

EXAMINING TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
IMMIGRATION AND UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

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Esta tesis está dedicada a mis padres y a mi esposo por todo su amor y apoyo. Son realmente una bendición en mi vida y soy muy afortunada de tenerlos a mi lado. También dedico esta tesis a todos los jóvenes Latinos en los Estados Unidos quienes luchan todos los días para superarse sin olvidarse de sus raíces.

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## ABSTRACT

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It is projected that by the year 2040, one in three children entering the classroom in the United States will be a second-generation immigrant. Among children of Latino immigrants, four in ten second-generation immigrant children have at least one undocumented immigrant parent and therefore live in mixed-status families. These demographic changes have significant implications for the schools and teachers who must be prepared to educate and meet the needs of these children; however, many teachers are not equipped to address the needs of these students. The present study examined whether participation in an immigration workshop would improve teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards immigration and undocumented immigrants. The theoretical framework used as a guide to conduct this research was the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), a theory of attitude change which posits that attitude change may occur from a person's careful and thoughtful consideration of the true merits of the information presented in support of an advocacy (central route) or change may occur via peripheral cues that trigger an individual's affective state (e.g., attractive expert source; peripheral route). Therefore, the immigration workshop incorporated both factual information from credible sources providing statistics and trends on immigration and



undocumented immigrants as well as personal student testimonies which appeal more to the emotions of the individual. Teachers (n = 197) were recruited from one school corporation in a rural county in the state of Indiana which has a Latino student population of approximately 35%. Teachers completed pre- and post-surveys to assess their knowledge and attitudes regarding immigration and undocumented immigrants. Results indicated that after participating in the workshop, teachers' general knowledge about immigration and undocumented immigrants increased, as did their knowledge of immigration policy. Additionally, teachers' attitudes toward immigration improved following the workshop. Teachers' knowledge of immigration was not related to their attitudes regarding immigration. Possible explanation and implications of these findings for future research are discussed.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Immigration has become a major topic of discussion nationwide leading to changes in immigration policy, public demonstrations, community forums, and controversy which have affected millions of individuals and families in the United States. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, since the year 2000 there have been over 8.4 million undocumented immigrants in the United States (U.S.) with the number growing steadily until the year 2007 when it reached its peak at 12 million. In 2011, there were about 11.1 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. According to a report from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security there are approximately 1.3 million undocumented youth under the age of 18 living in the U.S. (Baker et al., 2011). In 2002, it was estimated that about one-fifth of the nation's children were growing up in immigrant homes (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2002). Among children of Latino immigrants, four in ten second-generation immigrant children have at least one undocumented immigrant parent and therefore live in mixed-status families (Fry & Passel, 2009). It is projected that by the year 2040, one in three children entering the classroom in the United States will be a second-generation immigrant (Suarez-Orozco, Qin, & Amthor, 2008). These demographic changes have significant implications for the schools and teachers who must be prepared to educate and meet the needs of these children.

Even though statistics show there are a growing number of undocumented youth registered in schools throughout the United States, teachers, counselors, and other adults working with these students in school settings are not equipped to help them navigate and address the barriers they may face due to their legal status. This is particularly prevalent in states such as Indiana where 86.6% of its population is European American and only 6.3% of its population is Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census, 2010). These obstacles include, but are not limited to, family member deportations and the impact this has on the student, limited means of transportation because undocumented immigrants cannot obtain a driver's license, out-of-state college tuition and limited means of financial support because of legal status, and numerous nationwide and statewide immigration policies such as Secure Communities, Deferred Action, Dream Act, and Immigration Reform to name a few.

The mission and goal for most teachers, counselors, and administrators is to help all students navigate the education system successfully; however, this cannot be done effectively if school officials are unaware of the barriers undocumented students face in the first place. Being aware of why and how families migrate as well as stressors they live with once they arrive to this country will help teachers understand and meet the needs of these families. The goal of this research study is to examine if teacher's knowledge and attitudes of immigration and undocumented immigrants increase following participation in an immigration workshop.

### 1.2 Immigration: Implications for Students and Families

According to a 2007 study, undocumented immigrants migrate to the U.S. for two main reasons (Bacallao & Smokowski). First, they think they will have better job opportunities to support their families. Second, they seek a better future for their children. Unlike immigration patterns in the past where usually only the males immigrated to the United States to work during the farming season and then returned to their country of origin with their families, undocumented immigrants are settling down in this country with their entire families. Families who migrate often do so in a “stepwise” fashion also known as serial migration, which means that not all family members migrate at the same time (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992). Usually, the father or mother of the family migrates first to work and save money to afford for the rest of the family to migrate.

Recent migrating trends show that over 68% of all undocumented immigrants have lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years, including 35% that have lived in this country for 15 years or more (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). Due to this phenomenon schools in most Western countries, meaning European countries and countries populated by European people, have become increasingly culturally diverse over recent decades. At the same time, large-scale assessments such as Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) have repeatedly shown that immigrant students’ school achievement lags behind that of majority students. It has been claimed that schools fail to address the needs of immigrant students, and that catering to these needs is among today’s major educational challenges (Vedder, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Nickmans, 2006).

### 1.2.1 The Potential Consequences of Migrating

There are two major consequences of immigrating for families (Bacallo & Smokowski, 2007). First, family separation and the impact this separation has on both children and parents. When serial immigration occurs, families estimate that they will reunite within six to 12 months. In reality, the average separation time for Mexican families is two years, and five years for families that originate from Central America (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2002). According to a 2002 study, children who were separated from their parents were more likely to report depressive symptoms, with higher depressive symptoms among girls. Depending on the length of separation, some children also suffer from their compromised ability to build trust, anger at parental systems, and significant adjustment within a stable and secure family environment (Brandon, 2002).

Second, family systems change after immigration. The reunification of family members is usually fraught with disillusion and substantial disappointment (Cervantes et al., 2010). For example, some parents report that they have a difficult time reasserting control over their children because of their guilt over being separated from them which, often results in inconsistencies and overindulgence (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2002). On the other hand, other parents report that they become stricter in response to perceived environmental dangers in the U.S. (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). Further, when both parents were employed in the workforce, there was little adult supervision and parents and children spent less time together due to work demands. These changes contributed to adolescents' loneliness, isolation, and risk-taking behavior, and parent-adolescent conflict (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007).

Caplan (2007) identified three major types of stressors among Latino immigrants: instrumental/environmental, social/interpersonal, and societal.

Instrumental/environmental stressors include challenges related to obtaining the goods and services needed for one's daily existence, such as employment, access to health care, and language abilities. Social/interpersonal stressors refer to challenges related to the reestablishment of family resources and social support, changing gender roles and family, and intergenerational conflicts. Societal stressors capture discrimination and difficulties associated with undocumented status, which includes fear of deportation.

