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FACTORS THAT AFFECT AFRICAN-AMERICAN
STUDENTS' PERSISTENCE IN A SPANISH IMMERSION PROGRAM

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By

Dawn CheNeen Offutt

Lexington, KY

Director: Dr. Elinor L. Brown, Professor of Education

Lexington, KY

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

FACTORS THAT AFFECT AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS' PERSISTENCE IN A SPANISH IMMERSION PROGRAM

The number of African-American students studying a foreign language has continually persisted to be low (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009), thus eliminating them from the benefits gained from the study of foreign language. This study explores the experiences of African-American students in a partial Spanish Immersion Program (SIP) in Central Kentucky from their parents' perspectives. Data were collected via a survey and a focus group. Findings revealed that data gleaned from the focus group corroborated responses from the survey. Moreover, themes from content analysis of the qualitative data arose as to why parents chose to continue or discontinue their child(ren) in the SIP including varying levels of academic achievement, social integration in the program and the perceived lack of cultural responsiveness from school staff. The researcher's initial intent was to use Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure to discuss how his model could transfer to this K-12 partial immersion setting and show how parallels could be drawn. Results from data analysis led the researcher to develop her own Parent Perception Continuation Model (PPCM) as it was determined that in the K-12 partial immersion setting, it was not a question of student persistence, but rather the parents' decision about student continuation. Subsequently, the PPCM discusses the process that parents use to make the decision as to whether their child(ren) will continue in the SIP once enrolled which includes a discussion about reasons for enrolling, completion goals, student program experiences, integration and outcomes. Findings from the study can be used by school districts and administration for planning and policy making when attempting to capitalize on effective academic and social practices that influence whether a student continues in a partial immersion program through his/her high school graduation. In addition, K-12 systems can also use these findings to address the concerns raised by the parents of African-American students who discontinued the program in an effort to increase program graduation rates among this demographic.

KEYWORDS: African-American, foreign language, immersion, parent perceptions, attrition, Spanish

Dawn CheNeen Offutt

11/28/2017
Date

FACTORS THAT AFFECT AFRICAN-AMERICAN
STUDENTS' PERSISTENCE IN A SPANISH IMMERSION PROGRAM

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DEDICATION

To Donovan: My reason, my motivation, my smile...the best thing I ever did.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background of the Problem

In January of 2017, the Office of Postsecondary Education, housed in the United States Department of Education, developed a presentation on international and foreign language education. The presentation referenced statistics about the state of language in the United States and posed corresponding questions. For instance, it stated there are seven billion people in the world and 75% of those people speak a language other than English and there are 320 million people in the United States and only 10% of them speak a language other than English (International and Foreign Language Education, 2017, slide 2). In addition, it stated in the United States one in five jobs is connected to international trade and 95% of the world's customers are located outside of the United States (International and Foreign Language Education, 2017, slide 6). Finally, it stated that in 2006 the minority student population was 43% which was a 35% increase from the previous decade (International and Foreign Language Education, 2017, slide 5). With the aforementioned statistics in mind, the following questions arose: If a matter of national security occurred, would the United States be equipped with the appropriate knowledge of language, cultures and religions of other countries? Are college graduates adequately prepared to conduct business on a global stage if they do not have the foreign language skills to accompany their degrees? Can teachers, social services workers and medical professionals effectively meet the needs of the clients if they cannot communicate with them? (International and Foreign Language Education, 2017, slides 4 - 6).

Moreover, American society is not becoming a culturally pluralistic one, but is rather the definition of it. According to the 2010 United States Census, of the reporting populations, 12.6% were African American, 4.8% were Asian, and 16.3% were Hispanic or Latino. These numbers have increased from the previous decade by 12.3% and a staggering 43% and 43% respectively (Humes, Jones & Ramirez, 2011) (See Table 1.1). In contrast, White Americans account for 72.4% of the population. This is a decrease of 2.7% from the previous decade. Not only are the ethnic populations becoming more diverse, but the languages that the reporting populations speak in their homes are as well (See Table 1.2). From 1980 to 2010, the percentage of Americans reporting that they spoke English at home has only increased by 22.7%. However, the percentage of languages, such as Spanish, Chinese and Russian, spoken at home is growing at an astounding rate, with Spanish being the most spoken non-English language in the United States (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013).

Table 1.1

Population by Race for the United States: 2000 and 2010

| Population by Race | 2000 | | 2010 | | Change |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------|
| | Number | % of Total Population | Number | % of Total Population | Percent |
| Total Population | 281,421,906 | 100.0 | 308,745,538 | 100.00 | 9.7 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 35,305,818 | 12.5 | 50,477,594 | 16.3 | 43.0 |
| White | 211,460,626 | 75.1 | 223,553,265 | 72.4 | 5.7 |
| Black/African American | 34,658,190 | 12.3 | 38,929,319 | 12.6 | 12.3 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 2,475,956 | 0.9 | 2,932,248 | 0.9 | 18.4 |
| Asian | 10,242,998 | 3.6 | 14,674,252 | 4.8 | 43.3 |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 398,835 | 0.1 | 540,013 | 0.2 | 35.4 |
| Some Other Race | 15,359,073 | 5.5 | 19,107,368 | 6.2 | 24.4 |

Note. Data for Population by Race for the United States from Humes, Jones and Ramirez (2011)

Table 1.2

Top Languages Other than English Spoken in 1980 and Changes in Relative Rank, 1990-2010

| | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Spoke a language other than English | 23,060,040 | 31,844,979 | 46,951,595 | 59,542,596 |
| Spanish / Spanish Creole | 11,116,194 | 17,345,064 | 28,101,052 | 36,995,602 |
| Chinese | 630,806 | 1,319,462 | 2,022,143 | 2,808,692 |
| French | 1,550,751 | 1,930,404 | 2,097,206 | 2,069,352 |
| Tagalog | 474,150 | 843,251 | 1,224,241 | 1,573,720 |
| Vietnamese | 197,588 | 507,069 | 1,009,627 | 1,381,488 |
| Korean | 266,280 | 626,478 | 894,063 | 1,137,325 |
| German | 1,586,593 | 1,547,987 | 1,383,442 | 1,067,651 |
| Russian | 173,226 | 241,798 | 706,242 | 854,955 |
| Italian | 1,618,344 | 1,308,648 | 1,008,370 | 725,223 |
| Portuguese | 351,875 | 430,610 | 564,630 | 688,326 |
| Polish | 820,647 | 723,483 | 667,414 | 608,333 |
| Japanese | 336,318 | 427,657 | 477,997 | 443,497 |
| Persian | 106,992 | 201,865 | 312,085 | 381,408 |
| Greek | 401,443 | 388,260 | 365,436 | 307,178 |
| Serbo-Croatian | 150,255 | 142,078 | 233,865 | 284,077 |
| Armenian | 100,634 | 149,694 | 202,708 | 240,402 |
| Yiddish | 315,953 | 213,064 | 178,945 | 154,763 |

Note. Data retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/045/508.php>.

A society that encourages its ethnic groups to maintain and celebrate their individual cultures and appreciates them is considered to be pluralistic (Bennett, 2010). As previously stated, people of diverse ethnic and language backgrounds fill American society. They live in areas ranging from the most populated cities to the most rural ones. As a result, businesses, schools, medical institutions and industry are searching for people who are able to communicate in more than one language because they are now addressing the needs of a multilingual society within a global community (Committee for Economic Development, 2006; Butler, 2011, Gunn, Tobyne, Banks, Sargent, Lenz & Wood, 2017). Technology has also allowed people around the world to be connected in ways that they

never have before. It allows for communication with cultures around the world and the minimization of communication boundaries that once existed. As these borders are erased, the importance of proficiency in more than one language becomes crucial. Moreover, many American companies and corporations are either foreign owned or have facilities located abroad and consequently, numerous people lose employment opportunities and companies lose business because individuals cannot conduct business in another language (Butler, 2011; Committee for Economic Development, 2006). Therefore, second language instruction and acquisition are vital to the nation's progress and growth.

There are three primary benefits of acquiring competency in another language. The first benefit of learning a second language is academic. Research has shown a positive correlation between students who have studied a second language and their academic achievement (Lightbown, 2007; Caldas & Boudreaux, 1999). First, students who study a second language tend to have a better understanding of the structure of the English language. Learning the syntactical, morphological, and phonological rules of another language furthers one's understanding of one's native language (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2007). Second, numerous studies have shown that students who study a second language outperform students who do not in core content classes and on the core content sections of standardized tests. More specifically, students of color who study a second language tend to academically outperform both their counterparts and their non-White counterparts (Gunn, Tobbyne, Banks, Sargent, Lenz & Wood, 2017; Lightbown, 2007). Data have also shown comparable results about students from economically disadvantaged homes. In addition, the lack of studying a second language can create

academic barriers for students. For example, students who do not enroll in foreign language in high school are also faced with a barrier of access into competitive colleges (Grove, 2017).

The second benefit of knowing a second language is the economic effect it can have on an individual. As previously stated, knowing a second language can also improve employment prospects. People who can speak more than one language appear more marketable when searching for employment. However, not only does this skill enhance one's marketability, it also opens up avenues to jobs that a person may not have previously considered because they were not necessarily qualified to do them (Fortune, 2012). In addition, learning another language allows people to not only learn how to communicate in another language, but also affords people the opportunity to learn about other cultures. Students who learn another language have an increased awareness about cultures other than their own. This promotes a respect for other people, empathy towards other cultures, and allows students to realize how many variations exist amongst cultures. The earlier the exposure occurs in a student's life, the more of an opportunity s/he will have to foster an appreciation of different people. Curtain and Dahlberg (2007, p. 5) state "In an age of global interdependence and an increasingly multicultural and multiethnic society, early foreign language study gives children unique insight into other cultures and builds their cultural competency skills in a way that no other discipline is able to do."

The third benefit is societal, i.e., for the betterment of the country. The United States lags behind other countries when it comes to efforts in increasing foreign language study (Gunn, Tobbyne, Banks, Sargent, Lenz & Wood, 2017). Other countries have taken the initiative to promote efforts to increase foreign language study among primary and

secondary school students. For example, in 2002, the Presidency Conclusions report from the Barcelona European Council recommended that basic mastery skills for students be improved by “teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age” in addition to their mother language and that by 2003, a linguistic indicator be created to measure the establishment of a linguistic competence in these skills (Unspecified, 2002). Varying degrees of implementation of this recommendation have taken shape throughout Europe and have led to a new social agenda for the European Council. The focus of this social agenda, adopted in 2008, was to address how opportunities, access and solidarity were managed as the European Union changes in an increasingly global society (Communication from the Commission, 2008). Building upon its 2005 framework for multilingualism, which “reaffirmed the value of linguistic diversity” (Communication from the Commission, 2008, p. 2), the Commission’s objectives in promoting multilingualism for the European Union are: 1) everyone has the opportunity to communicate appropriately in order to make the most of the opportunities offered by the modern and innovative European Union; 2) everyone has access to appropriate language training or to other means of facilitating communication so that there is no undue linguistic obstacle to living, working, or communicating in the European Union; and 3) those who may not be able to learn other languages should be provided with appropriate means of communication, allowing them access to the multilingual environment.

In Europe, linguistic diversity exists due to its various countries and that the European Union seeks to promote solidarity and multilingualism. While this structure is different than that in the United States, there is still a need for valuing linguistic diversity and multilingualism. The more Americans study a second language, the better the

resources are for increasing national security, as well as the more capacity American business and industry has to compete in the global economy. According to the National Research Council (2007, p. 1), the overarching lack of knowledge of language and cultures other than American poses imminent threats to both the nation's security and economy. The Council (2007, p. 1) posited that "It would be shortsighted, however, to limit national attention to the needs of government alone. Language skills and cultural expertise are also urgently needed to address economic challenges and the strength of American businesses in an increasingly global marketplace." In addition, in reference to the benefits of learning a second language, the Commission on Language Learning found a need for more United States citizens to speak foreign languages to increase the chances for success in business and international relations as well as to address such needs as legal and social services in a diverse society (Gunn, Tobyne, Banks, Sargent, Lenz & Wood, 2017).

Another societal benefit of learning a second language is that it increases America's competitiveness in this global economy (Gunn, Tobyne, Banks, Sargent, Lenz & Wood, 2017). Often when Americans hear the term "global", they think that it refers to circumstances outside of the country. The term "globalization" refers to "the acceleration and intensification of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations" (Rothenberg, 2003, p. 4). Moreover, globalization can be considered as "the weakening of the physical boundaries surrounding the nation or states, which affects aspects of human life such as culture, social interaction, economy, politics and many other aspects" (The definition of Globalization Essay, November 2015, p. 2). Subsequently, Americans who work in

fields that require interaction with people abroad must be equipped with the knowledge of those languages, cultures, and customs in order to do the most effective job possible (Gunn, Tobyne, Banks, Sargent, Lenz & Wood, 2017). As a result, globalization has “led to unprecedented interest in expanding foreign language instruction in U.S. schools, particularly at grades where traditionally it has not been an option” (Met, 2008, p. 35) and being a global citizen necessitates having effective interactions across both language and cultural borders (Met, 2008).

Context of the Problem

Whether Americans are adequately prepared to enter a global workforce is questionable. The Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development (2006, p. 5) posited that “globalization is driving the demand for a U.S. workforce that possesses the knowledge of other countries and cultures and is competent in languages other than English.” In the same statement, the authors cited how inadequately prepared Americans were to meet this challenge. Watterson (2011, p. 2) questioned whether “America is simply a culturally obtuse nation built on the idea that immigrants must assimilate to participate.” The current United States’ practices regarding business, trade, and the economy attests to the validity of learning about and gaining an appreciation of other cultures (Committee for Economic Development, 2006; Gunn, Tobyne, Banks, Sargent, Lenz & Wood, 2017). Similar to the “melting pot” versus “salad bowl” theories when referring to culture, the United States would have a greater benefit by embracing diversity as opposed to erasing it. In addition, embracing diversity guards against the possibility of cultural backlash.

Despite the myriad of reasons as to why people can benefit from the acquisition of another language, some Americans seem to still question the need to learn one. This is apparent when reviewing the small numbers of individuals taking world language courses in K-12 (See Table 1.3) and those receiving degrees in foreign language. But even more disconcerting is that of these students taking a foreign language in K-12 or receiving a degree, the number of those who are African American only constitutes a small percentage (Watterson, 2011). While the percentage of African Americans enrolled in foreign language courses has increased in the past decade, the number who receive degrees is still relatively small (See Table 1.4). In addition, only 3% of foreign language teachers are black making it the subject least likely to be taught by African Americans (Morris, 2014).

Table 1.3

Foreign Language Enrollment

| Year | Foreign Language Enrollment | Overall Student Enrollment | Percentage of Students Enrolled in Foreign Languages |
|---------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| 2004-05 | 8,638,990 | 47,983,788 | 18.0 |
| 2007-08 | 8,907,201 | 48,112,069 | 18.5 |

Note. Data retrieved from <http://www.jbhe.com/images/issue52/degree-attainments3.gif>

Table 1.4

Foreign Language (FL) Degrees Conferred in 2014 and 2015

| All Bachelor's Degrees Awarded | 2014 | | 2015 | | FL Bachelor's Degrees Awarded | | % of All Degrees | | % of FL Degrees | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|--------|-------------------------------|------|------------------|------|-----------------|------|--|
| | 2014 | 2015 | 2014 | 2015 | 2014 | 2015 | 2014 | 2015 | 2014 | 2015 | |
| Total | 1,870,150 | 1,894,934 | Total | 20,332 | 19,493 | 1.09 | 1.03 | | | | |
| Males | 801,905 | 812,669 | Black Males | 249 | 231 | | | 1.22 | 1.19 | | |
| Females | | | Black Females | 661 | 676 | | | 3.25 | 3.47 | | |

Note. Data for Foreign Language degrees conferred in 2014 and 2015 from Snyder and Dillow (2015)

Statement of the Problem

Historically, the enrollment of African-American students in foreign language classrooms has been low (Glynn, 2012). Therefore, the lack of foreign language knowledge proves to be even more crucial for African-American students. Since knowledge of a foreign language is not a requirement for high school graduation in all states, but tends to be a requirement for admission into many colleges, African-American students who have not studied a foreign language are at a disadvantage and ultimately expendable when being selected by colleges or potential employers (The national K-12 foreign language enrollment survey report, 2017; Grove, 2017). In addition, African Americans tend to fall behind their White counterparts when it comes to foreign language study. Data retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2009 revealed that African-American students earned 1.9 credits in foreign language. While this is an increase from the 1.3 credits earned in 1990, it still is the second fewest credits earned by an ethnic group with the fewest being earned by American Indians/Alaska Natives. In addition, more data retrieved from NCES in 2009 revealed that of the students who studied a foreign language, the overall grade point average for African Americans was 2.53. This was an increase from the 2.30 grade point average in 1990, but still the lowest grade point average for all race/ethnic groups studied. Moreover, disaggregated trend data reported from NCES in this same year showed that among high school graduates, African Americans students have the lowest percentage of foreign language course completion after Year 3 (See Table 1.5). These data indicate that not as many African-American students as White students pursue foreign language study, and of those who pursue foreign language study, they are not performing as well as their White

counterparts. As a result, African-American students are limiting their professional prospects in this competitive, global, multilingual job market. Therefore, if the benefits of studying a second language are as numerous and impactful as the data would show, then it begs the questions “Why aren’t more people studying them?” and “What impact does that have?”

Table 1.5

Percentage Distribution of High School Graduates, by Highest Level of Foreign Language completed and race/ethnicity: 1998, 2000, and 2004

| Year and race/ethnicity | Highest Level of Foreign Language Completed | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------|-----|
| | None | Year 1 or less | Year 2 | Year 3 or greater | Year 3 | Year 4 | AP |
| 1998 | | | | | | | |
| White | 17.5 | 18.4 | 2.9 | 31.2 | 18.0 | 9.5 | 3.7 |
| Black/African American | 21.4 | 23.5 | 33.8 | 21.2 | 14.1 | 4.7 | 2.4 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 24.2 | 20.7 | 23.8 | 31.3 | 17.6 | 6.1 | 7.6 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 32.7 | 12.3 | 21.5 | 33.5 | 16.6 | 10.5 | 6.4 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 23.7 | 31.7 | 24.5 | 20.2 | 14.3 | 5.7 | .1 |
| Total | 19.4 | 19.2 | 31.5 | 30.0 | 17.4 | 8.5 | 4.1 |
| 2000 | | | | | | | |
| White | 16.7 | 17.1 | 35.4 | 30.8 | 17.1 | 8.6 | 5.1 |
| Black/African American | 17 | 24.9 | 38.5 | 19.7 | 13.8 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 19.4 | 18.1 | 31.9 | 30.7 | 15.6 | 6.2 | 8.9 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 24.2 | 12.1 | 27.6 | 36.1 | 17.0 | 9.9 | 9.2 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 25.7 | 29.9 | 27.5 | 17.0 | 14.8 | 1.8 | .3 |
| Total | 17.4 | 18.0 | 34.9 | 29.8 | 16.5 | 7.8 | 5.4 |

Table 1.5 (continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--|
| 2004 | | | | | | | | |
| White | 14.1 | 15.6 | 33.0 | 37.2 | 20.6 | 11.4 | 5.3 | |
| Black/African American | 15.9 | 22.5 | 42.0 | 19.6 | 13.3 | 5.5 | 0.8 | |
| Hispanic/Latino | 20.4 | 14.6 | 32.3 | 32.8 | 15.1 | 7.8 | 10.0 | |
| Asian/Pacific Islander American | 10.8 | 12.3 | 26.4 | 50.5 | 27.2 | 14.2 | 9.1 | |
| Indian/Alaska Native | 41.6 | 19.4 | 23.9 | 15.1 | 9.3 | 5.3 | 0.5 | |
| Total | 15.5 | 16.1 | 33.9 | 34.5 | 19.1 | 10.1 | 5.4 | |

Note. Adapted from *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic minorities* KewalRamani, A., Gilbertson, L. Fox, M., & Provasnik, S. (2007)

Purpose and Significance of the Study

While all Americans can benefit from acquiring a second language, the purpose of this dissertation is to address the factors that influence African-American students and their continuance/discontinuance in a partial-immersion program. As stated earlier, if African-American students choose not to study a second language, or perform poorly while in the course, the effects can pervade their academic career as well as prove to be detrimental to their professional career (Ansberg-Espinosa, 2008). Overall, the research is limited in this area and is reflected in some of the older citations. Some similar studies have recently been conducted in relation to African-American students in various immersion programs. However, they have either focused on academic achievement, student attitudes toward foreign language, or factors that influence their success in immersion programs. This study varies slightly in that its purpose was to gain insight as to which factors influence persistence and attrition in a Spanish immersion program. According to the National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey Report (2017), Spanish is the most widely studied foreign language. This is the rationale for choosing

Spanish for this study. By addressing the factors that influence persistence and attrition, the researcher believes that a more complete picture of African-American students' perceptions of immersion programs will be ascertained and once identified, immersion program administrators and teachers will be able to address these needs in the immersion program design.

Research Questions

This study explores the reasons African-American students remain enrolled in or withdraw from a partial Spanish immersion program. A questionnaire and a focus group were used to address two primary questions:

- What factors do African-American parents attribute to their students' continued participation in a partial Spanish immersion program?
- What factors do African-American parents attribute to their students' attrition in a partial Spanish immersion program?

Design of the Study

For this study, the researcher employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach. Longitudinal data about enrollment in the immersion program setting in this study provided data about African-American students and their program completion trends. In addition, the administration of a questionnaire prior to the focus group established the foundation for discussion. Subsequently, nine parents participated in a focus group which was a result of purposive homogenous sampling. The audio-recording of the focus group was transcribed and the researcher employed conventional content analysis which allowed codes and themes to emerge. The result was the development of the Parent Perception Continuation Model (PPCM) which describes the

process parents use when determining whether or not to allow their child to continue being enrolled in this partial Spanish immersion program (See Figure 1.1).

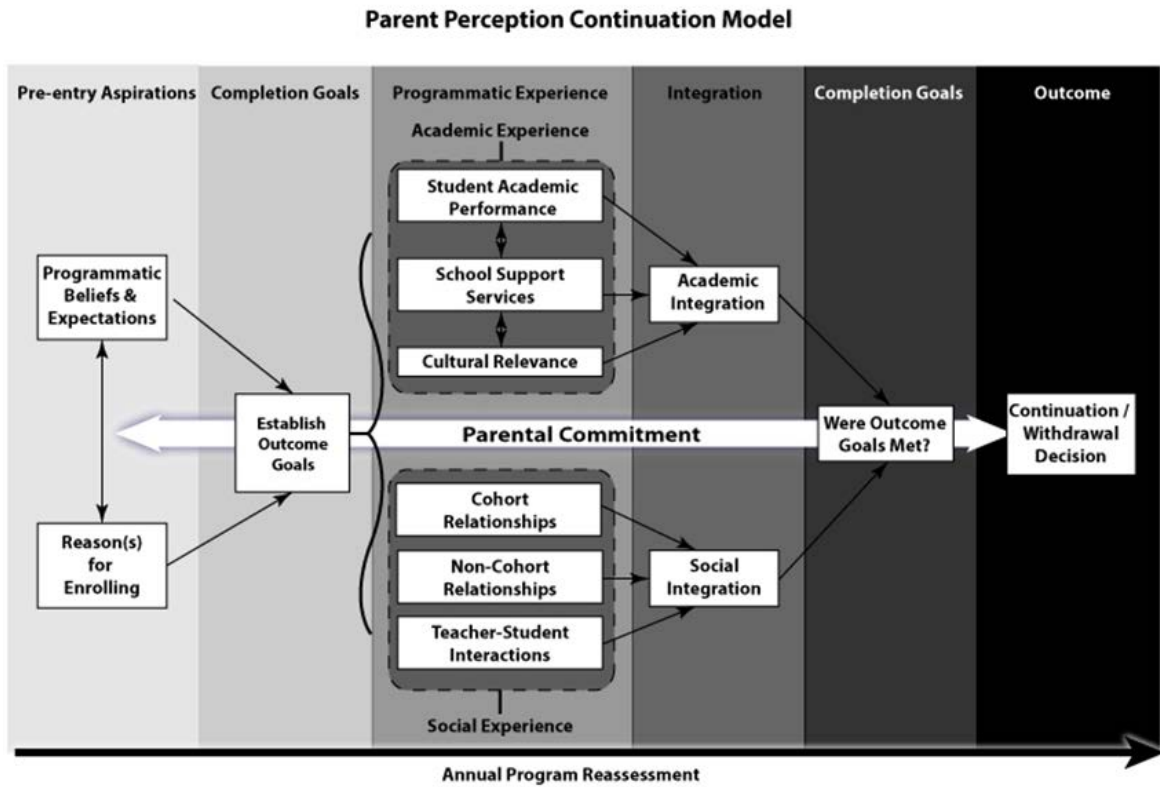


Figure 1.1. Parent Perception Continuation Model (PPCM). This figure represents the process parents use when determining whether or not to allow their child to continue being enrolled in a partial Spanish immersion program.

Definition of Terms

Attrition – for this study, attrition refers to students who withdrew from the Spanish immersion program and subsequently enrolled in a non-immersion program to continue their education.

Cultural backlash – the phenomenon of taking on another culture’s values, beliefs and norms which do not fit with the original culture resulting in disappointment and unfavorable outcomes (Lundy & Janes, 2016).

Cultural competence - the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than one’s own by developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, developing certain bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching (Moule, 2012, p. 5).

Cultural discontinuity – school-based behavioral process where the cultural value-based learning preferences and practices of many ethnic minority students-those typically originating from home or parental socialization activities-are discontinued at school (Tyler et al., 2008, p. 281).

Cultural incongruence – differences between the beliefs of the child’s home culture and those of the child’s school culture (Rogers-Sirin, Ryce & Sirin, 2009, p. 16).

Double immersion - a type of full immersion where essentially two foreign languages are used to instruct all subject matters (Glossary of Terms Related to Dual Language/TWI in the United States).

Foreign language Immersion/One-Way Immersion - approach requires that students be immersed in the target language at some point during the school day where the target language is the vehicle for instruction of the core academic subjects. They are sometimes referred to as “one-way” because the students enrolled are primarily native speakers of English (Boyle, August, Tabaku, Cole & Simpson-Baird, 2015).

Partial immersion – a program in which 50% - 90% of instruction occurs in the target language and where the goals are the same as those stated in a total immersion program (Glossary of Terms Related to Dual Language/TWI in the United States).

Total/Full immersion – a program in which subjects are taught entirely in the target language, including English where the goals are to become functionally proficient in the target language, to master the subject content, and to acquire an appreciation for people from cultures whose native language is the target language (Boyle, August, Tabaku, Cole & Simpson-Baird, 2015).

