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# Hispanic High School Dropouts: Their Unheard Voices

Cheryl Ann Clayton-Molina  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Cheryl Clayton-Molina

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2015

Abstract

Hispanic High School Dropouts: Their Unheard Voices

by

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MA, Albany State University, 2004

BA, Albany State University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

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## Abstract

America is in the midst of a high school dropout crisis that will cost \$3 trillion in lost wages over the lifetime of the 12 million students who are predicted to drop out. Each year, in an America's northern states, approximately 10,000 students drop out of high school; the majority of these students are Hispanic. Guided by Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory of academic disengagement, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of Hispanics who dropped out of high school and their rationales for dropping out.. Eight Hispanic dropouts in a local community were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and interrogated via inductive analysis. Findings in this study show that the system and community forces that impeded academic achievement were in similar to those of Ogbu's findings. However, contrary to this theory, the participants in this study did not report any discrimination. The participants dropped out due to academic difficulties, early parenthood, and a lack of parental support. Hispanics' perspectives are needed if administrators and other stakeholders are to develop and apply ethnically skilled policies and performances that could be effective in accommodating Hispanics' educational needs. Reducing Hispanics' high school dropout rates will benefit taxpayers by providing substantial economic return. Guided by these findings, the school board will be equipped to support their educators, which in return could produce quality academic performance among Hispanic students.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Background of the Problem**

In 2010, Gabriela Christes reported that dropping out of high school was a complex phenomenon; one that can be dangerous. Dropouts are more likely to be faced with unemployment, poverty, poor health, imprisonment, and a recipient of government assistance (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). Dropping out of high school is easy and it happens frequently (Christes, 2010). Approximately 1.2 million American students drop out each year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011; & Balfanz, Bridgeland, Fox & Moore, 2012). “In the United States, a student drops out of high school every 29 seconds; an average of 124 students an hour and 2,979 every day” (Chalker & Stelsel, 2009, p. 74). Hispanic students have struggled in America’s public school systems since the early 70s (Bohon, Johnson, & Gorman, 2006), and in 2011 they made up the vast majority of these dropouts (Child Trends Data Bank, 2011). For the past 30 years, Hispanics were the most severely affected and injured by the dropout crisis (MacDonald, Botti, & Clark, 2007).

In 2005, Robert Crosnoe conducted a study on Hispanic students in the American educational system. He reported, “Being able to serve Hispanic students effectively is one of the most pressing problems facing the American education system in the new century” (2005, p. 561 – 562). Despite Crosnoe’s early warning in 2005, Hispanic students continued to struggle in the American public school systems. Today, the Hispanic population has become the largest and fastest growing minority group in America, yet they are least educated among their peers (Crosnoe, 2005). In 2008, Louie

Rodriguez reported that the United States is the richest nation in the world, yet fail to graduate 50% of the Hispanic youth.

In 2009, Pew Hispanic Center confirmed the ongoing struggles for Hispanic students in public schools. Hispanics are educationally underachieved and they continue to out-grow any other student group in America. In 2009, Hispanic high school dropout rates were approximately three times higher than white students and two times the dropout rates of black students (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). In 2010, the “Dropout crisis continued to be a silent epidemic that afflicted the nation’s schools” (Bridgeland, Balfanz, Moore, & Friant, 2010, p. 5). According to Wanda Baker (2011), the dropout crisis among Hispanics was worse than it appeared (p. 1).

In 2010, the Alliance for Excellent Education reported that America was in the midst of a high school dropout crisis; a crisis that would cost America nearly \$3 trillion for the 12 million students projected to drop out in the next 10 years. Alliance for Excellent Education indicated that in order to prioritize the nation’s lowest performing high schools, federal policymakers have to perform *legislative triage* by devoting attention to the lowest-performing high schools, and immediately improving or replacing the most severely “injured schools” (2010, p. 6). The majority of these schools served low-income students, as well as, minorities (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010).

Numerous researchers have addressed the high school dropout crisis among Hispanics; however there was scarcity of data from the perspective of Hispanic dropouts (Tavitian, 2013). According to my review of literature, there were no phenomenological studies done that explored contributing factors that lead Hispanic students to drop-out of

school in a public school district in the northern states. The school district is home to many Hispanic students. It has been listed as one of the top five schools for having the highest Hispanic dropout rates in its state for numerous of years. For this reason, I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study that address contributing factors that lead Hispanic students to drop out of high school. For privacy reasons, the northern public school district was referred to as M Public School District, throughout the study.

The most effective way to address the dropout crisis among Hispanic students was to first determine, why they dropped out of school (Sparks, Johnson, & Akos, 2010). Giving a voice to Hispanic students who dropped out of school in research was minimal. If America was going to take on the challenge of eliminating the dropout crisis, then knowing the underlying contributing factors that lead them to drop-out of school were important (Dynarski & Gleason, 1999).

Finding an effective solution to the high school dropout crisis among Hispanics is vital, not only for Hispanic students, but for America. Increasing graduation rates can produce and increase tax revenues, as well as, lower the financial cost of healthcare, public assistance, and the cost of incarceration (Rodriguez, 2010). In an effort to bring about social change, this study served to make an indispensable contribution to the existing literature on the phenomenon of dropout crisis among Hispanics.

### **Problem Statement**

In 2011, M Public School District was placed under the direct control of its state's department of education. Reasons being – appallingly high school dropout rates and students chronic under-performance. The purpose of this study was to determine what

contributing factors lead Hispanic students to drop out of high school in M Public School District.

According to the state's Budget and Policy Center (2011), the overall graduation percentage rates for the M Public School District were; 40.8% in 2007, 35.8% in 2008, 48.1% in 2009, and 46.7% in 2010. In 2011, according to the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the school district had one of the highest dropout percentage rates in its state.

According to the 2012 State's Department of Elementary and Secondary (ESE), the 2012 statewide cohort graduation and dropout rates were as follows:

1. Hispanic enrollees – 10,203
2. Hispanic graduates – 65.5%
3. Hispanic dropouts – 18.1%
4. White enrollees – 51,364
5. White graduates – 89.7%
6. White dropouts – 4.3%
7. Black enrollees – 6,666
8. Black graduates – 73.4%
9. Black dropouts – 11.3%

Despite the slight improvement, reports continued to show that Hispanic students in the northern state still dropped out of high school at a higher percentage rate than any of their peers. Also, according to the Alliance for Excellence Education (2012), Hispanics' high school graduation percentage rates from this school were much lower

than whites in the nation. In fact, the nation's graduation percentage rate for Hispanic students in 2012 was 56%, while White students' graduation rate was over 70% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2012).

General Colin Powell (2013) stated, "Year after year, class after class, America was still needlessly losing too much of the talent and potential of our young people to the high school dropout epidemic" (p. 2). President Obama (2012) reported that in order for students to survive and be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, America had to pave the way for all students to achieve their education. The majority of high school dropouts in America are Hispanics.

In 2009, the state's Secretary of Education reported that nearly 10,000 students drop out of high school every year and the majority of these students will never be all that they could be. In fact he reported that dropping out of high school was a misfortune, not only for the students, but their families and the economy. According to the United States President, Barack Obama, the repercussion of dropping out of high school goes beyond the individuals who choose to dropout; it had a pervasive effect. In fact, during President Obama 2009 first address to Congress, he reported that the nation could not afford to lose more students to the dropout crisis; it was no longer a choice. President Obama also reported that dropouts were not just closing the door on themselves, but on America.

According to Tyler and Loftstrom (2009) and Rodriguez (2010), there was a lack of studies on the high school dropout crisis from the perspective of those individuals who dropped out of school. Villafane (1998) also reported, "There was a lack of information concerning Hispanic students' academic experiences as they relate to the school culture,



in-class, and out-of-class experiences, and social and academic integration” (p. 17).

Colvin (2010) also questioned the knowledge of stakeholders as they attempted to lower the high school dropout rates. He believed that, with the numerous studies from the 70s, 80s, and 90s, and the plenteous data to lower the dropout rate, there had been little success (Colvin, 2010). In order to take on the high school dropout crisis, it was important to fill the missing gap in the literature. The first step to take on the dropout crisis among Hispanics was to become aware of the contributing factors that lead them to drop-out of school (Dynarski & Gleason, 1999).

In this qualitative phenomenological study, I explored the underlying contributing factors that lead Hispanic students in M Public School District to drop-out of high school; this was the first step to find preventive solutions to the high school dropout crisis (Dynarski & Gleason, 1999). I explored the contributing factors by interviewing eight Hispanics who dropped out of high school in the M Public School District. Numerous researchers have addressed high school dropouts; however, there was scarcity of data from the perspective of Hispanics who dropped out (Tavitian, 2013). According to my review of the literature, this type of study had not been conducted from the perspective of Hispanic dropouts in M Public School District. Therefore, the problem that was explored in this study was the high percentage rate of high school dropout among Hispanics in M Public School District. This study was designed to explore contributing factors that lead Hispanics to drop-out of high school.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore contributing factors that lead Hispanic students in M Public School District to drop out of high school. This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach which was an approach designed for understanding a phenomenon from the individual's perspective. Studying and understanding the dropout crisis first hand from the perspective of Hispanic students who dropped out of high school gives stakeholders a deeper understanding of the crisis and the nature of their decision to drop-out (Creswell, 1998).

In this study, I sought to understand the reasons behind Hispanics dropping out of high school, as well as, to identify effective ways to eliminate the high school dropout crisis by interviewing students who dropped out of high school. According to Creswell (2002), if a study heeds to the unheard voices, it will make a contribution to knowledge. This study sought to make a vital contribution to the existing literature on Hispanic high school dropouts.

### **Nature of the Study**

This qualitative phenomenological study explored unvoiced factors that influenced Hispanic students to drop-out of high school in M Public School District. Eight Hispanic dropouts, ages 18 to 24, who attended high school in the M public School District, participated in this study by sharing their perspective on dropping out of school. The data were collected through interviews and analyzed according to the perceptions of the participants.

### **Research Questions**

The research focused on the question: What contributing factors lead Hispanic students to drop out of high school? Other unambiguous questions used in the 2006 study, “Silent epidemic” guided this study, but with some modification. I used an audio recorder to collect all data. I also used the computer program software, Nvivo to interpret and analyze the interviews. The methodology used in this study was discussed in chapter 3.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of John Ogbu (2003) guided this study. His work was related to academic disengagement among African American students. In an ethnographic study, Ogbu (2003) sought to find reasons for the wide gap in academic performance between black and white students.

Ogbu’s 2003 study examined reasons why black students were performing poorly in school and why they were not engaging in their school performance. His theory included two sets of factors that affected minority students’ performance in school: a) societal and school factors, which he referred to as “national and local mainstream white Society” (p. 43) and b) “Communities forces...”, which he considered to be the “beliefs and behaviors within the minority community regarding education that minority students bring to school” (p. 44).

In Ogbu’s 2003 study, “Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb”, he focused more on community forces. The reason being was that he believed that the school factors had been studied extensively by school and community members.

However, because community forces had not been recognized as a possible academic achievement, Ogbu believed that information on community forces, along with “inclusion in the discourse, policies, and practices regarding the academic achievement gap would contribute to the closing of the gap” (p. 51).

Ogbu (2003) chose to do an ethnography study because it gave him the chance to intermingle with the study’s participants. Interacting with the students allowed him to establish a rapport. Ogbu (2003) also was able to gain knowledge, as well as, an understanding of the students’ perspective of schooling. Another reason for doing an ethnography study was to monitor how the students obtained their education, the parents’ involvement, as well as, the performance of the teachers. Ogbu’s 2003 study was done using four methods: a) group and individual discussions, b) individual interviews, c) formal documents, and d) participants observation (p. 54).

This study is a qualitative phenomenological study and Ogbu’s (2003) conceptual framework is appropriate for this study because it related to minorities’ academic performance and their academic disengagement, which will be discussed further in Chapter 2. I explored the phenomenon of the dropout crisis from the perspective of Hispanics who dropped out of high school in M Public School District. Further details on this study methodology were discussed in chapter 3.

According to Creswell (1998), phenomenological studies focus on the thoughts of the participants. Researchers are given the opportunity to have up-close interactions with the study participants, in a hope to bring forth more personal reactions (Creswell, 1998). In fact, “it would be beneficial to have other studies that present the voices of students

explicating their perceptions and specifically the voices of students constructed in outsider roles” (Pifer, 2000, p. 27).

Russell Rumberger (2011) reported that dropouts have revealed numerous reasons for dropping out of high school. However, it was believed that the underlying factors had not been revealed from the students’ perspective. Rumberger (2011) believed that by using empirical studies, two factors will come out: (a) the attributes of the students, school performances and their previous experiences, as well as, (b) background information related to the students’ families, schools and communities. Despite Rumberger findings, this study was guided by Ogbu’s 2003 study.

### **Definition of the Terms**

The key words listed were used in the review of the literature.

*Dropouts*: Students who leave school between July 1 and June 30 of a given year and do not return, graduate, or receive a GED by the following October 1. The Department calculates the annual dropout rate by dividing the number of students who drop out over a one-year period by the October 1 grade 9-12 enrollment, multiplied by 100 (State’s Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011).

*General Education Diploma (GED)*: test is a four-subject high school equivalency test that measures skills required by high schools and requested by colleges and employers. The four subjects are Science, Social Studies, Mathematical Reasoning, and Reasoning Through Language Arts (GED Testing Service, LLC 2014).

*Latino, Spanish, and Hispanic*: These terms are used interchangeably in this study. A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other

Spanish culture or origin. Hispanics of Puerto Rico origin – they are Puerto Rican immigrants or they trace their family ancestry to Puerto Rico (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008).