It is widely accepted that immigrant children's development is influenced by proximal context (peer, family, extended family) as well as distal context (sometimes called macrosystems), which include laws, institutions, and policies (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Research has documented that this distal context contributes to several specific developmental challenges for children from immigrant families in general and from Latino immigrant families in particular. A study by Brabeck and Xu in 2010 found that even though only 38% of participants acknowledged being undocumented, almost half of the participants reported that they had experienced the detention or deportation of a family member. Additionally, more than half of the participants reported that these policies and practices affected their ability to financially provide for their family and had implications for their children's emotional wellbeing and performance in school. Overall the researchers concluded that it was the parents' legal vulnerability that was related to poor emotional well-being, financial capability, and relationships with their children, which in turn also affected outcomes for children including emotional well-being and school performance (Brabeck & Xu, 2010).

### 1.2.2 Academic Achievement of Latino Immigrant Youth

Academic achievement is an important indicator of the future prospects in society for Latino youth in immigrant families (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Because Latino adolescents in immigrant families are at increased risk for lower grade point average (GPA) (Pong & Hao, 2007), it is important to examine protective factors that may reduce this risk. For example, Perez et al. (2009) examined the role of protective resources in mediating the academic achievement of undocumented Latino youth. They operationalized four key concepts: risk, environmental protective factors, personal protective factors, and academic outcomes. The risk factors that the researchers examined were employment during high school, sense of rejection due to undocumented status, low parental education attainment, and large family size.

Perez et al. (2009) found that undocumented immigrant Latino students had parents with low levels of education. Participants' mothers had an 8th grade education and fathers had a 10th grade education on average. Almost half of the participants had three or more siblings and 40% reported working twenty hours or more per week. Students were then placed in one of three clusters: high-risk, protected, or resilient. The high-risk cluster was characterized by high levels of psychosocial risk accompanied by low levels of personal and environmental protective factors. The protected cluster was characterized by low levels of psychosocial risk and high levels of personal and environmental protective factors. Finally, the resilient cluster was characterized by high levels of psychosocial risk accompanied by high levels of personal and environmental protective factors. The researchers found that protected students reported significantly lower levels of rejection due to undocumented status and their parents had higher levels

of education. Protected students had higher rates of being identified as a gifted student early in their schooling and had significantly higher parental valuing of school, extracurricular participation, and volunteerism. Protected students had significantly higher GPAs, number of academic awards, and more academically rigorous Honors and AP courses. The overall finding was that undocumented students who exhibit high levels of psychosocial risk, but who enjoy high levels of personal and environmental resources, are able to maintain high levels of academic performance (Perez et al., 2009). This study shed light into the important role that teachers and other school personnel can have on an immigrant student that is undocumented.

### 1.3 The Role of Teachers

Teachers play a pivotal role in the academic success of undocumented Latino students (Sosa & Gomez, 2012). However, multiple research studies show that many pre-service and practicing teachers in the United States lack a comprehensive understanding of their own culture as well as other cultures (Gregor & Green, 2012). They often times enter their teacher education programs with beliefs that are stereotypical about immigrants and are unaware that these beliefs may result in bias or discrimination. As a result of these stereotypical beliefs and lack of exposure to different cultures, many teachers do not fully understand the needs of children who are new immigrants to this country (Escamilla & Nathenson-Mejia, 2003). A large body of evidence shows that teachers' beliefs significantly influence how they plan, organize, and implement their lessons and how responsive they are to their students (Staub & Stern, 2002).



The term beliefs is defined as attitudes, views, ideologies, and models that teachers hold about students with different cultural background from their own. There are two main belief sets that have been studied: multicultural and egalitarian. Multicultural beliefs recognize that because individuals have engaged with different socio-cultural contexts, they have legitimately different perspectives and beliefs. Teachers with multicultural beliefs can be expected to incorporate students' different cultures into everyday school practice when planning lessons, choosing materials, and interacting with students. On the other hand, egalitarian beliefs emphasize the importance of treating all people equally. People with egalitarian beliefs often argue that categorization on the basis of ethnicity or culture is one of the sources of discrimination. Teachers with egalitarian beliefs pay less attention to the cultural backgrounds of their students, focusing instead in their similarities and seeking to treat all students equally (Hachfield et al., 2011).

Various research studies have described important differences between multicultural and egalitarian beliefs. Multicultural perspectives have shown to lead to a more outward focus in interethnic interactions, to more empathy, and to a stronger perception and acceptance of differences between people (Wolsko et al., 2000). Hachfield et al. (2011) found that proponents of multiculturalism are less likely to agree with prejudiced statements, have more integrative views on acculturation, and show a lower tendency toward an authoritarian teaching style. These results suggest that egalitarian beliefs may be the less effective response to culturally diverse classrooms. Therefore, we expect that immigration workshops will enhance teachers' multicultural perspectives and improve their knowledge and attitudes regarding immigration.

Even though multiple studies have investigated immigration and the impact it has on families (Arbona, Olvera, Rodriguez, Hagan, Linares, & Wiesner, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, 2002; Schapiro, 2002), most of them have taken place in states like California or Texas where the population demographics are very different from those in Indiana. Also, most of the studies have focused on immigrant families, in general, and not on the undocumented population more specifically. The topics that have been researched related to immigration have ranged from the process of acculturating, to effects of raids and deportation, to how and why immigrants migrate, to effects of separation, and even academic resilience. However, the findings from these research studies have not been used to educate the people who work with undocumented students on an almost daily basis, such as school personnel. As Nathalia Jaramillo keenly points out, “Schools are one of the first formal institutions with which border crossers will come into contact. They are the places where new sets of values and norms are introduced to the population and where dreams are met or failures are secured” (Jaramillo, 2012, p. 12). Yet, many schools are not prepared to meet the real needs of these families and students because they are not familiar with their culture, values, traditions, and barriers they face every day.

A common misconception held by teachers and school administrators is that “good teachers anywhere, are good teachers everywhere,” (p. 23) but they fail to realize that their standards of “good” teaching and learning strategies are culturally determined and are not the same for all ethnic groups (Gay, 2000). Several schools and communities are troubled by the high percentage of dropout rates among Latinos. In 2010, a Pew Hispanic Center study found 37% of Latinos 20 years old and older in the United States

did not complete high school. The fact that a student is undocumented does not predetermine his or her ability to be academically successful, as shown by Perez et al. (2009). It just means that they have different needs to be met, and these needs can be met by the school if they are knowledgeable about the students' situation and barriers they need to overcome.

### 1.3.1 Schools Serving Undocumented Students

In 1975, the State of Texas enacted section 21.031 of the Texas Education Code. This section allowed its public school districts to charge tuition to undocumented children. There are no published records explaining the origin of this provision and it appears that this provision was inserted in a larger, more routine bill at the request of some border-area superintendents who mentioned this concern to their representatives (Olivas, 2005). According to Gardner and Quezada-Aragon (1984) there are two main reasons that explain why educating undocumented students became an issue. First, in areas where there was an increase in the number of undocumented students, there was the conception that financial burden on the local taxpayers would also increase. Second, the amendment to the Texas Education Code that was passed in 1975 denying reimbursement of funds to school districts for the education of undocumented children took the issue to the forefront. In 1978, multiple lawsuits were filed against the Governor of Texas and the State Commissioner of Education. The case, *Re Alien Children Education*, was assigned to Judge Woodrow Seals who ruled that section 21.031 of the Texas Education Code was unconstitutional based on the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Furthermore, he concluded that undocumented students residing in the jurisdiction of the

state of Texas were subject to its laws and rights and that included access to a free education. Judge Seals' decision was appealed and the case was taken to the Supreme Court as *Plyler v Doe*. The Supreme Court agreed with Judge Seals and ruled that section 21.031 was unconstitutional.