Two-Way/Dual immersion – a program that integrates language majority students (usually native English speakers) and language minority students (usually native speakers of Spanish) and provides instruction to both groups of students in both languages (Boyle, August, Tabaku, Cole & Simpson-Baird, 2015).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This dissertation will examine the factors that attribute to attrition and persistence for African-American students in a Spanish immersion program. Subsequently, three major themes will be discussed in this chapter. The first theme is a discussion of foreign language teaching methodologies. Included in this section is a historical overview of foreign language teaching methodologies with an emphasis on the definition and purpose of immersion programs, the different types of immersion program models, and the advantages and disadvantages of immersion programs in relation to student demographics and program design. The second theme discusses student attrition which includes a discussion of student attrition in general as well as in immersion programs. The final theme discusses African-American students and foreign language study, which includes reasons for the historically low enrollment of African-American students in foreign language courses, and the experiences of African-American students in different foreign language programs that range from immersion programs to programs at postsecondary institutions.

Foreign Language Instruction

Before delving into the literature on immersion, it is important to note that throughout history foreign language teaching methodologies have emerged and foreign language instruction evolved significantly over time. Since the late 19th century, as many as ten different methodologies have been employed and foreign language teachers constantly debated the effectiveness of methodology (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The earliest methodology is called the Grammar-Translation Method which mainly consisted of translating large volumes from one language to the next without a lot

of opportunity for verbal use of the second language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Subsequently, in the 1940s, foreign language instructors began adopting the Cognitive Approach which targeted communicative competence (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). This approach allowed students to be able to employ all four key language acquisition skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and emphasized speaking in the target language.

As the Cognitive Approach progressed, three other approaches began to take shape in the 1960s. The Audio-Lingual Method took advantage of the increasing use of recording devices by having students listen to recordings of native speakers in language laboratories to memorize and recite what they heard (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rogers, 2014). In this method, repetition and drills are key. In addition to the Audio-Lingual Method, the Direct Method is another approach that stems from this era. In this approach, instruction in the first language is discouraged. Students rely on context cues from the instructor in the target language to discern what is being asked and how they should respond rather than relying on extensive grammar explanations (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson; 2011, Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Amid these approaches, Krashen and Terrell developed the Natural Approach which is often seen as the foundation for second language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Its premise is that a second language should be acquired through a natural approach similar to how children learn to speak their first language. Second language is produced after a “silent period” where the student is focused primarily on processing input rather than producing output in the second language. In

this approach, instruction occurs completely in the second language and marks the beginning of what is now known as “total immersion”.

In the Silent Way, the instructors remain silent while using prompts to encourage student output. This approach encourages the learner to be independent in the learning process and to rely on his/her own resources to further language learning. Prompts include such items as phonetic charts, Cuisenaire rods, and gestures which promote production in the target language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Total Physical Response (TPR) and Suggestopedia are unique in their approaches. The focus of TPR is learning to articulate through commands. Students demonstrate understanding by how they respond to the command (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Once they are comfortable with the demonstration, they begin to verbalize their own commands (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Suggestopedia taps into the creative or right-side of the brain by emphasizing a learning environment that is relaxed and relatively stress free. Classical music, meditation, and a focus on the arts are often key components of the classroom with the belief that the art of suggestion in the target language drives acquisition (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Community Language Learning (CLL) is an approach, which purports that language learning is not an individual but rather a collective, cooperative process. Its process eases a learner into the language learning process by working in groups and allows them to go through stages of learning, which begin with fostering a level of security in learning the language and ends with the learner gaining a certain level of discernment for when to use appropriate grammatical structures (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

While there are numerous approaches to language learning, the setting for this research is an immersion classroom whose purpose was to provide an environment where learners spend a significant portion of time completely immersed in the target language with no use of the students' first language. Over the last few decades, researchers have begun to probe more into the immersion methodology, its impact on learning, and the challenges that using this methodology may impose (Fortune, 2012).

Immersion Programs

Immersion programs are becoming an increasingly used method of delivering foreign language instruction in today's classrooms since their introduction into the United States in 1971 (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007) and have proven to be successful (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2007). The data showed that there were 310 foreign language immersion programs in 263 schools across 33 states (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007). This percentage has increased over the last 35 years. In 2007, the *Directory of Foreign Language Immersion Programs in U.S. Schools* contained information for immersion programs in 53 preschools, 181 elementary schools, 89 middle schools, and 37 high schools (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007). In 2011, the number of schools with immersion programs increased to 448 (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011).

Immersion is defined as "a method of foreign language instruction in which the regular school curriculum is taught through the medium of the language" (Met, 1993, p. 2). The foreign language immersion/one-way immersion approach requires that students be immersed in the classroom setting at some point during the school day where the target language is the vehicle for instruction of the core academic subjects (Curtain, 1986; Met, 1987; Met, 1993). Boudreaux and Olivier (2009, p. 22) stated "immersion

pedagogues do not order their students to learn the target language, but by making it the only communication tool in the classroom, motivate them to make necessary efforts to master it.” It was further stated that there are three goals of immersion: (a) linguistic-to produce a functionally bilingual student; (b) academic-to produce students whose academic achievement is as good as their non-immersion counterparts; and (c) multicultural-to promote in students a positive attitude toward people and cultures different than their own (Boudreaux & Olivier, 2009). Ultimately, the aims of this type of program are that students become proficient in both English and the target language, that students have a more positive attitude to native speakers of the target language, and to gain knowledge and skills in the content areas (Met, 1987; Met, 1993). The term “immersion” is an all-encompassing term that describes different programmatic designs, which include foreign language/one-way immersion, total immersion, partial immersion, two-way immersion and dual immersion.

School Language Immersion Models

Several researchers have used “dual language education” as an overarching term that refers to immersion programs (Tedick, Christian & Fortune, 2011). Dual language education can be divided into two subgroups, foreign language immersion and bilingual immersion, each of which can be implemented a variety of ways (Baig, 2011; Lenker & Rhodes, 2007). Tedick, Christian and Fortune (2011) limited their definition of immersion education to the three types of programs:

- One-Way -Instructional use of the immersion language (IL) to teach subject matter for at least 50% of the preschool or elementary day to a group of students with little to no IL proficiency upon enrollment.

- Two-Way – Instruction to both language minority and language majority students in each other’s languages.
- Indigenous – Focused on revitalizing endangered indigenous cultures and languages by promoting their maintenance and development.

Ultimately, the goals of immersion programs are to provide students with a foreign language experience that begins at an early age and continues through the 12th grade, builds a foundation for academic and linguistic proficiency in both the native language and the target language, and fosters an appreciation for peoples from other cultures (Fortune & Tedick, 2012). Moreover, studies have shown the level of language proficiency increases for students regardless of the type of immersion program enrolled (Alberta Education 2011; Alberta Education, 2010). Overall, students who enroll in immersion programs tend to have higher levels of academic achievement (Caldas & Boudreaux, 1999). Alberta Education (2011, p. 11) identified six characteristics of immersion programs:

- The target language is acquired primarily by using it for meaningful communication within the school—that is, for instruction in other subjects (math, social studies, science, etc.);
- The students begin not knowing the target language, and instructional strategies and materials are designed with that in mind;
- The target language is not the native language used or the prevalent language of the community;

- The program begins with intensive instruction in and via the target language by teachers fluent in that language, with instruction via English often increasing in later years;
- Instruction on subject material is never repeated in the two languages; and
- The program objectives are intended to be achieved by end of Grade 12.

In addition to these characteristics, the Alberta Education Department (2011) cited the importance of parents and their role in supporting immersion. While immersion programs are increasing in popularity, there is still only minimal research that has disaggregated the data and studied the impact of participation in this type of program as it relates to student demographics.

Advantages and Challenges for Students in Immersion Programs by Demographics

Research on immersion programs that disaggregates data by student demographics is minimal (Caldas & Boudreaux 1999; Howard, Sugarman, & Christian 2003; Scanlan & Palmer, 2009). However, over the last decade, researchers have become cognizant that there is a hole in the research and new studies have been conducted that address the issue of participation in two-way immersion programs (TWIs). This current research gives insight into the attitudes, beliefs, and academic achievement of students from diverse backgrounds. This research also forms the basal underpinnings of the rationale to support why students who are generally underrepresented in these programs would benefit from their enrollment. Moreover, the lack of research indicates that this is a virtually untapped area of study and a need exists for further research of the effects of immersion experiences on the attitudes, beliefs, and student achievement of culturally diverse students in immersion programs (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, & Donovan, 2002).

There are several advantages and challenges for students from diverse backgrounds who participate in immersion programs. Some of these articles focus on the impact that immersion programs have on African-American students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. More often than not, the most common advantages found center around student use of both languages and student achievement (Lightbown, 2007). Caldas and Boudreaux (1999) found that students who participate in immersion programs not only tend to become functionally literate in the target language, but they also tend to score higher than their non-immersion counterparts on standardized testing. Caldas and Boudreaux (1999) studied the effects of partial immersion versus non-immersion program participation on the performance levels of English and math scores on standardized tests. Of the 302 immersion students in the study, 25 of them were African American. Overall, it was found that students in the immersion program scored significantly higher in English and math on the standardized tests than their non-immersion counterparts regardless of race, gender, grade, or socioeconomic status. While the African-American students made up only a small portion of the students in the immersion programs studied, these students still outscored their non-immersion counterparts. In terms of the other demographics in this study, immersion students in high poverty schools performed lower than those in the lower poverty schools overall. However, the African American immersion students were reported to score higher in the higher poverty schools than African Americans overall. In addition, the female immersion students outscored the males in English, but had no significant relationship when it came to the math scores (Caldas & Boudreaux, 1999). In addition, Palmer (2010)

revealed that African-American students can excel in these programs at the same levels as their White counterparts.

Haj-Broussard (2002) studied the academic achievement of African-American students in foreign language immersion programs as compared to their counterparts in traditional education programs. Haj-Broussard (2002) analyzed data from over 300 fourth grade students about how they perceived themselves and others in the class, how they interacted with their teachers and their peers, and how involved parents were in supporting their children in the program. A cross comparative approach was implemented and data were gathered through interviews, observations and administering the Self and Collective Esteem scale. It was found that overall, students had a positive self-esteem and that there were no significant academic performance differences between achievements of African Americans in traditional programs versus foreign language immersion (FI) programs.

Bender (2000) explored the interactions of the social relations and the educational practices of the teachers and the administrators in a TWI. The focus was the African American and Puerto Rican student population that comprised approximately 92% of the student population and consisted of participant observation, as well as an analysis of discourse from interviews and data collection. Bender (2000) argued that if the teachers in bilingual education programs did not value the different students in their classrooms, then the language learning of those students will be hindered. The data revealed that teachers did not have sufficient training in second language learning that would have enabled them to differentiate instruction geared toward their ethnically diverse classrooms.

Lambert and Cazabon (1994) studied 300 students in a voluntary two-way immersion program in Massachusetts. The “Amigos Program” consisted of native speakers of English and native speakers of Spanish, all of whom were reported to come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Of the native speakers of English, fifty percent of them were African American. The purpose of the program was to provide “an effective bilingual experience for both Spanish native and English-native young people” and to “cultivate friendships with children from different ethnic groups” (p. 8). The goal of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of this program. While the results of the data described students’ perceptions of the program, they also showed that native English speakers, including the African-American students, performed better on their standardized testing than did students who were not enrolled in an immersion program.

Lightbown (2007) observed students in an elementary school TWI that consisted mainly of African American and Latino students, most of whom were recipients of free and reduced lunch. It was found that the students in the TWI performed as well or better in reading English than students who were not enrolled in the TWI. In addition, the native speakers of Spanish were able to read English better than the native English speakers who were not enrolled in the TWI. Moreover, the students in the TWI were able to use Spanish in their other core academic classes.

Scanlan and Palmer (2009) and Palmer (2010) studied the effects of “color-blind” racism on African American and Latino students in an elementary two-way immersion program that consisted of 120 students out of 350. Out of 120 students, 6 were African American and White and Latino students made up the other portion of the students evenly. Scanlan and Palmer (2009) and Palmer (2010), along with Parchia (2000) as

cited in Howard, Sugarman, and Christian, (2003), found that parents of the African-American students kept their children enrolled in the program in order to enhance their opportunities for future employment and to give them cross cultural experiences, despite the feeling that certain academic and curricular needs of the students were not being met by the program.

While studies have shown that the levels of academic achievement of African-American students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds can increase due to participation in an immersion program, findings also suggest that there are some disadvantages for these students who participate in these programs. First, student achievement is not always enhanced by participation in an immersion program. For example, Krause (1999) studied the completion rates of African-American students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in an elementary TWI program. A mixed methods was employed (interviews, observations and data analysis) to gather data from thirteen students and their families, where other demographic variables, such as entry level age and gender, were controlled for. Krause (1999) found that although the attrition rate of African-American students increased yearly, those students who entered the program in kindergarten were more likely to complete the program through the fifth grade. Moreover, it was found that those African-American students, who spoke Standard English as the primary home language as opposed to African American Vernacular English (AAVE), were more successful academically. In contrast, Krause (1999) revealed that the African-American students with low socioeconomic backgrounds were not as likely to read at the same levels as their counterparts. It was concluded that more of this particular TWI was not meeting the needs of its African American student

population and that more interventions should be established to help these students increase their academic performance.

Furthermore, Abbate-Vaughn (2004) studied the barriers that TWIs encounter when located in urban settings with a high amount of poverty. Abbate-Vaughn (2004) stated that a number of challenges plague these programs. For example, many of the students in the TWI programs were nonstandard speakers of English, which hindered their learning process because they were also forced to learn an extra language (Standard English). Moreover, it was found that the program did not have a lot of parental involvement from African American parents. Finally, the insufficient resources and inadequately prepared teachers (those who were not culturally responsive) as reasons why the African-American students in these programs did not perform as well as their White counterparts academically.

Valdes (1997) found that most TWIs are created to serve two distinct, heterogeneous student populations-mainstream speakers of English (generally students from White, middle class backgrounds) and native speakers of Spanish. In the aforementioned dichotomous relationships, there is little room for students from different cultural backgrounds to find their fit. When students from diverse cultural backgrounds enroll in these programs, often their academic, linguistic, and cultural needs are not met (Palmer, 2010). Wiese (2004) found that one teacher in her study wrestled with abiding by the two-way immersion instruction guidelines or altering instruction in order to meet the needs of low performing African-American students. Carrigo (2000) discovered that the TWI's curriculum was not culturally responsive and subsequently, African-American students were overrepresented in the lower tracks of the targeted language portion of the

immersion program, as well as resistant to using the target language. Moreover, Scanlan and Palmer (2009) and Palmer (2010) found that the TWI in the school studied helped to keep students segregated within the school. On the surface, the student body of the school seemed to be integrated with African Americans, making up 30% of the student population and the rest were a combination of White and Latino students. However, in the immersion program, African Americans only made up 5% of the enrollment while Latinos and Whites made up the other 95%, thus indicating disparities among the student populations enrolled in the immersion program that enforce the aforementioned internal segregation.

Another disadvantage for African-American students in immersion programs occurs when teachers have been found to have misconceptions as to the abilities of African-American students and second language learning. Immersion programs tend to be viewed as programs for the elite (Alberta Department of Education, 2010; Scanlan & Palmer, 2009; Palmer, 2010). Consequently, many teachers felt that the African-American students from the surrounding low income neighborhood would not be appropriate for the immersion program because parents would not support the instruction and because of their linguistic variations. As a result, African-American students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds were and still tend to be underrepresented in the programs.

Finally, students' use of AAVE is viewed as an inhibitor to success in an immersion program by many teachers in the studies. Miller (1953) found that many foreign language teachers felt that African-American students had communication issues that hindered their ability to learn foreign language. This sentiment is still prevalent

more than 50 years later. Krause (1999), Howard et al. (2003), Lightbown (2007), Ansberg-Espinosa (2008), Scanlan and Palmer (2009), and Palmer (2010) found that those students who spoke nonstandard dialects of English were inhibited because they essentially had to learn a third language because the students were viewed as non-native speakers of Standard English. Moreover, the same effect was exhibited for Latino students who spoke a nonstandard dialect of Spanish. The effects of the nonstandard dialects of both English and Spanish were seen in the types of grammatical errors that occurred when these students were communicating in the TWI (Scanlan & Palmer, 2009). Furthermore, due to the social interaction of the African-American students who spoke AAVE and the Latino students who spoke nonstandard dialects of Spanish, the dialectal speech was likely to be learned along with the target language (Lightbown, 2007). Wiese (2004), whose study centered around the implementation of a second-grade TWI noted that dialects caused tension at the school site where it was established. Through the ethnographic study, the current design of immersion programs did not promote language instruction that encourages literacy development in non-standard dialects of a student's home language. Furthermore, Wiese (2004) stated:

“So, just as bilingual education aims to provide Spanish speakers with a bridge to English language proficiency through native language instruction, African-American students who are speakers of A.A.V.E. have the right to an educational programme that values their linguistic background and provides them exposure to “standard English.”(p. 87)

Wiese (2004) proposed that for the instruction to be effective for all students, regardless of ethnic background, the staff should make a concerted effort to design and implement an immersion program where instruction focuses on the needs of all students, which would include receiving literacy instruction in their native language, be it a dialect

or a standard form. Therefore, as immersion programs are implemented, the instructional strategies can serve to be a detriment to African-American students who are speakers of AAVE. In addition, since these nonstandard dialects of English and Spanish are not included in immersion programs, the lack of validation of these languages has been found to have a negative impact on the students' perceptions of themselves (Ansberg-Espinosa, 2008). Therefore, if immersion programs do not address the aforementioned concerns, they will continue to operate in violation of their intended goals. The implementation of immersion programs would benefit from further research on the topic (Abbate-Vaughn, 2004).

As stated earlier, research has failed to take an in-depth look at student demographics when determining the effectiveness of immersion programs (Caldas & Boudreaux, 1999). One of very few articles that discusses student demographics as they relate to immersion programs come from Caldas and Boudreaux (1999) who studied the effects of partial immersion versus non-immersion program participation on the performance levels of English and math scores on standardized tests as they relate to poverty status, gender and race. The results of the analysis on race and poverty status were discussed previously, however, in terms of gender, it was found that females who were enrolled in the immersion program tended to score slightly higher on standardized tests in English than their male counterparts. However, gender did not have any significant bearing on the scores in mathematics.

MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, and Donovan (2002) studied the effects of gender on anxiety and the willingness to communicate in the target language in a junior high school immersion program. MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, and Donovan (2002) found that girls

were more willing to communicate in the target language as their grade levels increased from grade seven to grade nine. It was posited that this could be attributed to the fact that girls tend to mature more quickly than boys and that in many instances, their observations showed teachers favored the girls in the classroom. However, the findings also noted that while the girls were more likely to use the target language in the classroom, the boys tended to use it outside of the classroom. In addition, Baker and MacIntyre (2000) studied nonlinguistic outcomes of immersion program and non-immersion program students in a high school. The results showed that non-immersion males had the least positive experiences overall, which increased their anxiety and made them less willing to communicate. Moreover, Baker and MacIntyre (2000) inquired about the students' perceived use of the target language in four different orientations (job, travel, meeting, and personal) among the male and female immersion students and their non-immersion counterparts. Of each of the immersion categories, the male immersion students favored the job orientation, the female immersion and non-immersion students favored the travel and personal orientation. Finally, Bartley (1970) studied the effects that attitude toward a foreign language had on students dropping out from the program. Eighth graders were surveyed to determine if they would continue their foreign language study in high school and how gender affected the attitude toward the foreign language.

Advantages and Disadvantages by Program Design

Overall, research has shown that students who study a foreign language may score slightly higher on verbal and mathematical assessments, regardless of the type of foreign language program in which the student is enrolled (Boudreaux, 1999, Kohne, 2006, Lightbown, 2007). Nevertheless, each type of immersion program has advantages and

disadvantages overall. For example, in a full immersion program, the student would have intense instruction in the target language for the entire curriculum. This would enhance the student's ability to communicate proficiently in the target language. However, this type of program could pose staffing problems because students would have to have an immersion teacher for each class (Mondloch, 2012). This would require that the teacher not only be trained in elementary education, but also have near native proficiency in the target language (Boyle, August, Tabaku, Cole & Simpson-Baird, 2015). In addition, parents may not feel comfortable enrolling their child in a full immersion program because of a concern about their child's ability to learn the core academic subjects in the target language and whether their child's English language development will be hindered (Fortune & Tedick, 2003).

Parents may be more apt to enroll their child in a partial immersion program because the program has less intensity and they would not be as concerned with whether the acquisition of a foreign language would hinder their child's ability to communicate in English (Fortune & Tedick, 2003). In addition, partial immersion programs are easier to staff (Boyle, August, Tabaku, Cole & Simpson-Baird, 2015). For example, one teacher can teach the English component for two immersion classes, while another can teach the Spanish. However, due to the decrease in intensity in a partial immersion program, it is not as effective in producing the level of proficiency for students to be able to communicate in the target language and some students experience difficulties in the core academic subjects.

Advantages and Challenges of Early versus Late Immersion Programs

Much like the research on immersion programs as they relate to student demographics, there is little research that has been conducted about the advantages and challenges of immersion programs by grade level in the United States. The research that describes the effects of immersion programs disaggregated by grade level has mainly been conducted on Canadian two-way immersion programs (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2008). The Canadian research compared aspects of both “early” and “late” immersion programs. In some cases, “middle immersion” and “early partial immersion” programs were discussed. For the purposes of this section, the terms “early” and “late” immersion programs are used to denote the grade level at which entry can be gained into the immersion program (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2008). An “early immersion program” is a program that begins in either kindergarten or first grade, where 50%-100% of the instruction occurs in the target language as the program progresses by grade level, and there is a decrease in the amount of instruction in the target language, which varies from program to program. The difference between an “early immersion” and a “partial immersion” is that only 50% of the instruction is conducted in the target language (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2008). In contrast, a “late immersion” program allows students to enter around the sixth grade (Alberta Education, 2011). (Programs that exist in middle and high school that are a continuation of the elementary immersion programs are considered early immersion programs.) Not so common are “middle immersion” programs, which offer entry between fourth and fifth grades. In “late immersion” programs, entry can be gained as early as the sixth or seven grades or as late as the ninth or tenth grade. Factors to be considered prior to entry are the student’s exposure to the

target language prior to enrollment, the student's motivation, and the parents' judgment (Alberta Education, 2011).

In the United States, more immersion programs exist at the preschool and elementary school than any other grade level (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007). In a full immersion program, all classroom instruction is conducted in the target level in preschool and first grade. Then, English is introduced in the subsequent three grades in reading/language arts classes for approximately the length of one class period. Subsequently, the amount of instruction wanes to approximately 50% by the time the student enters fifth or sixth grade (Tedick, Christian, & Fortune, 2011).

There is some controversial discussion centered around the advantages and challenges of enrolling in early and late immersion programs. Curtain and Dahlberg (2016) purported there were several reasons that a student would benefit from enrolling in an early immersion program. First, the earlier a student begins a program and the longer the student stays in that program, the more functionally proficient they become in the target language (Curtain & Dahlberg 2016). It is also easier for students to master subject content in the early immersion programs because the level of vocabulary at the age is not as dense as it is in the higher grades (Curtain & Dahlberg 2016). Finally, Curtain and Dahlberg (2016) offered that students tend to be more enthusiastic and have less anxiety about language learning at an earlier age than do their teenaged counterparts.

Day and Shapson (1988) compared early and late immersion programs in three different school districts in British Columbia. Day and Shapson (1988) determined whether enrollment in either the early or late immersion programs had any significant effect on French comprehension and French language arts. A determination of the

attitudes of the students enrolled in these programs toward the target language was also warranted. Data analysis revealed there were inconsistencies across the districts. In one district, the academic achievement of students enrolled in the early immersion programs was higher than those of the late immersion program. However, in the other two districts, there were no significant differences in achievement. Similar inconsistencies were found in reference to the students' attitudes about the target language, where only two of the three districts showed more positive attitudes towards learning the target language by those enrolled in the early immersion program. While the data revealed inconsistencies, a case was made that students who enrolled in late immersion classes could potentially function at similar levels as those enrolled in the early immersion program.

Montone and Loeb (2000) described challenges faced when trying to implement immersion programs at the secondary level, particularly when they are independent of feeder programs from the elementary and middle school levels. Some of the challenges described include student participation and motivation and attrition and late entries. Montone and Loeb (2000) concluded that factors such as course choice (e.g., electives) and peer pressure might influence the decision to participate in the TWI. Moreover, in some instances there was a need to accept late entries into a TWI at the secondary level due to a significant number of dropouts in the feeder program at the elementary and middle school level when late acceptance would normally not be the case. In this instance, entry criteria would need to be developed to gauge the level of proficiency that the student would have in the target language.

In contrast, Alberta Education (2010) defined late immersion as entry in grade six or seven and posited that enrolling students in a late immersion program affords students

the opportunity to develop a foundation in English prior to introducing the second language, as well as gives them the second language foundation they will need to continue studying the language in high school. Moreover, Alberta Education (2010) purported that if students wait to enroll in a late immersion, the chances for identifying any learning disabilities at an early age increases. Therefore, the rationale for late immersion was that it affords the student the opportunity to

- Acquire the knowledge, learning processes, abilities and attitudes necessary for effective and confident communication in French;
- Acquire the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the French language through its cultural environments in order to better understand French-speaking communities and their cultures, as well as their own culture and those of others; and
- Acquire the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of written, oral and visual works by Francophones
- Explore their potential in matters relating to language learning, critical thinking and self-expression (p. 3)

Lang (1993) described a late immersion program in which students' levels of second language oral proficiency were purported to be like those who participated in an early language immersion program, however these gains were obtained in half of the time. Lang (1993) found that thirty percent of the students in the late immersion program reached the same levels of oral proficiency as those that had been in an early immersion program. Those in the early immersion program had accumulated approximately 6,000 hours in the second language, while those in the late immersion program had only

accumulated approximately 1,750. These data suggest that students in late immersion programs can gain the same levels of proficiency as students in the early immersion programs in only one-third of the time. In contrast, Lang (1993) found that while the late immersion students gained the oral proficiency in the second language, they were not able to take some content course (e.g., Social Studies) and some scored lower in terms of written proficiency.

Using a developmental perspective, Kohne (2006) posited that students, who enrolled in a TWI in elementary school, would have greater academic achievement, cultural appreciation and self-esteem upon entering middle and high school. Kohne (2006) found that, overall there was no significant difference in the aforementioned categories among the students who had enrolled in a TWI and those who had not except in reference to grade point averages. The students who were not enrolled in the TWI had significantly higher grade point averages than those who were. However, there were differences among the ethnicities in the TWIs of the study. For example, the White students in the TWI had higher grade point averages than the Hispanic students. Moreover, Kohne (2006) found that the White students outscored the Hispanic students on standardized language arts testing at all grade levels and on mathematics at the middle school level. Kohne (2006) also found that the middle and high school TWI Hispanic students enrolled in more advanced classes than did their non-immersion counterparts. However, in regards to self-esteem, there was no significant difference between those enrolled in the TWI and those who were not; there was only a slight difference among ethnicities where White students scored higher than Hispanics. In terms of self-esteem, the only notable difference was among the Hispanic populations. Those enrolled in the

TWI reportedly scored higher than those who were not. Consequently, these results did not support the hypothesis.