*Phenomenology*: phenomenology helps to define the phenomena on which knowledge claims rest, according to modern epistemology. On the other hand, phenomenology itself claims to achieve knowledge about the nature of consciousness, a distinctive kind of first-person knowledge, through a form of intuition (Smith, 2008).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitation**

My first assumption in this study was that each participant willingly revealed any and all factors that influenced them to drop-out of school, as well as, the nature of their decisions. It was my assumptions that the participants were honest and open throughout the interviews. It was also believed that each participant was Hispanic and that each one spoke and understood the English language.

The study was a qualitative phenomenological study and the number of participants was constrained to eight participants, therefore, the generalizability to a larger population was limited. In this study, I also focused on Hispanic high school dropouts between the ages of 18 and 24. Participation by other populations was limited. I only analyzed participants' data from this study. The data interpretations were verified only by the participants in this study (Merriam, 2002, p. 5).

The delimitations in this study were that I only interviewed Hispanics who had dropped out of school in M Public School District and that it only included those individuals' perspectives on dropping out of school. Therefore, no other perspectives

were included in this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

This qualitative phenomenological study was important because Hispanics rapidly filled America's class-rooms, they had the highest school dropout percentage rate, they were the fastest growing ethnic group in America, yet, the least educated among their peers (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008). For numerous of years, Hispanics have lagged behind their peers in education. Despite the slight improvement in 2010 and in 2011, they continued to outnumber their peers in dropping out of high school (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Dropping out of high school was not a crisis that affect one individual, but one that had gotten the attention of many other stakeholders. Educators, policy-makers, and other stakeholders were concerned and had given their attention to the high school dropout crisis.

According a commissioner of elementary and secondary education (2011), having a high school education was an important element in the future of every student's life. Those students, who chose to end their education before graduating would sometimes finds themselves struggling. Due to the severity of the dropout crisis, several national and state leaders have weighed in on the issue (America's Promise Alliance, 2009). Also, the Secretary of Education in the northern state reported that the state could no longer carry the burden of high school dropouts; the state could no longer stand still and not react. The secretary believed that the state had the ability and resources needed to make changes and to make a different which would lead to positive outcomes. He also believed that the state had the tools needed to prevent high school dropouts; the tools

could help identify those students who have the potentials of dropping out; tools to develop interventions and recovery plans to not only learn from, but to be able to use repeatedly.

In 2011, The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education also reported: that the state could no longer carry the burden of high school dropouts; the state could no longer stand still and not react. The secretary believed that the state had the ability and resources needed to make changes and to make a difference which would lead to positive outcomes. He also believed that the state had the tools needed to prevent high school dropouts; the tools could help identify those students who have the potentials of dropping out; tools to develop interventions and recovery plans to not only learn from, but to be able to use repeatedly.

A high school diploma is a student's gateway to higher education, a career and a productive life. Our top priority as a state is to ensure that every student is educated to the same high standards and provided with the same opportunities and support that they need to complete high school and graduate college and career-ready. (America's Promise Alliance, 2009, p.2)

In 2009, The President of the United States reported that dropping out was no longer an option because it was not just affecting the students, but the nation. He reported that America depended on the skills and knowledge of all Americans because their skills were valuable, as well as, important. A governor in the northern state went even further to state that whenever a student dropouts out of high school, the nation is affected financially; the concern is being addressed, state and nationally.



In this study, I explored the phenomenon of the high school dropout crisis from eight Hispanic dropouts' perspective in M Public School District. The results of this study can be used to modify existing intervention programs that are being used to prevent students from dropping out of high school. The results can provide M Public School District with more knowledge and understanding of the dropout crisis among Hispanic students. The results can also assist educators in educating Hispanic students so that they too might be able to reach their full potential in their educational career.

According to Creswell (2002), if a study heed to the unheard voices, it will make a contribution to knowledge. Through interviews, researchers are able to articulate clearly and specifically, the views of the dropout crisis among Hispanic students (Creswell, 2002). To address this gap in the literature, I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study that explored the phenomenon of the high school dropout crisis, from Hispanics who had experienced it in M Public School District.

### **Summary**

This chapter included an introduction, problem statement, and the purpose of the study, nature of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, operational definition, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the study. In Chapter 1, I also provided a discussion of a phenomenon of high school dropout crisis among Hispanic students. Despite the studies and the efforts put forth to win what seems to be a losing battle on high school dropout among Hispanic students, the crisis remains, and the Hispanics dropout percentage rates continue to be much higher than those of any other group of students. In order to formulate an effective solution to the high school

dropout crisis among Hispanic students, I will examine the question: What contributing factors are leading Hispanic students to drop out of school?. In this study, I respond this question about Hispanics who had dropped out of high school. In Chapter 2, I focused on an in-depth look into the literature on Hispanic dropouts, including factors contributing to school dropouts. Chapter 3 contains an in-depth look at the methodology that I used in the study.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

### **Introduction**

In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature relating to contributing factors that lead Hispanic students to drop out of school. According to Creswell (2003), exploring previous literature was important; in fact, it was essential to understand the issue in the present context. The review of the literature included pertinent information on the methodology used in this study that addressed the Hispanic dropout situation. Key words and phrases that I searched in this literature search included: *Hispanics in America*, *Hispanics in America public schools*, *high school dropout trends*, *contributing factors causing high school dropouts*, and *the consequences of dropping out of high school*.

The search for current literature on Hispanic dropouts was conducted through a computer search on World Wide Web (www), articles from scholarly journals, reports retrieved from Walden University journals and dissertations site, Academic Search Premiere, the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Pro-quest databases, and the National Educational Department website. The key terms used to search for data were such terms as *Hispanic dropouts*, *Hispanics in American school system*, and *high school dropouts in America*.

### **Literature Related to the Method**

In this qualitative phenomenological study I explored underlying contributing factors that lead Hispanic students in M Public School District to drop-out of school. The methodology that I used in this study was appropriate because “the research questions concerns the experience of the participants and the phenomenology concerns

the meaning of the lived experiences for individuals about a concept or the phenomenon and exploring the structures of consciousness in human experiences” (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). Also, according to Creswell (1998), the phenomenological approach focuses on the thoughts of the participants. In this study, I had an up-close interaction with the participants, in the hope to bring out more personal reactions from each participant (Creswell, 1998). It was important and judicious to explore the hidden thoughts buried within the participants lived experience (Creswell, 1998).

According to Pifer (2000), a phenomenological approach for a study, such as this study, was appropriate. “It would be beneficial to have other studies that present the voices of students explicating their perceptions and specifically the voices of students constructed in outsider roles” (Pifer, 2000, p. 27). In 2002, Merriam reported that phenomenological studies allowed researchers to explore questions that revealed the cornerstone of the experienced life of individuals (p. 93).

Therefore, in this study I analyzed and sought to reveal underlying factors that lead Hispanic students in M Public School District to drop out of school. In this study I explored the lives of eight Hispanics who experienced dropping out of high school. The participants in this study provided their own perspective of why they chose to drop out of school.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework used to guide this study was Ogbu’s (2003) work relating to academic disengagement among African American students. In an

ethnographic study, Ogbu (2003) sought to find reasons for the wide gap in academic performance between black and white students.

Ogbu (2003) indicated in his study that there are two sets of factors that affect minority students' academic engagement and achievement. Societal and school factors (the system) and community factors (p. 120). According to Ogbu's (2003) review of previous studies regarding the academic achievement gap among black and white students, the majority of the studies were conducted on system factors and not on the communities of minorities. Ogbu (2003) believed that community factors should be studied so that other contributing factors could be revealed. Ogbu (2003) reported:

By examining the contribution of community forces to the academic gap does not mean exonerating the system and blaming minorities. We believe, however, that community forces and their role should be incorporated in the discussion of the academic achievement gap by researchers, theoreticians, policymakers, educators, and minorities themselves who genuinely want to improve the academic achievement of African American children and other minorities. (Ogbu, 2003, p. 127)

Ogbu's (2003) primary purpose concentrated on the academic achievement gap among blacks and whites. He sought to explore contributing factors that influenced the gap. Ogbu (2003) did not rely on statistic in his study. His study involved ethnographic observations and interviews that were formal, as well as informal. His participants included school counselors and other school employees.

In conducting interviews, Ogbu (2003) reported that students were able to discuss their personal and group experiences of schooling. During the interviews, many of the students talked about various factors that lead the lack of connection between them and the school and the academic disengagement. Ogbu (2003) reported that many of the students interviewed believed that their school problems were influenced by racism. Other students believed that the academic achievement gap was due to school courses and that the courses were set up purposely for their failure. Many of the high school students reported that, “their previous performance did not necessarily reflect their ability and that their academic tracks were often determined by the program to which they had been assigned at an upper elementary school” (Ogbu, 2003, p. 2599). According to Ogbu (2003), the students interpreted this to mean that the school counselors had no concerns for the education because they never encouraged them to sign up for upper classes. In fact, some students reported that the counselors did just the opposite; they talked them out of enrolling in upper classes. Ogbu (1983) reported:

According to the “American Dream,” the public school system is expected to provide all children, regardless of their background, with an equal opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and credentials that will enable them to enter the workforce and obtain jobs and wages based on a merit system. (Ogbu, 1983, p. 168)

Ogbu (2003) believed that further study should be done that would increase students’ involvement in their academic engagement and work in the public school system.

### **Hispanics in America**

Hispanics were considered the nation's fastest growing minority group in America (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). In 2010, the United States population was: "196.8 million (63.7%) whites; 50.5 million (16.3% Hispanics; 37.7 million (12.2%) blacks; and 14.5 million (4.7%) Asian" (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011 p. 1). From 2000 to 2010, the Hispanic population grew from 35.3 million to 50.5 million, which was a 43% increase in just 10 years (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Also, according to the Census Bureau Public Information Office (2008), by 2050 or sooner, Hispanics will be the largest minority group in America.

### **Hispanics in American Public Schools**

Hispanics outnumber their peers in public school enrollments in America. School age Hispanics, ages 17 and below, made up 17.1% of the United States population in 2000 and 23.1% in 2010 (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). In 2011, Hispanics made up over 23% of the nation's public high school enrollments (Fry & Lopez, 2012). The U.S. Department of Education (2011) and the National Center for Education Statistics (2011) projected a 36% increase in Hispanic enrollments by 2019. The U. S. Census Bureau (2010) predicted that by 2021, one out of every four students will be Hispanic and by 2036, Hispanics will make up one-third of America school students (U.S Census Bureau, 2008).

According to the Civil Rights Project (2005), Hispanic male students in California struggled to stay in school and graduate. Approximately 60% found it difficult to graduate. A 2005 research by the Civil Rights Project revealed that the overall

graduation rates in California were no way close to what was being reported. In fact, it was worse and for Hispanic students, it was much worse. The dropout crisis in the urban school district was labeled as *dropout factories*. With the different dropout prevention programs being utilized, Hispanics dropout rate in 2008 remained over 30% (California Department of Education, 2008).

According to Tileston (2007), in order for Hispanic students to perform well in American public school system, it was important for the school staff to go beyond the standards of the state, textbooks and policies and procedures. Tileston (2007) reported that students' progress and engagement levels in school should be observed by the school staff so that students' academic learning was taking place. In fact, Arcega (2010) reported that Hispanic students who are on the verge of dropping out of school would, in fact, dropout if educators did not take the time to monitor them.

### **Hispanics School Performance**

Patricia Gandara (2010) reported in a 1998 Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Hispanics educational performance in kindergarten, as well as, their last day in school was below average, compared to other groups of students. It was also reported by Gandara (2010), that Hispanic students' educational performance fell below their peers, and for this reason, many chose to drop out of school.

The goal of every high school is to graduate students of all nationalities. According to Maria del Carmen Mendez Tavitian's (2013) study, many students of color were consistently dropping out of school every year. The author also revealed that the school systems failure to keep Latino students in school and to graduate them was



difficult to comprehend, which was why educators and other stakeholders were lacking resourceful strategies to address the dropout crisis. Stakeholders found it difficult to comprehend the crisis, because many of the previous studies done on the dropout crisis among Latinos, lack exploration from the perspective of the individuals who experienced dropping out. Listening to the voices of those who experienced the dropout crisis was important for stakeholders to understand the phenomenon, and this understanding was a crucial step to finding a solution to the crisis. In fact, Orfield, Losen, Wald, and Swanson (2004) called this lack of comprehension, the Civil Rights of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

According to Barrientos (2009), Latino students were not allowed to speak out in their classrooms in Latin America. The reason for this was that, in Latin America, students feared speaking out in the classroom due to their upbringing and influenced by political reasoning. Students who spoke out were seen as disrespectful. Politicians feared that if Latino's learned to speak out, they would interfere in the way their communities are governed (Barrientos, 2009). When Latino students came to America to attend school, they were afraid to speak out because, speaking out was not a part of their cultural background (Barrientos, 2009).

There were times when Latino students, in American public schools, were afraid to question their teachers, even when they did not understand the class materials. American students were encouraged to partake in a debate or to make arguments in class. Barrientos (2009) reported that Latinos were brought up to have great respect for their teachers and this was demonstrated by not questioning things and remaining quiet. This

could have been a major factor that interfered with their willingness to speak up or ask questions.

According to the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy (2010), a northern state in America had a persistent achievement gap. The center reported that the subgroups of students who were suspended and expelled repeatedly, performed poorly academically and dropped out of high school at a higher rate than their peers. The Rennie Center's findings (2010) suggested that the state should further study the issue on racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in schools, as part of the plan to lower the dropout rates and close the achievement gap. Hispanic students made up the majority of the students with the highest suspension, as well as, expulsion rates in the state's public schools (Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, 2010).