According to the Immigration Policy Center (2012), in the three decades since the *Plyler* ruling was issued, states and localities have passed several measures and adopted unofficial policies that violate the spirit if not the letter of the decision. For example, in 1994, California passed Proposition 187, prohibiting elementary and secondary schools from enrolling any student who was undocumented in the U.S. Furthermore, it required schools to notify federal immigration authorities within 45 days. This measure was struck down in federal court for violating *Plyler v Doe*. In 2006, a school district in Illinois denied admission to a student who overstayed their tourist visa but the Illinois State Board of Education threatened to withhold funding if the district did not admit the student. In 2011, the legislature in Alabama enacted a measure requiring administrators to determine the immigration status of newly enrolled students. Moreover, it required the administrators to submit an annual report to the state Board of Education. The federal appellate court blocked its implementation.

In response to cases similar to those mentioned above, on May 2011 the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education released a letter to school districts reminding them that the 1982 Supreme Court decision *Plyler v. Doe* grants immigrant children who are undocumented a free public education (Unmuth, 2011). The letter states that a district cannot ask for information with the purpose of denying access to education. Proof of residency within the district boundaries can be requested; however,

it clearly states that inquiring about the students' citizenship/immigrant status or that of their parents is not relevant to establishing residency within the district. Under these guidelines, school districts are allowed to require a birth certificate, but enrollment cannot be denied based on a foreign birth certificate. Furthermore, enrollment cannot be denied if family cannot provide a social security number.

## CHAPTER 2. CURRENT STUDY

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The immigration workshops in which teachers participated incorporated both information from credible sources providing statistics and data on immigration and undocumented immigrants as well as personal student testimonies which appeal more to the emotions of the individual. The theoretical framework that was used as a guide to conduct this research to examine if these two modalities of presenting information had an effect on teacher knowledge and attitudes towards immigration/undocumented immigrants was the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). This theory from social psychology focuses on the thinking processes that might occur when we attempt to change a person's attitude through communication. This theory takes into account different effects that particular persuasion variables play within these processes.

Based on this theory, motivation and ability affect how an individual processes the message presented. A person's motivation can be influenced by several variables, such as the perceived personal relevance of the issue and being personally responsible for processing the message. Ability refers to an individual needing resources and skills to understand and attend to a message. A person's ability can be influenced by several variables, such as intelligence, time available to engage in the message, a person's level of actual or perceived knowledge, and number of message repetitions (Petty & Cacioppo,

1986). According to this theory, there are two routes to persuasion: central and peripheral route. See Figure A for more details.

### 2.1.1 Central Route to Persuasion

If an individual is motivated and able to think carefully about a message then the person is likely to follow the central route to persuasion. In this route, individuals carefully consider the elements of the message in order to determine whether its proposal makes sense and will benefit them in some way. Specifically, the central route to persuasion involves a focus on the strength of the message arguments, defined as pieces of information in the message intended to provide evidence for the communicator's point of view. If the arguments are strong, then engaged individuals will generate predominately favorable thoughts in response to the message and will experience attitude change in the advocated direction. In general, attitudes and behaviors that result from central route processes tend to be more stable over time, resistant to counter-arguments, are likely to guide thinking in a pro-attitudinal way, and lead to attitude-consistent behavior. Despite the obvious benefits of shaping attitudes through the central route, they are typically more difficult to achieve given the higher elaboration demands that are placed on the target audience (Wagner & Petty, 2011).

### 2.1.2 Peripheral Route to Persuasion

If an individual lacks motivation or ability to carefully consider every piece of the persuasive communication, attitude and even behavior change can still occur through the peripheral route. In this route, recipients use simple cues or mental shortcuts as a means

of processing information contained in a message. For example, a cue might involve an emotional state of the recipient, a recipient may count the number of arguments presented in the message rather than scrutinizing them, or a recipient may look at the response of other people around them (Wagner & Petty, 2011).

### 2.1.3 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent workshops on the topic of immigration and undocumented immigrants increased teachers' overall level of knowledge and attitudes about immigration issues. It was expected that increased knowledge and improved attitudes regarding immigration would better equip teachers to serve their Latino students. This study had three research questions:

- Does teachers' knowledge of immigration and undocumented immigrants increase following participation in immigration workshops?
- Do teachers' attitudes regarding immigration and undocumented immigrants improve following participation in immigration workshops?
- How is teachers' knowledge of immigration/undocumented immigrants related to teachers' attitudes regarding immigration/undocumented immigrants?



## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Participants

The school corporation that was chosen for this study lies within a county in Indiana in which Latinos make up approximately 15% of the population. Between 2000 and 2007 this school corporation experienced a large increase in Latino student enrollment, due to increased numbers of Latino immigrant families settling in the area. Currently over 35% of the student body within this school corporation is Latino and one of its elementary schools has slightly over 50% Latino student enrollment.

The target audience in this study were the teachers ranging from preschool to twelfth grade in one school corporation. There were 223 teachers in the school corporation and over 90% of them were White. Each school principal required each teacher, with a few exceptions based on afterschool activities, to attend this workshop. Most of the research in the field of immigration has been done at the high school and college level, as such, the present study helped fill this gap, which is so greatly needed because the barriers Latino students face, particularly undocumented students, are present throughout their school career. Starting in elementary school, students hear from their teachers how important it is for them to do their homework and do well in school so that they can go to college and get a good job; however, teachers do not know or understand

that the process for getting into college may be different for some of these students because of their heritage and/or legal status.

### 3.2 Procedures

This study used a quantitative method approach. Each of the five schools were visited separately to deliver a one-hour workshop on the topic of immigration and undocumented immigrants. The workshop took place during a regular staff meeting or regular professional development training at each school to ensure the greatest amount of participation possible. This workshop included two different modalities of presenting information. First, factual information regarding immigration statistics and trends was used to explain the complexity of the immigration system and more specifically focus on the immigration policies, programs, bills, and initiatives that affect the Latino youth the teachers serve every day as well as explain why and how their understanding of the immigration system will help them better address the needs of their students. Second, student testimonies of youth that have recently graduated from the participating school corporation were shared. In their testimonies students explained why and how they immigrated to the United States as well as the barriers they have faced due to their legal status.

In order to measure the impact of the workshop, teachers completed a pencil and paper pre- and post-survey. Because the pre- and post-survey took between 15-20 minutes to complete, they were not administered on the same day as the workshop. The pre-survey was distributed to teachers by each school principal one week before the workshop and was turned in the day of the workshop before it began. The post-survey

was distributed after the workshop and was due within one week. For confidentiality purposes, each teacher was assigned a code that they wrote on their survey, which also enabled pre- and post-surveys to be matched.