Parent Perspectives of Dual Language Programs

Baig (2011) explored the factors that motivated parents to enroll their children in a German immersion program and the decision-making processes that accompanied them. Using a qualitative research design, 16 parents were interviewed to determine the impact of parents' educational goals for their children and what they perceived their roles and responsibilities to be in the decision-making process. Findings revealed that the higher the educational attainment of the parent, the greater the expectations they had of the program and of their children. In addition, the reasons these parents enrolled their children in the program included wanting an alternative form of education for their children, wanting them to learn a language with which their family had ties, and wanting their children to develop a love for learning languages and other cultures.

DeLorenzo (2013) also studied reasons parents enrolled their children in a dual language immersion program along with their attitudes about the immersion program in general. DeLorenzo (2013) employed a quantitative approach that administered a survey to 60 parents of students enrolled in a two-way immersion program featuring both English dominant and Spanish dominant students. Findings indicated that in terms of the immersion program, parents felt that it would help their child better understand the Hispanic culture and communicate more effectively with its members. There was variation among the reasons for program enrollment. Parents of English-speaking students wanted their children to become more comfortable around Spanish speakers and did not see bilingualism as the most important. Parents of Spanish-speaking students

thought the opposite in that they believed that their child would be more knowledgeable if s/he were bilingual. In addition, findings indicated that while parents thought that this type of immersion program provided the best environment for learning, they would not necessarily recommend the program to others.

Ee (2015) studied parents of students in a two-way immersion program to determine their attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of their children's experiences. Data, which included demographics of the respondents, were collected and analyzed from 454 surveys administered to the parents of both Korean-speaking and English-speaking students from seven different elementary schools. Findings indicated that among the reasons for enrolling their children in the program, Korean parents wanted their children to attend a school that offered a two-way immersion program featuring Korean as one of the languages and to have increased academic performance. Both Korean and non-Korean parents wanted their children to be prepared for a global society and to be bilingual. In addition, Korean parents were less satisfied than their non-Korean counterparts with their children's language development and with instruction. However, they were satisfied with the interaction their children had with students from diverse backgrounds and the impact that had on their children's ability to maintain their heritage.

Wesely and Baig (2012) studied parental involvement in an immersion program, as well as the decision-making process parents used to allow their child(ren) to continue to be enrolled at the middle and high school levels. Surveys were administered to 131 parents of children who had participated in and graduated from one of five elementary schools with a one-way immersion program regarding their enrollment decisions and their continuation/withdrawal decisions. Findings revealed that the parents' personal

experiences with languages, social networks and consultation with other immersion parents influenced their decision to enroll their children in an immersion program. Regarding the decision to continue at the middle and high school levels, parents indicated that while they were the sole decision makers at the time of initial enrollment in elementary school, they shared the responsibility at the middle and high school levels allowing their child(ren) to have input. Subsequently, parents indicated that their reasons for continuing were to provide more opportunities for their children and students indicated that they wanted to continue in the program to remain with the social groups they had formed in elementary school.

Attrition and the Student Integration Model

This research project focuses on attrition versus persistence among African Americans in a Spanish immersion program. The research on this topic is minimal. Therefore, it is important to discuss attrition as it pertains to immersion programs. For this discussion, the concept of attrition versus persistence is framed in Tinto's student integration model (Tinto, 1993). Tinto's model suggests that an individual possesses certain characteristics, experiences, and goals that they bring to the institutional setting. Then, Tinto purported that there are two components that are essential for student persistence (McCubbin, 2003). The first essential component is that over time a student must be integrated both academically and socially with an institution. The second is the importance of the level of commitment a student has to both the institution and completion of the program. Subsequently, when a student's experiences are known, goals are defined and levels of integration and commitment are assessed, leading to making the decision as to whether the student remains at the university.

Authors have criticized Tinto's model stating that it is not generalizable (McCubbin, 2003). Criticisms include that the model only applies to what is referred to as a "traditional student" or one who attends college immediately after high school and lives on campus, thus questioning the importance of academic integration for nontraditional students (e.g., distance learners, students who enter college later in life, etc.). However, the model can be transferred to the immersion setting (Boudreaux & Olivier, 2009).

As stated earlier, there is a dearth of research on immersion and attrition with most of the research conducted in Canada. This supports the need for this study and indicates that further research should be conducted.

Student Attrition in Immersion Programs

With the discussion of immersion programs and their positive impacts, the question is why there is such a high attrition rate. Boudreaux (2011) stated "Given the success and growth of foreign language programs in the past fifty years, at least in terms of enrollment, it is surprising that attrition is considered a serious issue." However, it is an issue with the majority of this research being conducted abroad (p. 1).

It stands to reason that much of the research on attrition in foreign language immersion programs has occurred in Canada with that being the birthplace of the methodology and that not a lot of research has been conducted on the United States (Boudreaux & Olivier, 2009). Subsequently, researchers have questioned why students who were enrolled in an immersion program chose not to continue their studies in French at the secondary level and what trends have resulted from this attrition (See Table 2.1) (Cadez, 2006). Researchers have found that among the reasons students do not persist

are academic difficulty, lack of quality instruction, and lack of course options (Boudreaux, 2011; Cadez, 2006; Duhamel, 1985; Obadia & Theriault, 1995). Duhamel (1985) found that students thought they would have more options in an English program and that they would have higher academic achievement. In addition, Lewis and Shapson (1989) found an overall attrition rate of 35% in a two-year period and that of the students surveyed, 44% discontinued studies because they felt they were not receiving quality instruction, and 33% preferred to have core classes taught in English because they felt they would have better academic achievement. Cadez (2006) and Boudreaux (2011) referenced Obadia and Theriault (1995), who interviewed immersion program personnel and found that the reasons why students did not persist varied depending on the type of personnel. For example, the majority of teachers felt that not enough emphasis was placed on getting parents to see the importance of the program which contradicted the response from school administrators who indicated that actions had been taken to keep students in the program.

Table 2.1

Reason Students Discontinue Studying French at the Secondary Level

| Researcher | Respondents | Percentage Attrition Rate | Academic Difficulty | Difficulty in French | Difficulty in English | Behavioral Problems | Lack of Support | Quality of Instruction | Too Difficult | Too Much Work | Better Grade in English | Fear of Falling Behind in English |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Adiv (1979) | S | 20 | | | | | | | X | X | | X |
| Alberta Education (1985) | S | 30 | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Duhamel(1985) | S | NA | | | | | | | | | X | |
| Lewis et al. (1985) | S | 35 | X | | | | X | X | X | | X | |
| Parkin et al. (1987) | S | NA | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | | |
| Hayden (1988) | S | NA | X | X | X | | X | X | | | | |

Table 2.1 (continued)

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Halsall (1991) | S | 20 - 80 | | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| Obadia et al. (1996) | A | NA | X | | | | | X | X | X |
| Cadez (2006) | S | | | X | | | | X | | |
| CCL (2007) | | | | | | | | X | | X |
| Boudreaux (2010) | P | | | X | X | | | X | | |

Note. Adapted from Cadez (2006). S=Students; P=Parents; A=Administrators

In addition to the research on why attrition is an issue in immersion programs, some trends have been found in terms of which gender tends not to persist as well as which grade levels see the most students exiting. In regards to gender, studies indicated that more males than females leave the program (Adiv, 1979, Genesee, 1987). Genesee (1987) conducted a study of an early immersion program and found that more males than females exited the program. In addition, Adiv (1979) found similar results that was conducted at the secondary level. In terms of reasons that students withdraw from immersion programs, Cadez (2006) posited that contributing factors include: difficulty in learning the language, lack of support, inadequate instruction, or the influence of family. Canadian Council on Learning (2007) contended that “attrition rates in French-immersion programs are particularly high after grade 8 (p. 9).”

African Americans and Foreign Language Study

The research on African Americans and foreign language is limited (Ansberg-Espinosa 2008; Glynn 2012). Moore (2005) reviewed two prominent foreign language journals (Modern Language Journal and Foreign Language Annals) and only found five articles related to African American and foreign language study since their inception of each journal in 1925 and 1960, respectively. Subsequently, Moore (2005) stated that not until the mid-1990s did researchers begin to ponder reasons for the low enrollment of African-American students in foreign language classes which accounts for the minimal

and dated research in the area. Four decades ago, some authors took on the task of explaining the reasons for and providing answers to the following question: “Am I really going to need this,” a question asked by many African Americans. In the question, “this” refers to the study of foreign languages (Hubbard, 1975; Hubbard, 1980). At the time the authors wrote these articles, four general sentiments from African-American students prevailed (Davis & Markham, 1991, Moore, 2005). First, the students felt that there was no benefit in studying a foreign language (Hubbard, 1975; Hubbard, 1980).

Hubbard (1975) stated:

“Black students in the past were usually counseled out of the foreign language field with the reasoning that the subject would be too difficult and that they would never need it. As the choice today becomes theirs to make, black students become a part of mainstream America that sees no benefits in academic study of a foreign language.” (p. 563)

Second, students thought that studying a foreign language was only a privilege of the elite members of society (Hubbard, 1980). Third, these students did not feel that the time spent on acquiring the foreign language was equal to the benefits they would receive (Sims, 1978). In other words, students felt that spending all of that time in the classroom would not make them fluent speakers (Hubbard, 1975). Finally, these students feared not being successful in the courses (Hubbard, 1980). Therefore, African-American students questioned what impact, if any, foreign languages would have on their lives. African-American students in the late 1970s did not have as many opportunities to experience foreign languages. As stated earlier, many people considered foreign language study a privilege of the elite. Hubbard (1975) referred to the many study abroad opportunities that European American high school students have had that their African American counterparts have not. Sims (1978) said that often European American

students have had exposure to foreign language and travel abroad before entering college. Furthermore, Hubbard (1975) stated that the substitute for study abroad comes from studying a foreign language in college and if colleges do not require them to take it, African-American students should require it of themselves.

The main reason that the authors provide as to why African-American students should study foreign language is that knowledge of a foreign language will broaden their opportunities for employment (Brigman & Jacobs, 1981; Hubbard, 1980; Sims, 1978). According to Brigman and Jacobs (1981, p. 371), “Knowledge of a foreign language provides an opportunity to the minority student for greater job flexibility, future advancement, and economic security.” Furthermore, Sims (1978) emphasized that if two people apply for the same position and only one knows a foreign language, the one who knows the foreign language is the most likely to be hired. Finally, Hubbard (1980) stated that African-American students may not be able to capitalize on the opportunities for employment if they do not know a second language.

Until recently, the majority of the research on African Americans and foreign language consisted of studies done at institutions of high learning. However, research at the grade levels in school has become more prevalent, particularly in schools hosting immersion programs. Davis and Markham (1991) ascertained African-American students’ attitudes toward foreign language study, their foreign language program, and its cultural content; as well as foreign language teachers’ and administrators’ points of view on the issues that surrounded foreign language programs. This study was situated at 76 historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) that offered at least one year of introductory level foreign language courses. The data revealed that in general, the

students had a positive attitude toward foreign language study. For example, 81% thought that studying a foreign language had been a positive experience and 75% reported that they enjoyed speaking a foreign language. The majority of students also felt that Americans should make a more concerted effort to study a foreign language and 69% reported that they would study a foreign language even if it were not required. Moreover, 84% stated that they would like to be able to communicate in the target language and 43% indicated that they would like to work in a foreign country. Eighty percent felt that studying a foreign language would help them to achieve their career goals and 69% reported having gained a greater appreciation of foreign culture due to studying the foreign language. However, 40% of the students felt that a more culturally responsive approach toward curriculum content would make the course more meaningful for them. Ninety one percent of them identified themselves as African American and an overwhelming 72% of the respondents were female.

Moore (2005) employed a quantitative approach to survey African-American students' experiences at the university level. Noting that most research pertaining to students' perspectives on foreign language learning depicts those of White students, Moore (2005) sought to ascertain the reasons for low enrollments of African-American students in foreign language courses as well as teacher education programs. The framework was based on three assumptions: a) If students have an early foundation in foreign language, then they will be more likely to continue this study at the university level, b) The type of experiences family members had with foreign language and if there were cultural representations in the curriculum would affect whether a student would enroll in a course, and c) African American males would be less likely to take a foreign

language. The data revealed that there was no evident connection between early language student and college-level enrollment. There was also no indication that family experiences had an effect on whether a student enrolled in a foreign language. Finally, while more male students were enrolled in a foreign language course, the study found that those who were surveyed revealed that enrollment was a requirement for their major and had it not been, they would not have enrolled in the course.

Lambert and Cazabon (1994) studied 300 students in a voluntary two-way immersion program in Massachusetts. The “Amigos Program” consisted of native speakers of English and native speakers of Spanish, all of whom were reported to come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Of the native speakers of English, fifty percent of them were African American. The purpose of the program was to provide “an effective bilingual experience for both Spanish native and English-native young people” and to “cultivate friendships with children from different ethnic groups” (p. 8). The goal of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of this program. While the results of the data described students’ perceptions of the program, they also showed that native English speakers, including the African-American students, performed better on their standardized testing than did students who were not enrolled in an immersion program.

Lucas (1995) researched the beliefs and attitudes of African-American students and foreign language study at the secondary school level. Lucas (1995) posited that within a communicative framework, the foreign language student’s attitudes and beliefs will be a factor in a student’s foreign language acquisition. The purpose of the study was to ascertain not only how the beliefs that African-American students have about foreign language study differs from the White counterparts, but also to ascertain how the beliefs

of those students who continue in a foreign language program differ from their counterparts (Lucas, 1995).

Caldas and Boudreaux (1999) attempted to answer the question of whether participation in an immersion program would enhance or inhibit the academic achievement of children in poverty in their native language. Caldas and Boudreaux (1999) analyzed the language and math test scores for 1,941 White and African American immersion and non-immersion students grades 3, 5, and 7 from 13 schools. What was found, in general, was the immersion students did better at all three levels. Moreover, African-American students with low socioeconomic status scored comparably with their higher socioeconomic counterparts even though overall, they scored lower than the White students.

Haj-Broussard (2002) studied the effects of an immersion program on language and math achievement test scores. The study included 247 fourth grade students of which 47% of the students participated in an immersion program and 53% participated in a traditional language program. While the aforementioned students were disaggregated by race, Haj-Broussard (2002) found that the African-American students in the immersion program scored similarly on language and math achievement tests as did those enrolled in traditional programs. Moreover, while a significant difference in the math performance scores between African American and White students enrolled in the traditional program were found, there was no significant difference in math scores between African Americans enrolled in the immersion program and White students enrolled in the traditional program. Haj-Broussard (2002) also noted that students who participated in the immersion program reported having a high self-esteem. However, the

qualitative portion of this study was small and further research should be conducted to explore how enrolling in an immersion program can affect self-esteem.

Krause (1999) pondered the reasons as to why African-American students in a TWI were not completing the program. Using a mixed methods approach, Krause (1999) studied African-American students from low socioeconomic backgrounds that were in the fifth grade and gathered data through interviews and observations. The study attempted to answer the following questions (p. 66):

- How is program completion impacted by various factors that are known to influence school achievement?
- Are English dominant students from socioeconomic backgrounds achieving literacy levels comparable to their counterparts in a two-way immersion program?

African-American students typically made up between 21-30% of the entering kindergarten classes. However, Krause (1999) found that not only were graduation rates of the aforementioned students significantly lower, they were also not gaining proficiency in the target language which hindered their academic achievement in their grade level curriculum. In her study, Krause (1999) concluded that African Americans were less likely to graduate than their white and Hispanic counterparts; African-American students were less likely to read on grade level in English; and TWIs do not meet the needs of African-American students as well as it does students from other cultural backgrounds. The implications suggested the need for more research on African-American students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in TWIs and African-American students in TWIs who speak nonstandard dialects of English.

Carrigo (2000) used an ethnographic approach to study a two-way immersion program (TWI) at the middle school level. The goal was to assess four areas of the program: a) percentage of student and teacher Spanish language use, (b) percentage of Spanish use, (c) the presence of an additive bilingual environment for both English home-speakers, (d) and Spanish home-speakers and what factors influence student perceptions of Spanish language status, Spanish speaker status and ethnic group status. The findings suggest in terms of language use, there was a considerable amount of English spoken in the Spanish portion of the immersion program by both students and teachers. Carrigo (2000) also found that African-American students were more likely to be the most resistant in speaking Spanish. Carrigo (2000) posited that this is possibly due to a lack of cultural relevance in the TWI curriculum. Moreover, when students were asked which ethnic group they thought were the smartest and which they would invite to a party, African Americans were chosen last among both White and Latino students; therefore suggesting that the TWI should make a concerted effort to address the needs as perceptions of African-American students in the TWI.

Boone (2007) studied parent and student perceptions of factors that lead to academic success for African-American students in TWIs as well as the challenges that the students had to conquer to be successful. As part of the ethnographic study, Boone (2007) interviewed six fifth grade African-American students using nine open-ended questions. Questions were asked of their primary caregivers. In general, the students, as well as their primary care givers, felt that it was important to learn another language because it could enhance their future careers. Moreover, the students had good rapport with their teachers and classmates and participated in numerous Spanish activities outside

of school. In addition, the primary caregivers were active participants in their children's education by serving on the Parent Teacher Organization, helping with their homework and keeping in contact with their child's teacher. All of the themes were said to be contributing factors in the student's academic success. In terms of challenges, the primary caregivers were concerned about not being able to help their children with their homework and expressed a need for language classes geared toward them. Moreover, the primary caregivers expressed that the extracurricular activities designed to enhance the program have equitable classes for the African-American students and that these activities be offered consistently.

Ansberg-Espinosa (2008) also explored the factors that contribute to African-American students and their participation in TWIs. Ansberg-Espinosa (2008) collected data that pertained to the "linguistic and cultural realities and attitudes" (p. 81) of both the students and the parents. As with the majority of the studies surrounding African Americans and their experiences in TWIs, Ansberg-Espinosa (2008) gathered data through ethnographic interview and interviewed nine upper elementary and middle school students along with their parents. Some of the same themes that Boone (2007) found emerged from the interviews. For instance, students stated that they stayed in the program due to the positive rapport they had with the teachers and the other students. Students also remained in the program because they understood how being bilingual could impact their future. Subsequently, the parents were satisfied with the program overall and kept their children in the program because they recognized the benefits of being bilingual and were committed to having their children complete the program. In

addition, parents attributed the positive school culture and sense of school community to the reason that students stay in the program.

Glynn (2008) used questionnaires and interviews to conduct a study among White, Somali, Latino and African-American suburban high school students in an introductory level Spanish course. Glynn (2008) found that while the African-American students enjoyed the class, they were most apprehensive about taking the next level Spanish course for fear of not performing well. Moreover, Pratt (2012) surveyed African-American students about their motivation for taking a foreign language and found that at the onset, their motivation was similar to students from other ethnicities, but that as study progressed, their interest waned and complicated the decision to enroll in more advanced courses. In 2012, Glynn employed a comparative case study to review the enrollment and experiences of African-American students in urban and suburban settings. Through questionnaires, focus groups and individual interviews, Glynn (2012) found that enrollment for African-American students was lower than other ethnic groups and that teachers held negative perceptions of the ability of African-American students to perform well.

Finally, Boudreaux (2010) examined factors that affect student attrition in a large French immersion program. The conceptual framework was based on two theories: Tinto's (1993) model of student departure and Hirschman's (1980) theory of exit and voice as it relates to parent satisfaction of the program. Using a mixed-methods approach, Boudreaux (2010) collected quantitative data that pertained to the attrition rates that were disaggregated by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Boudreaux (2010) also collected quantitative data relative to factors that affect persistence and withdrawal,

along with qualitative data pertinent to the parents' level of satisfaction with the program. As a result, three major findings were established. First, while parents' pre-program aspirations were inconsistent, there was an overall satisfaction with the program. Parents wanted their children to be challenged academically and belong to a program with a select group of students (Boudreaux, 2010). Second, Boudreaux (2010) discovered that students' pre-program attributes had only slight significance on persistence or withdrawal from the program. For example, Black students withdrew from the program an average of 1.33 grade levels earlier than their non-Black counterparts. Finally, Boudreaux (2010) revealed that the student's experiences and level of satisfaction played a significant role in persistence or withdrawal. Students were reported to have been withdrawn in early primary grades due to parents not being satisfied with the grades their children received. In addition, parents withdrew some students later in elementary school due to dissatisfaction with the location of the middle school that housed the next phase of the immersion program. Boudreaux (2010) concluded by offering recommendations for further research on the issue.

Conclusion

Immersion programs, as a vehicle for foreign language instruction, have become increasingly popular in the United States throughout the past few decades. These programs can be implemented in a variety of ways and are not limited to starting at the elementary level. Advocates for immersion programs cite increased proficiency in the target language, as well as high academic performance in English. Conversely, research also indicates an issue in student attrition in immersion programs asking the question, "If immersion programs are so beneficial, why are students not completing them?" In

addition, the research that revealed how immersion programs impact student populations as they relate to certain demographics (e.g., ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and gender) is limited. Moreover, the results of data collected from the research that has been conducted in reference to the African American student populations are inconsistent. Future research should be conducted to ascertain more information as to how participation in an immersion program affects diverse learners.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Many methods are available for researchers to choose from when designing a study (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that affect the persistence of African-American students in a partial Spanish Immersion Program (SIP). The participants were parents of African-American students who were either currently enrolled in the SIP, had graduated from the SIP, or had been withdrawn from the SIP. The rationale for identifying factors that affect persistence is to be able to use them to inform the development of guidance and interventions that will address them. Subsequently, African-American students who persist in the Spanish Immersion Program will reap the benefits of learning a second language. Data collected in this study included longitudinal data analysis and survey data which were used to establish a foundation for the discussion that occurred as a result of the focus group.

Theoretical Framework

The guiding question for this research study was “What factors influence African-American students’ persistence in a partial Spanish immersion program?” In an effort to address this question, a qualitative research design was used. The aim was to analyze responses from a survey and a focus group to gain an understanding of the participants’ thoughts about their children’s experience in a partial Spanish immersion program. Since the primary focus was to gain meaning from the focus group responses, a qualitative approach was the best fit for the research study.

Creswell (1998) initially described qualitative design as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social

or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). More recently, Creswell and Poth (2017) posited that pinpointing an actual definition of qualitative research is difficult because it is constantly evolving. Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 14) defined qualitative as “an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured [if measured at all] in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency”. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) went on to say, “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry.” Denzin and Lincoln (2008 p. 3) also stated that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.”

Research philosophies have an indelible impact on every research study (Hashemnezhad, 2015). For this research study, the use of qualitative inquiry allowed for the exploration of epistemology and theoretical perspectives, in particular, constructivism and interpretivism respectively. Baxter and Jack (2008) stated that “Constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one’s perspective”, and described an advantage to using the constructivist epistemology by positing “through these stories the participants are able to describe their views of reality and this enables the researcher to better understand the participants” (p. 545). Creswell (2014) offered the following perspective on constructivism:

“Social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meaning of their experiences-meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views

rather than narrow meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied.” (p. 8)

Moreover, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism is inextricably linked to constructivism. Interpretivists view knowledge as being gained through a strategy that “respects the differences between people and the objects of natural science and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Al Riyami, 2015, p. 413). Gray (2004, p. 23) cited Crotty (1998) when stating that interpretivism looks for ‘culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world’. Gray (2004) also cited Williams and May (1996) noting, “There is no, direct, one-to-one relationship between ourselves (subjects) and the world (object). The world is interpreted through the classification schemas of the mind (p. 91).” Crotty (1998) continued by stating that interpretivism is “an understanding of the text that is deeper or goes further than the author’s own understanding” and that the writing process “has the potential to uncover meanings and intentions that are . . . hidden in the text (p. 91).” The deeper dive into the data allows researchers to interact with the data in a more intrinsic way. Qualitative research is inductive in nature due to its flexibility (Hashemnezhad, 2015). As such, its use allowed for an analysis of the specifics in the data gleaned from the survey and the focus group to apply them to more generalizable concepts.

Subsequently, the content analysis theoretical framework was employed for this study. It consists of “purposively selected texts which can inform the research questions being investigated” (Hashemnezhad, 2015, p. 60). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) defined content analysis as a “research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes

or patterns” (p. 1278). Moreover, content analysis can be conducted through the lens of either deductive or inductive reasoning. In addition, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identified three types of content analysis: (a) conventional content analysis (i.e., codes are developed as the data analysis progresses); (b) directed content analysis (i.e., codes are defined prior to and during the analysis of data); and (c) summative content data analysis (i.e., keywords, from the review of literature, are established prior to the analysis). This research study employed conventional content analysis where codes were developed during the process of data analysis. Inductive in nature, content analysis allows the categories to evolve from the data and new themes to emerge (Hsieh & Shannon (2005).

Research Design

This research study employed a case study approach. Yin (2014) defined a case as “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context” (p. 13). Yin (2014) continued in that a case study is appropriate when the focus of the study is to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about “a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (p. 2). Referencing the relationship between constructivism and case studies, Merriam (1998) stated:

“The researcher brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people’s constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. The final product of this type of study is yet another interpretation by the researcher of others’ views filtered through his or her own. (p. 22)

Yazan (2015) cited Merriam who contended that “the key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” (p. 137). Therefore, case studies seek to

answer questions that provide insight into how people take their experiences and construct meaning from them (Yazan, 2015). More specifically, this study was designed as an explanatory case study. Yin (2014) stated that in order for a study to be considered explanatory, it must meet the following criteria: (a) the study must seek to explore a contemporary phenomenon rather than a historical one, (b) it must attempt to answer the questions “how” or “why”, (c) and it must explore a phenomenon over which the researcher has no control. Therefore, this explanatory case study sought to determine why parents chose to continue or discontinue their child’s enrollment in a SIP.

Population/Setting

This research project was set in a city in the Midwestern United States that has become increasingly more diverse with the influx of Spanish speakers in the last three decades. Ninety-two different languages are spoken in the school district, with two of them being languages used in partial immersion programs. The school district offers a partial Spanish immersion program that begins in three elementary schools (all of whose names have been changed for anonymity in this study), with the option of continuing the program that converges at a middle school and its corresponding high school. Two of the three are neighborhood elementary schools. Upon entering, parents could choose whether they wish to enroll their children in the Spanish immersion or regular kindergarten track. The first neighborhood school is Lincoln Elementary. It has an enrollment of 810 students with 19% of those students being African American and 41% qualify for free and reduced lunch (See Table 3.1). The second neighborhood school is Nordstrom Elementary. It has the most diverse student population with 38% of its students being African American and 29% of the students being Hispanic (See Table

3.1). Both Lincoln and Nordstrom elementary schools host partial immersion strands where those students who were enrolled in the track spend half of the day immersed in Spanish. Classes taught during this period included math and science. Students were instructed in English the other half of the day and classes taught in English include language arts and social studies.