### **High School Dropout Trend**

The Editorial Projects in Education (EDE) Research Center (2006) predicted in 2006 that one in three high school students would drop out of school and for students living in poverty, the numbers would be even greater. According to Chaddock (2006), "When 30 percent of our ninth graders fail to finish high school with a diploma, we are dealing with a crisis that has frightening implications for our future" (p. 3). What was more frightening was that the decision to drop-out was not a sudden decision; it was a process that started in middle or junior high school (Chaddock, 2006).

According to President Obama's 2011 Agenda, there were nearly 5,000 schools in the nation that were labeled as low performing schools. Low performing schools are schools that are deficient in academic yearly progress. Also, according to Obama's

2011 agenda, approximately 50% of dropouts are products from 2,000 American high schools, and 75% or less of minorities in America are dropouts.

Researchers have shown that students who fell behind in school were more likely to drop out of school. The president's 2011 agenda reported that Latino students had the highest dropout rate and in fact, over one-third was academically below grade level (2011, p. 8). This was consistent with Gandara's (2010) research mentioned earlier.

In 2012, the Children Trend Database reported that the total number of dropouts a year was approximately 1,494,000. Every school day, "180 calendar days and seven hours per day, approximately 8,300 students dropped out of high school" (Children Trend Database, 2012, p. 1). While there were differences in estimates, the numbers were high and a cause for concern. Reimer and Smink (2005) went further to report that that "every twenty-nine seconds a student drops out of high school" (p. 1). However, according to America's Promise Alliance (2013) minute by the minute daily dropout counter, a student dropped out of school every 26 seconds.

From 1970 to 2010, Hispanic students dropped out of high school at a higher percentage rate than any other group of students (Children Trends Data Bank, 2011). The high school dropout percentage rates in 1970 were: Hispanics 34.3%, blacks 21.3% and whites 12.3% (Children Trends Database, 2012). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), the dropout rates between 1990 and 2010 declined: "For Whites (from 9 to 5%), Blacks (from 13 to 8%), and Hispanics (from 32 to 15%)" (p. 1). The dropout percentage rates in 2011 were reported as being, Hispanics 17.6%, Blacks 9.6%, and Whites 5.2% (Education Week, Children Trend Database, 2012).

According to Wallis (2007), black and Hispanic students were more likely to drop-out of high school than whites. Asian students were the least to drop-out among all their peers (2007). Hispanic students continued to outnumber their peer in dropping out of high school.

### **Contributing Factors Leading Hispanics to Drop out of High School**

For numerous years, researchers have been exploring contributing factors that lead Hispanic students to drop out of school. However, according to Civic Enterprises (2006) and Mendez Tavitian (2013) there was a lack of studies done addressing the dropout crisis from the perspectives of dropouts.

In 2009, Tyler and Lofstrom reported that the first step to battle the high school dropout crisis was to have knowledge, as well as, a good understanding of the characteristics of dropouts and their reasons for dropping out of school. Knowing who they are and what lead them to leave school were crucial in addressing the school dropout crisis (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). The decisions made by the students to dropout were not sudden decisions, but decisions that were a part of disinterest in school. According to Knestling (2008) and Rumberger (1987), to understand the dropout crisis, educators had to search beyond the students characteristic; they needed to look at issues that were going on within the students' school, as well. In fact, talking to students and hearing what they had to say open up doors of opportunities for educators and other stakeholders to find solutions to the dropout crisis (Knestling, 2008). According to Mendez Tavitian (2013):

Listening to the voices of Latinos who have dropped out was a critical element to understanding the realities they encountered in their schooling. Their ideas may

be utilized to help the educational community advocate for resiliency-building in schools in order to promote social and academic success and reduce the dropout rates among Latino youth (Tavitian, 2013, p. vi).

Students dropped out of school for a number of reasons. Basch (2011); and Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, and Pagani (2009), reported that students dropped out of school due to personal and family health, emotional and behavioral health, their lack of interest and lack of motivation in school and their responsibility to their immediate family. Students also reported that they did not have any support and guidance from the school staff and sometimes, parents. Students reported that these reasons and others influenced them to drop out of high school (2011 & 2009).

In Mendez Tavitian's 2013 study, the participants reported that their poor performance in school held them back from succeeding, as well as, job opportunities. For this reason, many of the participants, who were high school dropouts, labeled themselves as failures (2013). The participants in the study also reported that they were no longer accepted in the school and felt isolated. Their educational experiences eventually lead them to drop out of high school (2013).

In a 2006 study by Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison, the participants, who were high school dropouts, reported that they dropped out of school for various reasons (2006). Five major reasons dropouts reported for leaving high school were: (a) the classes were not interesting – 47%, (b) too many days missed in school – 43%, (c) spent time with individuals who were not interested in school – 42%, (d) had too much freedom – 38% and (e) failing in school- 35% (Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison, 2006). The study also

revealed that the majority of the dropouts regretted their decision to drop-out of high school.

According to Walden and Kritsonis (2008), “There is a crisis in secondary education in the United States, and the dropout rate is increasing yearly” (p. 3).

Mandatory testing governed and enforced by the No Child Left Behind Act forced many students to drop out of school (2008). In fact, many dropouts reported that they feared taking the test and felt as though they had no other options but to dropout (2008). Also, according to a 2009 study by Mark Lopez, over 70% of the Hispanic dropouts stated that one of their reasons for dropping out of high school was due to a lack of support from their parents. The survey also revealed that many of the dropouts reported poor English skills and a disinterest in school lead them to dropout (Lopez, 2009).

### **Teenage Pregnancy**

Teenage pregnancy was another contributing factor that leads high school students to drop out of school. Fletcher and Wolfe (2008) reported in their study that teenage parenthood minimized the chance of a student graduating from high school by 5 to 10%. However, Hotz, McElroy, and Sanders (2005) reported in an empirical study that childbearing had a small negative effect on teenage mothers’ chances of graduating from school. Despite the difference, childbearing can affect the lives of teenage mothers (Fletcher & Wolfe, 2008). In fact, Kaplan, Turner, and Badger (2007) reported that Hispanic teens had a higher risk of dropping out of high school due to teenage pregnancy and lack of self-esteem.

In a study involving 228 current and recent students from General Educational Development (GED) programs in Texas, 158 were or had been pregnant (Meeker, Edmonson, & Fisher, 2008). Twenty-five percent of these students reported that they dropped out of high school due to pregnancy or being a teenage parent (2008). The students reported that it was difficult going to school and being a parent because, as one Hispanic female stated, “Taking care of my child alone was a factor to dropping out of school” (2008). Another Hispanic student reported that she did not have anyone to give her any guidance after she became pregnant. Another student reported, “The one factor that prevented me from completing high school is that I got pregnant in high school and my school counselor told me I would never graduate” (Meeker, Edmonson, & Fisher, 2008, p. 8). Other students reported that a pregnancy was just one factor, among others, that lead them to drop out of high school (2008).

According to Betty Cortina (2010), Latino teenagers had difficult times in school and the proofs were present. Cortina (2010) reported that, “Our community has the highest teen pregnancy and highest school dropout rates in the country; it’s time to do something about it” (p. 1). In fact, in a 2012 survey on high school dropouts in America, 27% of female students drop-out of high school because they were pregnant (Harris/Decima, 2012). According to these studies, being pregnant in high school was a leading factor that led students to drop out of high school.

### **Poor School Performance**

Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006) reported that many of the students stated that there were no connections for them in school, which lead them to feel less motivated

and academically challenged. Approximately 47% of the students reported that the classes were boring and that they became disengaged in school. Over 40% indicated that they had been absent too many days and had gotten behind in classwork. Over 60% were not motivated to do the classwork.

In a 2007 study by Magnus Lofstrom, grade retention, poor school performance, and poor test scores were reported as contributing factors that lead students to drop out of school. In fact, Chappell (2012) reported that students' failure to perform academically was a well-known indicator of a student dropping out of school. It was reported that a student's school performance had some effect on their self-esteem and self-concept, which lead them to drop-out of school or be placed in Special Education classes (Chappell, 2012).

Hispanic students find themselves in Special Education classes due to poor school performances. Many Hispanics, according to Collins (2006), came to America not knowing how to read and write. Hispanics arriving in America, for the most part, did not rely on their parents for school support because many of their parents were unfamiliar with the operation of the school systems (Collins, 2006). Due to a lack of understanding and poor performance in school, Collins (2006) reported that many Hispanics chose to drop out of school, rather than be labeled as academic failures, challenges, or Special Education students.

In 2006, Phillips reported that many non-English speaking and other minority students failed standardized tests that were required by the No Child Left Behind Act. When a child failed behind in school and was tagged according to their test scores, it was



almost impossible to get rid of the failure tag (2006). Students reported that they feared being told that their testing scores would not meet the criteria needed to go to high school so they dropped out of middle school (Phillips, 2006, p. 52-53).

According to Meeker, Edmonson, and Fisher's 2008 study, 29 of the 158 students interviewed stated that absenteeism or skipping classes were poor choices they made in school. Other students reported that they did not want to attend school because they chose to hang out with their peers who were not enrolled in school (2008). There were also some students who reported that they did not like school and some were addicted to drugs while in school (2008). According Meeker, Edmonson and Fisher (2008), "These individual's choices and attitudes toward school played a major role in their inability to obtain a high school diploma" (p. 44).

### **Lack of Teachers' Concern**

In 2008, Kimberly Knestling reported that to better understand the high school dropout crisis, one had to look further than the "Limited scope of individual student characteristics to include school factors in students' decisions to stay in or leave school" (p. 3). It was important to know what influences the teachers, schools, organizations and other stakeholders had on students' decision to dropout (2008). The relationships and interactions between the students, faculties, as well as, parents were key factors in understanding why students chose to drop out or stay in school (Rumberger, 1987).

Meeker, Edmonson, and Fisher (2008) reported that Hispanic students reported that unchangeable school policies and the teachers' lack of concern were huge reasons why they chose to drop out of high school. In fact, one student in their 2008 study

reported that he hated the school and his teachers because the teachers failed to teach him. For the most part, the students in the 2008 study had a conflict with the school faculty as well as the school policies; they were both critical factors that lead them to drop out of high school (2008).

In a 2006 study by a city's Youth Transitions Task Force, students reported that the teachers did not show concern for their education and this influenced disruption in their school performance. The study also revealed that other students reported that there were days when they felt invisible in school. In fact, Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison 2006 study, Hispanic students reported that they dropped out of school because they did not receive as much recognition as their peers from their teachers. Students reported that they felt neglected ( 2006).

According to Lumpkin (2007), the relationship between teachers and students were vital. It was important because teachers' role could possibly affect students' motivation and their performance in school. This was consistent with a report by Allensworth and Easton (2007). They stated that teachers' relationship with students was felt deeply in the classroom as well; students were not able to let their guards down and develop a sense of trust. Stanton-Salazar reported in 2001 that a positive and consistent relationship between the teachers and Latino students was important. In fact, he reported that a community of school staff should surround Latino youth because Latinos need to feel safe and they need to know that they have someone who they can trust (2001). According to Schulz and Rubel (2011), Latinos who did not have this type of relationship became disengaged and dropped out of school.

This was consistent with a report by Brown and Skinner (2007). If Hispanic students did not build a trusting relationship with the school staff, they stood a chance of dropping out of school. It was important for the school staff to show a personal concern for the students' educational needs and performance.

### **Language Barriers**

In recent studies, the language barrier was reported as being one of the main factors contributed to Hispanic students dropping out of school. According to the President Obama's 2011 agenda, "English learners are the fastest-growing student population in the United States, comprising 4.7 million, or 10%, of the Nation's students in grades K-12. Nearly all English learners have faced significant barriers to educational attainment. More than two-thirds of ELs score below basic in reading and mathematics" (2011, p. 11).

The Youth Transitions Task Force (2006) also reported that Hispanics, who had problems speaking and reading English, would most likely drop out of high school or be placed in Special Educational Programs (Youth Transitions Task Force, 2006). According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2007), approximately 59% of Hispanics who dropped out of school spoke little English. In 2009, the Pew Hispanic Center reported that most Puerto Ricans who entered school spoke more than one language in their home and over 20% found it difficult to grasp the English language.

According to Mary Cooper's (2011) survey on Hispanic high school dropouts, ages 16 to 25 years old, approximately 75% of Hispanic dropouts reported that they dropped out of school due to a lack of funds. However, results from the same survey

revealed that almost 50% of the dropouts reported that being deficient in English was a major factor in their decision to drop out of high school (2011). Many as 50% of the dropouts reported that their parents preferred and influenced them to speak Spanish and less than 22% reported that they are told to speak only English. According to Cooper (2011), “There is a significant gap between Hispanic youths who are Spanish-language dominant and those who are bilingual or Hispanic English-language dominant” (p. 41). Cooper’s (2011) survey revealed that over 40% of the Hispanic youths admitted that being deficient in English was the main reason for their poor performance in school.

In 2007, Kohler and Lazarin reported, Latino immigrants made up 58% of the total population of immigrant children in school, and they represented more than 75% of English Language Learners (ELL) students. There were more Hispanic ELL students in America’s public school systems than any other immigrant groups (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007). In 2011, Angela Pascopella reported that approximately 3.8 million students, between the ages of 5-11, did not speak English in their home in 1979. In fact, the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) reported in 2008 that the number of students who spoke Spanish at home had increased to 10.9 million. Due to the English deficiency among Hispanics, the NCES reported that, Hispanic students dropout percentage rates doubled the rates of blacks and tripled the dropout rates of whites.

Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, and Christian (2006) reported that Hispanic students who came to America speaking their native language, experienced difficult times in American school system. However, educators faced challenges as well, especially when they were responsible for teaching students who did not speak English.

The variety of reasons dropouts gave for dropping out of school were mostly related to the school. However, Rumberger (2011) believed that these reasons did not show the underlying causes of why students dropped out of high school. Although for the most part, many studies did not identify particular causes, “indicators of dropping out of and graduating from high school, had been examined through by empirical studies” (Rumberger, 2011, p. 6).

### **Consequences of Dropping out of High School**

#### **Impact on Dropouts**

Each year over a million students dropped out of school (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). Many of these students faced difficulties and disappointments as a result of dropping out. Menzer and Hampel (2009) reported that, students’ confidence and their mental state were affected by their decision to drop out of high school. Many students find themselves unemployed, others employed with low wages, lack of health insurance, incarcerated, and faced with the fact that they may not be able to move freely in the job market, all because of a lack of education (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

This was consistent with the Alliance for Excellent Education (2009) and Cutler and Lleras-Muney (2006) report that students who did not graduate from high school were linked to many negative outcomes; they depended on government programs for assistance, received lower pay rates, experienced poor healthcare and other health issues, and had a greater chance of being involved in criminal activities.

Candace Layne (2009) reported that students who dropped out of high school would lack the skills necessary to find work in today’s job market. Dropouts will lack

the education needed to operate in, “Today’s fast-paced world” (p. 9). Layne (2009) reported that a high school education was needed to get a job in today’s society due to a lack of minimal skills.

Graduating from high school with a diploma can open more doors, than dropping out (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). Studies indicated that minority students, as well as, low-income students dropped out of school at a higher percentage rate than their peers (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). The cost of dropping out of school fell unevenly on the shoulders of students and society. Dropping out also had an effect on issues such as, “income distribution, health disparities and ethnic education gaps” (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009, p. 86).

### **Loss of Income**

According to Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies (2009), America was currently in the midst of a high school dropout crisis (p. 3). Having a high school diploma was important in today’s workforce. According to Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies (2009), “Over a working lifetime, from ages 18-64, high school dropouts are estimated to earn \$400,000 less than those that graduated from high school” (p. 4). The loss of revenue can impose a financial burden on all taxpayers. Many dropouts might find themselves depending on taxpayers to provide for their healthcare needs, food and shelter, and for some, the cost of being incarcerated (2009).

In 2011, Rumberger agreed that, for the most part, many high school dropouts might have difficulty in many ways. Many will have difficulty finding jobs, having

enough money to support a family, have poorer health, commit crime and are less than likely to vote (Rumberger, 2011, p. 14 –15). Dropouts who find themselves without jobs or any financial assistance will most likely commit crimes and become incarcerated (Rumberger, 2011).

President Obama reported in his 2011 Agenda that one out of every five students in America public schools was of the Hispanic origin. He also reported that nearly 50% of high school students dropped out. The president reported that the dropout crisis has had a negative impact on Hispanics' opportunities for growth in America. He believed that the dropout crisis among Hispanics was important because Hispanics were projected to become the majority of America work force within the next 50 years.

### **Crime**

High school dropouts were more likely to engage in criminal behavior, which could lead to incarceration (U. S. Department of Labor, 2010). In fact, according to Education Week, Children Trends Database (2012), 75% of the United States crimes were committed by dropouts.

In a Governor's Inter-agency Task Force 2008 report, the common age for most inmates was between 25 and 35. According to the Test of Adult Basic Education, which is a test that is given to all inmates prior to being incarcerated, the majority of the inmates' education levels were at the middle school level or below. In fact, approximately 70% of ex-offenders fail to graduate from high school and over half were "functionally illiterate" (Governor's Inter-agency Task Force, 2008). According to a northern youth transitions task force in 2006, many juveniles who were incarcerated were

high school dropouts and approximately 61% of the juveniles were labeled as Special Education students. In fact, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, approximately 75% of America's state prison inmates, 60% of federal inmates and nearly 70% of jail inmates were high school dropouts. Many regretted dropping out of school because of the impact it had on their future.

### **Societal Implications**

There were numerous of suggestions generated from students who dropped out of high school. Dropping out of high school can lead to a decrease in the national income, as well as, the tax revenues (Oreopoulos & Salvanes, 2009). On the other hand, it could possibly cause an increase in social services as well as crime (2009). Studies have shown that many high school dropouts were less likely to vote and work. Also, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2009), dropping out of school had a great impact on the state and community. Most dropouts had less than a high school diploma and they paid less in taxes and required support from governmental programs. Many high school dropouts were less likely to be involved in voting or any other civic engagement (Oreopoulos & Salvanes, 2009). In fact, Oreopoulos and Salvanes also reported that over 60% of dropouts in the United States reported that they had never voted - approximately 1.4 million dropouts per year (2009).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) reported that high school dropouts were more likely to be unemployed and the Council on Foreign Relations (2012) reported that high school dropouts did not meet the criteria to serve in the armed forces; math, science, and English were subjects that potential recruits must have knowledge of, in order to pass



the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (2012). Employment opportunities could be limited for many Hispanic dropouts. In fact, the Pew Hispanic Center (2009) reported:

Puerto Ricans have lower levels of education and lower incomes than average for the United States population. They are less likely to be in the labor force, and among those in the labor force, they have a higher rate of unemployment than either all Hispanics or the overall population. The rate of home ownership among Puerto Ricans is lower than the rate for Hispanics overall and the United States population overall. (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009, p. 1)

As the Pew Hispanic Center (2009) indicated, society lost money on students who dropped out of high school. Having a high school education gave students a better opportunity to get a skilled and white collar job (Menzer & Hampel, 2009). In 2009, the Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies also reported that the United States have spent over \$260 million on high school dropouts. The study also indicated that the debt was generated from the loss of wages, tax revenue and the productivity of high school dropouts' lifespan. Job opportunities for dropouts were minimum, compared to those offered to high school graduates. Studies have also shown that the job market requirements today were different from the requirements 20 and more years ago (2009).

According to Padron (2009), citizens in the United States lived in an environment that was, demanding and changing. The problem, according to Padron (2009), was that America was moving forward, but no one knew where. There was new technology that emerged and educators had to introduce this new technology to upcoming students. It

would be difficult to teach and train today's students and workers about the new technology; it would take more time to train individuals who are less educated. These are individuals who dropped out of high school and experienced difficulties in read and comprehend (Padron, 2009). Alliance of Excellent Education (2011) and the State Farm reported that states across America were hemorrhaging financially due to the increased number of high school dropouts. The United States will continue to struggle to meet the needs of high school dropouts, until the dropout crisis has stopped (Alliance of Excellent Education, 2011).

In 2010, in a northern state in America, approximately 14,200 high school students dropped out of high school. The state was reported as having 282 federally reported high schools and 33 of them were reported as having low promoting power; this meant that of the 282 high schools, 33 saw lesser freshmen progress to their senior year on time. The majority of the low promoting schools enrollments included minority students and students of families with low income. Alliance for Excellent Education (2011) reported that, if one-half of those dropouts from 2010 had graduated, the contribution to the state would have been the following:

Eighty-eight million dollars in increased earnings; \$63 million in increased spending; \$25 million in increased investments; \$335 million in increased home sales; \$8.9 million in increased auto sales; 600 new jobs; \$114 million in economic growth; \$12 million in increased tax revenue and increased human capital. (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011, p. 2)

Dropping out of school placed a financial burden on the United States and that burden need to be lifted. Money was being spent yearly on students who dropped out of school. Whether it was for welfare or GED programs, America was constantly supporting dropouts. In fact, according to the Guide to U.S. Department of Education Program (2008), if the funding used to finance school dropout prevention programs was not available annually, the high school dropout crisis would remain and would not decrease.

### **Summary**

A review of the literature indicated that there were a limited number of studies regarding Hispanics' perspective of dropping out of high school. However, there were a great number of studies on high school dropout in general at the national level. In this phenomenological study, I addressed the factors that lead Hispanics to drop out of high school from their perspective in M Public School District. The results of this study will provide stakeholders with additional data on the high school dropout crisis among Hispanic students.

Previous studies opened doors for future studies. However, Creswell (2002) stated, "Evidence can also be obtained from practical work experience in educational settings" (p. 77). Studies and reviews in this review of the literature indicated that the issue of high school dropout among Hispanics continued to grow and affects American schools and the economy. The data on Hispanic dropouts put the spotlight on the need for additional studies. In this study, I explored, from the Hispanic high school dropouts' perspective, contributing factors that influenced them to drop out of high school.

A review of the literature showed a gap in literature addressing Hispanics perspectives of why they dropped out of high school. For this reason, a phenomenological study was conducted in a large city in the Eastern part of the United States, which had one of the highest numbers of Hispanic dropouts in the state where it was located. According to Pifer, (2000), “It would be beneficial to have other studies that present the voices of students explicating their perceptions and specifically the voices of students constructed in ‘outsider’ roles” (Pifer, 2000, p. 27). The need for further studies on Hispanics’ high school dropout was evident. In chapter 3, I discussed the methodology that was used to conduct this study.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

Chapter 3 of this study consists of the research design and approach, research questions, context of the study, sample selection, method of data collection, method of data analysis, the validity of the study, and summary. The purpose of the study was to explore contributing factors that lead Hispanic students to drop-out of high school in M Public School District. Numerous researchers have addressed the phenomenon dropout crisis among Hispanic students; however, a limited number of studies were found in the review of the literature that addressed the phenomenon from a qualitative phenomenological approach. According to Pifer (2000), “It would be beneficial to have other studies that present the voices of students explicating their perceptions, and specifically the voices of students constructed in ‘outsider’ roles” (p. 27).

With over 8 years as an educator, I believed that by giving an ear to a student’s crying voice would be of value and importance. By listening to individuals who had experienced the life of a high school dropout, much was learned. In 2002, Creswell reported, “evidence can also be obtained from practical work experience in educational settings” (p. 77), although previous studies findings were scholarly justification proof for further studies. In this study, a review of the literature justified a gap in the literature that addressed Hispanic dropouts in M Public School Districts, which in turns gave me the authority to necessitate this study.

### **Research Design and Approach**

I explored the underlying contributing factors that lead Hispanic students to drop-out of high school. I used Ogbu's 2003 to guide this study relating to minorities poor school performance and disengagement. I explored the high school dropout phenomenon by conducting interviews with eight Hispanic high school dropouts who were ages 18 to 24 and who attended school in one of M Public School Districts.

The research question that I address in this study was: What contributing factors lead Hispanic students to drop out of high school? A qualitative phenomenological approach was chosen for this study because it allowed me to ask *how* and *what* questions. According to Creswell (1998), by using a qualitative approach, a researcher can report the results of the data from the perspective of the participants and not from the assumptions of the researcher or expert. A qualitative approach allows a researcher to quote the participants exact words. However, a phenomenological approach had weaknesses. According to Van Manen (1990):

The problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the Phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much. Or more accurately our common sense, pre-understandings, our suppositions, our assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 46-47)

Despite its weaknesses, the phenomenological approach was used. Also, quantitative and mixed-method approaches were designed to explore outcomes of

experiments, outcomes, and comparison among different variables (Creswell, 1998). The two approaches sought to build a relationship between the cause and effects, as well as, associations (Creswell, 1998, p. 17). This was not the purpose of this study; thus these approaches were not appropriate.

### **Setting**

The setting for this study took place at local sites, in the precinct of the M Public School District. The participants' privacy was taken under consideration when the facilities were chosen. M Public School District was chosen for this study because it's school district had one of the highest school dropout percentage rates in its state. Also, according to a staff writer for a northern publishing company, in 2011 the state department of education took over the entire school system in M Public School District – citing an appallingly high dropout rate and chronic under-performance .

Previous studies on Hispanic dropouts were mostly quantitative studies although there were some qualitative studies. However, according to a review of the literature, no qualitative phenomenological studies were found that were from Hispanic dropouts' perspective that attended and dropped out of high school in M Public School District. For this reason, I explored the phenomenon dropout crisis from Hispanic perspectives in M Public School District.

### **M Public School District Profile**

According to State's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2011):

1. 28 schools in the district
2. Approximately 90% Hispanic enrollments

3. 23% of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students (also known as English Language Learners)
4. Over 80% of student comes from low-income families
5. Over 20% of M Public School District students are Special education students
6. In 2010, M public schools demonstrated proficiency rates and composite performance in-dices that dropped below those of the state, some substantially below

### **Ethical Protection**

I recruited participants for this study from a local community college, with the assistance of an academic advisor who assisted in the distribution of the fliers.

Participants were also recruited from distributing fliers. I also recruited participants the vicinity of M Public School District. All of the participants were informed of the purpose of this study, during the recruitment stage and prior to the interview session. Participants were informed of the confidentiality and privacy of the study as well. Participants were asked to sign a consent form in order to participate. The names of all the participants were pseudonym for the purpose of protecting their privacy and identity.

The need for an interpreter was verified during the recruitment stage. I confirmed the need for an interpreter prior to the start of the interview session, and there was no need for an interpreter. All of the study's data will be maintained for a period of 5 years under lock in my home, at which time it will be destroyed.