### 3.3 Measures

#### 3.3.1 Perceived Knowledge

This portion of the survey was designed to assess teachers' knowledge about the why, what, and how of immigration/undocumented immigrants. Knowledge items were created for the purposes of this study and included items on general knowledge of immigration and undocumented immigrants as well as knowledge regarding immigration policy. Thirteen items were created using three different response formats: true/false, multiple choice, and a four-point scale that ranged from 0 (Nothing at all) to 3 (A lot). The true/false questions and multiple choice questions assessed general immigration knowledge and were assigned a value, true (1) and false (0) because each of these items had one correct answer. A higher score indicated more knowledge (Cronbach's alpha could not be computed because this scale was not continuous). Immigration policy knowledge was assessed with a four-point scale in which responses were assigned a value of nothing at all (0), a little (1), some (2), and a lot (3). A higher score indicated more policy knowledge and Cronbach's alpha was .77. The complete questionnaire is in Appendix B.

#### 3.3.2 Attitude

Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policy were measured with items adapted from the Pew Hispanic Center (2005). Some of the questions from that survey

were selected to be included in this study and the wording on some of the questions was slightly modified. There were eight items in this portion of the survey using a Likert five-point scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. An example of an item is, “Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents.” A mean score was created by averaging the items to create a total score and a higher score reflected a pro-immigrant/immigration attitude. Cronbach’s alpha was .84. Items are in Appendix B.

### 3.3.3 Demographic Information

Teacher demographics were collected for the purpose of data analysis and to examine the impact, if any, of each of these factors. Questions included gender, age, race, ethnicity, grade level taught, number of years teaching, and subjects taught. These items were created for the purposes of this study.

## CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Results

Out of the 223 teachers that were employed in the school corporation at the time of the study, 197 completed a pre-survey which is a total of 88.51%. The post-survey was completed by 139 teachers which is a total of 61.76%. In total there were 139 pre- and post-surveys that could be compared. Please refer to Table 4.1 for the breakdown of percentages of teachers that completed pre and post surveys by school as well as aggregate data. Forty-four teacher participants were male, 144 were females, and 9 did not answer this question in the demographics portion of the survey (see Table 4.2). Teachers ranged in age from 18 to 61+ and most teachers were between the ages of 31 and 40 (see Table 4.3). Most teachers had been teaching five years or less at the time of the workshop (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.1 Teacher Survey Completion Data

|                 | <b># of<br/>Teacher<br/>s per<br/>School</b> | <b># Pre<br/>Surveys<br/>Complete<br/>d</b> | <b># Post<br/>Surveys<br/>Complete<br/>d</b> | <b>% Pre<br/>Surveys<br/>Complete<br/>d</b> | <b>% Pre and<br/>Post<br/>Surveys<br/>Completed</b> |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>School A</b> | 34                                           | 32                                          | 26                                           | 94.12%                                      | 76.47%                                              |
| <b>School B</b> | 31                                           | 26                                          | 14                                           | 83.87%                                      | 45.16%                                              |
| <b>School C</b> | 41                                           | 37                                          | 25                                           | 90.24%                                      | 60.98%                                              |
| <b>School D</b> | 54                                           | 47                                          | 33                                           | 87.04%                                      | 61.11%                                              |
| <b>School E</b> | 63                                           | 55                                          | 41                                           | 87.30%                                      | 65.08%                                              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>    | <b>223</b>                                   | <b>197</b>                                  | <b>139</b>                                   | <b>88.51%</b>                               | <b>61.76%</b>                                       |

Table 4.2 Gender Distribution.

| <b>Gender</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Male</b>   | 44               | 23.40          |
| <b>Female</b> | 144              | 76.60          |

Table 4.3 Age Distribution.

| <b>Age</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>18-30</b> | 46               | 23.83          |
| <b>31-40</b> | 61               | 31.61          |
| <b>41-50</b> | 38               | 19.69          |
| <b>51-60</b> | 37               | 19.17          |
| <b>61+</b>   | 11               | 5.70           |

Table 4.4 Number of Years Teaching Distribution.

| <b>Years</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>0-5</b>   | 48               | 25.00          |
| <b>6-10</b>  | 37               | 19.27          |
| <b>11-15</b> | 43               | 22.40          |
| <b>16-20</b> | 24               | 12.50          |
| <b>21+</b>   | 40               | 20.83          |

#### 4.1.1 Research Question 1

A t-test was used to compare mean knowledge scores on the pre-survey and post-survey. Results showed that post-survey general knowledge was significantly higher than pre-survey knowledge,  $t(138) = -10.10$ ,  $p < .001$ . More specifically, the mean general knowledge score on the pre-survey was:  $M = 0.72$ ,  $SD = 0.17$  and the post-survey was  $M = 0.86$ ,  $SD = 0.08$ . Teachers' immigration policy knowledge was also significantly higher on the post-survey compared to the pre-survey,  $t(138) = -23.19$ ,  $p < .001$ . More specifically, the mean policy knowledge score on the pre-survey was  $M = 0.27$ ,  $SD = 0.38$  and the post-survey was  $M = 1.32$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ .

Table 4.5 Results Comparing Pre- and Post-Surveys on General Immigration Knowledge.

| Survey | n   | Mean | SD  | t-value | p     | Decision |
|--------|-----|------|-----|---------|-------|----------|
| Pre    | 138 | .72  | .17 | -10.10  | <.001 | Accept   |
| Post   | 138 | .86  | .08 |         |       |          |

Table 4.6 Results Comparing Pre- and Post-Surveys on Policy Immigration Knowledge.

| Survey | n   | Mean | SD  | t-value | p     | Decision |
|--------|-----|------|-----|---------|-------|----------|
| Pre    | 138 | .27  | .38 | -23.19  | <.001 | Accept   |
| Post   | 138 | 1.32 | .53 |         |       |          |

#### 4.1.2 Research Question 2

A t-test was used to compare mean attitude scores on the pre-survey and post-survey. Results indicate that there was a statistically significant improvement in attitudes among teachers that participated in the immigration workshop,  $t(136) = -3.69, p < .001$ . More specifically, teachers' pre-survey attitudes were  $M = 2.44, SD = 0.66$  and post-survey attitudes were  $M = 2.60, SD = 0.60$ .

Table 4.7 Results Comparing Pre- and Post-Surveys on Attitude.

| Survey | n   | Mean | SD  | t-value | p     | Decision |
|--------|-----|------|-----|---------|-------|----------|
| Pre    | 136 | 2.44 | .66 | -3.69   | <.001 | Accept   |
| Post   | 136 | 2.60 | .60 |         |       |          |

#### 4.1.3 Research Question 3

Bivariate correlations were used to examine the relationship between teacher knowledge and attitudes from the post-survey. Results indicated that more knowledge of immigration policies was associated with more positive attitudes,  $r = .27, p < .001$ . However, general knowledge about immigration issues was not associated with immigration attitudes  $r = -0.03, ns$ .