The third school is Martin Elementary. It differs from the neighborhood schools in that it is not a school that hosts Spanish Immersion strands, but rather it is a Spanish immersion magnet school. Martin Elementary has been a Spanish immersion magnet school since 1990. The school-wide curriculum follows a half-day partial immersion model in which 50% of instruction occurs in Spanish. Math, science and language arts are taught in the target language, while reading, writing, and social studies are taught in English. Students also have the opportunity to take arts and humanities classes in the target language.

Students in kindergarten and first grade are admitted to Martin Elementary based on a lottery drawing. Parents can apply for admission online or in person. The school district sends information about the application window to parents in seven of the ninety-two languages spoken in the district. District policy stated that the student enrollment at the elementary must reflect the population demographics of the school district. As a result, the lottery application process for admission to the Spanish Immersion Program weights certain factors for priority that help to meet the diversity goals of the school (e.g., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status).

Students in subsequent grades can test as long as there is availability and as long as they demonstrate that their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills meet the

curriculum standards in both Spanish and English. Once students complete fifth grade, they may choose to attend the Spanish Immersion Program feeder middle school. If they complete the Spanish Immersion Program in middle school, they may subsequently enroll in the program at high school. Martin Elementary has an approximate enrollment of 523 students with a diverse student body (See Table 3.1). The free and reduced lunch students make up 24% of the student body in addition to 6% of students who are English language learners. Martin Elementary is the setting for this study.

Table 3.1

Ethnic Demographics of Elementary Schools with Spanish Immersion

| | Lincoln Elementary | Nordstrom Elementary | Martin Elementary |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| White | 57% | 29% | 53% |
| African American | 19% | 38% | 18% |
| Hispanic | 11% | 29% | 19% |
| Asian | 6% | 0% | 3% |
| Other | 6% | 4% | 7% |

The initial rationale for this study was to determine factors that affect African-American students' persistence in a partial Spanish Immersion Program. However, the findings suggested that based on what the parents perceive their child's academic and social experiences to be determined whether or not they kept their child in the program. Parents play an integral role in the planning and decision-making process of the child's education and it is important to understand what impacts this process (Baig, 2011). Moreover, the success and continuation of immersion programs, like the one in this study, depends on parents voluntarily applying for it and once their child is accepted, ultimately making the decision whether to withdraw their student at any point or allow them to persist until graduation. Therefore, research that includes the parent perspective

on motivation for seeking enrollment and/or reasons for withdrawing would help school administration planners and policy makers to take a more comprehensive approach to providing an environment suitable for all students and parents (Gerena, 2011). Gerena (2011, p. 346) stated “If research supports specific parental values, attitudes, and motivation, then it would behoove policy planners to recognize and meet these parental constructs to encourage and stimulate student and parent participation in these programs.” Throughout the literature there is an absence of the perspective of African American parents in relation to their children’s education (Ansberg-Espinosa, 2008). Their perspective in understanding their child’s educational experiences is critical. Ansberg-Espinosa (2008) stated “it is this perspective that greatly informs teachers and administrators and, at the same time, communicates to parents that their opinions and perspectives are valued (p. 89).” Although participation in studies like these can be small, data can be gathered and used to compare to experiences reported by other parents of African-American students in a partial immersion program.

In order to be considered for participation, the following criteria had to have been met:

- 1 – Parents identified their students as African American.
- 2 – Students had to have begun the SIP in either kindergarten or first grade at Martin Elementary.
- 3 - Students had to have enrolled in the SIP at any point between 1999 and 2013.

The criteria allowed for more breadth of data over a longitudinal timeline.

In order to solicit volunteers to participate in the research study, a letter describing the purpose of the study and criteria for participation was sent to the presidents of the Black

Greek Letter Organizations in the city, as well as to the six churches with the largest African-American congregations. Subsequently, 15 surveys were completed and eight volunteers participated in the focus group about the experiences of their child(ren) in the Spanish Immersion Program (SIP). The purpose of the focus group was to provide insight into some responses generated from the survey and to allow parents the opportunity to expound upon the experiences of their children in the SIP. All volunteers of the focus group responded to the survey. All were African American and included both males and females (m = 2; f = 7).

During the course of the focus group, parent demographics were gathered. The demographics were then assigned attributes codes as a preliminary step in providing information about the participants. This type of coding serves as a management technique that organizes the demographic data of the participants (Saldaña, 2013, p. 70). Hedlund-de Witt (2013) described attribute coding as “the notion, typically used at the beginning of the set, rather than embedded within it, of the basic descriptive information such as: work setting (e.g., name, location), participant characteristics or demographics, data format (e.g., interview, transcript, field note, document), time frame or other relevant variables” (p. 9). It is a “way of documenting ‘cover’ information about the participants, the site, or other components of the study” (Hedlund-de Witt, 2013, p. 9). Seven attributes codes were used in all.

Attribute codes used for the participants in this study were as follows: age, ethnicity, number of child(ren), level of education, occupation, socioeconomic status, and experience with Spanish.

Lisa. Lisa (all names in this study are pseudonyms) is a 41-year old African-American mother of 3 students currently enrolled in the SIP. She has a daughter in the 11th grade, a son in the 7th grade, and a son in the first grade who has special needs. Lisa earned a master's degree, is a family therapist, and falls in the middle class socioeconomic status range. She never studied Spanish, but her husband double majored with one of the majors being Spanish.

Veronica. Veronica is a 55-year old African-American mother of 2 daughters who are currently in the program. Her twins are in the 11th grade. She earned a master's degree, works as an epidemiologist, and falls in the middle class socioeconomic status range. She never studied Spanish.

Toni. Toni is a 54-year old African-American mother of 3 daughters, all of whom graduated from the SIP. She earned a master's degree, is a senior vice president of a printing company, and falls in the upper-middle class socioeconomic status range. She never studied Spanish.

Evonda. Evonda is a 48-year old African-American mother of a daughter who graduated from the SIP and a son who is currently enrolled in the SIP in the 10th grade. She is an attorney who falls in the upper middle class socioeconomic status range. She never studied Spanish, but she and her husband took some classes offered by the elementary school.

Sandra. Sandra is a 42-year old African-American mother of two sons, one of whom graduated from the SIP, and the other who withdrew from the SIP after the third grade. She holds a master's degree, is a purchasing coordinator, and falls with the middle class socioeconomic status range. She never studied Spanish.

Robert & Andrea. Robert and Andrea are African American and are the parents of twins. Their daughter is currently enrolled in the 10th grade and their son withdrew from the SIP after third grade. Robert is 51, holds a doctoral degree, and is a professor. Andrea is 48, holds a bachelor's degree, and is a claims investigator. They fall within the middle class socioeconomic status range and neither has studied Spanish.

Cliff & Tina. Cliff and Tina are African American and the parents of two daughters both of whom withdrew from the SIP (one in 7th grade and one in 6th grade). Cliff is 47, holds a bachelor's degree, and is an account executive. Tina is 44, holds a master's degree, and is a teacher. Cliff studied Spanish in high school, but Tina never studied it.

Data Collection

Data were collected from the school district to identify trends in participation/attrition in the Spanish Immersion Program. The data were de-identified and disaggregated by race and gender to ascertain trends in the number of African-American students who continued in the program in grade 6 at the feeder middle school, grade 9 at the feeder high school, and completed the immersion program in grade 12 at the feeder high school. Subsequently, some of the parents of these students who continued in the program to completion and parents whose children withdrew from the program completed a survey and participated in a focus group. The purpose was to identify factors that contributed to parent and student decisions to continue or withdraw from the Spanish immersion program.

To accompany the longitudinal data seen in Tables 3.2 and 3.3, data were collected from two other sources; a survey questionnaire and a focus group. First, a survey

questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered to parents of African-American students whose children had enrolled in the SIP at Martin Elementary at some point between 1999 and 2013. The survey questions, adopted from Boudreaux (2010), were designed to serve as an impetus for gauging the parents' thoughts about the concept of immersion and their satisfaction with the SIP. Akin to Tinto's Model of Student Departure (1993) which discusses the effects of pre-entry attributes on the social and academic integration of students entering college and Boudreaux's revised model, the survey focused on the reasons that parents enrolled their children in the Spanish Immersion Program and how committed they were to it at the time of their child's enrollment and how satisfied they were with the SIP experience. Survey themes were divided into the following categories: reasons to enroll, level of commitment, program expectations, and program satisfaction. The responses were captured using a Likert scale and the subsequent data were charted. Administering the survey offered a starting point for identifying factors that influence African-American students' persistence in a Spanish Immersion Program. The survey ended with an open-response question which allowed respondents to describe and give examples of their children's experiences in the SIP.

Table 3.2

SIP Completion 2015

| Grade | Gender | Ethnicity | Sp Ed | Diploma Date | Year in 5 th Grade |
|-------|--------|-----------|----------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/30/2015 | 2007-08 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/30/2015 | 2007-08 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/30/2015 | 2007-08 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/30/2015 | 2007-08 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/30/2015 | 2007-08 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/30/2015 | 2007-08 |
| 5 | M | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | NA | 2007-08 |

Note. AfrAm=African-American; Non-SpEd= Students not in special education

Table 3.3

SIP Completion 2016

| Grade | Gender | Ethnicity | SpEd | Diploma Date | Year |
|-------|--------|-----------|----------|--------------|---------|
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | F | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | M | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | M | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | M | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | M | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | M | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | M | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | 5/26/2016 | 2008-09 |
| 5 | M | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | N/A | 2008-09 |
| 5 | M | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | N/A | 2008-09 |
| 5 | M | AfrAm | Non-SpEd | N/A | 2008-09 |

Note. AfrAm=African-American; Non-SpEd= Students not in special education

The second instrument that was used was a collection of questions asked of parents in focus groups. Focus groups are designed to provide an opportunity for its participants to have insightful discussion around meaningful issues in an environment where they can interact among themselves as well as the moderator (Ryan, Gandha, Culbertson & Carlson, 2014). Groups of eight to ten participants meet for one to two hours to discuss a “set of targeted questions designed to elicit collective views about a specific topic” (Ryan, Gandha, Culbertson & Carlson, 2014, p. 329). The rationale for collecting this qualitative research was to expound upon the quantitative data from the survey questionnaire as they related to participation/attrition in the Spanish Immersion Program and to offer explanations for continuation/discontinuation. Following the

survey with focus groups allowed for the opportunity to gain more insight on the respondents' survey answers.

Nine parents participated in a focus group that took approximately two hours. Since parents play an integral role in where their children attend school, the interview questions that were posed focused on the parents' experiences with the SIP and their perceptions of their children's experiences. While these questions served as the foundation for the discussion, the flow was flexible and allowed for open topics, including follow up questions to gain further understanding. The research questions were adopted from Ansberg-Espinosa (2008). The questions were intended to serve as a follow up to the survey to allow parents to cite specific examples and expound upon their children's experiences in the SIP. More specifically, the focus group questions were intended to glean information related to the following: expectations of the program, intentions for and commitment to the program, academic experiences, social experiences, and decision to continue or discontinue the program (See Figure 1.1).

Focus Group Questions

- 1 – What is the reason you enrolled your child in the Spanish Immersion program?
- 2 – What did you know about Spanish Immersion at the time of your enrollment? How did you see this program helping your child in the future?
- 3 – What expectations did you have of the SIP? How did the SIP live up to these expectations?
- 4 – Have you ever felt worried about his/her ability to learn English considering language arts is carried out in Spanish?

5 – What, if anything, has made you/your child feel upset/discouraged or unmotivated?

6 – Did s/he have any really difficult moments in this program where s/he might have wanted to quit studying at this school? Please explain.

7 – Your child made it to ____ grade in this program. A) Can you tell me why you and/or your child made the decision to stay with the immersion program? B) Do you want your child to stay in the immersion program through 5th grade? 8th grade? High school? C) Has anything in particular made your child want to stay in the program?/made you want your child to stay in the program?

8 – Your child made it to ____ grade in this program. A) Can you tell me why you and/or your child made the decision to leave the immersion program?

9 – Would you recommend this program to other African American families?

10 – Can you tell me about any other African-American students who were in the program but are no longer there? Do you know why?

11 – How do you think being African American has affected/might affect his/her experience in the SIP? What about his/her relationships with other students? With teachers? With principal or other adults on campus?

12 – Are you aware of the number of African Americans at the school? Explain your child's experience of being one of only a few African-American students at your school. How do you think being one of a few African-American students at the school may have made/make a difference for your child in the program? (Do you or your child notice it? Is

it comfortable, uncomfortable, etc.?) How do you think it would be different if there were more African Americans at the school?

13 – Are you aware of any activities in the classroom (stories or celebrations, etc.) that focus on African Americans in particular? If yes, what? Tell me your opinion about that.

14 – Can you think of a time when s/he might have discussed culture (especially African American culture) in classrooms or meetings and/or with teachers?

15 – Can you think of any recommendation you might have to improve the program for students, particularly African American students/families?

Data Analysis Procedures

The longitudinal data were analyzed to determine how many African-American students were in the fifth grade in the SIP in 2007 and 2008, then the data were analyzed to see how many African-American students were in eighth grade in the program in 2010 and 2011. Finally, the data were analyzed to determine how many African American graduated from the SIP in 2015 and 2016. The initial data served to set the foundation for the discussion of continuation and discontinuation in the program (See Tables 3.2 & 3.3).

The survey responses were analyzed to ascertain which responses on the Likert scale garnered the highest percentages. The responses were then graphed. The open-ended responses were analyzed to determine if any themes developed.

The audio file from the focus group was transcribed. Then, the researcher reviewed the transcript for accuracy and made any necessary changes. The coding method was used to analyze the focus group transcript. Coding moves “from the data to

the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea” (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 154). In other words, coding is an interpretive process that allows the researcher to take the data set as a whole, glean ideas from that whole data set, then support those ideas from smaller, more specific pieces of data. Subsequently, coding is the process of taking data and grouping it based on patterns, consistencies and/or commonalities (Saldaña, 2016). Patterns can be divided into several forms (Hatch, 2002, p. 155):

- similarities (things happening in the same way),
- difference (things happening in predictably different ways),
- frequency (how seldom or often they happen),
- sequence (things happen in a certain order),
- correspondence (things happen in relation to other activities or events)
- causation (one thing appears to cause another)

Coding methods are divided into first and second cycles, each having several broad subcategories from which a researcher can choose. Each broad category consists of individual coding methods. The broad categories of first cycle coding methods include (Saldaña, 2009, p. 67):

- grammatical- techniques for enhancing the organization, nuances, and texture of qualitative data
- elemental –foundation approaches to coding qualitative texts
- affective – investigates participant emotions, values, and other subjective qualities of human experiences
- literary and language – draw on aspects of written and oral communications for codes

- exploratory – permit open-ended investigation
- procedural – “standardized” ways to code data
- theming – extended passages of code in the form of sentences can also capture the essence and essentials of participant meanings

Each of these broad categories of methods has its own set of codes. As previously stated, for this study attribute coding, under the broad category of grammatical methods, was used as the preliminary step in analyzing data about the participants.

First, cycle coding is iterative and can be repeated multiple times (Saldaña, 2016). After the attribute codes were established, the researcher employed holistic coding which is another first cycle coding method. Holistic coding falls under the broad subcategory of exploratory methods. Exploratory coding methods assign preliminary codes to the data prior to refinement (Saldaña, 2016). More specifically, holistic coding applies “a single code to each large unity of data in the corpus to capture a sense of the overall contents and the possible categories that may develop” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 141). The final first cycle coding method used was descriptive coding. Descriptive codes are used to identify topics that emerge from the data versus using the content itself (Saldaña, 2016). This can be illustrated using a word or a short phrase and seeks to answer the question of what the study is about (Saldaña, 2016).

Once the first cycle of coding was completed, the researcher moved to the second cycle which involves more advanced techniques for reanalyzing the data corpus. This can consist of recoding (changing the name of an originally coded item for accuracy), merging codes (putting codes together that have similar concepts) or dropping codes (eliminating codes that are used redundantly or infrequently (Saldaña, 2016). This

research employed pattern coding. Saldaña (2016, p. 207) stated that the goal of pattern coding is “to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes.” Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 69) describe pattern codes as being “a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs.” Results from the analysis of both the first and second cycle coding methods are discussed in Chapter 4.

Limitations

Sampling Limitations. As previously mentioned, the participants in this study started their immersion experience at Martin Elementary which is one of three elementary schools in the district that offers an immersion program. The SIP began at Martin Elementary and thus it has the longest standing immersion program in the district. Furthermore, Martin is an immersion school while the other two elementary schools only have immersion tracks in which parents can choose to place their child(ren) or not. Martin is not a neighborhood school and students who attend are chosen through a lottery process. The population for this study came from parents of African-American students who attend/attended Martin and while the purposive homogeneous nature of the volunteers fit the need of the study, it may limit the ability to generalize the findings to other school settings like Lincoln and Nordstrom and to families whose demographics may be different.

Time Limitations. In addition, the longitudinal data used was based on information provided by the data director in the school district. It tracks the African-American students in two consecutive fifth grade classes (2007, 2008) of Martin Elementary to their high school graduation (2015, 2016) denoting whether or not the

student completed the SIP. Data for previous years was not available. The purpose of this quantitative data was to help establish a glimpse of African-American student enrollment in the SIP. Since the researcher only had access to two years of longitudinal data and time constraints did not allow for the researcher to be able to collect data for the subsequent year, the ability to identify trends was limited.

Researcher Limitations. The researcher is considered to be the primary instrument and, as such, who s/he, his/her experiences and his/her beliefs affect how s/he collects and analyzes the data (Saldaña, 2011). The researcher in this study is an African-American female who began studying French in fourth grade and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in French with a minor in Spanish and a Master's degree in French Linguistics. The researcher has been a French instructor at both the secondary and postsecondary levels at institutions with a predominantly African-American student body. While teaching at the postsecondary institution, the researcher's perception was that many African-American students enrolled in foreign language classes because they were required for graduation. Furthermore, they waited until their senior year to enroll. This made it difficult for the department to graduate students with degrees in foreign language. This was the impetus for the interest in African Americans and foreign language study. In addition, the researcher has worked in education administration at the state education department and the state Council on Postsecondary education to promote instructional equity, opportunity and access among ethnically and socio-economically diverse learners. Furthermore, the researcher has conducted trainings on cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that affect persistence among African-American students in a Spanish immersion program from the perspective of their parents. Participation in an immersion program is voluntary. In other words, parents intentionally choose to place their children in a specialized program that goes above and beyond state mandated requirements for children's education. Boudreaux (2010, p. 1) stated "Because foreign language immersion programs are voluntary, parents must choose to place their children in them at the time s/he enters kindergarten and, likewise, have the option to withdraw him/her before program completion." Therefore, from the findings, school districts and administrators will be able to identify the strengths common to their school systems and capitalize on them to decrease student attrition. In addition, schools and districts should be able to take the issues that were raised in this study, conduct any needs assessments in their programs, and identify strategies to address the concerns to increase student persistence. To provide the most comprehensive view of this case study, data was analyzed from three angles: longitudinal, survey, and focus group. The findings for this research study will be discussed threefold.

Longitudinal Data

Longitudinal data regarding enrollment and withdrawal trends in the SIP from the school district were limited. Data was secured relevant to the last two years. Tables 9 and 10 represent the number of African-American students that were in the SIP at the end of the fifth grade year in 2008 and 2009 and whether or not they completed the program. The data are disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and special education status. In Table

3.2, eleven African-American students (ten females and one male) were in the SIP at the end of the fifth grade. By graduation, all ten of the female students completed the program, while the male did not. Table 3.3 shows an increase in the number of African-American students that completed the fifth grade with 16 total students. Of these, 16 students seven were female and 9 were male. However, only six of the nine male students completed the program in comparison to all of the female students.

Survey Data

Student Information. A total of 15 parents responded to the survey. Of the respondents, 35.71% had students who were male, 64.29% were female, and all reported that their students were African American. Of the 15 respondents, 30% had students who had graduated, while the other 70% had students currently enrolled in school ranging from third to eleventh grade.

Student Academics. The next section of the survey asked about students' academics. Forty percent of respondents had students who were currently enrolled, 20% had students that had completed the program and graduated, 40% withdrew their students from the SIP prior to completion. This discontinuation ranged from second to eighth grade (See Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1).

Parents reported that students had earned As, Bs, and Cs in ELA/reading. Similar grades were reported for mathematics with one student receiving an F. Grades ranged from As to Ds in Spanish with 85% of the grades being As and Bs (See Figures 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4).

Table 4.1

Student Immersion Program Participation Status

| Participant | Child | Enrollment Status | Grade | |
|-----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Lisa | F1 | Enrolled | 11 | |
| | M1 | Enrolled | 7 | |
| | M2 | Enrolled | 1 | |
| Veronica | F1 | Enrolled | 11 | |
| | F2 | Enrolled | 11 | |
| Toni | F1 | Completed | NA | |
| | F2 | Completed | NA | |
| | F3 | Completed | NA | |
| Evonda | F1 | Completed | NA | |
| | M1 | Enrolled | 10 | |
| Sandra | M1 | Completed | NA | |
| | M2 | Withdrew | 3 | Withdrew after 3rd |
| Robert & Andrea | F1 | Enrolled | 10 | |
| | M1 | Withdrew | 10 | Withdrew after 3rd |
| Cliff & Tina | F1 | Withdrew | 10 | Withdrew after 7th |
| | F2 | Withdrew | 8 | Withdrew after 6th |

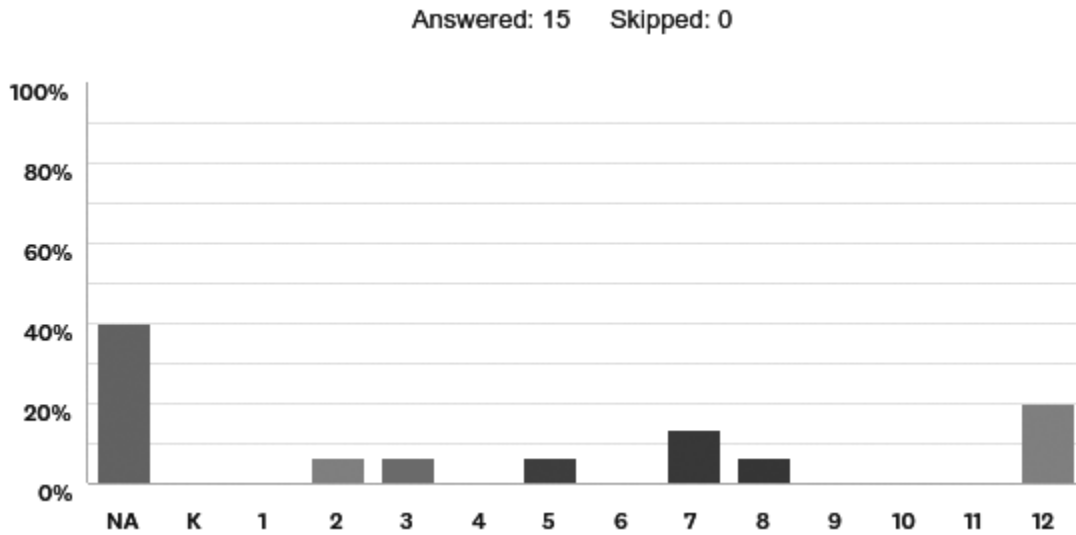


Figure 4.1. Withdrawal from the SIP. This figure illustrates the responses to the question “What grade did your child exit the Spanish Immersion Program?”

Answered: 14 Skipped: 1

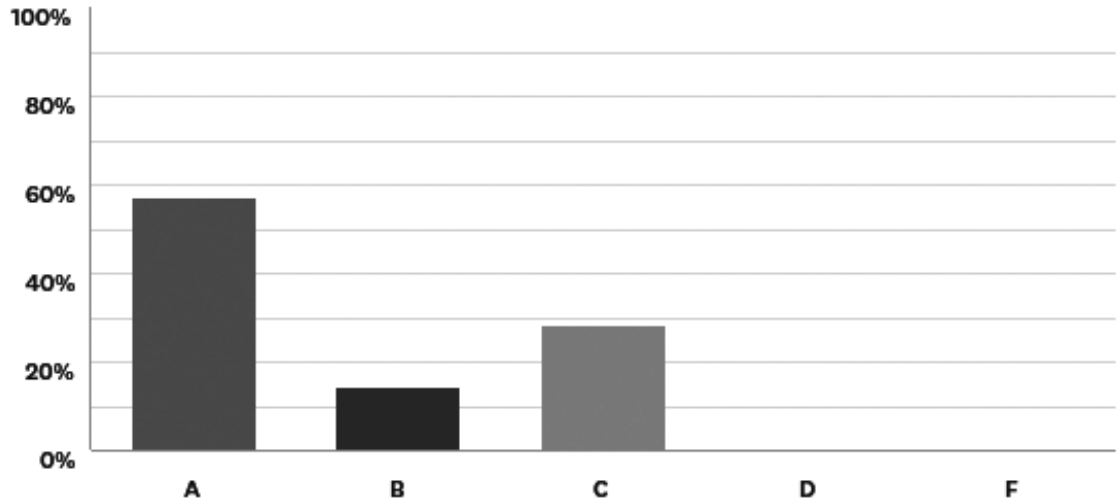


Figure 4.2. Grades in English/Language Arts and reading. This figures represents the responses to the question “What are your child’s current grades in ELA/reading or grades received at the time s/he exited the program?”

Answered: 14 Skipped: 1

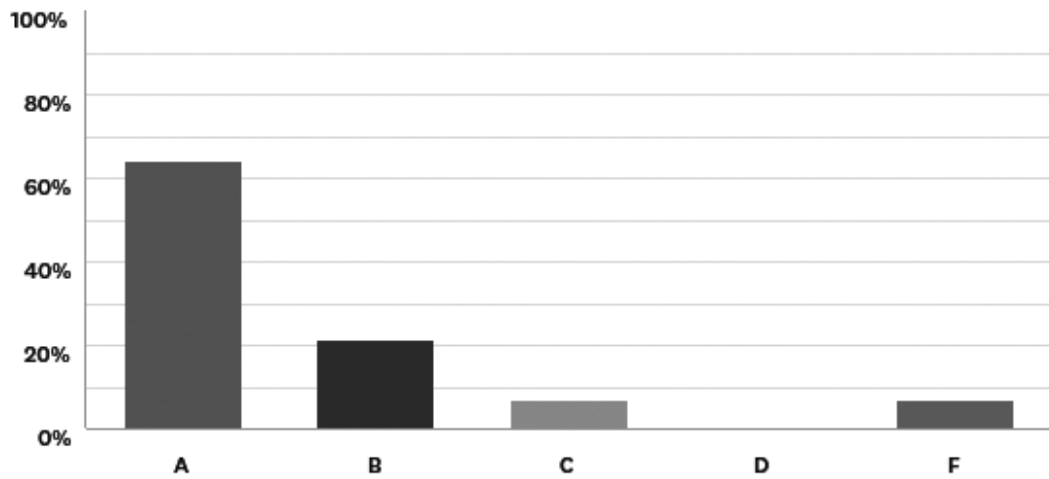


Figure 4.3. Grades in mathematics. This figures represents the responses to the question “What are your child’s current grades in mathematics or grades received at the time s/he exited the program?”