### **Population and Sample**

According to Creswell (2002), participants and venues were chosen as those who, “Might provide useful information, might help people learn from the phenomenon, and who might give voice to silenced people” (p. 193). Therefore, in this study I chose purposeful sampling to select its participants. Sampling was expanded by using snowballing. An academic advisor assisted in the distribution of the flier. Due to confidentiality, the advisor did not have access to the study’s data. I made contact with the participants during recruitment and after they voiced an interest in participating in the study. The eight-participants were required to meet the following criteria:

1. Hispanic
2. Age ranges from 18 to 24
3. Dropped out of high school from M Public School District
4. Currently not a student of the researcher

Creswell (1998) suggested that a phenomenological study should include up to 10 participants. However, only eight participants were used in this study. The eight participants actual names were not revealed in this study so that their privacy would be protected. For this reason, each participant was given a pseudonym, as will others persons or sites in this study. All participants were required to sign a consent form and the participants were informed that their identity would be kept confidential.

### **Data Collection**

According to Merriam (2002), researchers were able to explore questions that reveal the cornerstone of the experienced life of an individual through in-depth

interviews. Phenomenological studies involved intensive interviews and according to Pifer (2002), “it would be beneficial to have other studies that present the voices of students explicating their perceptions and specifically the voices of students constructed in outsider roles” (p. 27). Therefore, I collected data through face-to-face interviews and my reflective journal documentation. The data collection instrument used in this study was created by Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison in 2006. A copy of the data collection instrument used in its study, “Silent Epidemic”, as well as, permission to utilize the instrument in this study (see Appendix A), were retrieved from Hart Research Associates in September, 2010. It was modified to fit this study.

Only open-ended questions were asked. According to Hatch (2002), open-ended questions allowed the participants to speak freely about their lived experience as a high school dropout. All interviews were audio recorded on a tape and I kept a reflective journal while audio recording the interviews. I transcribed all interviews word for word, leaving out all identifying information about the participants. All data were stored in my folder system, as well as in an Excel database.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Glesne (1999), “data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with data, you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories” (p. 130). All interviews were transcribed word for word, leaving out all identifying information about the participants. The data collected were stored in a computer database.

Two methods of coding and analysis were used in this study. Initially, I manually coded and analyzed a hard copy of the study's data. The coding process was started during the collection and formatting of the data. Preliminary topics and phrases were noted in my research journal, notes and on the transcripts for future reference. I read the transcripts thoroughly and numerous of times. I formatted the data into three columns labeled: interviews, preliminary code notes, and resulting codes. I read, re-read, coded, and highlighted words and phrases that were consistent and important to the research question. After I re-read the data for numerous of times, I was able to identify topics that were constant and important in the data. I repeated this process several times for refinement. Each code was labeled and defined.

I also used computer program analysis software, Nvivo, to maintain, control and reconstruct the study's data; this was compared to the outcome of the manually analysis. During the data analysis process, using both the hard copy and the computer software, I initially coded each participant's transcript separately. Some of the codes appeared more than others. In using the computer software, I was able to stay well-informed of the codes and their frequencies.

The codes were reviewed to determine which ones were redundant and could be merged or split. Responses that were continuous, exact in wordings, important and related to the research question were highlighted. After repeating this process several times, two major categories emerged from this data: School-related factors and Personal-related factors. Subcategories also emerged from the two major categories. Finally, a cross-checked was conducted between the transcription, the recordings, and the reflective

journal that was documented during each interview. According to Hatch (2002), the researcher has to identify the typologies that need to be analyzed.

### **Validity**

To ensure the validity of this study, I used clarification of researcher's bias and member checking, which are suggested by Creswell (1998). According to Creswell (1998), two verification methods are suggested to verify the validity of the study. I verified the validity of this study through member check; transcripts were emailed to five of the participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the transcribed data, two participants agreed to meet for a face-to-face for the member check and one of the participants did not respond. The participants were asked to modify any misunderstood transcribed data and added any information that needed to be added. Also, in 1998, Creswell stated that a researcher has the opportunity to discuss his or her biases that could possibly shape the interpretation and analysis of the study. I discuss my bias in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

### **Reliability**

According to Field and Morse (1985), qualitative researchers stress the individuality of individuals' state, so that change in experience rather than the same natural event was sought after. The reliability of this study was supported by using member checking, which is also referred to as participant feedback. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this strategy was one of the most important plans of actions for accomplishing interpretative validity and reliability.

### **Summary**

The goal of Chapter 3 was to discuss the methodology that I used in this study. The chapter included research design and approach, research questions, context of the study, method of data collection, data analysis, and validity.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore contributing factors that lead eight Hispanic students to drop out of high school from M Public School District. I chose to explore these factors directly from the voices of Hispanics who dropped out of high school. The qualitative phenomenological study allowed me to mentally see, as well as, hear the dropouts experience through their voices; it facilitated a thorough and in-depth concept of the dropout crisis. Chapter 4 of the study includes the study's data collection, data analysis, findings, evidence of trust worthiness, and the conclusion. In Chapter 4, I addressed the prevailing research question: What contributing factors lead Hispanic students to drop out of high school in M Public School District?

### **Data Collection**

I collected data in this study by using the methodology described in details in Chapter 3 of this study. The intentional sample for this study included eight participants. The participants included, four males and four females Hispanics, ages 18 to 24, who attended school in the M Public School District and later dropped out. According to Creswell (1998), when trying to make a judgment or decision about a group or individual, it was better to use someone who represents the subject who experienced the phenomenon (p.118). Pseudonyms were used in this study to protect the participants' identity, as well as, other persons and locations.

Over 50 fliers were both handed out and posted in libraries, local businesses, and a local community college. After 3 weeks of not receiving any responses from fliers posted and handed out, another approach was chosen to recruit participants. I spoke with a college administrator requesting permission to speak with the college's professors regarding the opportunity to introduce this study to the students in their classes. After speaking with the professors, I was granted permission to address their class and was able to recruit three participants. The three students agreed to participate in the study and requested to be interviewed on campus at the college in a vacant classroom for privacy. Five other participants were recruited from local and public businesses in M Public School District. The five participants chose to be interviewed at the sites where they were recruited.

The participants were informed of the second meeting for member check only. Only three of the eight participants agreed to the second meeting; five requested that the member check be conducted through by e-mail, at which time I retrieved their e-mail addresses. The participants were given a consent form to read and signed prior to the interview. Participants were informed of the protection and confidentiality of all pertinent information. They were also informed that their identity would be kept confidential during the study and would thereafter be destroyed after the completion of the study.

The study's participants included four males and four females Hispanics who attended high school in M Public School District. Table 1 includes the participants by ethnicity, gender, and year dropped out.

Table 1

*Participants Information: Ethnicity, Gender, and Grade Dropped Out*

Participants	Ethnicity	Gender	Grade Dropped Out Of MPSD
Participant # 1	Hispanic	Female	10 <sup>th</sup>
Participant # 2	Hispanic	Female	11 <sup>th</sup>
Participant # 3	Hispanic	Female	11 <sup>th</sup>
Participant # 4	Hispanic	Male	11 <sup>th</sup>
Participant # 5	Hispanic	Male	11 <sup>th</sup>
Participant # 6	Hispanic	Male	11 <sup>th</sup>
Participant # 7	Hispanic	Female	11 <sup>th</sup>
Participant # 8	Hispanic	Male	12 <sup>th</sup>

All interviews were face-to-face and informal. To confirm and verify the accuracy of the participants' responses, the interviews were audio recorded, participants' answers were restated for clarity and accuracy, and a reflective journal was kept. The reflective journal contained dates, times, interviews, and locations, as well as, the duration of each interview, which was approximately 45 to 50 minutes. A semi-structured interview questionnaire instrument was used to guide the interviews (see Appendix A). The questions on the instrument were open-ended questions.

For the purpose of reporting, the interview data were transcribed within two days after each interview and a copy of the transcribed data was sent, by email, to five of the participants to check for accuracy and completeness. The participants were asked to reply only if corrections or additional comments were needed. I did not receive any written or verbal feedback from the participants indicating that the transcribed data were



inaccurate nor needed additional comments. Therefore, I assumed that the transcribed data was accurate and complete. I reached out to the remaining three participants by telephone, leaving several messages regarding the second interview; only two responded. Therefore, I was not successful in completing the member check with Participant #2. It was important to note that, during each interview, I restated the answers given by the participants; this allowed them the opportunity to either confirm my understanding of their responses or correct it – this was also a method used for validation. The data collected from the interviews were reviewed several times and analyzed manually and by using Nvivo computer data analysis software. Using these approaches allowed me to create a mental construct of the participants' school and personal life experiences, as well as the phenomenon dropout crisis in M Public School District.

### **Data Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed within 1 to 2 days after each interview. Two methods of coding and data analysis were used in this study. I manually analyzed and coded the data and I also used Nvivo computer data analysis software, which was an all-inclusive and organized method of reviewing types of communication to document mode not affected by my personal feelings or prejudice. Both methods were utilized to analyze transcribed interviews of narrative texts, such as one's perspective of events or experiences. The methods were utilized to clarify participants' perspective on certain issues. Therefore, the transcribed data for this study were first analyzed to form two primary categories of importance: school-related factors and personal-related factors.

Subcategories were subsequently color-coded according to recurring themes in each major category, relevant to the research question: What contributing factors lead Hispanic students to drop out of high school in M Public School District? By reviewing and analyzing data from the transcribed interviews, I was able to understand the participants' perspective on school, and their reasons for dropping out.

### **Findings**

The main categories, school-related factors and personal-related factors emerged from the color-coded data analysis; they helped create a mental construct of the participants' school and personal life experiences. The findings in this study emerged from the voices of eight Hispanics who dropped out of high school in M Public School District. The participants shared their perspective on being a student in M Public School District, as well as, their life at home. The majority of the participants had similar stories to tell; others were somewhat different. The findings in this study supported the findings that I described in the Chapter 2 literature review. There were no discrepant cases found in this study.

### **School-Related Factors**

According to this study's participants, school-factors were some of the main reasons why they dropped out of high school. Several subcategories emerged from this category: a lack of teachers' support and motivation, poor school performance, and a difficult ninth grade transition.

### **Lack of Teachers Support and Motivation**

Having non-supportive and uninspired teachers weighed heavily on the participants' decision to drop out of school. Throughout the study, the participants consistently talked about the teachers being non-supportive. Several of the participants were persistent about the teachers' methods of teaching; teachers taught to their satisfaction and not on a level for the participants to understand what were expected of them to learn. According to Chartes (1998), students believed that school was no longer important, especially when their teachers bored them with lecturing materials that added no meaning to their life and when they were not allowed participate in class. The participants reported that the classwork was difficult for them to learn and that the teachers did not put forth any effort to help them learn.

Participant #8 reported, "If I didn't get it quickly like they wanted, then I got in trouble. I tried to learn myself; it was too hard." It was also reported that the teachers, for the most part, expected the participants to fail and not succeed. Jeannie (1985) argued that students need extra support to increase their performance in school. She also argued that the support would help them connect to what teachers are teaching them in school.

Participant #4 indicated that:

They just threw me in class. Didn't have no help. That wasn't the school I wanted to be in; they uh, nobody cared. I love school, but not in M Public School District. Teachers didn't care. Teachers tell me, 'you don't have to come'. That ain't no positive attitude. They'll just tell me to read my book if I need help. They sit there on their phones.

Participant #5 reported, “I would be there and asked myself, ‘why am I learning this?’ It wasn’t clear to me.” While Participant 4 reported:

I can’t read out loud or in front of someone else because right now I read on a fourth or fifth grade level. I learn slow. They didn’t stop and help me. Man, they didn’t care cause they kept passing me from one grade to the next grade. I got tired cause everyone else was doing better than me.

Participant #8 reported the following:

It took too long to understand stuff. Teachers didn’t try to put it where I could understand. They put it their way. That’s the way you had to learn it. I wanted more explanations so I could understand it. They didn’t care.

Participant #2 went even further to report that the teachers never paid attention to the students. She stated, “They did not put forth the effort to keep us in school. Teachers don’t try to help the students; they just be paid to do nothing.” Participant #7 reported, “The teachers were grouchy, rude, and in bad moods.” He reported that the teachers did not try to motivate him; “Teachers only saw failures.”

The participants were asked about educational support in school. Four of the participants reported that they had no one at school that supported them and the others reported that a principal, guidance counselor and a math teacher gave them some support, but not much. Chartes (1998) argued that a lack of teacher’s support lead students to believe that they only attend classes because it was mandatory and not because they were deemed to learn. The participants did not like attending school in M Pubic School District.

Participants # 1, 3, and 6 just did not like the school; no reasons reported.

Participant # 1 experienced anxiety attacks due to the size of the high school's population and faculty. She also indicated that she was nervous and fearful. She reported other reasons for not liking the school, as well.

According to the participants, there were no positive relationships or connections between them and their teachers. They reported that there was too much school work, loss of interest in school, school starting too early, and too many people. When asked what did they liked about their school, they reported, the social aspect of it, being able to leave home every day, a love for learning English, activities when the teacher made classes fun, and being a good student. For the most part, the participants had a desire to learn and to finish school; however, it was cut short.

### **Poor School Performance**

All of the participants had failing grades and the majority of them felt as though they were not smart enough to succeed. Some of the participants reported that their failing grades followed them from middle school. It was important to note that Participant #1, 2, and 8 had never repeated a grade or were held back; yet they saw themselves as failures because of their poor school performance. With a combination of not feeling smart, failing grades, and poor school performance, the participants became overwhelm, and needed help.

Tutors were placed in schools to offer students assistance in all areas of their studies. Based on this study, the teachers were aware of the students' poor school performance, yet the participants were never offered or provided a tutor to assist them.

In fact, Participant #5 reported that he had to seek a tutor without the help of his teachers. He also reported that it was hard for him to catch up his schoolwork once he got behind. He stated that nobody there wanted to help and it, “Felt like dead end.”