#### 4.1.4 Demographic Variables

An analysis of variance was used to examine if age or the number of years a teacher had taught would have an impact on teacher knowledge or attitudes regarding immigration. Results showed that teachers' age did not have statistically significant effect



on general immigration knowledge  $F(4, 132) = .68, p = .60$ ; immigration policy knowledge  $F(4, 132) = .58, p = .68$ ; or attitudes  $F(4, 130) = .18, p = .95$ . Similarly, results indicated that the number of years teachers taught did not have a statistically significant effect on general immigration knowledge  $F(4, 131) = .36, p = .84$ ; immigration policy knowledge  $F(4, 131) = 1.47, p = .21$ ; or attitudes  $F(4, 129) = 1.32, p = .27$ . A t-test was used to examine whether males and females differed in their immigration knowledge or attitudes. Results indicated that there were no gender difference on teachers' general immigration knowledge  $t(186) = .74, p = .50$ ; immigration policy knowledge  $t(186) = 1.28, p = .20$ ; or attitudes  $t(184) = .18, p = .86$ .

## CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Discussion

This study sought to explore three major questions: (a) does teachers' knowledge of immigration and undocumented immigrants increase following participation in immigration workshops, (b) do teachers' attitudes regarding immigration and undocumented immigrants improve following participation in immigration workshops, and (c) how is teachers' knowledge of immigration/undocumented immigrants related to teachers' attitudes regarding immigration/undocumented immigrants. The Elaboration Likelihood Model was used as a guide to conduct this research because it focuses on the thinking processes that might occur when we attempt to change a person's attitude through communication. This theory considers the different effects particular persuasion variables play, which is why two different modalities of presenting information were used in the workshop. First, factual information regarding immigration statistics and trends were discussed with regards to immigration bills, policies, and programs. Second, recorded testimonies from students that had recently graduated from the participating school corporation were incorporated to the workshop in order to appeal to the emotions of the participating teachers.

Unfortunately, even though research shows there is a growing number of undocumented youth registered in schools throughout the United States, many teachers

working with these students in school settings are not equipped to help them navigate and address the barriers they may face due to their legal status. Research studies have shown that due to their lack of comprehensive understanding of not only other cultures, but also their own, many pre-service and practicing teachers enter their education programs with stereotypical beliefs about immigrants (Gregor & Green, 2012). Furthermore, teachers are unaware that these beliefs may result in bias and discrimination leading to gaps of communication and understanding between teachers and immigrant students (Escamilla & Nathenson-Mejia, 2003). A large body of evidence shows that teachers' beliefs significantly influence how they plan, organize, and implement their lessons and how responsive they are to their students (Staub & Stern, 2002). A research study done by Sosa and Gomez in 2012 indicated that teachers play a pivotal role in the academic success of undocumented students, but yet there is very little research indicating that anything is being done to prepare teachers to educate and address the needs of this subgroup of students, which is why the present study was designed.

Results from this study showed that teachers who participated in a one hour immigration workshop not only had a statistically significant increase in knowledge, but also an improvement in attitudes toward immigration, as was initially predicted. These results support the premise that not only can teachers' knowledge about immigration increase if given the relevant information, but their attitudes towards immigration and undocumented students can also improve. There are two possible explanations as to why there was a higher increase in immigration policy knowledge than general immigration knowledge. First, in the community where this study was conducted there have been several immigration forums since 2009. It is possible that some of the teachers that

participated in this workshop attended these forums and were therefore more knowledgeable about items in the general immigration knowledge portion of the survey. Second, in the past five years there have been multiple immigration policies and bills introduced at both the state and national level. Many of the immigration policies that were discussed during the immigration workshop for teachers were relatively new and so it is likely that many of the teachers that participated in the study were not aware of these policies.

Contrary to expectations, there does not appear to be a relationship between general immigration knowledge and attitudes. See results. It was expected that more knowledge of immigration and undocumented immigrants would be associated with more positive attitudes toward immigration. However, the absence in this association could be attributed to the fact that teachers only attended one immigration workshop. Perhaps teachers need more exposure to this topic so more workshops could potentially lead to statistically significant relationship between knowledge and attitudes. Due to time limitations there were many topics that were not covered during the teacher immigration workshop; however, discussing these topics could lead to an association between knowledge and attitudes. A list of the suggested topics includes teachers' understanding of their own culture, how a person's sense of identity evolves and how this impacts how a person sees her or himself, exposure to more undocumented students' testimonies, acculturation versus assimilation and how this process occurs, the role of fear in assimilation, and benefits of bilingualism to name a few. An alternative hypothesis is that in order for there to be a relationship between these two variables, there needs to be more in depth discussion about immigration and undocumented immigrants, because even

though teachers had the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the workshop, it was not very interactive due to time constraints.

Even though qualitative data was not formally collected as a part of this study some differences among each of the five schools were observed during the workshops. One difference that was observed was the school culture in each of the five school buildings. In two of the schools, the principals publically voiced their expectations for teachers to be aware of the struggles Latino students in their communities were facing. For example, right before delivering the workshop in one of the elementary schools, the principal shared with her staff that even though she knew the topic of immigration was very politicized and that she also knew her staff as people had their own opinions, the bottom line was that as teachers they were expected to serve any and all students that arrived to their classroom regardless of their ethnic background or legal status. The level of engagement, participation, and questions from the teachers in that school was much higher than any of the other four schools. It was also evident that the principal had made that workshop mandatory and knew exactly who was not in attendance and why. This school had the highest percentage of pre survey completion at over 90% (See Table 4.1). In the previous two years this school had also celebrated Mexico's Independence Day during the school day by inviting Mexican high school students to each of the classrooms to talk about their heritage as well as by having trivia questions throughout the day about Mexico and playing traditional Mexican music through the intercom during breaks. This school had also housed a biliteracy program in partnership with Purdue University for two years. Given the small sample size of schools ( $n = 5$ ), statistical comparisons between schools could not be conducted. However, the information regarding school

differences collected from field notes, indicates that future research should consider the culture, leadership, and practices of individual schools because these factors likely contribute to teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices as well.

## 5.2 Limitations

Several limitations are notable in the present study. First, not all of the teachers in each of the five schools were able to participate in this study because of afterschool programming such as the afterschool tutoring program which took place in each of the five schools where the workshop was delivered. This affected fifteen teachers in total with the numbers ranging from three to five at each school. Unfortunately this program could not be cancelled during the day of the workshop because it serves about 250 students at the corporation level. The level of knowledge and attitudes of these teachers with regards to the immigration system and undocumented immigrants might have been different from the teachers that were not involved in this program.

Second, even though the Latino students' culture and sense of identity was mentioned during the workshop, it was very brief and general. Teachers were confused and puzzled as to why developing a sense of identity was difficult for many of their Latino students. It was hard for them to understand that the environment the child is raised in will affect the way the child sees his or herself which will affect how they identify themselves. Dr. Alejandro Portes has done research on the topic of the adaptation of children of immigrants in the U.S. and has found that children of immigrants tend to either have a downward or upward acculturation and that this is often defined by the messages these children receive from their surroundings (Portes, 2014).

Furthermore, a number of research studies indicate that many Anglo pre-service and practicing teachers in the United States lack a comprehensive understanding not only of other cultures but also of their own. For example, Escamilla and Nathenson-Mejia (2003) noted that most white middle class teachers did not recognize how their world views contrasted with those of people from other ethnic groups and cultural experiences. Similarly, these studies indicate that the majority of white pre-service teachers have minimal cross-cultural exposure. Often times these teachers enter their teacher education programs with stereotypical beliefs about immigrants and are therefore unaware that these beliefs may result in bias and discrimination (Barnes, 2006). Even though Latino students' culture was briefly discussed, the teachers' own culture was not incorporated in the workshop which could have helped teachers understand the importance of culture in the development of identity. It is often times helpful to be aware of one's own culture to be able to be aware of the existence of other cultures.