Answered: 13 Skipped: 2

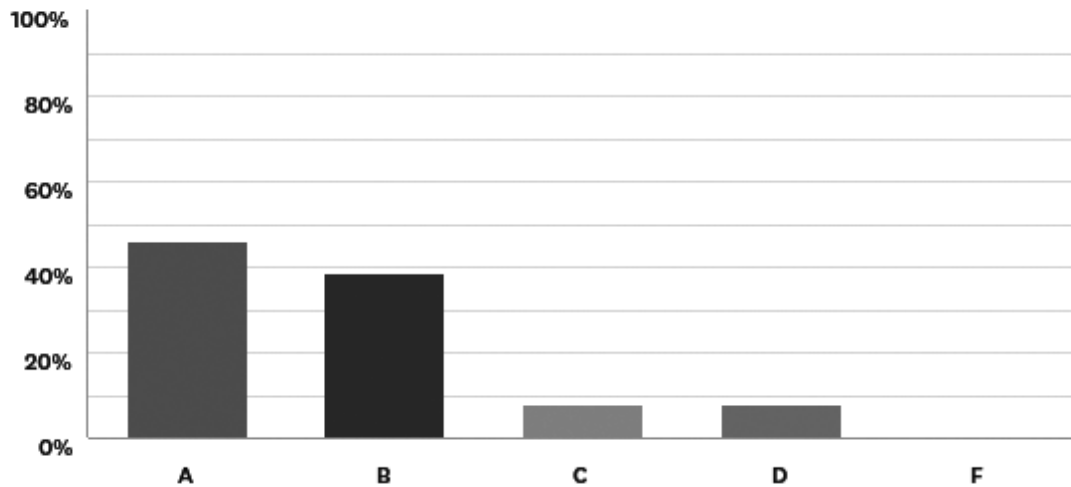


Figure 4.4. Grades in Spanish. This figures represents the responses to the question “What are your child’s current grades in Spanish or grades received at the time s/he exited the program?”

Reasons for Enrolling. In this section, responses were rated on a Likert scale ranging from such choices as “not important to extremely important”, “not influential to very influential”, and “does not apply to applies”. Respondents were allowed to check all responses that applied to their situation. In terms of enrollment decision, respondents were asked to rate statements on how important each was to their initial decision of enrolling their child(ren) in the SIP. The ability to speak two languages and increased academic achievement were the two reasons that were the most important to respondents with 100% of responses being “moderately” to “extremely” important (See Figure 4.5). In addition, respondents were asked to indicate which sources of information influenced their decision to enroll their child(ren) in the SIP. The top three sources of information that respondents rated as either influential or very influential in helping them decide to

enroll their child(ren) in the SIP were school/educators (80%), research on immersion (67%), and conversations with family and friends (67%) (See Figure 4.6).

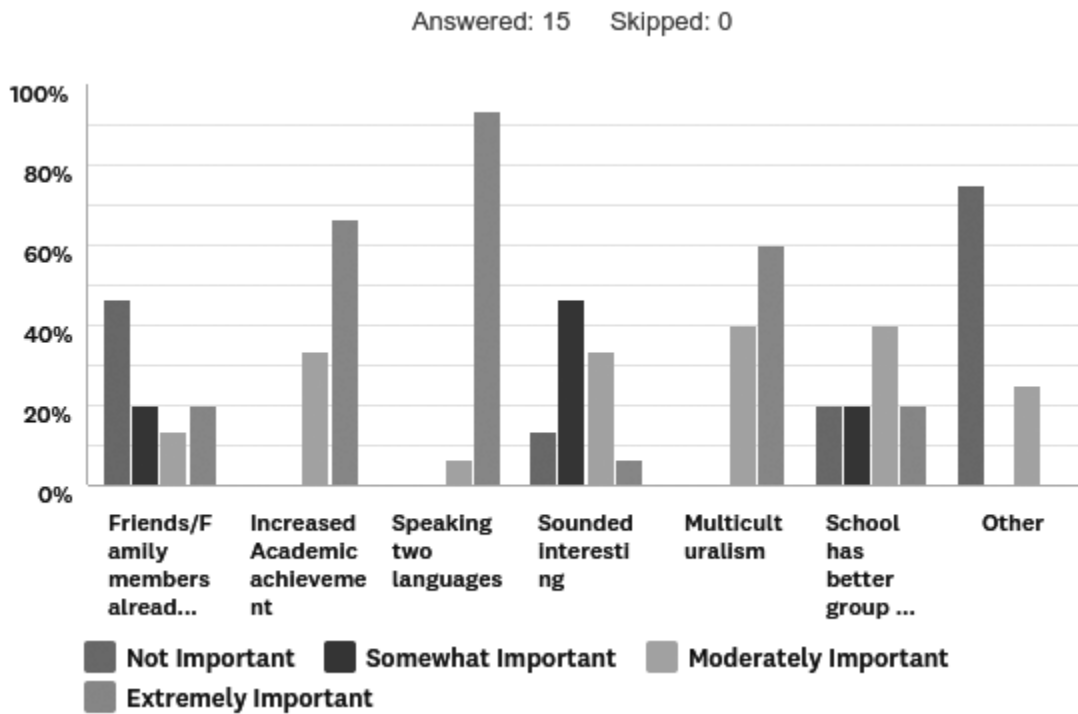


Figure 4.5. Reasons for Enrolling. This figure represents the responses to the statement “Indicate how important each of the following reasons was in your decision to enroll your child in the Spanish Immersion Program.”

Answered: 15 Skipped: 0

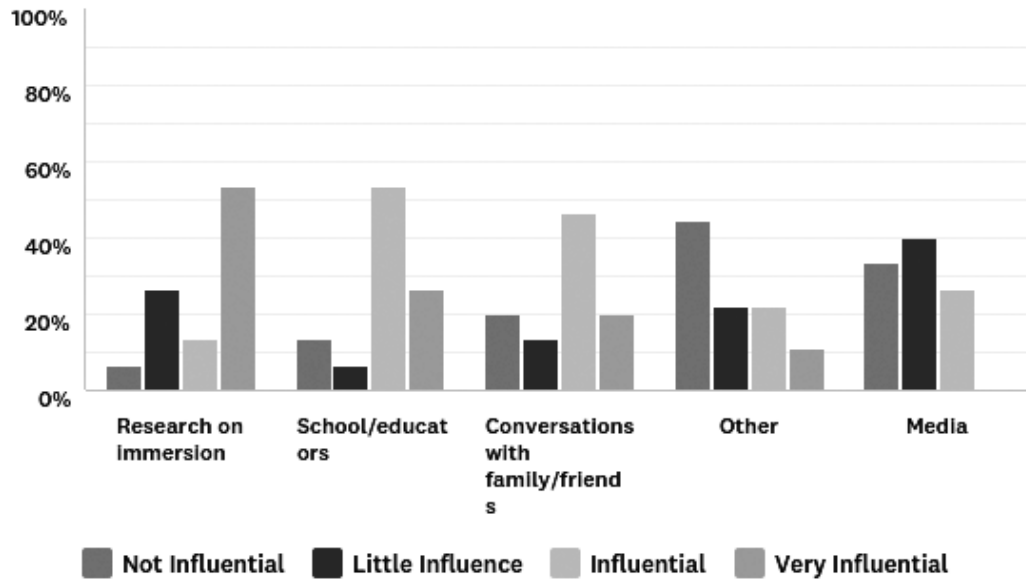


Figure 4.6. Enrollment decision influencers. This figure represents the responses to the statement “Indicate what source of information influenced your decision to enroll your child in the Spanish Immersion Program.”

In reference to program commitment at the time of enrollment in the SIP, 64.3% of respondents indicated that they were strongly committed to program, while 35.7% said they were committed, but with a few doubts (See Figure 4.7). Respondents also indicated that the SIP matched their expectations with 53.3% indicating that “most” expectations were matched and 46.7% indicating that “many” were matched (See Figure 4.8). Finally, when it came to how parents came to the decision to enroll their child in the SIP, the response that received the largest indication of applicability was “applied and got accepted” which received 86.7% followed by “asked questions to other parents/professionals” which received 60% (See Figure 4.9).

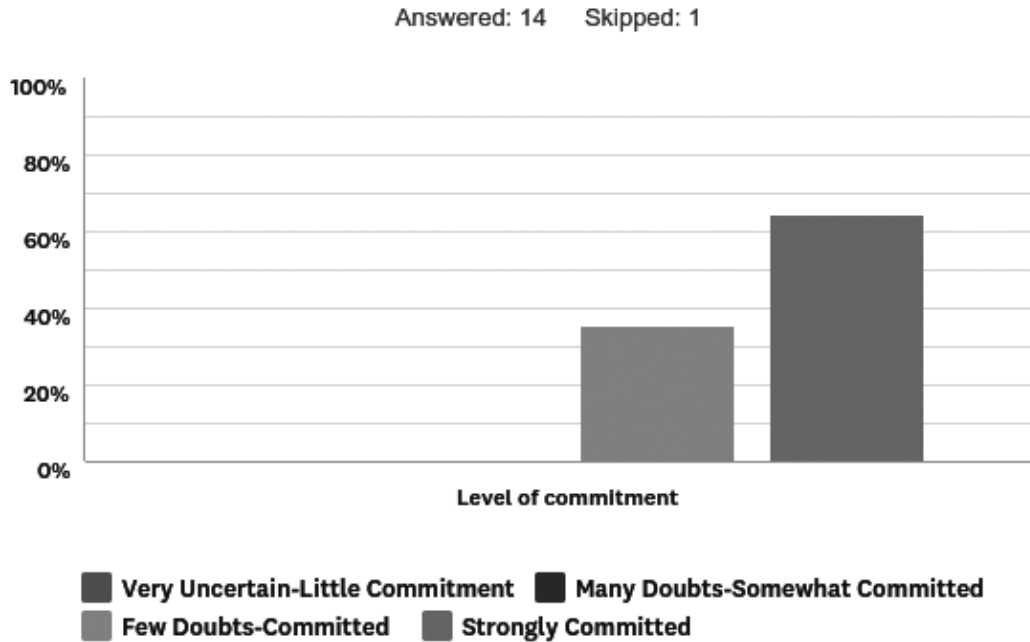


Figure 4.7. Level of Commitment. This figure represents responses to the statement “Rate your level of commitment to the Spanish Immersion Program at the time of your child’s enrollment?”

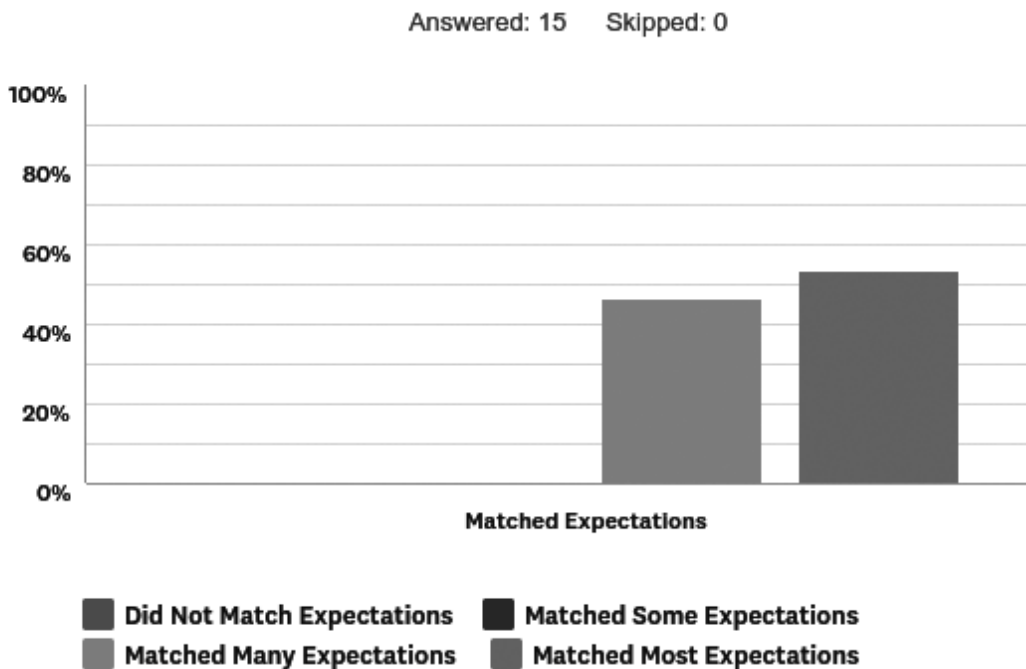


Figure 4.8. SIP Expectations. This figure represents responses to the statement “Indicate how the actual Spanish Immersion Program matched the expectations you had before enrolling your child in the program.”

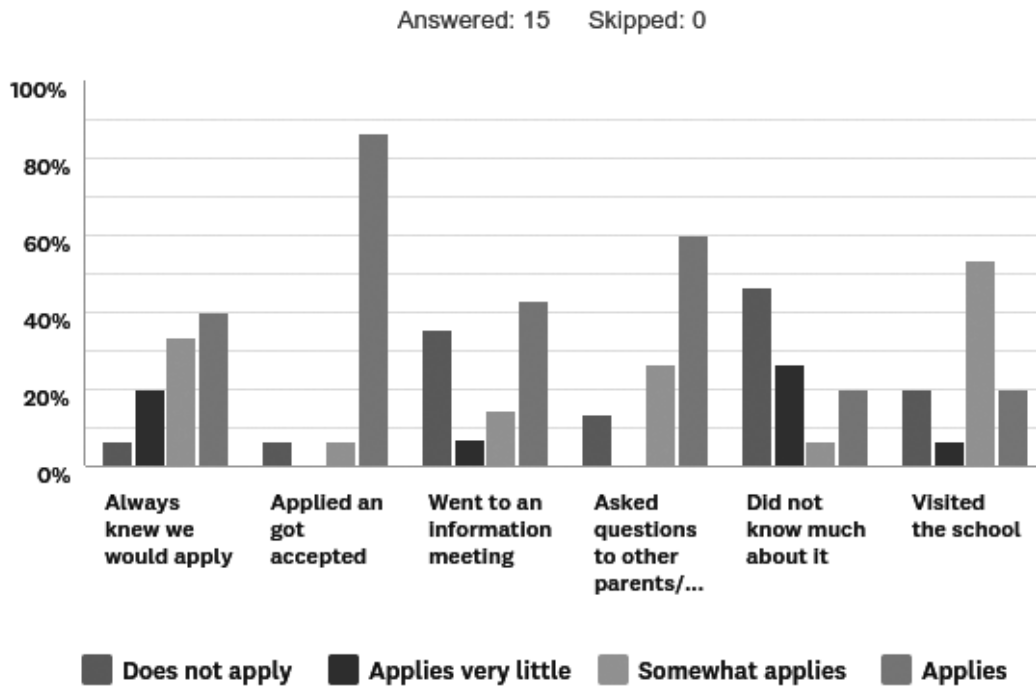


Figure 4.9. Decision for Enrolling. This figure represents responses to the statement “Indicate how you came to a decision to enroll your child in the Spanish Immersion Program.”

The next section of the survey asked participants to describe their level of satisfaction with different aspects of the program. In terms of program satisfaction, 53% were very satisfied with the school and 60% of respondents were satisfied with the administrators as a whole. However, respondents were more satisfied with the teachers who taught English than those who taught Spanish, reporting 73.3% and 60% respectively. In addition, 60% were satisfied with the program overall. Comments about the satisfaction of the SIP yielded three themes: cultural diversity, academic achievement, and support from administration and staff (See Figure 4.10).

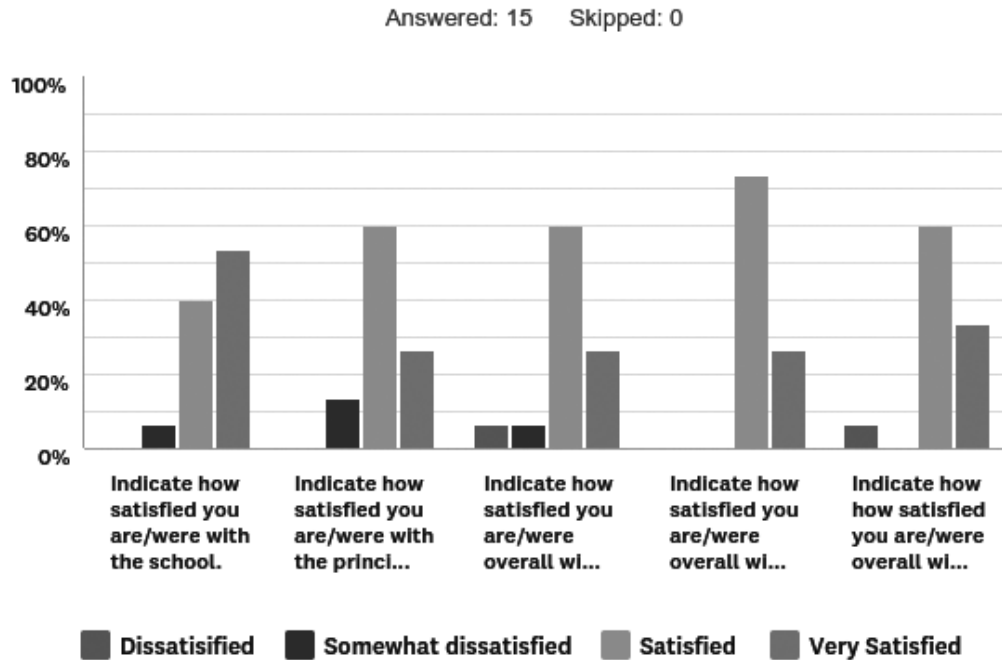


Figure 4.10. Program Satisfaction. This figure represents responses to the statement “Please select a response for each statement about the Spanish Immersion Program.”

Many respondents were satisfied with the culturally diverse experiences their students their students had in the SIP. Some responses are as follows:

“The staff embraces multiculturalism.”

“Children had several opportunities to have multi-cultural experiences.”

“We appreciate the ethnic diversity of students and teachers.”

“Diverse environment - both students and Spanish teachers. No other program in the county has this type of diversity of educators. And that is important for diverse students.”

“The school regularly has events focused on enhancing respect of diversity and education.”

In addition to being satisfied with the cultural diversity of the program, many respondents seemed satisfied with how their students performed academically. In

particular, respondents were satisfied with how the program challenged their students and how well they were able to speak Spanish.

“Child was treated as an individual and allowed to learn and be challenged at her level GTP (gifted/talented program).”

“Discipline and work ethic that my child adopted.”

“It offered a challenge for our child academically.”

“We like that the program sets high expectations for the kids and helps them to achieve them.”

“Beginning 1st grade, excellent language immersion experience and great teachers (both English and Spanish). My children graduated and were fluent in Spanish. Significant accomplishment achieved through dedicated and talented teachers who just created an incredible learning environment.”

“He learned a second language that he could speak fluently in.”

The third theme that came from the examples of satisfaction that respondents gave on the survey was the support from administration and staff. Participants reported that:

“Principal, teachers and staff were supportive in Martin Elementary.”

“The principal at the time was very hands on with the students.”

“Good teacher and parent relationships”

“Teachers encouraged parent participation.”

“The staff are devoted to helping students reach their greatest potential.”

In addition to providing examples of why they were satisfied with the program, respondents also provided examples as to why they were not satisfied. Two overarching themes rose to the surface of these comments: academic system and cultural incongruence between teachers and students. In reference to the academic system of the SIP, respondents were dissatisfied with the grades their students received as well as with certain aspects of the program structure and administration. Comments included:

“Middle school principal at the time (nameless, for now!) was not a strong advocate for SIP and was not an inspirational leader for SIP kids or Brook Stone

traditional students in general. It was hard, as a parent, to get involved and to create positive change at middle school for all kids, during that era.”

“The program model has not been consistent from year to year (ex. homework).”

“When [my student] went to middle school [s/he] was not where they needed to be with mastering of the language”

“They could have worked on English a little more.”

“As my child matriculated through elementary school program seem to get water down each year.”

“Grades received were demoralizing to my daughter.”

In addition to the dissatisfaction with some aspects of the program administration and structure, respondents also stated that they were dissatisfied with the cultural incongruence between some teachers and their students as well as a cultural shift from elementary school to middle school.

“A couple of teachers didn't meet expectations”

“How Spanish teachers treated AA (African American) students”

“Teachers in [middle school] were not as understanding of cultural differences.”

“Middle school did not maintain the same culture.”

“The last year we were there I felt that my son and his Spanish teacher clashed personality wise.”

Focus Group Results

The final component of data collection from this research project came from a focus group. As state previously, nine individuals volunteered to participate in an effort to discuss their personal experiences and the perceived experiences of their children in being a part of the SIP. The goal was to identify patterns that influenced a parent’s decision to keep their child(ren) enrolled in the SIP or to withdraw them. From the transcript analysis of the focus group data, seven categories emerged: reasons for

enrolling, academics, extracurricular opportunities, relationships, parental commitment, cultural competence, and continuation decision.

Reasons for Enrolling. In Boudreaux's (2010) study of factors affecting attrition rates among students in a French Immersion Program, it was found that while having a friend or family member already enrolled in the program was not important, both the potential for increased academic achievement and bilingualism were. For this study, the reasons for enrolling were defined as the internal and/or external factors that influence a parent's decision to apply for the SIP. Similar to Boudreaux (2010), bilingualism emerged in this study as a reason parents sought enrollment in the SIP, but more than bilingualism, it was the opportunity for their children to become global citizens. When asked what their reasons were for enrolling their child(ren) in the SIP, Andrea stated, "For me, them being bilingual." Sandra echoed the sentiment. "I really did it because it would help him in the long run, just knowing that second language. That's really why I put him there." Robert's reasons were "Good instruction, high expectations and them leaving elementary with a pretty strong foundation in Spanish."

Cliff added,

"As we considered the program, initially we worked hard to get them into Martin. Because we just believed in the program. I took several years of Spanish. I took some in middle school, some at high school, and even a year in college. And I knew the importance of being able to speak in another language in terms of career opportunities to make them more well-rounded. And I just believe in terms of who they're going to interact with more, it's the language that makes the most sense to learn because we have a lot more Spanish speaking people in this country."

He went on to say,

"And these students, when they graduate from this program, all the way through high school, and they get the commendation from the council of Spain saying that they are in fact bilingual, that was very attractive to us as parents."

The second reason that parents enrolled their child(ren) in the SIP was for the reputation of the school. Components that are related to reputation of the school include: academic achievement, rigorous curriculum and program recognition. Several parents commented on how good the school was and that they wanted their child(ren) to be a part of it. Evonda stated,

“I heard about the program from other parents...so just him talking about it and him talking about the curriculum and how advanced the students were is what drew me to the program.”

Cliff continued by stating,

“We always heard that the Spanish immersion students did better academically. And so, we wanted to give them that challenge so that they could perform academically.”

Veronica added,

“I had some friends whose kids had been in the program. Talked very highly of it. Thought it was a great curriculum, great program. Looking at the students that came out of the program, how well they did academically and in college.”

Like Cliff, she also acknowledged the program’s reputation by stating,

“I’ve heard about programs like that, but other than talking my friends, I had no idea that the one we had here was recognized the way that it was and talking to them, it was ‘It’s recognized in the state. It’s one of the best programs.’ So, I said ‘Oh, okay. Well, let me do a little research.’”

Lisa concluded by stating,

“We were told that the academics were, the expectations were higher than the standard public school and so it’s like putting her in a private school but in public school and so we decided to put her in the program because we thought it would benefit her academically and intellectually.”

Overall, findings for reasons that parents enroll their children in the SIP support

Boudreaux (2010), however the reputation of the program also emerged as being salient.

Academics. The second category that emerged from the focus group was academics. This study defines academics as the practices, resources and outcomes

relating to how foreign language education is delivered in the SIP. This category is comprised of three subcategories: achievement, learning needs, and program design.

Achievement. As previously mentioned, parents enrolled their children in the SIP due to the potential for high academic achievement and their belief that the program had a rigorous curriculum, high expectations and that students who completed the program were poised to do well in college. When asked what grades their children had received, Lisa described her children's achievement as follows:

“As and Bs for the most part. I think my daughter came home with a D in art like random, but it was just her and she's creative so that's her style. I don't really know why she got the D, but she's been consistently A's and B's. All through, I think this is accurate, all through elementary school, she got straight A's, maybe an occasional B, but mostly A's. Middle school, it got a little tougher just because the expectations were tougher, the environment was tougher and I say environment was tougher because they were not secluded anymore but socially, she did well, that was fine. So, her grades I think still maintained. She also did extracurriculars. Once again, she's a self-motivated young person. Freshmen and sophomore year, once again a little tougher because they are going to go to the AP classes and so the standards are even more higher and she's maintaining As and B. She gets really upset if she comes home with a C or a D and that's her being upset and not us being upset but I think this year, she struggled the most because of the pre-cal and things like that. With my son, he's more As, Bs, Cs and occasional D but middle school, he's been... go back, elementary school, he's been As and Bs. He's harder on himself as well but middle school, he was really school out the gate. He couldn't get the time management and the level of expectation, once again, he's always worked at a slower pace so that's been harder on him so he more Cs and has kind of been consistently at the C range for midterms and he'll pull it up to As and Bs. So right now, I think his GPA is 3.5 or just below maybe. So, that's for him, the youngest, when he doesn't really...they're not given grades.”

Evonda's children had similar results.

“I don't know his rank this year. We haven't gotten that. But at the end, when they first did the ranking last year, as a freshman he was number 14 out of 500 and whatever. My daughter was ranked really high like that. They are A/B students, mainly A students. I can't remember what her GPA was when she graduated. But she had her pick of schools to go to. So, they test very well. They did very well for grades. Again, she got to pick wherever she wanted to go.”

Of her daughter, Andrea stated “To me, she caught onto the language pretty quickly. She excelled in her studies and she did very well, pretty much it. Her being able to catch on to the language and wasn’t having any problems.”

Conversely, not all parents saw the same level of academic achievement with their child(ren). Cliff and Tina described a very different experience and expressed concerns over their daughters’ grades:

Tina: “They had the same kinds of concerns. Because they said that ‘my child was always being picked on.’ ‘My child was never looked at as being a smart as the other students of the other races. And, they were like, I feel like they can speak better in the regular ed than they can in the Spanish immersion program. And I see it as a result of it. Because, they were in it, and they did well. But, not... they were just... like for instance: Algebra, English you have a solid A. Algebra, Spanish you have an F. You’re doing the same content. And how you get an A in English and F in...