The participants were asked would they have used or accepted a tutor’s assistance if one had been offered; the majority stated yes. The participants, for the most parts, wanted to learn, but did not have the support of their teachers. Lofstrom (2007) reported that the grades, retention, poor school performance, and poor test scores contributed to students dropping out of school. Chappelle (2012) reported that students’ failure to perform academically was a well-known indicator of a student dropping out of school.

After the participants’ grades plunged, they started skipping school and sometimes classes. Each participant reported skipping school, and class except, Participants #7 and 8. Participant #8 reported that he could not get along with his teachers, yet he never skipped school or his classes. Some of the participants reported missing up to three days per week of school and classes.

The participants were asked how the school responded to their absentees. Participant #1 stated that she was sent to night school for missing too many days. Participant #3 reported that the school sent letters to her home, but her mother never received them; she intercepted the delivery of each letter. Participant #4 reported, “It took about three days for the school to call. They’re forget cause its too many students to keep up with.” Participant # 5 reported the school did not send any responses home. However, the school would send him, along with bad kid to individual housing for an entire day. Participant #7 had a similar report. She reported that there were no

responses; “They just marked them.” It is important to note that Participants #6, 7, and 8 worked while attending school. All three participants admitted that their jobs sometimes, interfered with their education.

### **Difficult Ninth-Grade Transition**

Transitioning from middle school to high school was challenging for the participants. Some of the participants reported that they did not know what to expect when they entered high school. For those who had a small inkling of high school, they reported that high school expectations were unrealistic. It was reported that transitioning was challenging due to a lack of educational knowledge of expectations, and preparation for high school.

Some of the participants reported that their elementary and middle school did not prepare them for high school. Others reported that their schools did a little. Participant #1 reported that the schools did not do a good job in preparing her to read. In fact, five participants reported the same; the school did a poor job in preparing them to read. Two of the participants reported that their poor reading abilities opened doors to many problems in high school. Participant #4 reported that he was reading at a fourth or fifth-grade level when he entered high school. He stated that he was embarrassed to read aloud in front of other students. Participant #8 reported that he was a slow learner and had been since elementary school. The majority of the participants did not know what to expect when they entered high school; they were just there in body. According to the participants’ reports, transitioning to the ninth-grade was difficult. Coupled with a lack of educational knowledge of expectations, and a lack of preparation for high school, the

participants became disengaged in school and in their classes. They sought solutions to their problems and found none; therefore, they dropped out of school.

According to Louie Rodriguez (2008), America continued to struggle to graduate half of the Latino students. Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006) reported that three of the major reasons why students dropped out of high school were; boring classes, absenteeism, and failing in school. This study's findings supported Rodriguez (2008) and Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006) findings. John Ogbu (2003) also reported that, societal and school factors such as social distance, fear, conflict and mistrust, and an effective relationship within the system, all influenced academic engagement, as well as achievements of minority students. The participants in this study found themselves disconnected from their teachers; there was no student-teacher relationship visible. Instead, the participants experienced more distrust and neglect. Ogbu (2003) also believed that it was possible that community factors, which included minorities understanding and reactions to schooling, influenced their academic engagement. The data in this study supported Ogbu (2003) theory.

Robert Crosnoe (2005) also reported that there are mounds of evidence that showed, "The degree to which students like school and participated in both academic and social activities had implications for their persistence in school" (p. 564). Tinto (1975) also argued that internal elements such as – educational experiences, educational skills and motivation – and external factors such as inadequate support services, inappropriate placement in courses and not having a social connection with the school faculty, staff and others played a major role in students' decisions to stay in school. Tileston (2007) went



further to report that for Hispanic students to perform well in American public school, it was important for the school staff to go beyond the standards of the state, textbooks, and policies and procedures; they had to lend a hand and offer their support. The findings in this study, as they relate to reasons why the participants dropped out of school, supported these findings. The participants in this study loss interest in school, experienced difficulties with their teachers, and had poor grades; these factors had a negative impact on their decisions to dropout.

### **Personal-Related Problems**

In this study I created a mental construct of the participants' school and personal experiences. These participants, like any other students, educational goal was to graduate from high school. The participants' reaction and belief in education evolved from within the, schools, homes, and from their communities. In this study several school factors, as well as, personal factors emerged such as: a lack of involvement by their parents, a dysfunctional home, and early parent-hood.

### **Lack of Parental Involvement**

Nearly 100% of the participants' parents were not involved in their education. The small percentages that were involved were only involved when the participants were in trouble; for discipline reasons. The parents did not have any knowledge or awareness of their child's school performance and activities in school. In fact, Participants #1, 2, 3, and 7 reported that their parents never visited the school on their behalf. Participants # 4, 5, 6, and 8 reported that their parents visited the school on their behalf only when they were in trouble. In spite of the parents' lack of involvement, they wanted their child to

finish school. In fact, some were angry and upset when they were informed of their child's decision to drop out of school.

Parental involvement was crucial in the students' development, as well as, their school performance. It was important to note that some of the parents dropped out of high school as well. Table 2 listed the educational status of the participants' parents. It was important to note that parents' educational status can influence their child's school performance. In fact, Chirtes (2010) reported that an unstable family had a negative influence on students' academic performance.

Table 2

*Parents Educational Status*

Participants	Graduated	Dropped out
#1	No	Mother and father
# 2	Mother	Father
#3	No	Mother and father
#4	Mother	Father
#5	Father	Mother
#6	No	Mother and father
#7	Father	Mother
#8	Mother and father	No

The majority of the parents who dropped out did so in the seventh or eighth grade. During the time of this study, participant #3's mother was enrolled in college. It was also important to note that some of the participants' sibling and friends dropped out of school as well.

Another important point to note was that, there was a lack of communication between the participants and their parents at home. Table 3 revealed the amount of communication that occurred between the participants and their parents during the week.

Table 3

*Communication between Participants and Parents*

Participants	Mother	Father
#1	Not very often	Hardly ever
#2	Sometimes, not much	None
#3	About school, nothing else	About school, nothing else
#4	Here and there	Hardly talked
#5	Some	Maybe some
#6	A lot	Didn't talk
#7	Only when I complained about school	Only when I complained about school
#8	Really, not at all	Not at all

As indicated in Table 3, the participants and their parents barely talked to each other. For the most part, the participants had the freedom in high school and at home, as it related to parental supervision. The majority of the participants reported that their parents had no control over their decisions to drop out of school. Some of the participants reported that their dysfunctional home life had an impact on their ability to graduate from high school. Others reported that it only forced them to become more independent quicker. Mark Lopez (2009) pointed out that over 70% of Hispanic dropouts reported that one of their reasons for dropping out was due to a lack of support from their parents.

### **Early Parent-hood**

Early parent-hood was a major contributing factor in each of the participants' life. It was a factor that influenced them to drop out of high school. All the participants experienced early parent-hood, whether as a mother or a father. The participants had to take care of their babies by providing financial support. Those who were pregnant reported that they struggled in high school. Betty Cortna (2010) reported that Latino teenagers have difficult times in school, and the proofs were present.

Participant #1 reported that she had to drop out in the tenth grade because she did not have the support of her parents to help her when she was pregnant. However, she later returned to school and obtained her GED. During the time of this study, she was enrolled in college. Participant # 2 reported that she became lazy and wanted to sleep. She was also enrolled in college during the time of this study. Participants # 3 and 7 reported similar stories, except #7 reported that when she went to school, she would only sleep. She reported that the teacher would wake her at the end of each class, but not before. Participants' # 3 and 7 dropped out in the eleventh grade. Participants # 4, 5, 6, and 8, all males, reported that they had to work to take care of their child. However, only three participants reported that they worked while attending school. The participants reported that an early parent-hood called for a lot of their time, which took away from the time they spent doing school work. The findings in this study supported Kaplan, Turner, and Badger (2007) findings which stated that Hispanic teens have a high risk of dropping out of high school due to early parent-hood and a lack of self-esteem.

### **The bridge to dropping out: A disconnection**

The majority of the participants reported that their decision to drop out of high school was an individual decision. Participant # 1 reported that she dropped out in the tenth grade. She stated that she just stopped going because she was depressed and school was too much. She first started thinking about dropping out in the ninth grade when she informed her counselor, of what then was an indecisive decision to drop out. She also reported that she did not think about the consequence of dropping out, but that she only thought of herself and child.

Participant #2 reported that she, alone, made the decision to drop out. After having problems at home, at school and missing too many classes, she dropped out in the eleventh-grade. She reported that she had thought about dropping out one year before she actually did. Just like all other participants, she did not think about how dropping out would impact her future. She had a decision to make and, according to her, there was no one to turn to for advice or help.

Participants # 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 dropped out of high school in the eleventh grade and reported that their decision to drop out was their own decision. Neither participant weighed in on the importance of a high school education or the impact that their decision to drop out would have on their future outcomes. Some of the participants reported pregnancy and being lazy, too many absences, problems with the teachers, or too old as personal factors that influenced their decision to leave school. Participant # 6 reported that he was much older than all the students, and he had no one to hang with because, “they could not relate.” Also, Participants #6, 7, and 8 reported their job as a factor.

Participant # 7 had a different story to tell. He reported that he did not want to drop out of high school, but was forced out. He reported, "First time during the Summer I started going every day then I got less energy cause I had hard times. Knowing it was going to be hard for me. So I asked myself why I should go." He also reported that the decision to drop out was really not his decision. He reported:

I wanted to go. I went back, and I had added up absents. The principal talked to me and I went to alternative school, but I couldn't go because I had to work, and it was during the time I had to be in school. I couldn't do both, and they wouldn't let me leave early to go to work. I went back to regular school and they wanted to put me where I can go get my GED, and I told them I didn't want to do that because that is like dropping out. Then after they did, I went back the second day the teacher asked me about homework and I told her that I never started the program and she said I would get all zeros and she couldn't give me time to do it. I asked why because it was her job to give me the work to make up. She took me to the guidance counselor because she said I had an attitude and the guidance counselor said that there was nothing else for me to do but to dropout and I did. It was almost like I was forced out because I wanted to stay.

What was also interesting about Participant # 7 was that he never thought about dropping out, and he never skipped school. In fact, he reported that he wanted to stay in school and try to graduate.

**What would have helped them stayed in school and their advice to teachers and parents?**

The majority of the participants reported that someone knew in advance that they were dropping out of school. When asked what could have helped them stayed in school and what advice would they give to the teachers and their parents, they reported:

Participant #1:

Not sure what would have made me stay; I was not involved in any school activities cause I didn't like it. The school could have provided tutor or extra work. They could have sent someone to my home to help me stay in school. My friends could have talked to me. The teachers need to be involved with kids and give extra work. My family need to think about the age I dropped out cause I didn't have mentality to make the decision it did. They need to tell me to get a job and stay in school.

Participant # 2:

Putting forth my own effort would have helped me stay in school. My family couldn't have done nothing cause it was my decision. The teachers need to support the students and explain more to the students. My family needs to talk to us, support us, and just keep talking about having a good future.

Participant #3:

Communication with my parents would have helped me stay in school. Things would have been different. The school could have been more involved, and my

family could have given me support; relationship with my parents would have made a difference.

Participant #4:

There should have been more options for me to get my career as chef would have helped me stay in school. The school could have been more helpful. They could have shown me how to graduate. My family was not the fault cause I was hard headed and I made up my mind to leave. Teachers should do your job, pay more attention to students, show them that you care; we need them to help us. My family should encourage me to keep on with my degree and that I can go further.

Participant #5:

My attendance was my problem. I never attend class. I tried out for basketball, but got cut cause I was too small at the time. The school was not factor, but my family could have done little bit more. The teachers, I don't want to talk about it because when I show up to class they wouldn't help me; I would get un-noticed. I didn't have any materials like schoolwork, and they didn't say nothing. Advise to family, nothing really because my dad tried everything, even not going to work.

Participant #6:

To have done better in school or stayed the school should have started a little later. School could have changed the time in the mornings; I liked sleeping late. School did lots for me. My family could have done nothing that would make me stay. The teacher think they know it all, I had to try and sit and figure it out; at



the end of class I didn't know the school work. Some teachers cared and some don't. My family could have told me stop being lazy.

Participant # 7:

Studying more would have helped me stay in school. I was not involved in no activities in school. The school could have try to help me out, but they didn't care. They should help me out. My friends and family could have at least tried to help me out. The teachers should have helped me out; wouldn't have got to this point if they would have.

Participant # 8:

If I had more time to study and the teachers being helpful would have helped me stay in school. The teachers could have helped me. My friends and family could have talked to me. My advice to school, uh, I wouldn't say nothing; for what, they don't care. My family I tell them, yeah, they need to tell me to stay in school and do something with my life; no one said that to me.

Overall the participants' lacked teachers, friends, and family support, as well as, encouraging advice. Also, they were not involved in any extra-curriculum activities while in school. Being active in school can encourage students to become more involved; they began to feel a sense of belonging. It was important to note that some of the participants' demeanor seem as though they were filled with anger and disappointment. At one point, it seems as though the participants had been waiting for their voices to be heard; their opportunity to speak out was finally here and they spoke.

## **Life as a Dropout**

### **Regrets**

Eighty-eight percent of the participants regretted dropping out of high school. As stated earlier, the participants did not have second thoughts about how the impact of their decision to drop out of school would have on their future. When asked if they had to do it all again, would they do it the same, they all reported no. The participants shared their regrets and talked about how things would have been different if they had stayed in school.