A fourth limitation in the present study is that some of the post surveys (maximum of 12) in one of the schools may have been accidentally thrown away by school staff over a school break, which could have affected data results.

### 5.3 Future Research

Research on this topic is relatively new and most is done only in a handful of states where the population of Latino residents is high such as in California. However, recent immigration trends show that Latino immigrants are now settling down in nontraditional states such as in the Midwest where there has been an influx of Latino families during the past ten years. Future research might replicate this study in other

states with different percentages of Latino residents to measure impact and examine if the Latino student population has an impact on teachers' attitude. Some of the participants in the present study voiced interest and appreciation for the workshop because of the number of their students that could be affected due to state as well as national statistics. Future research might also consider replicating this study looking at the impact in different types of communities, for example urban compared to rural.

Furthermore, more in depth research is recommended in this field of work. The results in the present study show that there is an increase in knowledge and improvement in attitude; however, future studies might want to look at how this translates in classroom practices and teacher/student as well as teacher/parent relationships. Classroom observations of a group of randomly selected teachers that attend this workshop could examine if there is a change in classroom practices after the workshop by doing pre and post workshop classroom observations. Student focus groups could also be used to examine impact in classroom practices. Additionally, this research could also provide insight into other resources teachers may need to better meet the needs of their Latino students. For example, teachers may need additional workshops regarding classroom strategies and techniques they could implement or immersion programs to experience firsthand the culture of their Latino students and these immersion programs could be organized at the local level. It has been claimed that schools fail to address the needs of immigrant students, and that catering to these needs is among today's major educational challenges (Vedder et al., 2006). In conclusion, research in this field shows that the Latino student body population will continue to increase and that teachers play a key role in the development and success of these students. Teachers will be more equipped to



address the unique needs of these students if they receive professional development training on the topic of immigration and undocumented immigrants.

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## APPENDICES

# Appendix A The Elaboration Likelihood Model

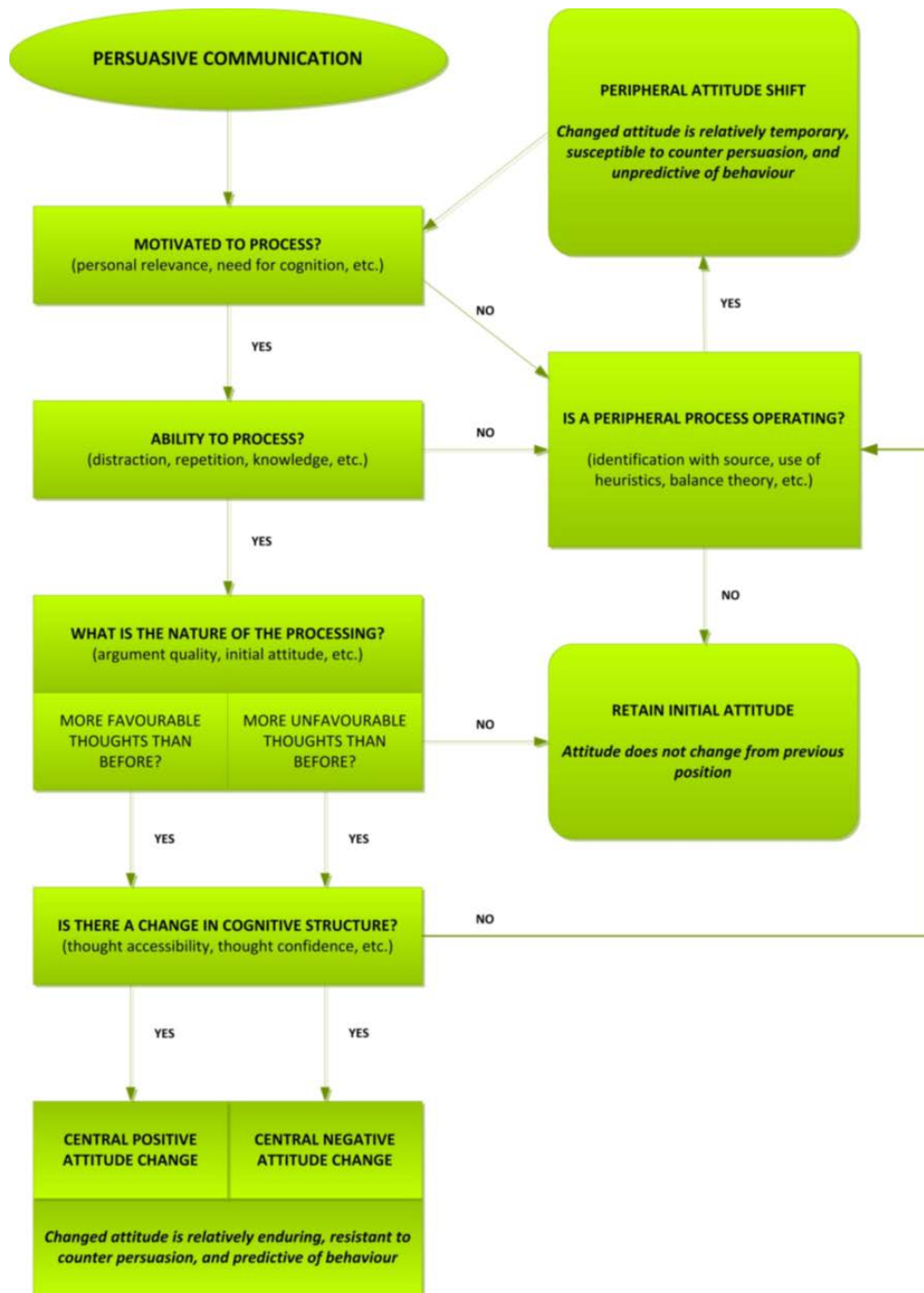


Figure A.1 The Elaboration Likelihood Model

## Appendix B Teacher Immigration Survey

### Community Schools of Frankfort Immigration Survey

The purpose of this survey is to explore perspectives on the U.S. immigration system within the Community Schools of Frankfort. We would appreciate your response to each question. Some of these items ask about specific governmental policies. Please do not look up any information online when completing the survey, since the purpose is to capture baseline knowledge on this issue. This should take between 10-15 minutes. Your responses are completely anonymous and will be used to generate discussions and develop programs within the schools.

**Thank you very much for your participation!**

1. How much do you know about “Deferred Action” in immigration policy? (Please choose the most appropriate answer.)

☐ Nothing at all  
☐ A little  
☐ Some  
☐ A lot

If you answered *a little*, *some*, or *a lot*, please give a brief description of “Deferred Action” below.

2. There is a lot of talk these days about “undocumented” immigrants. Please circle the best description below of what it means to be an “undocumented” immigrant of the state of Indiana.