Cliff: Spanish.

Tina: Spanish. I don't understand. So, I don't know if it was... that they couldn't bring the two together. But the other African American parents were feeling the same way. They just felt like, “here, our child was doing really well at this end, but on this end, they wouldn't... they wouldn't give them the time of the day. Sit down after school, work with them even harder. Or just sit with them in class or come up to their desk and say ‘are you struggling with this? Or do you need help?’ you do. There was no extra help for them.

Cliff: And I won't say that there was never. But it wasn't freely offered, if you follow what I'm saying. It's one of those things that was a follow-up to a conversation that we've had, like can you actually do this to help my student do better and to which they would agree to do that. But I don't think that concern was there, in them succeeding. If you follow what I mean. I'll make it available to you, but if you don't get it, then you just don't get it.”

Learning Needs. Cliff and Tina went on to express that one of the reasons they felt hindered one of their daughter’s academic achievement was that she had a learning need that had not been addressed. As previously mentioned, Cliff expressed concerns that their children had not always received the help that they needed. He stated,

“Another thing that concerned me is the fact that my oldest daughter has a speech impediment. And the ability to master speaking the language when you have an

impediment already, you know, you can imagine being a child, because they are still children, in a classroom where you have to speak it in Spanish, it's the only thing that you could do. And if you don't feel comfortable speaking already and then you don't master the second language, how emotionally turbulent that makes you feel when it's time to contribute in class. And part of the grade is class participation. So, you know, was I there every day to see when she spoke? No. but do I believe that she had moments where she just... yes. And she shied away from speaking. And that impacted her. Yes.”

Robert, who is married to Andrea, expressed that not all children learn at the same pace and was unsure of how strong the academic support was in the program. This was evidenced by the fact that their daughter was excelling in the program (as previously described by Andrea), but that her twin brother was struggling prior to being withdrawn from the program. He stated:

“The one thing I can say about Marlon, particularly then, he processes information so slow that with Spanish immersion it's like this (snapped fingers rapidly), if you fall behind in the language, it's also falling behind in math. So if a kid was...processes information pretty fast and stay on it, they won't have any issues probably. . I can't remember tutoring or things like that. Did they stay out after school for tutors? I don't remember. It doesn't seem like it. I was trying to figure out where they get the extra help and things like that. The teachers are willing. They identify if the kid is struggling and things like that but I don't know how much tutoring was. It was some, but considering your learning basically two languages in school, I don't know how strong their academic support was. I think the teachers are willing but actual structured setting? I don't know if it was strong or not.

Lisa described her sons as also needing more time to process information and that the pacing of the classroom was not conducive to how they learned. She said:

My oldest son now is in 7th grade but the questions began probably around 1st, 2nd grade and now, like I said, not too much about whether or not his English was developing because all of my kids are strong readers in the English language but it was just the way he was processing information overall. So it just kind of continued but then they started to have questions for my son because he was a little bit slower and just as advance like able to take in information but how he process that information will take him a little bit longer. So that was my first question started. So I think our questions were more about how is he doing overall in the program. Is he getting it? Is he feeling discouraged? There would some times that he will feel discouraged in the classroom but it is because the pacing of the class was very, we always feel like our children needs structure, has

structure in general so the pacing of the classroom wasn't benefiting him, wasn't helping him. He had to do things a little bit slower because he'll get it but just do things slower. The other thing to know for my youngest is, he's recently been diagnosed with autism so he has a high functioning diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder so that's very different from the other two."

Program Design. The final subcategory in academics is program design. Several participants described their thoughts about the partial immersion design, what it meant as to why they initially chose to enroll their children, and how changes in the program's implementation impacted them as parents as well as their students. Toni, whose oldest daughter was in the inaugural cohort of the SIP, began by stating what it was about the program that influenced her decision to enroll her.

"I actually thought it was a good thing to have her in the school where you--you see all kinds of kids, everybody--it's not--because in life, you got--you got to meet people where they are and you have to always adapt and adjust so I thought it would be a good thing for her to be in an environment where she spent half a day now with Spanish immersion and half the day now with just everybody else and new people that were--you hadn't met before and maybe some people had more than you had, maybe some people had less than you had which you got to figure that out anyway in life."

Consequently, parents whose children enrolled in the program in subsequent years discussed the impact of program design changes.

Veronica said,

"Oddly enough, the math and science, which was taught strictly in that language, they did really well in and I credit to them being starting music early and the relationship of music and math and being a great student because they gravitated to math and science really well early. Now to me, I thought when that leadership changed, that some of the changes the way the curriculum was taught, I didn't necessarily didn't agree with that I was in administration, sorry, but I thought the direction they were going in to me was weakening the program. I liked the program the way it was structured where information came home in Spanish and I had to look it up if I was gonna help my child. I had to learn as they learned which I thought was, to me, great, but as time went on, that bothered them as well as me that some students had an option and so where they felt like everybody should have to do math and science homework in Spanish. English wasn't an option if that's what being taught. They didn't struggle with that. It was just a change that we didn't particularly care for. I always instructed my children to get

their homework in Spanish whether it was offered in English or not. You bring it home in Spanish.”

However, Evonda countered with:

“Some of the complaints I heard from kids, from their parents when their kids were struggling, especially with the language was like ‘How do they expect us to do this when the homework comes home in Spanish and I don’t understand it?’”

Sandra summed it up by stating:

“It’s just depends on what your child’s strengths are. If you know that your child doesn’t like English, or math, you might want to put him in another program. Because once they get older they’re going to be doing that math in Spanish. It just gets harder and harder and then eventually they don’t even talk English in the class anymore. It’s all Spanish. Like when they were Kindergarten and first grade, they did English, Spanish. When they get to like third, fourth grade, it’s all Spanish in the classrooms. But I mean, I think it’s a good alternative. It’s not all that bad. I mean you can only gain from learning another language.”

Extracurricular Opportunities. The next category that emerged from the focus group was extracurricular opportunities. This category is defined as “opportunities for students to participate in activities outside of the classroom that were either school sponsored or where they could use the target language”. When asked if their students participated in extracurricular opportunities, findings indicated that other than community service hours required by the program, there was no consistency in reference to whether students participated in the aforementioned activities. Veronica, Toni and Evonda’s children were the most involved, Sandra, Robert and Andrea’s were not.

Toni: “So they would do something to volunteer, they would all--there was--there--there were opportunities for the kids to acts as translators at some community kind of events and they would--they would typically do that. They did do--they did do the trips to the other countries, they do between fifth and eighth grade or something like that. And they were all in the girl scouts and the girl scouts was really consistent Spanish immersion because it was at Woodland Christian church so they would always have a project or something related--giving something back to Latino community. So, I think they stay--they stay connected, they--there wasn't as much of that opportunities I would thought it would have been and I think the community doesn't recognize that they can--they have all Spanish speaking people that they can pull for whatever. But what was available they did participate in.”

Veronica: “They did academic challenge from Martin. They did not do many extracurriculars at Martin within the school itself, but outside the school extracurricular like their music. They did participate in school, but that’s when they started participating in CMA, CKY and all those entities outside school. The only thing they really did in Martin was some intramural sports. They played basketball. They didn’t like that. They were too short and they did the academic challenge team. Those were the only ones they really did in elementary school.”

Evonda: “We did Carnegie centers some summers where they had Spanish programs. Of course, we did Festival Latina. Even now, my kids tutor at the Valley during the summer...Kiara still does that. Even like last summer, she worked, but in the morning, she made it a point that she volunteered every morning to work with Spanish speaking kids.”

Sandra: “I mean they have a little program, like little dance programs where they would do Spanish songs and stuff like that, but for the most part, no, he just came here after school.”

Andrea: “She’s not involved and I know of at least one or two at the school that I’m going to make her be a part of this year because she’s not, other than community service hours. They are required to do so many, just regular community service hours. Then, they have to do one that is Spanish-related. They have to have I believe, eight hours maybe. It has to be something Spanish-related. But other than that, she’s not involved in anything that would require her to use the language.”

Robert: “But they don’t do anything...it’s almost like they don’t do anything around enrichment outside of just instruction other than get your community service hours.”

Overall, most of the students did not participate in school sponsored activities or activities where they can use the target language.

Relationships. The way in which a group of people interacted within itself or with another group emerged as a category. For this study, this phenomenon is referred to as “relationships”. The two subcategories of relationships that dominated the discussion were the teacher-student relationship and the student-student relationship. Cliff and Tina alluded to their discontent with the relationship their daughters had with their teachers in the “academics” section. To reiterate, they stated:

Tina (referring to her perception and that of other African-American parents):
They just felt like, “here, our child was doing really well at this end, but on this

end, they wouldn't... they wouldn't give them the time of the day. Sit down after school, work with them even harder. Or just sit with them in class or come up to their desk and say 'are you struggling with this? Or do you need help?' you do. There was no extra help for them.

Cliff: And I won't say that there was never. But it wasn't freely offered, if you follow what I'm saying. It's one of those things that was a follow-up to a conversation that we've had, like can you actually do this to help my student do better and to which they would agree to do that. But I don't think that concern was there, in them succeeding.

Sandra continued:

"Well, this actually was the first year that we struggled a little bit. But prior to 4th grade, the teachers were really good. As a matter of fact, they spoiled him a little bit, I guess it's because he had been there since he was in Kindergarten and they were really good, I just think this past year, I think it was the personality clash between him and his Spanish teacher. And they just really never clicked, which it made him not like school anymore. And then he kind of just like sit all the way down."

However, the relationship Evonda's children had with teachers was different.

"The other thing that I liked about the program is during the summer we continued to read, we continued to buy books and go to festivals, or what have you. But for the most part during the summer, I had a staff member work with them during the summer. So, in that sense, it is a family atmosphere like you'll still go to the events and outings where you see them, and they know you. I have seen teachers, former teachers out in the community or church. It's still that relationship and that was the one thing about being in that program too was like by the time Grant got to Martin he already felt like he belonged there. So even his kindergarten, first day of kindergarten experience from Kiara's kindergarten experience was very different. She was crying. I was crying. But for Grant, because he's been coming every day for drop off and pick up. He felt like he knew them and he already knew some of the teachers and they were already talking to him. He already had his Spanish name. And so, his first day of kindergarten he was like 'Bye! Be gone!' So, that was very different too in that they knew their names, they knew about them. It was like on one of the teacher conferences for him it was towards the end of his fourth-grade year, and they were already talking about we're concerned because he's so sweet and this is his personality. We're just concerned about when he gets to middle school, like what's going to happen with him with girls. And even during middle school some of those elementary school teachers were around and you see them sometimes at different events. Some of the teachers have come back for graduation so they can see the kids go through these different phases, and that's not something you're going to get anywhere else. But because they think of it is a continuous program, a continuous cycle. I can see somebody on the street today and they're saying

‘How are the kids? What are the kids like? What are they doing? What are they up to?’ And so, I appreciate that and I don't know-- I would say that it's something special to that type of program because you follow these kids all this time and so you have developed that type of relationship. So even by the time, Grant got to high school they were already like ‘Okay, we know that your parents expect this of you. We know what your sister was like.’ So sometimes he's like ‘I'm not Kiara’. But I think that that environment kind of harkens back to old school days and I like that.”

The responses relevant to student-student relationships were two-fold. First, participants described how close-knit the students in the SIP were, using words like “family” and “cocoon”.

In reference to her daughter’s experience, Evonda stated:

“In fact, my daughter when she was going to high school I just started looking at the programs that really didn't have any intention of taking her out the program. But it's my nature to investigate that's just my nature. So I was looking at like the IB program and different things like that, and she actually said ‘Mom, I'll die if you take me out of this program.’ I think there is a social aspect to it because it's not often that kids move together from kindergarten throughout their entire career, and you see that when you go on these trips with them as well that they're like a family. They're like brothers and sisters. So there's that social component to it as well because they know each other like ‘Oh that's just so and so that's just what he does. That's just what she does, how she is.’ I especially now looking back on it I wasn't planning on taking her out of it now but I can see that just knowing my child that would have been detrimental to her progression as a student and just really kind of the person that she is.”

Toni continued: “So in the like, in cafeterias, in those kinds of things, so they would all sit together because they were friends--that's the thing about Spanish immersion. You--it's family right or wrong, good or bad and, yes, you can have a good family or you can have bad family but once you started in the first grade and you go to twelfth grade, you are pretty much family.”

While some examples given by parents touted the “family” atmosphere among the students in the SIP, other examples described how some SIP students experienced bullying from non-immersion students by virtue of being a program participant. In the preceding example, Toni continued to describe her oldest daughter’s experiences trying to socialize at the middle school level.

“So, they would sit together and--so they became--she kind of came--it was hard for her to fit in initially and especially in sixth grade with the rest of the kids because they--the rest of the kids kind of said, "Oh, those are the Spanish immersions" whatever that is called.] They call them Spaniards, or whatever that would be. And then--so that was a struggle for her, that--I don't know if the middle school was just hard but what she struggled with as an African-American was trying to talk--she's a very friendly, she's out, she still very outgoing, so she was trying to talk to the African-Americans and there was a lot of slang language, everything that she just had no clue and she would say--and I keep going and she goes “Mom” and she said, "You could drop me off to the corner in Mexico and I can talk to people for I have no idea what the people saying to me because of the lingo and the slang" and so that--so then you get not picked on, but then you kind of--you--people would kind of like, “What's up with you because you don't speak the African-American language. So, that was really hard for her but--in the sixth grade year which is why--but by the time she got to the, I think middle in seventh grade and eight grade she had found herself and she had--she didn't change at all but people just said, "Okay. This is who she is. So you get in--you--it wasn't bullying but it was like, "Oh, you're Spanish immersion. You're Spanish immersion." She became a Spanish immersion kid, she happened to be black so she was more--if you going to--she stood out more because she was a Spanish immersion kid.”

Andrea had similar perceptions of her daughter's experiences in the program.

“And they keep the Spanish Immersion students so segregated from the rest of others...from the school because like I know this from Tatianna especially in middle school, like they would have the homecoming dances. She never participated any of those dances. I was like, ‘Don't you want to go?’, and she was like, ‘I don't know anybody who's going to be there.’ The Spanish Immersion students did not socialize with the rest of the class. The one and only dance that she attended was after the eighth-grade Spanish Immersion, they have a little separate graduation and then they have one with the high school and then they have a little party afterward. She went to that because she knew the students there and then too, I believe with the middle [school] students kind of look at the Spanish Immersion students as being maybe kind of uppity or they think they're better than the rest of us so they kind of treat them different too. So, that also made that gap wider between them. So, you have just the Spanish Immersion being separate from them anyway. About the only time they were ever, would have classes with the other students would be like if they had orchestra or band, and then, like I said with the other students, also just kind of ostracizing them in a way that just made that divide in them even wider. They've been with the same group of students since kindergarten and will continue with them through high school. High school, they're a little bit more integrated but not that much. But middle school is definitely. They were so segregated from the rest of the population. I think she missed out on some of the social aspects of middle school being in the program.”

Toni continued:

“And in the middle school you—they knew—you went from a whole school Spanish immersion to this wing of Spanish immersion. Everybody knew if you went to that wing you were Spanish immersion and whatever that meant was not good.”

Veronica’s daughters also experienced the stigma associated with being an African-American high school student in the SIP.

“There has been some response from other students of color, but them being in the magnet program, but not from their classmates. That’s been kind of interesting for them. There’s kind of these “oh, you’re one of them.” and not being accepted by the main stream kids. Their cohorts look at them as if “they look like you, why aren’t you doing more with them?”

While the aforementioned parents described some of the social struggles their children had in the SIP, all kept their children in the program.

Parental Commitment. Parental commitment emerged as the fifth category and for this study refers to “parents’ intention to have their children complete the Spanish Immersion Program and their ability to support this endeavor. The most common theme was academic engagement referring to how families academically supported their students in the SIP. Several parents either had some background in Spanish or had a family member that did and used this background to help their students with homework.

Lisa: “My husband, he’s actually a double major. So, he has communications and Spanish as his major. So, there was tutoring in home, tutoring our kids and they were learning at the same time.”

Sandra (referring to her youngest son): “I used his brother. That’s how we worked it out. You know, he really helped him.”

Other families who did not have the background knowledge of Spanish found other means to support students:

Toni: “All my kids kind of picked up the Spanish pretty well. So, it was--it was-- I didn’t have to do a whole lot of translating, but what I did have to do I would say I just--I would--I had like a Spanish dictionary because this is pre-Google, pre- all that kind of stuff because you don’t want them to get frustrated. You don’t want

them to say like they know how to do something, they just can't understand the directions, right? So, you want to remove those barriers and say, this is actually what you need to do and they can do that because like why, I'm not exactly sure it's the same, so things like just talking to the teachers and back in the day use dictionaries. Nowadays so I think it would just be--just put something in Google translator anywhere you go. But I think--I think from a parent a lot of parents look at--especially elementary stuff and when you're trying to help some--when you're trying to look at homework you--it's--I would tell people that it's a humbling experience because you literally can't do first grade math because you don't know what it says. So, you got to get over yourself as a parent to say, 'Okay. I'm learning. I got to go... I got to really think about this because I'm nearly somebody brings home multiplication tables it's like, okay, this is what you got to do but you're just looking at it and you're like, Huh? I know don't' what it say'" and so you got to humble yourself a bit and then it's kind of--it's kind of good from the learning perspective for the parent too. But you got to be willing to say I signed up for this so I'm going to have to sit down and look at these directions and figure this out and be encouraging to the kids because I think a lot of the kids--going back to your question, African-Americans why a lot of people dropped out, if the Spanish is hard it makes everything hard. And so if you can help remove some of that, give them confidence that, yes, it is a little tricky but this is actually what he's saying and those kinds of things I think they'll stay in the program longer, but if you can't it has to be frustrating for somebody—for a kid to not be able to do basic things because they--this is a different language and they just can't hit and they just can't--it's not so much translating because they don't translate, but they can understand it."

Evonda was the only participant that mentioned the opportunity to take school-sponsored Spanish classes for parents. She and her husband used this as a means to help their students. She stated:

"One of the things I think that they push the rigor and really made me appreciate the program was, it wasn't just the child's experience. It was a family experience. So, they asked the parents to take Spanish classes that they provided at school for us to attend. So, that as our children moved through the program, we would be able to help them with homework. So, that gave you a greater appreciation, or it gave me a greater appreciation because my husband and I both did those classes, of what they were experiencing in the classroom. And that also helped us set the expectations of what we expected them to do at home, what homework should look like, what their conversation should be at certain times and at certain levels."

She continued by stating,

"There were many nights where we did translations to make sure that we understood it to be able to help them out with the homework. And so I think that the students who continued on, and who really did well they had parents who

continued to be there helping them in that aspect. Whether it was them or that they were getting someone else to help them. I think that really made a difference. Look of all people I can think about, almost all of them had, if they didn't do the classes, they had someone else either a teacher, a tutor, or some other family member who had perhaps even been through the program, or just the language. So I think that was the difference too.”

Cliff summed up the impact of parents and their ability to help at home.

“Fortunately, I knew some Spanish. So, when they had homework they didn’t understand I was able to help some. But when it gets heavier and heavier in to it, the other African-American parents who might believe in parent involvement, would be very involved, don’t know the language. They don’t send home a set of instructions in English, they send home in Spanish. So, you can’t help them with it. And I think that it makes it very difficult to provide the come-along aiding that parents do in the educational process, if they can’t grasp the material, they can’t break it down to their children to help them better understand it.”

Cultural Competence. Cultural competence is the sixth broad category. Moule (2012, p. 5) defined it as “the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than our own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, developing certain bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching.”

Three subcategories emerged in this study: relevance, mental models and discontinuity.

Relevance. Some parents expressed that their children were having difficulty seeing how being bilingual would help them in life. Veronica wished that the program had done a better job of making the connection. She said,

“I don’t think through their experience, people have helped them connect the dots on how to use the language and how it might benefit them other than just learn it. It’s been a ‘you gotta know it, learn it to get a grade to move on to the next level’. It hasn’t been a ‘how can this help you in an ever changing world’, right? Because I look at data all the time by 2040, the majority of the US population is not gonna be African-American. It’s gonna be Hispanic. Nobody is really helping them see how this will help them navigate in the future and to me, I was saddened to see that they’re not helping them to connect the dots because they come home now and question ‘Yeah mom, we get this certificate that says we’re fluent, we’re proficient in the language, but then what?’”

Evonda spoke of how she took the initiative to provide opportunities for her children to have more real-world experiences.

“If we're going to give them this education we don't want them just to do it the time that they are in school but they need to see a real world as well. So that might mean obviously they had all different kind of festivals at school, but that also means that hey okay so tonight we're going to go to a Mexican restaurant. But you all are going to order and you are going to speak to the people, and we need you to ask X amount of questions.”

“But it's just like when we talk about standardized testing, how can a kid if they never had a tea cup and saucer in their home make that match? Well if all you've done is ever read about the rain forest in there, or they talk about the climate or the topography of a country but you've never experienced that, it's still, sometimes, whether in English or in Spanish is still writing a book. But when you have experienced that now they can say ‘oh yeah I get it’, and so I think that that is a big factor.”

Robert summed up the topic by saying:

“Just making a connection in the class culturally. Hispanic and white kids would have more cultural capital than the black kids because when you're teaching using examples to connect with kids and you don't have examples for African-American students, how can you connect content to them?”

Mental Models. The concept of a “mental model” is defined differently across disciplines. Senge (1990, p. 8) defined it as “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action.” Simply put, it is an internal representation of one's external environment (Rook, 2013, p. 40). In this study, the term “mental models” refers to the images of cultural representation students in the SIP are exposed to and the impact of how those images shape who they are. Moreover, cultural appreciation is not unidirectional and in general, parents felt that there was more of a very narrow view of what culture looked like in the target language. Parents wanted to see more cultural representations that their children could relate to, not only in the content, but also in the staff.

Veronica: “I don’t remember them singling out African-American-Latinos, that heritage, they talk about countries in general. So, they learn about all the Central, South America and all of that and all the gifts and strengths, and weakness of all of those countries, but there was never an emphasis on that, on one versus the other. Now of course, they research things and find out themselves now. If they had to do a project on a country, they would point out those unique things, but I don’t think it was ever taught to them that way to appreciate all the different flavors that make up, for example, Brazil, Cuba, the migration of the slave trade and all that. That was never discussed. We talked about some of that, but it was not taught to them at school that way. And the other piece is not really exposing them to more Spanish speakers of color because you gotta look for them, but they’re here and they just didn’t. I don’t know if that’s the comfort level of the teachers because you usually seek out communities where you’re from, right?”

Cliff: “None of the teachers were like them ethnically.”

Tina: “Not of African descent. But they did have a culture class and it kinda went into, where they went into a little bit more about what the Spanish people do.”

Robert: “It’s hard to be what you can’t see. Plus, for the other students, it’s important that they have more diverse teachers in the classroom.

Lisa: “So I would love to see them have something for African-American females too. I would love to see more teachers that are darker skinned so you know... they are out there and that would just be beautiful. Right now, I’m just shooting for the one African-American teacher in the school, period and she’s English speaking so like, ‘Can we get her? Can we do that?’ So that my children will know that experience in and of itself. So yeah, to be Spanish speaking and a brown skinned, that’s really nice.

Therefore, if students do not see themselves in content or staffing, then they develop mental models that become their reality without images of people that look like them.

Discontinuity. Tyler et al. (2008) posit that cultural discontinuity “is captured in the school-based cessation of ethnic minority students’ cultural value-based practices, particularly those found throughout their home socialization experiences” (p. 282). As such, some parents spoke of an incongruence between how African-American students were treated as compared to their counterparts. They questioned the teacher preparation of the staff that were native speakers of the language and whether that training prepared them to teach culturally diverse students, particularly African-American males.

Robert: “I think in general that the school had issues with boys and particularly African-American boys, around classroom management. I think the expectation was you sit in rows and you listen and direct instruction, and so a lot of kids, particularly boys don't respond to that. But that was how the instruction was. It's like a cultural mismanagement. Discontinuity between the teachers, particularly those who were like from South America, and places like that, in connecting with boys because he wasn't the only that was pulled out. But that was one that was an expectation that wasn't addressed was connecting with the kids. They did fairly good trying to intervene, provide interventions with my son when he was not doing well academically but he was one of a number of boys that I know that parents pulled them out.”

“But they have to know that all the teachers can't necessarily connect with the boys. They have to be fairly well behaved. If not, there can be some behavior issues which end up impacting their academics and things like that and then kids leave or whatever.”

Lisa: “I just think about, mostly right now, honestly just think about the boys. It's amazing to me. Some kind of support like it's almost they are given up on, definitely at the middle school level. I saw more in my daughter's class just disappearing. I'm like I know these are bright boys like behaviorally, sure they got this going on but they are still, you know, they are boys. They are not different than any other boys. They are just boys like African-American but they are capable. If you can come through all of that in elementary school, and that's where the largest drop off feels like it is from elementary to middle. So, I really would love to see some more support for my son too, yeah.”

But the discontinuity did not solely affect the African-American males. Parents also expressed concerns about the females.

Cliff: “In fact, the parents who I knew were Caucasian and their children were struggling they weren't having the same kind of conferences that ours were. It was always like you know, ‘if she doesn't shape up, we're going to have to put her out of this program’. It was always one of those ultimatum type things. And, I don't recall other friends of mine whose kids were in the same class as my children who were actually behaving poorly, and my kids getting blamed for it, because they were nearby them having the same kinds of pressure to... you get them right or they're coming out.”

Regardless of whether discontinuity affected their children personally, parents felt it important enough to mention.

Continuation Decision. The final category that emerged is the crux of this study. Parents discussed what led them to make the decision whether to allow their child

to continue in the SIP or whether they would withdraw their child(ren) from the program. This section begins with a discussion as to why parents chose to let their child(ren) continue followed by a discussion of why parents withdrew their child(ren). Those parents who decided to continue made a commitment to the program early on and were determined to complete it.

Evonda: “There really was no decision for us. When we started the program, we made a commitment that we were going to go K-12, and from what we experienced at that point by the time she had been raising my son was in we knew we were going to finish it now. Just because of the rigor, the climate of the school she had so many friends and she wanted to go on. And that's the way it was with my son and there was never question that they weren't going to continue in the program. So, it really wasn't a factor for us.”