Participant # 1 reported:

My friends went to K High School (pseudonym) and graduated. They all have good jobs; better jobs. I hate quitting now cause I am not getting paid nothing close to what they are. I went back to school the second time and finished.

Participant # 5 reported, “No, I would be an A student and try to go to college. I wished I had finished school; I would have been better.” Participant #3 reported, “Absolutely not. It pays off – I mean its hard work and hard work pays off. It’s more important having a diploma instead of GED; they said it was equivalent, but it is not.” Participant #4 reported, “No. After I thought about it, I need a high school diploma to reach my career goals. It is not easy anymore.” Participant #2 reported, “No. I am married and I hate what I did, but I did it. It is sometimes hard without a diploma.” Participant #1 reported, “No, I would have a better education by now. Education really helps.” Some of the participants reported that if they had received support from their parents and the school, things might have been different.

### **My Life Now**

Each participant told their individual stories of their life at the present. They talked about their regrets for dropping out of school, as well as, the impact dropping out had on their life. The participants shared their stories of their struggles, as well as, their life wishes.

#### **Participant #1:**

Life has not been what I expected; it has been hard. I wouldn't be in the same place if I had my high school education. I would be better off if I had graduate. I am working right now to take care of my child and I am in college. I'm working at a mental health center. I like the job but I would rather have another one. Sometimes dropping out keep me from getting the job I want. That's why I went back and got me GED and in college.

#### **Participant # 2:**

Well, I am a therapeutic mentor. I like my job; I don't want another one. I got my GED, and I am taking classes in college; I'm doing good in my class. Life has been a little hard. I could have finished school and college by now. Sometimes life ain't what I expected it to be. When I dropped out it was easier, later it got harder. I think I'll be in a better place if I'd stayed in school. Yeah, I would be better off graduating.

#### **Participant # 3:**

I am an office assistant in an office. I like my job, but sometimes I hoping to bet something better. But my dropping out kind of stopped me from getting it. I have

my GED and I am in college. I got my GED before my baby was born; I got it quickly cause I was afraid of letting go. Life has been okay. I would be in a different place if I graduated. I know I would be better off.

Participant #4:

I am working as a chef. I like my job cause cooking is my passion. Dropping out of school did not stop me from getting a job and it ain't stopping me now. I did not want to go back to school cause I don't need to. If I had stayed I had graduated, but I didn't need to stay. My life hasn't been that bad, but it's not like I expected. Some days I, well life is easy and some days it kind of hard. If I had finish school, I would probably be like my friends; they are doing good. I might have been better off – I don't know.

Participant #5:

I make hospital needles for a company. I like my job some days, but I would like one that pays better. I like to get paid for what I know and do. Yeah, I think being a dropout hold me back, but I tried to go back to school, but I dropped out again. I want to get me GED; I am going to get it sometimes cause it's hard. If it wasn't for my music I would probably be in trouble and life would be harder to cope with. I think I would have graduated if I had stayed in school. I know I wouldn't be struggling. I'll probably be in college and have a good job. Man, its crazy sometimes.

Participant #6:

I like working at Dunkin Donut. I like my job. I would definitely want another one; I tried getting a better job so right now Dunkin Donut is all I got. I probably got to get my GED to get a better job. I think about it sometimes, if I had of stayed. I probably be doing good now. When you ain't got anybody to help you, I have to struggle a little. It's my fault cause I quit school.

Participant #7:

I am working at Dunkin Donut. I want another job but I want to keep working here. I think I might go back and get my GED one day. Right now I am just trying to make it. I'll tell anybody not to dropout. It's hard and sometimes I get depress.

Participant #8:

I am a cashier at Dunkin Donut. I don't like it but it gives me money. I would love to get another job, but we are short right now and it wouldn't be fair to leave. But I told them already that I was going to get another job cause I need the money. I help my brother out sometimes. I suppose to be writing the paper to sign up to get my GED. I got to see cause we get busy here and its hard to get time to do it. Life has not been really that hard. I don't try to get them big jobs cause I know you need a high school education and I don't have that. If I stayed in school I would get a job that would help me financially. I wouldn't be in the situation I'm in now.

Tyler and Lofstrom (2007) reported that each year over a million students drop out of high school, later facing difficulties and disappointments in life. They also reported that many dropouts find themselves unemployed, others are employed in low wage jobs, have a lack of health insurance, are incarcerated, and are faced with the fact that they may never be able to move freely in the job market, all because of a high school diploma (Tyler and Lofstrom, 2007). The findings in this study supported Tyler and Lofstrom (2007) findings. The participants in this study struggled and worked in jobs that paid low wages. Approximately 90% of the participants in this study desired another job paying higher wages.

#### **Advice to 14 and 15 Year Old Students**

The participants were asked what advice they would give to 14 and 15 year old students in school. All of the participants had different advice to give. Their demeanor appeared to be of great concern. The participants' advice to the students was to remain in school, no matter what. It appeared that the participants' advice was based on their experiences as a dropout.

##### **Participant #1**

“They should think about it. They don't have the mentality that we do now. They don't know what it is to struggle or pay bills because they are living with their parents.”

##### **Participant #2**

“Think of the future. When you don't finish school it is really hard to find a job to finish your professional life. They need to know it is hard for me. Sometimes it ain't easy and they need to stay in school. Finish.”

## Participant #3

“Definitely worth it to stay. It pays off. I would have been done with this part of my school if I had stayed there. You know you can offer more, life is better, if you get your education, rather than putting it off. It has not been easy, sometimes.”

## Participant #4

“To get strong and stop hanging with the wrong crowd and they can make it.”

## Participant #5

“Stay in school. It is not something you want to be. I will figure out what wrong and give them advice. The world is much more than just black and white. Martin Luther King is very inspirational. Stay so you can learn about that stuff.”

## Participant #6

“Don't drop out, but if you are going to drop out, make sure you get a backup plan for working because it ain't easy out here.”

## Participant #7

“To not drop out because it's not easy.”

## Participant #8

“Stay in school. Just look at me. Do you really want to look like me? You will do better staying in school getting the help and support you need so you won't struggle like me.”

The participants admitted that having a high school education was important to have in order to be successful in life. The majority stated that if they knew then what they knew during the time of this study, they would have stayed in school. The

participants encouraged teenagers to stay in school. The majority of them wished they had taken heed to those who tried to reach out to them. They did not take into consideration the impact dropping out could have on their future, their families and society. Three of the participants went back and got their GED.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Creswell (2009) recommended steps to verify evidence of trustworthiness. In this study, interviews were conducted to obtain thick and rich data (Creswell, 2009). Member checking was also done; it allowed the participants the opportunity to review the transcribed data for accuracy to clarify any and all misunderstanding (Creswell, 2003). Each participant was identified by the letter P and a number. In this study, all the participants were given the opportunity to clarify the accuracy of the transcribed data and to add information they felt needed to be heard.

The credibility in this study involved the honesty of the participants, my reflective journal, member check, and what Creswell (2009) called thick and rich descriptions. Transferability was not pertinent in this study due to the small number of participants. Dependability was applied through by the methodology and procedures used to gather data. To confirm my objective, participants' interviews, my reflective journal and member checks were implemented.

A copy of each participant's transcript was made available for them to review through-emails or face-to-face. Participants were asked to read the transcript for accuracy as well as to provide additional comments if they deemed it necessary. Those who received the transcript by email were instructed to respond only if there were any changes



needed. I did not receive any feedback from the participants regarding corrections or additional comments. Those who met face-to-face confirmed the accuracy of the transcribed data. Participant #2 did not respond to any of my messages regarding the second meeting; therefore, the member check was not completed. It is important to note that during the interviews, I repeated the responses given by the participants so that my understanding of the responses was understood and clarified. The data was also clarified by reviewing the recorded interviews while rereading the transcript. To reduce bias, I reviewed other studies relating to Hispanic student dropping out of high school to get a better view and understanding on what was occurring in public high school in the northern states. I also reviewed case studies conducted on Hispanic dropouts and dropouts in general

### **Conclusion**

Chapter 4 included the findings that explored the research question, why Hispanic students were dropping out of school in M Public School District. Dropping out of high school has been a phenomena concern for numerous years at the high schools in M Public School District, especially among Hispanic students. In this study, Hispanics who dropped out of school in this district were given the opportunity to let their voices be heard. Chapter 4 provided an analysis of data that were collected from Hispanic dropouts through face-to-face interviews. Chapter 5 provided interpretations of findings, conclusions, recommendations to disseminate the findings, implication for social change, reflection, suggestions to improve M Public School District, as well as, recommended areas for future studies.

## Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore contributing factors that lead Hispanic students to drop out of high school. In this study I focused on Hispanic students who dropped out of school in M Public School District. I was motivated to focus on this district because it was listed as one of the top seven districts to have had the highest Hispanic dropout percentage rate in its state. In recent years, this particular school district was placed under the direct control of the state's Department of Education due to appalling high school dropout rates and students chronic underperformance.

Previous researchers, through qualitative and quantitative studies, have addressed the dropout crisis among students in general. However, a limited number of studies were done from the perspective of Hispanic dropouts. According to this study's review of the literature, there were no qualitative phenomenological studies done that addressed the high school dropout crisis among Hispanics in M Public School District. For this reason, I chose to go directly to Hispanics who dropped out of high school from M Public School District to explore the question: What contributing factors lead Hispanic students to drop out of high school in M Public School District? The participants in this study reported two main categories of factors that contributed to their decision to drop out of high school: school related factors and personal related factors.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Two main categories and several subcategories emerged from the data. The two main categories were school related factors and personal related factors. The subcategories included: a lack of teachers' support and motivation, poor school performance, a loss of interest in school and classes, non-supportive parents, and early parent-hood. It was important to note that a lack of teachers' support and motivation, as well as, parents' support were especially problematic for the participants; teachers being the most problematic. Throughout the study, the participants consistently spoke of the problems with their teachers and the lack of support that they received from their parents. The data in this study suggested that the teachers failed to provide the participants with equal and adequate opportunities to succeed in school, and the participants' parent failed to participate in their education, as well as, their personal life.

Throughout this study, the participants consistently talked about the problems they experienced with teachers in M Public School District. Teachers did not provide the participants with the help they needed to improve their grades. They failed to offer the participants the support they needed and according to the participants, it was possible that they could have been successful in school, if they had gotten support. Tutors were available within the school, but were never provided to the participants. It was possible that with the assistance of the tutors, the participants may have succeeded in school, and not dropped out.

The participants desired to improve their school performance but were never motivated or inspired to do so; teachers failed to challenge the participants academically.

The findings supported Ogbu's (2003) report that some teachers believed, for the most part, that minority students could not perform like that of their counterparts. For this reason, many teachers gave minority students less attention than other students, not challenging them, and not encouraging them to become actively involved in any extra-curricular school activities.

It was important to note that the majority of the participants in this study were not involved in any extracurricular activities. Being active, instead of passive in school can encourage students to become more involved and to work harder and they begin to feel a sense of belonging. Without teachers' support and challenges, participants found themselves at what participant #5 called, "a dead end." Teachers' support and challenges should follow students from elementary school through high school so transitioning to the ninth-grade might not be as difficult.

The participants in this study reported that transitioning to the ninth-grade was difficult; they were not prepared and did not know what to expect. For some participants, a lack of educational knowledge of expectations and preparations of high school were reasons they experienced fear and anxiety attacks. This finding supported Tinto's (1975) arguments that students' school experience and performance, as well as, the support they receive from their family and the community influence their decision to remain in school. What was also important and impacted students' decision to stay in school was the motivation that they receive, internal and external.

The findings in this study suggested that the teachers in M Public School District did not provide equal and adequate opportunities for the participants to succeed in high

school. The findings in this study confirmed Meeker, Edmonson, and Fisher's (2008) report that teacher's lack of support had a great influence on Hispanic students' decision to drop out of high school. However, positive relationships between students and teachers are important, as well. The data in this study suggested that the relationships did not exist. The participants believed that the relationship was difficult to develop because the teachers saw them as failures.

Tileston (2007) also reported that for Hispanic students to perform well in American public school, it was important for the school staff to go beyond the standards of the state, textbooks, and policies and procedures; they needed to offer their support. This was confirmed by the findings in this study. The participants had failing grades and performed poorly in school, because teachers did not go beyond their routine standards of teaching.

Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006) reported that when there were no connections for students in school, they felt less motivated and became academically challenged and disengaged. These findings are supported by the findings in this study. The participants reported that the classes were boring because they were not taught on the level of their understanding; therefore, they felt neglected and contemplated dropping out. One of the participants refused to dropout. She went to her principal, teacher, and guidance counselor for help, only to be told to dropout. She did so against her wishes; she was not given any other options.

Some of the participants stayed in school until they turned 16 years old. They desired to drop out earlier, but their school attendance was mandatory by the state.

However, the participants started skipping school and classes; they eventually lost interest. Their loss of interest played a major role in plummeted grades. The findings supported Lopez's (2009) report that students who did not like their classes, for the most part, did not see a reason to continue their education; their career goal and the consequences of dropping out was not in question. Without hesitation and with ease, they just dropped out.

What was interesting about the findings in this study was that the participants reported that the teachers taught classes above their levels of understanding. When the participants informed the teachers of this, they were told to just read the book. The participants saw the teaching technique as, what Freire once stated, one size fit all. Paulo Freire (1970, 1993) defined this teaching technique as *problem-posing education*. He argued the following:

A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally narrative character. This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). Education is suffering from narration sickness. Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits that the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat. When students' efforts to act responsibly are frustrated, when they find themselves unable to use their faculties, students suffer. (Freire, 1993, p. 70 – 71)

According to the data in this study, teachers in M Public School District appeared to have operated on what Freire (1970, 1993) called the *Banking Education*. There were little to no communication among the teachers and the students because, according to Freire (1970, 1993), students are not participants in the classroom because teachers perceived them as individuals who lack knowledge and understanding. The teachers believed that in the classroom, they were the only one with all the knowledge and understanding and that the inputs of the students were of no value and therefore, not permissible (Freire, 1970, 1993). Freire reported that teachers see students to be more like objects and themselves as the controllers.