*An undocumented immigrant is someone who...*

- a. Was born in the U.S. to foreign-born parents, and is convicted of a serious crime.
  - b. Was born outside of the U.S., and does not have a currently valid driver’s license.
  - c. Was born outside of the U.S., and is not currently authorized by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to reside in the country.
  - d. Was born outside of the U.S., and is not currently authorized by government officials in Indiana to reside in the country.
  - e. Was born in the U.S., and has lost all citizenship rights after failing to pay taxes or committing some other serious crime.
3. Undocumented immigrants cannot get a driver's license in Indiana.  
☐ True  
☐ False

4. Undocumented immigrants face limited job opportunities with nearly all professional fields closed to them, such as employment in the medical and education fields, governmental offices, and even cosmetology, among others.
- ☐ True  
☐ False
5. Undocumented immigrants cannot apply for federal or state financial aid to attend college.
- ☐ True  
☐ False
6. Undocumented immigrants do not qualify for in-state college tuition in the state of Indiana.
- ☐ True  
☐ False
7. Undocumented immigrants have been found to live with higher levels of anxiety compared to documented immigrants.
- ☐ True  
☐ False
8. How much would you say you know about what the deportation process entails?
- ☐ Nothing at all  
☐ A little  
☐ Some  
☐ A lot
9. About how long would it take for an unmarried son or daughter who is a Mexican national to get "permanent residency status" in the U.S. through a petition from his or her parent, who is a U.S. citizen?
- ☐ 5 years  
☐ 10 years  
☐ 15 years  
☐ 20 years
10. Undocumented employees have taxes taken out of their paychecks, even though they are barred from receiving many government benefits.
- ☐ True  
☐ False
11. How much would you say you know about the Secure Communities Program?
- ☐ Nothing at all  
☐ A little  
☐ Some  
☐ A lot

12. How much would you say you know about E-Verify?

- ☐ Nothing at all
- ☐ A little
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A lot

13. If serial migration occurs in a Mexican family, meaning that one member of the family migrates before the others to the United States, how long does it take for the family to reunite?

- ☐ 0-6 months
- ☐ 7-18 months
- ☐ 19-30 months

### Attitudes

14. Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

15. Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing, and health care.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

16. The United States should increase the number of immigrants allowed to come and work in the United States.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. Driver's licenses should be granted to undocumented immigrants in the United States.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

18. In-state college tuition should not be granted to undocumented immigrants in this country.

- ☐ Strongly Agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

19. The United States government should pass an immigration reform that gives undocumented immigrants living in the United States a chance to remain here permanently with legal status.

- ☐ Strongly Agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

20. There are too many immigrants living in the United States today.

- ☐ Strongly Agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

21. Deporting all immigrants who are undocumented would fix the immigration problems this country is facing.

- ☐ Strongly Agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

### Demographics

Gender:

Male

Female

Age:

18-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61+

What grade level do you teach? (Select all that apply)

Elementary

Middle School

High School

What subject/s do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you taught? (In your entire career)

0-5 yrs.

6-10 yrs.

11-15 yrs.

16-20 yrs.

21+ yrs.

Race:

☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native

☐ Black or African American

☐ Asian

☐ White

☐ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander

☐ Multi-racial

Ethnicity: Are you Hispanic or Latino?

☐ Yes

☐ No



### Appendix C Researcher's Personal Experience

I arrived to Indiana from Mexico when I was seven years old. Shortly after my arrival, I started first grade and my brother started kindergarten. In Mexico, I had already completed first grade, but school administration said that because of language barriers I needed to start in first grade so that I could acquire the language. When we started school in the year 1994, there were very few Latinos in the entire school and there weren't any teachers that spoke Spanish. The only Spanish speaking adults I saw in the school building were 2 paraprofessionals. I remember that in the mornings my brother and I would get off the bus and would be separated into two different lines, I would be in the girls' line and my brother on the other side of the staircase in the boys' line. He was two years younger than I was and every time we were separated he would cry and call out my name. I would try to go to him, but the teachers would not let me, saying that with time he would get used to it, but that day never came.

It was not easy to get used to it because everything we had ever known was gone and replaced with new surroundings, a new language, new people, a new system, and a new father. For the first time in seven years of my life I had not lived with my father in the same house for more than three weeks at a time. For the first time, I saw a house that had a toilet, a sink, and a shower that was inside the actual house. For the first time I saw a microwave, a washer, and a dryer. For the first time I saw something furry that felt soft and covered the floors in our house, the carpet. For the first time I saw a park that had slides, swings, and monkey bars which were my personal favorite. For the first time I saw McDonalds and bought food from a store that had walls and a ceiling. For the first time, I

could turn on and off the lights as I pleased at any time, even if it was light outside. All of these things and many more were new to me.

In my first grade class there was only a single Latino boy. His name was Juan. Because my first grade teacher did not speak Spanish and I did not speak English she would tell me to just do what Juan did. So the first time we took a bathroom break, I went to the same bathroom that Juan went and was quickly taken out. When we got in line to go to lunch, I only saw foods that were strange to me. One day, there was a small bowl full of an off-yellowish food and my eyes beamed with happiness because at last I had come across a food I had seen before, vanilla ice-cream. So I grabbed my spoon and dipped it in and excitedly stuck it into my mouth when I realized that it was hot and mushy, it was mashed potatoes. I became disappointed and stopped eating. I remember that when I went to recess, some of the students were really nice to me, but others would not play with me. They would stare and laugh and sometimes hit me, but I couldn't tell my teacher because I did not know how. Back then, the school did not have an ELL (English for Language Learners) program and so I was placed with the students who had a learning disability to learn English, which I learned in a year.

My first grade teacher was very helpful and someone I will never forget. Even though she did not understand what I was saying, she would let me speak Spanish with Juan and would often ask me how to say different words in Spanish. She would always make me feel special by praising me when I did something right and helping me one-on-one when I needed it. I remember the first time I got in trouble in the cafeteria. A gentleman had told the students to be quiet but because I did not understand I continued speaking and he went up to me, tapped me on my shoulder and told me to go to detention.

Once more I did not understand what he was saying, but I knew it was not good because of the way he looked at me. Not knowing what to do and because I assumed I was in trouble instead of going to recess that day, I went to my classroom, sat down on my desk and cried for over twenty minutes. When my teacher saw me she asked what was wrong and I tried to explain, with the little English I had picked up and the little Spanish she had learned, she understood what I said. The next day, the gentleman from the cafeteria came to my classroom said he was sorry along with other things I did not understand.

My elementary school career was very successful overall. By second grade I was talking my teacher's ear off in English and by third I was placed in the gifted class. I was a straight A student for the most part. It was not until I arrived to middle school, that I realized that things were going to change. In middle school there were a lot of fights between the Latino and White students. I did not feel as special anymore. I was not allowed to speak Spanish in the classroom and my grades started to decrease. I felt like people who looked like me were being discriminated and that we were not accepted. At the same time however, I felt disappointed by my Latino classmates because of how they behaved and most did not seem to care about school. By the time I reached high school, I had no illusion of going to college. I felt defeated. Until I met Mr. Harshbarger, my math teacher. Even though I was placed in the challenge math class, it was a hard subject for me so he would often go in before school to help me. During one of those many mornings I told him that school was too hard and I didn't feel very capable. The words that he replied with truly changed my life. He said, "I would have never guessed that, you are really smart and disciplined." With those words and without realizing it, he allowed me to give myself a second chance. He believed in me and thought I was capable. From

sophomore year on I enrolled into Honors and AP classes and I did not care if I was the only Latino student in those classrooms. When I graduated I received the award for the best student in Science and in French, 9th in my class, and a full ride scholarship to Purdue.