Veronica: “You know a lot of parents at that age don't really ask their kids what they wanna do. They say ‘You will do.’ I kind of did a pulse check with my daughters. I asked them whether they wanted to continue the program, whether they still enjoyed the program ‘cause that's important. If you don't like what you're doing, you won't do well in it. We kind of sat down and they said ‘I really wanna continue. Most of my cohort is moving on. I wanna stay with them.’ So, we made that decision as a family that they were going to continue to middle school. Now at the same time, we made that decision if you continue on here, we will finish the program. There's no ‘oh well, I'm tired now’ because you're committed I think in middle school to get that certificate to say ‘I'm gonna be a proficient. This is gonna be my language that I learn. I'm gonna complete the program.’ And I think they understood that going in. ‘Ok, we make this decision here. We can't decide in eighth grade I wanna go to another high school. I don't wanna do immersion anymore.’”

Toni's decision with her eldest daughter was a bit more complex in that her daughter was part of the inaugural cohort and not all parents in the cohort demonstrated commitment to the program as their children got older. However, Toni was an advocate.

“I think parents probably had to work a little bit harder because some of their homework is in Spanish. And so, you got to have--you got to have--you got to have commitment to do that as well as to drop your child off because there's no buses and all that kind of stuff but the expectations starting at Martin absolutely met my expectations. So, in middle school it was a--the decision was go to your local school or in--or go to PACA--for me it was--it was go to Brook Stone and it goes to Brook Stone Middle because—my oldest Erica, she picked up the language so well and so easy--she wasn't struggling. ‘Some people's decision of

the school--because the kid struggling in Spanish and it's like 'Why am I torturing my child?' and 'This is too hard', some people decisions, 'I don't want my kid to go Brook Stone'. And then so for Erica, she--Spanish was easy for her and she feel very comfortable in her element and Brook Stone Middle had a reputation but we went visited and it was--it seems--it was close again, proximity to where I work was good. So, the middle school wasn't as big a decision point for me. High school, when she went, was the big decision because it was the Brook Stone High School, the old one which was a dump, right? It was—it was just bad. And--the--it was a dump from the building. And that was also a decision point because that's another enrollment form for PACA because PACA takes fourth grade and sixth grade is a ninth grade and we lived in La Fontaine's district and she's a violist. So, I had her audition for PACA and she got it so I was ecstatic because she can take the bus, to be quite honest is like all these driving--oh, the bus, this is good thing. And she was pretty happy and then she went to--they had a--we went to La Fontaine I think for like a back to school, I don't know, orientation night or something in, she was kind of lukewarm and not of--not--there was--there was kind of no reaction. But then what Brook Stone did at the high school, they had a day where they took the Wednesday invited the middle-school kids to get a high school to--it was like two or three hours so they can experience the high school to see what classes were like, to see what the building was like, to see what are things like and as you recall it, no, it was not a good--that was a pretty bad building. So, I figured that after coming out of that one day visit she would definitely say, "I'm in PACA." So, she came home and she said "I really want to go to Brook Stone High" I was stunned because she had spent three hours in what every--the new school was under construction. I asked, 'Did you like the school?' She said, 'Well, the school is what it is, I mean, but these are my friends now. These are--these are--this the school I've grown up with. I don't really know the kids at La Fontaine. These are my friends, I don't have to try to fit in, I'm already--I already have friends' and those kinds of things. But for her in her class, there were I would say maybe 20 kids that went to the middle school from the high school. It started out with--she was the first--she was the last of the two--there are only two classes in her year had like 50 kids and then it went down to 20, but when it came time to go to Brook Stone High School we had a parent meeting because a few people wanted to go. And--we had it on Nicholasville Road up--well, one that's the restaurant on Nicholasville Road and it was a good healthy discussion and why people wanted to go, why people didn't want to go but then only four people went with her--in her class to Brook Stone High School. There were--the rest of it, that 18 to 20 other people say we didn't--they weren't going to go for a number of reasons, some it was sports team, some it was I want to go with my--with my neighborhood, some of it was I can't do Brook Stone High because I've heard whatever. It's only four kids went, three--there were three girls and a guy and they are tight right now."

Robert and Andrea had twins that started the program. Subsequently, they made the decision to withdraw their son, but their daughter remained in the program. Andrea said

“We just went ahead and took that opportunity and left Tatianna there because she was just flourishing. There wasn't any need to pull them both out. That's why we left her and moved him over to Scotlandville.” While their daughter was having success, they chose to go another route with their son.

Withdrawal Decision. There was a total of 16 children represented by the parents in this focus group. Of those 16, four were withdrawn from the program. While the other parents kept their children in the program, they had their perspectives as to why some African-American parents chose to withdraw their children.

Cliff: “As we considered the program, initially, we worked hard to get them into Martin. Because we just believe in the program. I took several years of Spanish. I took some in middle school, some at high school, and even a year in college. And knew the importance of being able to speak in other language in terms of career opportunities to make them more well-rounded. And I just believe in terms of who they're going to interact with more, is the language that makes them most sense to learn because we have a lot more Spanish speaking people in this country. So, we got them in the program, we were excited when they got admitted. We always heard that the Spanish immersion students did better academically. And so, we wanted to give them that challenge so that they could perform academically. But we also realized that as we started getting into the middle school area, we heard about the full scholarships, full rides. And these students, when they graduate from this program, all the way through high school, and they get the commendation from the council of Spain saying that they are in fact bilingual, that was very attractive to us parents. So, there is an economic side to this too, that I think those who can persevere through it, recognize that. But I also think that if there's an opportunity for someone who is not interested in seeing someone like us, get that same level of advancement, there's less motivation to prepare them, because of they know what's happening on the other end of it. I'd rather see some other people who look like, don't look like us. Get it? So, that's been my concern. I was excited about the opportunity for them to get in. They were doing so well, I was proud of how they were interacting when we go down to Florida with Spanish speaking people, with confidence. And the adults were pleased that they could communicate with them. So that was all encouraging for us at parents. But we had to take a good hard look at what was happening to them as people. As young, impressionable people, who are trying to figure out who they are in this world. And in that scenario, we kind of felt like they were being held down. And I can't have that for my children.”

Robert and Andrea concluded that while their daughter was succeeding, this setting was not the bit fit for their son.

Robert: "It was ongoing. Ongoing frustration. Actually, I wanted him out in the second grade. I wanted him out a little sooner.

Andrea: "I think we didn't want him to get any further behind that he was. So, we just came to the conclusion that Spanish Immersion probably isn't the best fit for him and we were able to get on in Scotlandville."

For Sandra's youngest son, it was an issue the teacher.

"I just think this past year, I think it was the personality clash between him and his Spanish teacher. And they just really never clicked, which it made him not like school anymore. And then he kind of just like shut all the way down."

As previously stated, some parents shared perspectives on why African-American parents choose to withdraw their children from the program even if they, themselves, did not.

Veronica: "I'm not all knowing how to deal with African-American boys in the classroom and that's where your expertise might come into play there. I think that was a little of it and talking to parents too, but by fifth grade going to middle school, that cohort got even smaller. When they left in the years that they were there, six to eight, cohort got even smaller with African-American kids leaving. By the time they got to the high school, they're on two hands. I think there's seven left. That was attrition and I wish they'd really hung in there, but they didn't. Some of the parents shared that they struggled with the instructors not knowing how to accommodate learning styles, not everybody learns the same way, not knowing how to interact to our students. You can't say things to our students and expect the same reaction that you'd say to another student. Some of it was academic. Some of it was the material, not being able to really stay on top of the language piece. Some of the students struggled with the language. I talked to one good friend and she just couldn't stay on top of the language. She was struggling having to speak in class, felt really uncomfortable having to speak in class because the teachers demanded that you respond in Spanish. So, there were a number of reasons why, some just attrition from moving away, moving to another district or moving to another city. I think it was a mix of a lot of that, but most of the comments I heard were negative either with teacher, parental, administration, but my girls never really had a problem with any teacher."

Evonda added her own thoughts including attributing attrition for African-American males to the opening of all male academy for boys of color:

"In fact in most cases, for the most part, I can tell you even kind of the years that the African-American students start dropping out in each one of their classes.

Some of it was the language that kids weren't getting the language which is the Spanish language. Some of it was that-- I guess the discipline factor, and the commitment factor because for the most part you are driving and picking up every day. Unless you had a certain number and you got together a bus that was a commitment that your family had to make. And so, I think that was some of it that I heard people voice. For Grant's classmates, we lost African-American males when Carter G. Woodson came around. Some of them went to Carter. G which I think that some of them probably wouldn't have gone on in any way, but that wasn't a factor for some of them was being in that setting. And so, where his class started out pretty much kind of half and a half I think we're down to maybe 15."

Finally, Toni offered a summative perspective relative to parents wanting the best for their children regardless of the decision they make.

"In terms of the program in general, I think most African-Americans would say the teachers are--the curriculum it's--the structure is fine, it's generally the people just literally--I think the people that put their kids at Magnet schools in general whether it's--whatever it is. They are making the best decision that they've think for the child and they're always kind of second guessing that to say, "I didn't go public" like you just go in your district it's like, "Yes, I got the choice" and then it is what it is, if you intentionally put them somewhere else you can always say and it's not the right thing because they can always go back, I'm doing this but I'm--it might not be right, so I think the people that pull them out are literally saying, 'I thought this was right but, it's not right and they are not forcing-- and they usually don't make the--you just say, "Okay. I tried it but it didn't, no shame in saying this if this and this didn't work."

Parent Perception Continuation Model

As a result of the findings, a conceptual framework, the Parent Perception Continuation Model (PPCM), was developed based on Tinto's (1993) Model of Student Departure (See Figure 1.1). Tinto's model identified factors that affect student persistence, which include: pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments, institutional experiences and academic and social integration. From the student perspective, Tinto's framework discussed persistence and the factors that affect it, making persistence something that is innate and internal to the student. The PPCM framework is taken from the parents' perspective and reflects their perceptions of their student's experiences in a

partial Spanish immersion program. This framework differs from Tinto's in that: 1) it posits that since persistence is individual and refers to one's own resilience, grit and self-efficacy, the more appropriate term to be used is continuation, and 2) it occurs at the K-12 level as opposed to post-secondary. In the K-12 system, it is the parents who ultimately are responsible for making the decision whether to enroll, continue and/or withdraw their child from the program. Therefore, it is not a question of persistence, but continuation. In addition, Tinto's model refers to students on a post-secondary level and his descriptors reflect that. For this model, the factors represent parents' perceptions of the experiences of their children and how those factors affect their continuation decision. Figure 1.1 is a visual representation of this framework.

The PPCM framework posits five factors that affect a parent's decision to continue having their child(ren) enrolled in a partial Spanish immersion program (See Figure 1.1). The first factor to be considered is pre-entry aspirations, a term borrowed from Boudreaux (2010) (See Figure 4.11). For this model, pre-entry aspirations consist of program beliefs and expectations, and reasons for enrolling students in the program. Prior to enrolling their child(ren) in the SIP, parents hold their own beliefs and expectations about the concept of immersion, the SIP and whether it will have a positive impact on their child. These beliefs and expectations can be derived from such sources as research conducted about immersion programs or from conversations with other parents who have children enrolled in the program. Beliefs about immersion programs and reasons for enrollment are inextricably linked. They influence the reasons parents choose to enroll their child(ren). Reasons for enrollment are individual and can differ from person to person. They can include such reasons as wanting their child(ren) to be

enrolled in a rigorous curriculum, wanting their child(ren) to experience more cultural diversity, and/or wanting their child(ren) to be able to speak another language so that s/he has more job opportunities.

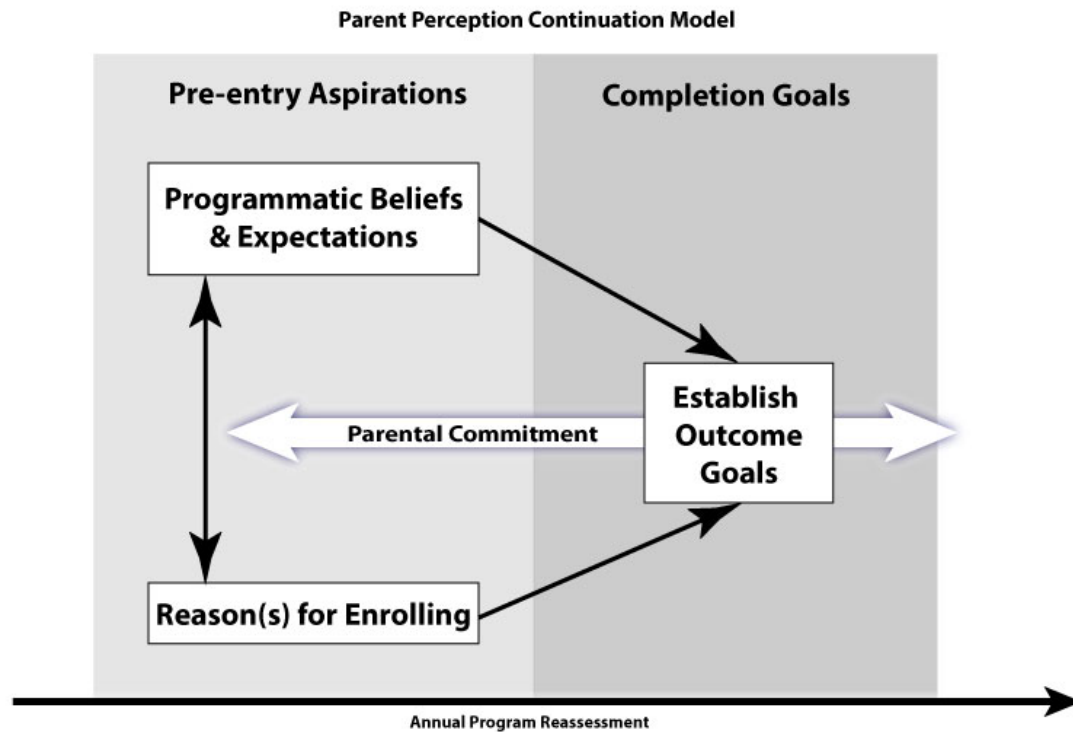


Figure 4.11. Parent Perception Continuation Model. This figure illustrates the pre-entry aspirations and completion goals parents have prior to enrolling their child in the SIP.

The second factor in the model is completion goals (See Figure 4.11). This section houses outcome goals. Simply put, outcome goals refer to what parents want their child(ren) to be able to do or what they want them to have acquired after having completed the program. Outcome goals could include that their children are bilingual upon graduating from the program or that their children are global citizens. The beliefs parents have about immersion programs and their reasons for enrolling their children inform the outcome goals they have for their children.

The middle section of the PPCM is entitled “programmatic experiences” and refers to the parents’ perceptions of the experiences their child had in the immersion program. It is divided into two sections: parent perceptions of the student’s academic experience and parent perceptions of the student’s social experience. Academic experience has three identifiers: student academic performance (e.g., grades, assessments), school support services (e.g., interventions, tutoring), and cultural relevance (e.g., cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching) (See Figure 4.12). *Student academic performance* refers to the academic achievement of the student, while *school support services* refers to the school-sponsored interventions that are designed to increase academic achievement. *Cultural relevance* refers to how culturally competent the parents perceive the teachers to be and how culturally responsive the parents perceive their instruction to be. Social experience also has three identifiers: cohort relationships (i.e., the social interactions among students within the cohort), non-cohort relationships (i.e., the interactions between students in the cohort and their non-cohort counterparts) and teacher-student interactions (i.e., the interactions between teachers and students) (See Figure 4.13). It refers to the parents’ perceptions of the how closely their child(ren) bond with their cohort peers, whether they have a connection with their non-cohort peers and how they interact with their teachers.

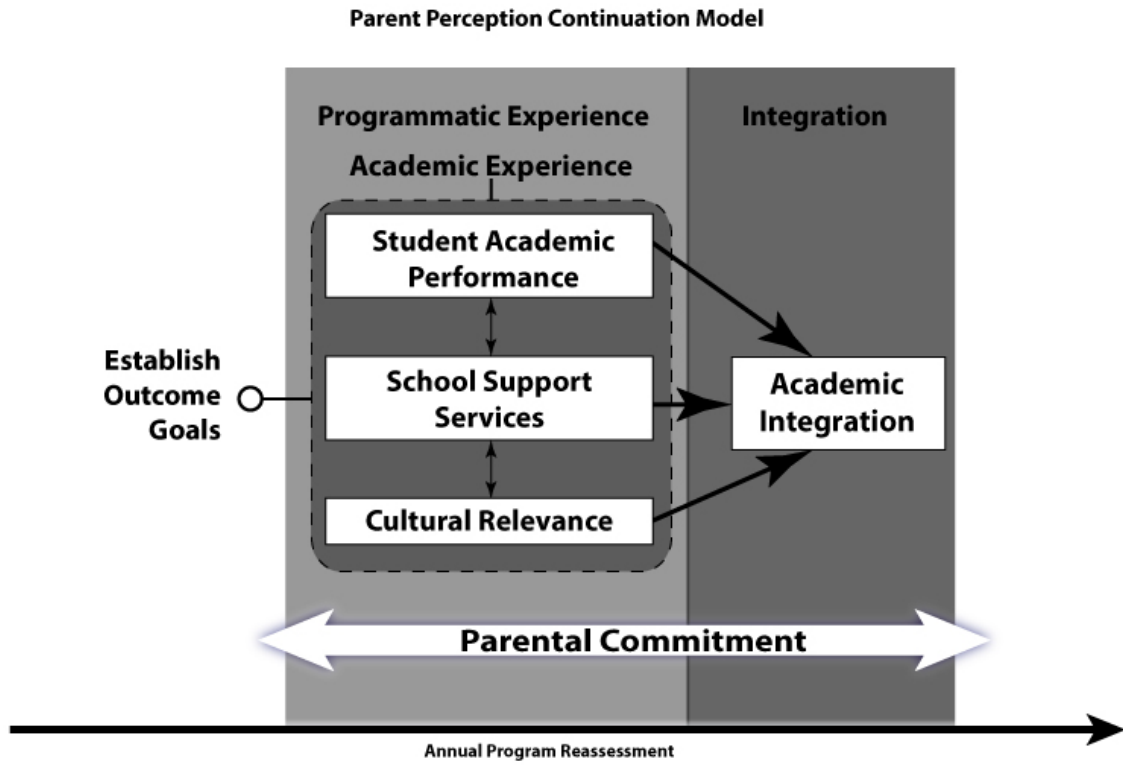


Figure 4.12. Parent Perception Continuation Model. This figure illustrates parents' perceptions of their child's academic experience in the SIP.

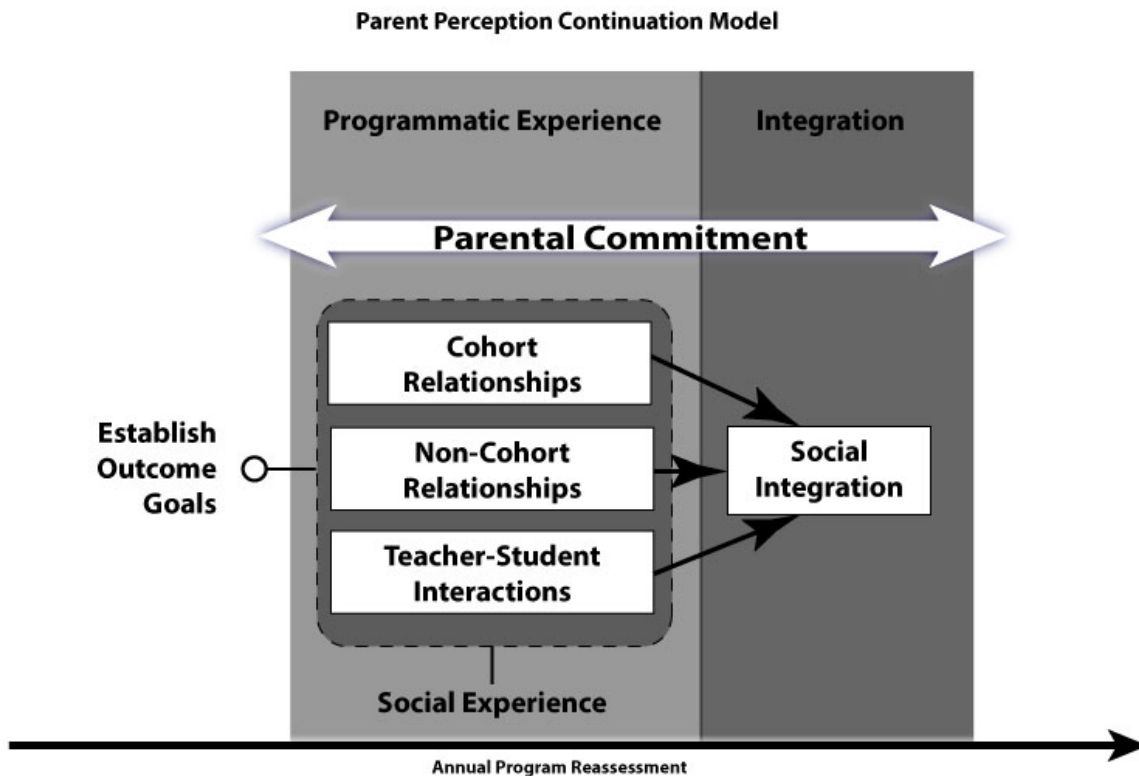


Figure 4.13. Parent Perception Continuation Model. This figure illustrates parents’ perceptions of their child’s social experience in the SIP.

Subsequently, the fourth factor is integration which is a result of the programmatic experiences (See Figure 4.14). The degree to which a student is academically integrated is dependent upon how well s/he performs, how much support is provided through school-based interventions such as tutoring or modifications and how often students are able to connect with the content by seeing either reflections of themselves or their culture or how they can make use of the content in the future. The perception from parents is that students are more likely to want to stay in the immersion program if they are performing well academically, feel they can go to their teacher for help and see how they can use the language in the future. Social integration is dependent upon the strength of the relationships and interactions between the child and the other

students and teachers in the cohort and the students who are not in the cohort. (Non-cohort students are considered those not in the immersion track at the middle and high school level as well as those that attend neighborhood schools.) The perception here is that students are more likely to want to stay in the program if they have developed strong bonds with their cohort peers and teachers. In addition, they are more likely to stay if they do not have a connection with their non-cohort peers. Therefore, the degree to which a student is integrated into the SIP is a result of both the academic and social experiences of that student.

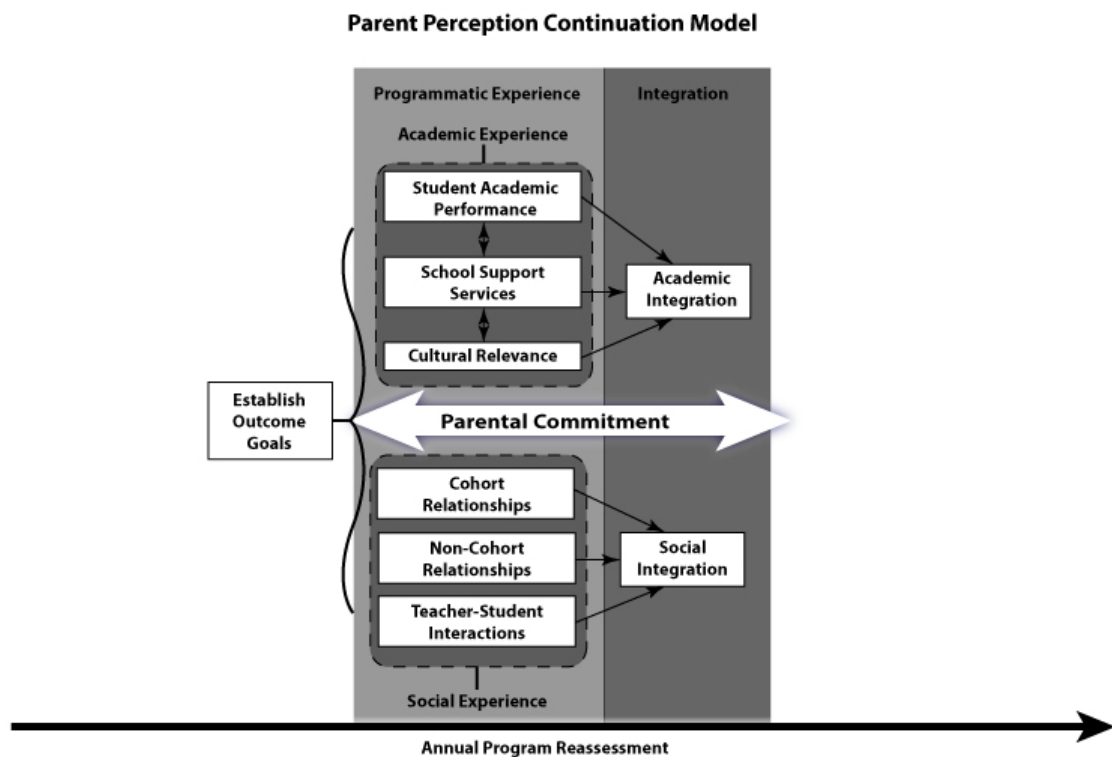


Figure 4.14. Parent Perception Continuation Model. This figure illustrates parents’ perceptions of their child’s integration in the SIP based on their programmatic experience.

After determining how academically and socially integrated their child is in the SIP, the parent must then compare the degree of integration with the initial outcome goals

they had for their child upon enrollment in the SIP. It is important to note that when the parents are assessing the degree to which their child is integrated in the program, one may outweigh the other. For instance, a student might be more socially integrated than academically. Thus, a parent would need to weigh this against his/her outcome goals before proceeding to the next step. Once these factors have been taken into consideration, the parent comes to the fifth factor which is the decision point where they ask themselves the question: Do I allow my child to continue enrollment in the SIP or do I withdraw him/her? (See Figure 4.15).

