent.

[^31]:    ${ }^{41}$ The 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010 Decennial Census were used to generate most of this table; therefore, the breakdown by origin mirrors the breakdown used in the Decennial Census.

[^32]:    ${ }^{42}$ Note that Lincoln Annex is excluded from this analysis, since it has only been operating since September 2016.

[^33]:    ${ }^{43}$ As measured by the share of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch.
    ${ }^{44}$ Note that in addition to these eleven institutions, the New Riviera School District operates the Health Sciences Technology High School. I excluded this school from the analysis because it is a special admissions program.

[^34]:    ${ }^{45}$ Demographic factors include year of birth, sex, highest attained degree, and race/ethnicity.
    ${ }^{46}$ Job status details include school name, position title, full-time equivalent, contract duration, and salary.
    ${ }^{47}$ Expertise indicators include certification type, preparation route, years teaching in district, years teaching in NJ , and total number of years teaching.

[^35]:    ${ }^{48} \mathrm{I}$ recorded and transcribed all interviews.

[^36]:    ${ }^{49}$ This section focuses on local initiatives, as opposed to federal- and state-mandated programs and policies. Also, note that the list of programs/policies/practices mentioned in this section is, most likely, not exhaustive given that there is no single document that records the start and end date of all district initiatives. However, by using multiple sources of data (library archives, district archives, and staff interviews), I compiled a reasonably comprehensive list.

[^37]:    ${ }^{50}$ Though the individual-level data set used in this study ends in academic year 2015-16, the most recent aggregate-level data from NJDOE indicates that the trends depicted in Figure 4.2 remained somewhat consistent across time: As of 2018-19, the share of Hispanic teachers working for the NRPS declined by 2 percentage points (to 19\%), the share of the share of White non-Hispanic and "Other" non-Hispanic teachers increased by 1 percentage point (to $63 \%$ and $5 \%$, respectively), and the share of Black nonHispanic teachers remained steady at 13\% (NJ Department of Education, 2019b).
    ${ }^{51}$ Note that demand for bilingual education teachers, who must speak Spanish and are usually of Hispanic origin, affect these ratios. In general, schools that offer bilingual education have more Hispanic teachers.

[^38]:    ${ }^{52}$ Four teacher and three administrators. Note that all of the administrators began their careers in the district as teachers.

[^39]:    ${ }^{53}$ As of AY2018-19

[^40]:    ${ }^{54}$ At the end of every academic year, each NtN cohort participates in focus groups sessions. At the sessions, the students discuss (1) what they have learned during that academic year at the program, (2) their satisfaction with specific subjects, activities, program staff, and events, and (3) the perceived advantages and disadvantages of attending the program.

[^41]:    ${ }^{55}$ Note that although this study does not assess social capital development at an individual level and link it to school performance, it is important to consider the possibility that by virtue of expanding students' social networks, NtN could also have an indirect effect on short-term academic outcomes (e.g., grades).

[^42]:    ${ }^{56}$ Tailored instruction to support the needs of all students.

[^43]:    ${ }^{57}$ Policy/program/practice categorized by when it was initially implemented.