During my last year in college, I was offered a job that would start as soon as I graduated with my bachelor's degree and I accepted the job. On May of 2010, I started my job as the After School Tutoring Program director. I was very excited, because I knew that we had a high percentage of Latino students in our school district and I knew that as a part of my job I would be working with them. I thought that the Latino students would be so happy to see someone that looked like them and spoke their first language. To my surprise I was proved wrong. When I visited an elementary school for the first time that housed first through fifth grade students and spoke to the Latino children in Spanish, I received one of three responses for the most part: they would reply to me in English, ignore me, or reply by saying, "I can speak English" while a White child would be beside them excited that I could speak Spanish. I was astonished to say the least. To my surprise, this type of response was not an exception but the rule.

Within a few months in my position I began to receive phone calls from Latino parents sharing their concerns with me as I had shared with them. Some would say, "I try to get my child to speak in Spanish at home, but he won't" or "I try to get my child to read in Spanish but the only thing he will do is cry." Other parents would tell me that with time it was becoming harder and harder for them to communicate with their children, especially if they had multiple children. When multiple children exist in a family, the younger children don't see a need to know Spanish because there is someone

else they can communicate with in English and because Latino parents for the most part, can understand English, at least the basics, they just have a hard time speaking it. Other concerns I would hear would be that the children no longer liked what the mother was cooking at home, the children only wanted pizza, cheeseburgers, nachos, etc. Other parents were asking if I thought that teaching their kids both languages would be good because they were afraid they would get confused, while others were not sure if they should correct their child if they said something wrong in Spanish. Other parents would call and say, “is there something wrong with my child because I got a letter saying they pull him out of class or his grades are not improving.” One mother even called me and asked if her son had something wrong with his head because he was in Special Ed. and she did not know what this meant.

I realized that parents had had all of these and even more concerns for some time but simply did not know who to address them with. Even though the school had translators during parent/teacher conferences, the parents did not feel comfortable. They did not want to offend the teachers or the school or appear to be ignorant. I also realized that even though the schools had improved since the time I was in school, there was still a lot of improvement to be made. Parents needed to learn more about our education system and teachers needed to know more about our Latino culture.

I also found that unlike in my generation, students were becoming aware of their legal status much earlier, some in high school, others in middle school, and others in elementary. Parents were calling me asking if their child could go to college if they were undocumented and if so what they needed to do. Others were frustrated because their child wanted to drop out and others called me concerned because their child appeared to

be depressed. One day I even received a phone call from a mother who had a four-year old who did not want mom to go out because she was afraid the police would take her away. Sure, the child had no real understanding of the process or details, but she was afraid and to her our police officers were the bad guys. A few months ago, while driving back from a fieldtrip to Purdue with a group of twenty-seven elementary students and six parents, a fourth grade student sat next to me on the bus and asked, "Can kids like me go to college." Even though I knew that perhaps he wouldn't completely understand the process, I told him yes and motivated him to get good grades, learn English, and participate in school. I have the feeling that he would have not asked his teacher this question for fear of what she would say and fear of making his undocumented status known.

On another occasion as I was walking through the hallways of one of the elementary schools during the after school program, I saw a fifth grade student sitting in the hallway which was surprising to me because students who get sent to the hallway are those that are causing major disruptions in the classroom and I knew this student and I knew he was a good student that was respectful, kind, and smart. So I walked up to him and sat down and asked why he was in the hallway. He said that the teacher had asked him to step outside the classroom because he was misbehaving and so I asked if he wanted to talk about it. His eyes filled with tears and he said, "My mom was pulled over by the police and she has a court date. I don't want them to take her away. What will I do if my mom is taken?" I realized that like him, many of our students were facing these struggles alone because they didn't know who they could trust and who could help them. I also realized that perhaps students like him, who were model students could be acting

out in class or not following instructions because the troubles they were facing at home were so overwhelming that they came with them to school.

Even though I try to help the Latino families and children as much as I can, I know there are still questions not being asked, questions being left unanswered, subjects not being touched, and troubles growing. I feel that there is still a gap between our Latino families and schools that NEEDS to be bridged and the longer we take, the more students will fall through the cracks.

## VITA

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Graduate School, Purdue University

Education

B.S., Political Science and Psychology, 2010, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana  
M.S., Youth Development and Agricultural Education, 2014, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana

Research Interests

Perceptions of adults, particularly teachers, of undocumented youth, bilingualism, access to higher education for Latino students, and immigration policy.

**Presentations**

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Cruz, E. (September, 2013). How to get started on the college process: Presentation for Latino parents. Workshop presented at Frankfort Senior High School, Frankfort, Indiana.

Cruz, E. (September, 2013). What is next: College presentation for Latino students? Workshop presented at Frankfort Senior High School, Frankfort, Indiana.

Tharp, S. & **Cruz**, E. (February, 2011). Reducing Risk Factors-Increasing Protective Factors: The Role of Adult Education. Workshop presented at Tri State Diversity Conference, Ohio.

Tharp, S. & **Cruz**, E. (March, 2011). Educational Entrepreneurship-Added Value Extension. Workshop presented at NACDEP Conference, South Carolina.

Cruz, E. (October, 2010). Forum on Immigration: Economy and Politics. Workshop presented at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.

**Guest Speaker**

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Cruz, E. (April, 2014). Communication across culture. Presentation at Purdue University for AGR 201, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Cruz, E. (April, 2014). Immigration system and immigrants in the United States. Presentation at Purdue University for EDCI 285, West Lafayette, Indiana.



Cruz, E. (August, 2013). What is extension and what does it do? Presentation at Kirklin PM Homemakers Club, Kirklin, Indiana.

Cruz, E. (August, 2013). What is hospitality: My personal journey. Presentation at Gloria Du Church, Rossville, Indiana.

Cruz, E. (June, 5, 2013). How to work with diverse families through Extension. Presentation at HDFFS 30100: Diversity in Individual and Family Life, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Cruz, E. (May, 2013). What is hospitality: My personal journey. Presentation at Women of Faith, Frankfort, Indiana.

Cruz, E. (March, 2011). Immigration policy and immigrants in the United States. Presentation at Learning to Lead Program, Frankfort, Indiana.

### **Professional Development Experiences**

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- ACT Raising Safe Kids curriculum
- I Am Moving I Am Learning curriculum
- Grant Writing Workshop
- United States Hispanic Leadership Institute Training
- ServSafe Proctor

### **Committee Membership/Professional Services**

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- Sponsor of CRASH (Community Raising And Starting Heroes) Club
- Spring Clean-Up for Clinton County committee member
- Kidney Transplant Foundation fundraisers committee member
- Healthy Communities
- Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and Environment Change (ACHIEVE)
- College Success Coalition
- Latino Advisory Board
- United Businesses Serving the Community
- Communications Committee