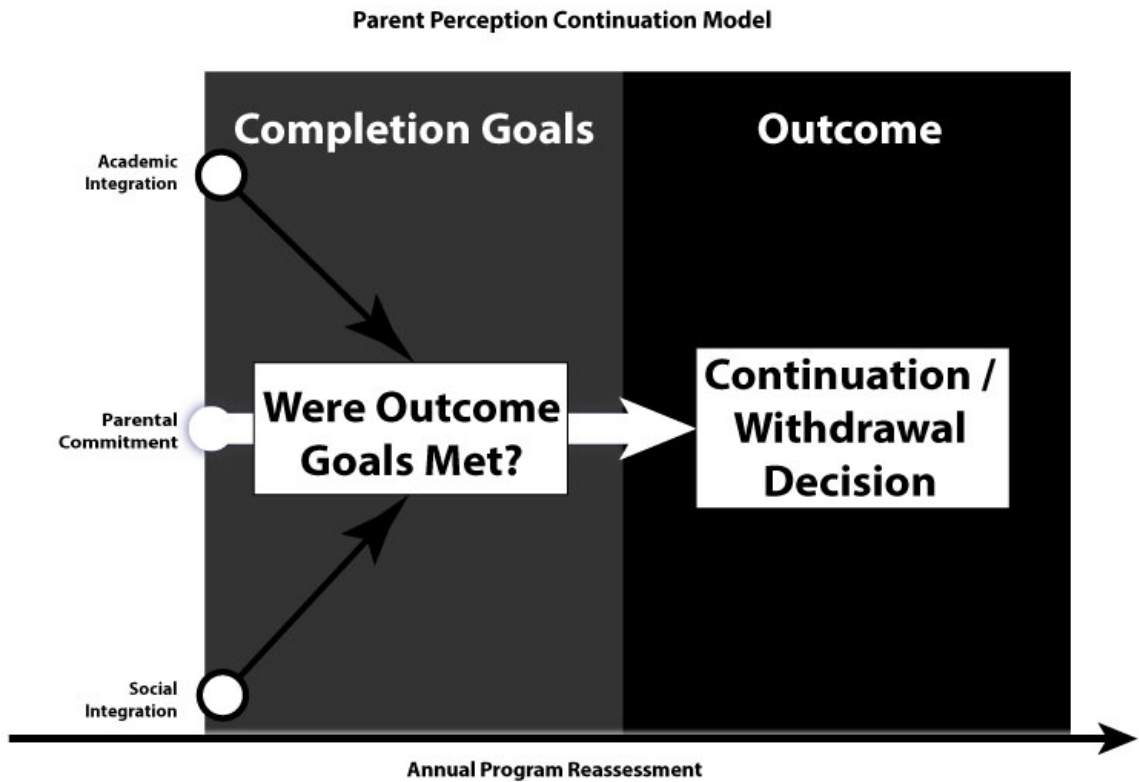


Figure 4.15. Parent Perception Continuation Model. This figure illustrates the parents' decision-making process in relation to whether outcome goals were met.

There are two final things to make note of in the PPCM. First, parental commitment is a factor that runs the length of the model. Akin to Tinto's external commitments, parental commitment is a factor that works independently of the immersion program itself and the students enrolled in it. It refers to the intentions parents have for their child to complete the program and the personal commitments they make of themselves in order to help their child(ren) get to completion. These commitments may include such things as ensuring transportation for their child to and from school, providing opportunities for their child to participate in various cultural activities outside of the classroom, securing extra homework help outside of the school day if they cannot help their child due to the language barrier, or even taking classes in the language themselves. As previously stated, these commitments work independently of the immersion program and may occur at any point in the model.

Second, in the K-12 system transitions organically occur between elementary school and middle school and middle school and high school. However, parents do not have to wait until their children get to these points in order to apply the PPCM. Since parents can withdraw their student at any point in the program, not only could the model be applied at the aforementioned transitions points, but it could also be applied between grade levels.

Chapter Summary

In summary, data were analyzed from three different sources to ascertain reasons why African-American students continue and discontinue their enrollment in a Spanish immersion program. Longitudinal data were used to identify any trends in enrollment and withdrawal, but the data were limited to two consecutive years. Survey data revealed that the reasons parents enrolled their children in the SIP were to speak two languages

and to increase their academic achievement. In addition, the survey data revealed that parents were strongly committed to the program upon enrollment, however, their level of satisfaction varied depending on the aspect of the program.

The survey served to identify potential volunteers and as a foundation for the focus group discussion. The focus group allowed the participants to expound upon their survey responses. Several themes emerged from the data analysis of the focus group. They include reasons for enrolling, extracurricular opportunities, relationships, parental commitment, cultural competence, relevance, mental models, discontinuity and continuation/withdrawal decision. These themes led to the development of the PPCM. Major research study findings, recommendations and implications for future research will be discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

Findings and Recommendations

In this chapter is an overview of the research study, including a review of the purpose, the design, and the conceptual framework. In addition, there is a discussion of the major findings, a proposal for a model program continuation, as well as implications for future research.

Overview of the Study

This qualitative case study explored factors that affect the persistence of African-American students in a Spanish immersion program. If African-American students choose not to study a second language, or perform poorly while in the course, the effects can pervade their academic career, as well as prove to be detrimental to their professional career (Ansberg-Espinosa, 2008). Research shows three major benefits to studying a foreign language. First, students who study a second language tend to have a better understanding of the structure of the English language and numerous studies have shown that students who study a second language outperform students who do not on the core content sections of standardized tests. Second, people who can speak more than one language appear more marketable when searching for employment because they have an increased awareness about cultures other than their own. Finally, the more Americans study a second language, the better the resources are for increasing national security as well as the more capacity American business and industry have to compete in the global economy. The lack of foreign language knowledge proves to be dire for African-American students, since historically, the enrollment of African-American students in foreign language classrooms has tended to be low (Glynn, 2012). As Boudreaux (2010, p. 185) stated “it is important for researchers and practitioners to investigate the reasons

for student withdrawal from foreign language immersion programs, and attempt to identify trends within these reasons.” Therefore, the goal of this study was to pinpoint factors that affected continued participation and attrition among African-American students in a partial Spanish immersion program in an effort to then be able to offer recommendations to school district administration and staff for maximizing the opportunity to keep African-American students enrolled in their program from kindergarten through high school graduation.

This research study employed a case study approach. Yin (2014, p. 14) stated that a case study is appropriate when the focus of the study is to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about “a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control”. Subsequently, the research questions for this study were:

- What factors do African-American parents attribute to their students’ continued participation in a partial Spanish immersion program?
- What factors do African-American parents attribute to their students’ attrition in a partial Spanish immersion program?

The content analysis theoretical framework was employed for this study through the constructivist lens. It consists of “purposively selected texts which can inform the research questions being investigated (Hashemnezhad, 2010, p. 60). In other words, researchers construct meaning from a participants’ interpretations of a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). So, what one considers as truth is relative to that person’s interpretation. In addition, Tinto’s (1993) Model of Student Departure identifies pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments, institutional experiences, and integration as bases for student withdrawal.

While the findings from the case study form the underpinnings of the research, the two quantitative instruments were employed to establish a foundation for the study: longitudinal data and a survey. Once data from the instruments were analyzed, data were gleaned from the transcript of the focus group. The transcript data were coded using first and second cycle coding methods which were compared to the survey results to see if: 1) findings were consistent among the two data collection methods, and 2) data from the focus group could provide any insight to the responses given in the study. Ultimately, a modified conceptual framework was developed based on the findings and subsequently, recommendations were outlined offering answers to the research questions.

Major Findings

Research Question 1: What factors do African-American parents attribute to their students' continued participation in a partial Spanish immersion program?

Major Finding 1

Parents chose to keep their child(ren) enrolled when the program met their reasons for enrollment.

The results from the quantitative data revealed two main reasons that parents enrolled their children in the SIP: increased academic achievement and the potential for bilingualism. Similar to the findings of Boudreaux (2010), the qualitative data supported the findings from the quantitative data and revealed that the parents of students who were performing well academically chose to keep their children enrolled. Of the sixteen children represented in the study, four graduated from the program and seven were currently enrolled. Of the four students whose parents withdrew them, poor academic performance was cited as the reason. Some parents stated that their children had

particular learning needs that hindered their ability to grasp the language at the pace that was required for success. In addition, parents indicated that teachers at the elementary level were either not willing or not equipped with strategies to accommodate their needs.

The potential for bilingualism was another reason parents wanted their children enrolled in the SIP and the qualitative data supported this quantitative result as well. However, when student performance was hindered by the inability of the student to grasp the language at the pace needed, the poor academic performance outweighed the parents' desire for their children to be bilingual. The result was the parents withdrawing their children for the program.

Recommendations for school administration and staff. Most of the Spanish teaching staff were native speakers of the language trained in other countries. School administration should ensure staff are trained to identify the various learning needs of students and subsequently monitor that they are being addressed. By providing interventions for students early on, it gives students more opportunity to be successful.

Major Finding 2

Parents of children who were socially integrated in the program, chose to keep them enrolled in the SIP.

From the quantitative data, all respondents revealed that their students were involved in Spanish activities both in and out of school at varying levels. This was supported by the qualitative research. Moreover, upon further exploration, it was determined that students in the SIP were required to perform a certain amount of community service hours which may have influenced how participants responded to this question on the survey.

Subsequently, it is difficult to ascertain the impact that required participation has on

social integration. However, parents who chose to keep their children enrolled described the deep connections their children had with other students in their cohort due to having taken classes with the same group beginning in either kindergarten or first grade. Similar to Ansberg-Espinosa (2008) and Wesely and Baig (2012), when parents came to the transition point from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school, they expressed how detrimental it would have been to remove their students from the social component of the immersion setting and placing them in a brand new environment and thus, they kept them enrolled.

Parents who withdrew their children did not have as much to say about their children's socialization in the program and most of what they said was not favorable. This group of parents stated that their children either had personality clashes with the students or with the staff. These clashes were reported to have had negative effects on the students and were a factor in the decision to withdraw them.

Recommendations for school administration and staff. School administration and staff should capitalize on the effects of the strong bonds that parents saw among their children and their SIP cohort by continuing to promote opportunities within and outside of the school day for students to cultivate relationships. In addition to providing opportunities for students, school administration and staff should provide structured opportunities for parents to connect not only with each other, but also with school administration and staff. Finally, at the middle and high school level, school administration and staff should intentionally identify and facilitate opportunities for SIP students and non-SIP students to form relationships in an effort to destigmatize students in the immersion program.

Research Question 2: What factors do African-American parents attribute to their students' attrition in a partial Spanish immersion program?

Major Finding 3

Parents withdrew their children from the program when their student's academic performance was low.

As in Boudreaux's (2010) study, parents enrolled their children in the SIP believing in the goals and ideals of the program and hoping that their children would achieve at high levels academically. As stated previously, parents continued to keep their children enrolled in the program if the program matched their reasons for enrolling. Conversely, when the program did not, the parents withdrew their children. In this case, the parents of those children who were performing poorly, withdrew their children from the SIP because their reasons for enrolling were not being met.

Not only did the parents feel that their children were not performing well academically, but they felt that the learning needs of their children were not being addressed by school administration and staff. Data revealed that three of the four children whose parents withdrew them from the SIP were not performing well academically. In addition, parents indicated that two of their children had learning needs that were not being addressed. In one instance, one child had a speech impediment. Her parents acknowledged that speaking the target language is critical to program success, however they stated that at no time did school administration and staff meet with them to discuss a plan for providing the necessary resources and interventions to help this child be successful.

In addition, parents of another child discussed their son's frustration at the pacing of the classes being taught in the target language. They described their son as a "slow learner"

and stated that their son was not grasping the language as quickly as he needed to. However, these parents also stated that school staff did not provide the necessary adjustments to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom. Moreover, a parent of a child who was still enrolled in the program indicated that her youngest son had autism and while at the moment she chose to keep him in the program, she did indicate that she did not feel that school staff were appropriately addressing his learning needs. Lastly, other parents expressed that they had heard similar sentiments from parents they knew who had withdrawn their children from the SIP.

Recommendations for school administration and staff. School administration could benefit from looking at the academic needs of the diverse learners in their classrooms and intentionally matching resources, strategies and interventions with their needs. If current staff are not aware of how to address these needs, continual professional development should be provided to equip them to be able to better serve their students.

Major Finding 4

Cultural discontinuity exists between the instructional environment of the immersion program and the cultural, value-based learning preferences of African-American students.

Both parents who kept their children enrolled and those who withdrew their children stated that there was a cultural incongruence between the native Spanish-speaking teachers and some of the African-American students. This finding was consistent with Ansberg-Espinosa (2008) whose students expressed a desire for a more “culturally inclusive environment” (p. 227). Parents stated that while students learned about the culture of the target language, their own cultural values, beliefs and experiences were not acknowledged and teachers did not use culturally relevant instructional practices

to make the content meaningful. In addition, parents expressed concern over the lack of cultural representation in the SIP whereas there were not many opportunities for African-American students to see people that looked like them among the school staff or in the content, resources, and materials in the curriculum. There was not an intentional connection made between the target language and Afro-Latino influence in order for students to develop mental models that are relevant to them.

Moreover, parents expressed concerns with the attrition of African-American males in the program. One parent who withdrew his African-American son from the program cited a disconnect between how teachers taught and how African-American males learn. He described how the teachers' lack of ability or lack of willingness to differentiate instruction led to many of the African-American males being withdrawn from the program in elementary school. This instructional discontinuity then led the teachers to perceive that the African-American students had behavior issues resulting in those teachers attempting to address behavior rather than instructional needs. Not only was this discontinuity expressed by parents whose children experienced this, but it was also stated by other parents whose children were either still enrolled or who had graduated as they reflected on their own children's experiences and how the demographics changed as their own children advanced through the program.

Recommendations for school administration and staff. In an effort to address the cultural discontinuity between the SIP and the cultural, value-based learning preferences African-American students bring, continuous professional development in cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching should be provided. Gay (2000, p. 29) defined culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior

experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them.” With this in mind, cultural is not unidirectional. Therefore, school administration and staff, while imparting knowledge to the students about the cultural of the target language, need to be aware that African-American students enter the classroom bringing their own culture. Teachers should be intentional about making connections from the content to the students’ own culture in an effort to show relevance and allow students to learn about the target language’s culture from the perspective of their own cultural lens. Understanding the cultures of the students that are in the classroom would better equip the teachers with strategies for teaching them effectively.

Implications for further research

The size and scope of this study is small and the ability to generalize the findings has its limits. While this study adds to the research base of African Americans and foreign language study, as well as parent perspectives on immersion programs, further research studies should be conducted. First, research should be conducted in a partial Spanish immersion program where the program is a track in a non-immersion, neighborhood school versus an immersion school where students must apply and be selected to attend. Using the same research questions, data could be collected and comparisons could be drawn to determine what effect, if any, the demographics of this set of parents has on their decision whether to continue enrolling their student in the SIP. Moreover, more research should explore factors that affect persistence among African-American male students in immersion programs. Regardless of whether the parents in this study had withdrawn a son from the SIP, their general observation was that African-

American males tended to not complete the program. Pinpointing the reasons why could allow the administration to address the needs with the goal of retaining more African-American males in the SIP from enrollment to program completion.

Finally, an in-depth study should be conducted on the incongruence between native speaking teachers of the target language and their culturally diverse students. Included in this study should be a discussion of the perceptions that teachers of the target language hold of African-American students. These perspectives would inform administrators of the type of school-sponsored professional development needed to bridge the instructional gap between the teachers of the target language and African-American students. Furthermore, findings from this research could also inform the content delivered in postsecondary teacher preparation programs in an effort to equip these teachers prior to them encountering African-American students for the first time. Teacher preparation programs could benefit by ensuring cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching are embedded in the curriculum or at a minimum are course requirements. By continuing the research, school administration and staff can use the findings to implement strategies in their schools in an effort to increase the continuation rates of African-American students in immersion programs.

Conclusion

This study explored the factors that affect African-American students' persistence in a partial Spanish immersion program. It sought to determine why parents continue to keep their children enrolled in the program and why they withdraw them. By identifying these factors, it was the researcher's aim to offer recommendations for the school administration and staff in an effort to maximize the opportunity to keep African-

American students enrolled in the program through completion. This study was conducted from the parents' perspective. Parents are an integral part of their children's education and a key component in the success of immersion programs. As a result of the findings, the Parent Perception Continuation Model, a conceptual framework that outlines the process parents use to make their continuation/withdrawal decision, was developed. This process gives immersion program administration and staff concrete reasons as to why parents make the decision to keep their children enrolled in the program or why they remove them prior to completion. Understanding the process and determining where their strengths and areas of concern lie will help immersion program administration maximize the retention rates of African-American students. Subsequently, while the research focus has been on why parents enroll their children in an immersion program, more attention should be paid to why they continue to keep them enrolled and why they withdraw them.

Appendix A. Spanish Immersion Parent Questionnaire

Spanish Immersion Parent Questionnaire

| Student Information (please circle each response) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|------|-------|-------------------|---------------------------|---|--------------|---|-----------------------|---|----|----|----|----|
| Gender | M / F | Race | White | Black | Hispanic | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | Asian | Two or more races | Other | | | | | | | | | |
| SES | Free Lunch | | | Reduced Lunch | | | Paying Lunch | | | | | | | |
| Current Grade Level | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | NA |
| Grade child exited program (if applicable) | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | |
| Current School | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Previous School(s) (If applicable) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Current grades (or grades received) | ELA/Reading: A B C D/F | | | | Mathematics: A B C D/F | | | | Spanish: A B C D/F | | | | | |
| Identified with learning exceptionalities (504, Special Education, dyslexia, ADD, ADHD, etc.)? | Yes: _____ (specify) | | | | | | | | No | | | | | |
| Identified as Gifted and Talented? | Yes | | | | | | | | No | | | | | |

Indicate how important each of the following reasons was in your decision to enroll your child in the Spanish immersion program. (Please circle one response for each.)

| | | | | |
|--|---------------|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1. Friends/family members already in immersion | Not Important | Little Importance | Important | Very Important |
| 2. Increased academic achievement | Not Important | Little Importance | Important | Very Important |
| 3. Access to school site of our choice | Not Important | Little Importance | Important | Very Important |
| 4. Speaking two languages | Not Important | Little Importance | Important | Very Important |
| 5. Heard about it, and it sounded interesting | Not Important | Little Importance | Important | Very Important |
| 6. Multiculturalism | Not Important | Little Importance | Important | Very Important |
| 7. Better group of students and parents | Not Important | Little Importance | Important | Very Important |
| 8. Other (specify) _____ | Not Important | Little Importance | Important | Very Important |

Spanish Immersion Parent Questionnaire

Indicate what source of information influenced your decision to enroll your child in the Spanish Immersion program? (Please circle one response for each.)

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 9. Conversations with Family / Friends | Not Influential | Little Influence | Influential | Very Influential |
| 10. The media | Not Influential | Little Influence | Influential | Very Influential |
| 11. School/school board educators | Not Influential | Little Influence | Influential | Very Influential |
| 12. Research on immersion | Not Influential | Little Influence | Influential | Very Influential |
| 13. Other sources (specify) | Not Influential | Little Influence | Influential | Very Influential |

14. Rate your level of commitment to the Spanish immersion program at the time of your child's enrollment. (Please circle one answer.)

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Very Uncertain – Little Commitment | Many Doubts – Somewhat Committed | A few doubts - Committed | Strongly Committed |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|

15. Indicate how the actual Spanish immersion program matched the expectations you had before enrolling your child. (Please circle one answer.)

| | | | |
|---------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Did not match | Somewhat Matched | Matched many expectations | Matched most expectations |
|---------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|

Indicate how you came to the decision to enroll your child in Spanish immersion. (Please circle one response for each.)

| | | | | |
|--|----------------|---------------------|------------------|---------|
| 16. Always knew what you would do | Does not Apply | Applies very little | Somewhat Applies | Applies |
| 17. It was our second choice | Does not Apply | Applies very little | Somewhat Applies | Applies |
| 18. Went to an information meeting | Does not Apply | Applies very little | Somewhat Applies | Applies |
| 19. Asked questions to other parents / professionals | Does not Apply | Applies very little | Somewhat Applies | Applies |
| 20. Didn't know much about it | Does not Apply | Applies very little | Somewhat Applies | Applies |
| 21. Visited the school(s) | Does not Apply | Applies very little | Somewhat Applies | Applies |

Spanish Immersion Parent Questionnaire

Please circle the appropriate response to each statement.

| | | | | |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 22. How satisfied were you with the school your child attended? | Dissatisfied | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |
| 23. How satisfied were you with your school principal as a leader for the Spanish immersion program? | Dissatisfied | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |
| 24. How satisfied were you with the Spanish teachers your child had in the Spanish immersion program? | Dissatisfied | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |
| 25. How satisfied were you with the English teachers your child had in the Spanish immersion program? | Dissatisfied | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |
| 26. How satisfied were you with the Spanish immersion program? | Dissatisfied | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |
| Give examples of subjects of satisfaction in the program: | | | | |
| Give examples of subjects of dissatisfaction in the program: | | | | |
| 27. How involved was your child with formal or informal Spanish activities outside the school, such as play time with other immersion students, etc. | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often |
| 28. How involved was your child with the Spanish immersion program in ways such as in school Spanish activities, etc. | Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Often |
| 29. Did your child take non immersion Spanish in middle or high school? | Yes | No | | |
| 30. Explain you answer to 29. | | | | |

Please include any additional comments regarding your/your child's experience in the Spanish immersion program.

Appendix B. Survey Cover Letter

Survey Cover Letter

To Research Participant:

You are being invited to take part in a research study to investigate the factors that affect African-American students' persistence in Spanish immersion programs. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you have identified your child as African American and he/she attends/attended the Spanish Immersion Program in Fayette County.

Although you will not get personal benefit from taking part in this research study, your responses may help us understand more about reasons for attrition among African-American students in the Spanish Immersion Program in XXXX County.

We hope to receive completed questionnaires from about 50 people, so your answers are important to us. Of course, you have a choice about whether or not to complete the survey/questionnaire, but if you do participate, you are free to skip any questions or discontinue at any time.

The survey/questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete.

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Your response to the survey is anonymous which means no names will appear or be used on research documents, or be used in presentations or publications. The research team will not know that any information you provided came from you, nor even whether you participated in the study.

Please be aware, while we make every effort to safeguard your data once received from the online survey/data gathering company, given the nature of online surveys, as with anything involving the Internet, we can never guarantee the confidentiality of the data while still on the survey/data gathering company's servers, or while en route to either them or us. It is also possible the raw data collected for research purposes may be used for marketing or reporting purposes by the survey/data gathering company after the research is concluded, depending on the company's Terms of Service and Privacy policies.

If you have questions about the study, please feel free to ask; my contact information is given below. If you have complaints, suggestions, or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the University of Kentucky Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428 or toll-free at 1-866-400-9428.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this important project. To ensure your responses/opinions will be included, please complete the survey/questionnaire link by December 31, 2016.

Sincerely,

Dawn CheNeen Offutt
Doctoral Candidate
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Survey/Questionnaire Cover Letter Template [F1.0355]

Appendix C. Recruitment Email

Recruitment Email for Survey

Good Afternoon,

Dawn CheNeen Offutt, a doctoral candidate at the University of Kentucky, is conducting a research study entitled “Factors that affect African-American students’ persistence in a Spanish Immersion Program”. The objective of this study is to identify factors that contribute to attrition among African American students in Spanish Immersion programs. By identifying these factors, it is hoped they will inform the development of guidance and interventions that will address them.

You have been invited to take a survey that will focus on the experiences of African American students and their parents in the Fayette County Spanish Immersion program. Participation is voluntary. The criteria to be included in this study are as follows:

- Parents and/or students must identify their students/themselves as African American.
- The students must currently be or have been enrolled in the Spanish Immersion Program at MaXXXXXX Elementary

The link for the survey is below.

After completing the survey, you will be invited to participate in a focus group to discuss your and your child’s experiences in the Fayette County Spanish Immersion Program. The focus group will be conducted in January of 2017. If you are interested, please contact Dawn CheNeen Offutt at cheneenXXX@XXXX.com.

INSERT SURVEY LINK HERE

Appendix D. Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



Continuation Expedited Review

Extension

Approval Ends
January 17, 2018

IRB Number
15-0997-P4G

TO: Dawn Offutt
Education
[Redacted], KY
PI phone #: (859) 576-[Redacted]

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
Non-medical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol Number 15-0997-P4G

DATE: January 23, 2017

On January 18, 2017, the Non-medical Institutional Review Board approved your protocol entitled:

Factors that Affect African-American Students' Persistence in a Spanish Immersion Program

Approval is effective from January 18, 2017 until January 17, 2018 and extends to any consent/assent form, cover letter, and/or phone script. If applicable, attached is the IRB approved consent/assent document(s) to be used when enrolling subjects. [Note, subjects can only be enrolled using consent/assent forms which have a valid "IRB Approval" stamp unless special waiver has been obtained from the IRB.] Prior to the end of this period, you will be sent a Continuation Review Report Form which must be completed and returned to the Office of Research Integrity so that the protocol can be reviewed and approved for the next period.

In implementing the research activities, you are responsible for complying with IRB decisions, conditions and requirements. The research procedures should be implemented as approved in the IRB protocol. It is the principal investigator's responsibility to ensure any changes planned for the research are submitted for review and approval by the IRB prior to implementation. Protocol changes made without prior IRB approval to eliminate apparent hazards to the subject(s) should be reported in writing immediately to the IRB. Furthermore, discontinuing a study or completion of a study is considered a change in the protocol's status and therefore the IRB should be promptly notified in writing.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" from the Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook web page [<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/IRB-Survival-Handbook.html#PIresponsibilities>]. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site [<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori>]. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at (859) 257-9428.

N. Van Tubergen, PhD/ah

Chairperson/Vice Chairperson

seeblue.

315 Kinkead Hall | Lexington, KY 40506-0057 | P: 859-257-9428 | F: 859-257-8995 | www.research.uky.edu/ori/

Printed On Recycled Paper

Appendix E. Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

- 1) What is the reason you enrolled your child in the Spanish Immersion program?
 - 2) What did you know about Spanish Immersion at the time of your enrollment? How did you see this program helping your child in the future?
 - 3) What expectations did you have of the SIP? How did the SIP live up to these expectations?
 - 4) Have you ever felt worried about his/her ability to learn English considering language arts is carried out in Spanish?
 - 5) What, if anything, has made you/your child feel upset/discouraged or unmotivated?
 - 6) Did he/she have any really difficult moments in this program, where he/she might have wanted to quit studying at this school? Please explain.
 - 7) Your child made it to ____ grade in this program. A) Can you tell me why you and/or your child made the decision to stay with the immersion program? B) Do you want your child to stay in the immersion program through 5th grade? 8th grade? High school? C) Has anything in particular made your child want to stay in the program?/made you want your child to stay in the program?
 - 8) Your child made it to ____ grade in this program. A) Can you tell me why you and/or your child made the decision to leave the immersion program?
 - 9) Would you recommend this program to other African American families?
 - 10) Can you tell me about any other African American students who were in the program but are no longer there? Do you know why?
-

11) How do you think being African American has affected/might affect his/her experience at KSIP? What about his/her relationships with other students? With teachers? With principal or other adults on campus?

12) Are you aware of the number of African Americans at the school? Explain your child's experience of being one of only a few African American students at your school. How do you think being one of a few African American students at the school may have made/make a difference for your child in the program? (Do you or your child notice it? Is it comfortable, uncomfortable, etc.?) How do you think it would be different if there were more African Americans at the school?

13) Are you aware of any activities in the classroom (stories or celebrations, etc.) that focus on African Americans in particular? If yes, what? Tell me your opinion about that?

14) Can you think of a time when he/she might have discussed culture (especially African American culture) in classrooms or meetings and/or with teachers?

15) Can you think of any recommendation you might have to improve the program for students, particularly African American student&/families?

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Vitae

Dawn CheNeen Offutt received her Bachelor of Arts in French from Grambling State University and her Master of Arts in French Linguistics from Louisiana State University. She taught French & Spanish at Southern University Laboratory School for 3 years and French at Grambling State University for 4 years. Subsequently, she worked for seven years as an education administration consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education before becoming the Director for Program Services for a federal education grant.