The findings in this study supported Ogbu's (2003) theory regarding negative student-teacher relationships. He believed that the values and the beliefs of minority students may not be understood by American's teachers because, teachers may not be aware of the students' values and beliefs. Therefore, a disconnection between the students and the teachers emerge (Ogbu, 2001). According to Basch (2011) and Archambault, Janosz, Marizot and Pagani (2009), a lack of support and guidance from school staff were contributing factors in the students' decision to drop out of high school. This was especially true for those participants who experienced early parent-hood.

Participants in this study experienced early parent-hood, which was another main reason for dropping out. A financial burden was placed on the participants, therefore they had to choose between dropping out or struggling through school; they chose to dropout. The majority of the participants waited after they dropped out to find

employment. They did not have any family support which also played a role in their decision to drop out.

The data suggested that the participants' family life was dysfunctional; there was little to no communication among the participants and their parents. Chirtes (2010) reported that an unstable family is another factor that influenced students' academic performance as well as their decision to drop out of school. The data also suggested that the parents had no control or power to keep the participants in school. In fact, for the most parts, they were not involved in any school activities; no visits, except when their child was in trouble; also, they did not attend any teachers' conferences. When the participants dropped out of school, some of the parents were frustrated. It appeared that the parents' authority, as well as parental supervision, was obsolete at home and at school. A lack of parental involvement had a great influence on the participants' school performance, as well as their decisions to drop out.

The findings supported Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006) report that students were more likely to drop out of school if their parents were not involved. Balli, Demo and Wedman (1998) reported that educators strongly believed that a lack of parental participation in their child's education could have a negative impact on the outcome of their education. Nicholas Hartlep and Antonio Ellis (2010) defined a lack of parental support, according to Title 1, Section 1118 and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as following:

This statute defines parental involvement as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning



and other school activities, including ensuring the following: (a) that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; (b) that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; (c) that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and (d) that other activities are carried out, such as those described in Section 1118.

(p. 3)

It was important to note that the majority of the participants' parents, siblings, and friends were dropouts as well. Chirtes (2010) reported that parents who were high school dropouts and those with a low degree of education, had an impact on their child's motivation to stay in school. In fact Chirtes (2010) reported that many dropouts were in fact a recipient of a family who dropped out of high school. The data in this study suggested that a dysfunctional home can have a negative impact on students' educational performances. It was important to note that the participants did not report any form of discrimination, as reported in Ogbu's (2003) theoretical concept. However, the findings in this study confirmed other findings in Ogbu's (2003) theoretical concept. The participants were influenced by external factors, as well as, internal.

In Ogbu's (2003) theory, he argued that a lack of hard work was a key factor in students' academic disconnections and low school performances. Participants reported being lazy due to pregnancy and a loss of interest in school. Some made sleeping-in late a priority over attending school. Ogbu (2003) also reported that in order to be successful in school one had to work hard. He labeled the act of not working hard as, "Low-ethic

Syndrome” that he referred to students who had little to no interest or participation in their education. In this study, the participants’ lost interest in their home and school work; some reported that their loss of interest was due to a lack of support from the teachers and teaching that had added no meaning to their life. The findings in this study supported and agreed with Ogbu's theory regarding the system; which were societal and school factors and also in part, community factors. Ogbu (1987) suggested that researchers should focus their studies not only on the students' failures in school but on “what works” and “what work best for whom” (p. 314) either for students or teachers. Also according to Ogbu (1983), it was the schools responsibility to provide all students, regardless of their nationality, with the same opportunity to be educated, and to obtain credentials that would allow them to be able to join the workforce and gain employment and wages based on a merit system.

Ogbu (1987) also concluded that in order to improve the social adjustment and academic performance of immigrant students, “children are encouraged and/or guided to develop good academic work habits and perseverance; parents and other member of the community, sometimes through gossip and related techniques, communicate to children non-ambivalent instrumental message about education” (p. 330). The results of this study are confirmations of the contributing factors that lead the Hispanic participants in this study to drop out of high school.

### **Discrepant Cases**

Based on the findings in this study, there were no discrepant cases

### **Implications for Social Changes**

In M Public School District, Hispanic students continue to have one of the highest dropout rates in its state, in spite of some improvements. The school district cannot adequately confront the dropout crisis without knowledge of what factors may be contributing to it. For over 30 years Hispanic students have been dropping out of high school faster than any other group of students. Each year in one of America's northern state, approximately 10,000 students drop out of high school and the majority of the dropouts are minorities. Rodriguez (2008) reported that America was a giant when it came to trade and industry (financial), yet it lost 50% of its Latina/o students to the dropout crisis. America's schools failed to graduate half of its Latina/o students (2008).

Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006) went even further to report that dropping out of high school was dangerous. Many dropouts find themselves dependent upon the Welfare system for support, lacking jobs that support their family, and incarcerated because they became involved in criminal activities (2006). Gandara (2009) also argued:

...if the high dropout rates and low educational achievement of Latino youth are not turned around, we will have created a permanent underclass without hope of integrating into the mainstream or realizing their potential to contribute to American society. If we find a way to educate them well, their future and ours is bright. (Gandara, 2009, p)

This study recapitulated the struggles that Hispanic students faced in M Public School District. I challenge all educators, parents, and other stakeholders to stop and not only hear, but to listen to the voices of the students who are crying out for help; they want to stay in school, but are not given equal opportunities to do so. Flores, Cousin, and Diaz (1991) made an important observation: researches that were related to school reform did not include the perspective and the experience of students; instead students' voice, especially minority students from families who lived in poverty, were considered unworthy and unimportant. Therefore their voices were not heard. In 2007, Azzam reported that the best way to conclude what influenced students to drop out of high school were from the perspective of those who dropped out.

Dropping out of school can be prevented with the helping hands of all stakeholders. Without the support and joint effort of teachers, parents and other stakeholders, the dropout rates among Hispanic students will continue to grow. According to Crosnoe (2005), the schools in America were overflowed with Hispanic students' enrollment and it was more likely to continue.

In this qualitative phenomenological study, the number of participants was constrained to eight; therefore, the generalizability to a larger population was limited. This study also focused on Hispanic high school dropouts between the ages of 18 and 24. I trusted the honesty of each participant, believing that the information given was true. The information was not verified as to the truthfulness of it.

### **Recommendation for Action**

Based on this study's findings, the following recommendations could assist in resolving the dropout crisis in M Public School District.

1. Refresh teachers and students relationships. Nearly 20 years of research have reported that student-teacher relationships are important, especially for Hispanic students. Students need teachers who motivate and believe in them; believing that they can be successful; teachers who really care and put forth to help. The school needs teachers who are capable of recognizing, inspiring, motivating, and supporting all students, regardless of their nationality. The school should provide or show evidence that these qualities exist in educators. Also, class size should be kept small to allow educators to provide more one-on-one attention with the students. This will allow educators to provide more one-on-one attention with the students.
2. Providing students with internal support. Provide advocates and mentors that will reach out to students who are skipping school, missing classes, struggling to stay ahead and those that are pregnant. Advocates and mentors are important parts of students' life, especially those who are considering dropping out. Supporters will be excellent for those students who are struggling in reading and math. The two subjects seem to be challenging subjects for most Hispanic students. Also important is that in large schools students sometimes get lost in the crowd.
3. Reform traditional teaching structures. Freire (1970) argued that an education suffered from narration sickness (p. 71). Freire also argued that, "Teachers were

the subject of the learning process, while the pupils were mere objects” (p. 73).

As suggested above, make the classes smaller so that the students can be treated as individuals and not as having to fit into what Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006) called a “one size fit all” class. It is also important that students have their own education goals to work toward. Educators should be more in tune of the values and beliefs of all students they address, before developing and implementing an educational goal for them. Developing an educational goal should include the parents. Students should be challenged and teachers’ expectation of them should remain high, regardless of their nationality. Students with special needs should be monitored to assist them in staying on track and successful in reaching their educational goals.

4. Motivating parental support. Educators should seek out ways to get parents involved in the students’ education. Parents should be informed when students miss school and classes, made aware of the students’ grade (passing and failing grades), and all other problems and achievements that students are actively involved in. To close the gap between the parents and teachers, I suggest that educators give parents the opportunity to share their input on developing educational goals for the student. This will keep parents informed on the student progress toward graduating. Parents should assist educators in overseeing the students’ progress; this should be regularly be done because changes may occur which may require some modification of the goals. Keeping parents informed will increase their enthusiasm of graduation, as well as that of the students.

5. The school should consider implementing regular focus groups to address factors that may be influencing students to drop out of school. Educators and parents should take heed to early warning signs of dropout and address these immediately. Students who are struggling to stay ahead should be assigned a mentor or a supporter. Providing them a mentor or a supporter is important, especially if the school has a large student body; freshmen have a tendency of getting lost in the crowd.

If educators, parents, and the communities join as a team and commit to treating the dropout problem like a real crisis, students, especially minorities, will have equal opportunities to be successful in school (Ogbu, 2003). A copy of this study was disseminated in the form of a written executive summary to M Public School District Head Masters. It is with hope that the results of this study will be used by the Head Masters and the educators in M Public School District to increase their knowledge on the dropout crisis among Hispanics, as well as for a tool for developing or for modifying programs that are already in use for addressing the dropout crisis among Hispanic students.

### **Recommendation for Further Study**

Research on Hispanic dropouts is an area of study that will continue to be studied consistently. Additional studies should be done to investigate student-teacher relationships, especially among Hispanic students and non-Hispanic teachers; the data in this study did not reveal a relationship among them. Student-teacher relationships were one of the biggest and most problematic factors for the participants in this study. It will

be of equal importance to involve students who are in school, as well as, those who have dropped out.

Another suggestion for future research should be on students who are transitioning to the ninth-grade; how many students are entering high school readings below a high school reading level. Some of the participants in this study reported high school being difficult because they were not reading on a high school level. Some were reading on a fourth and fifth-grade level. It appeared that students were being passed along from middle school to high school, while they are still reading below grade level.

The process the school used for responding to students skipping class and skipping school should be studied. According to some of the participants, the school failed to contact parents of their absence. Also, in the future studies, evaluate the school follow-up policies and procedures, if any, on students who dropped out. Participants in this study were not contacted by the school after they dropped out.

I suggest a variety of methods be used to study to conduct the suggested studies. A quantitative study will reveal the number of students who are and are not receiving support from teachers. It will also measure the number of follow-ups the school is making, as well as the effectiveness of the school's active policies governing absentees. The qualitative study will give students and teachers the opportunity to be heard; giving their perspective on different issues. A mixed methodology could reveal a bit of both.

### **Reflection**

As a professor, I believed that the dropout crisis can be resolved through the assistance of the school and community. Educators need support and the community



needs to know how to influence that support. If our educational leaders, parents, and the community commit to treating the drop out crisis like the real crisis it is (Rodriguez (2010), Hispanics and all other students will be given equal opportunities to be successful in schools (Ogbu, 2003).

This study opened my eyes to issues that should not be in America's public schools. As a professor, I know the importance of the student-teacher relationship. Students should have an open door policy; one that will allow students to feel free and comfortable to communicate with their teachers as needed. The findings in this study also reminded me of the importance of not only hearing, but listening to those students who is speaking out; they have a message that needs to be heard. The desire to question educators was very strong. After thoroughly analyzing the data, I believe that educators should consider students' values and beliefs when preparing for and conducting their classes.

### **Conclusion**

Dropping out of school continues to be a complex problem; one that is phenomenon and risky. Hispanic students still have the highest and fastest dropout rates in the nation in light of showing a slight improvement (Pew Research Center, 2014). The number of Hispanic dropouts, ages 16 through 19, for 2012 was 242,410; a decrease of 295,127 from the 2000 dropout total of 537,537 (2014).

According to Sarah Dolan (2009), "Latino children under 18 years of age play a critical role in the U. S. education system as they now constitute the second largest group

of students after whites. They are the fastest growing student population and their numbers are increasing in all regions of the country” (Statistical Brief, 2009, p. 2).

Dolan (2009) reported that the Latino student is in the classrooms and their successes or failures are a reflection of the effectiveness or impact of schools in America; students are struggling, and teachers are not supportive. Teachers neither motivated the students in this study nor inspired the students to partake in any extracurricular activities at school. One participant reported feeling as though he was un-noticed and that the teachers saw him as a failure. It is important for educators to know the values and beliefs of Hispanic students. According to Crosnoe (2005), “Considering the problematic history of this population in the U. S. educational system and the consequences of these historical patterns for the stratification of American society, the value of studying the academic experience of Hispanics has never been greater” (p. 584).

It is important to note that the participants in this study did not once consider the consequences of dropping out or the impact that it would have on their future. According to the study’s data, no one warned them of the danger or the consequence of dropping out of high school. In fact, one participant was told to drop out against her will. She was told by the school guidance counselor that she did not have any other options; therefore, she did exactly that, she dropped out. Hopkin (1994) reported that for one to think in such a way was to think that he or she would intentionally behave in a way that was not in his best interest (p. 138). Dropping out of school occurs frequently; “every 29 seconds - an average of 124 students an hour, and 2,979 a day” (Chalker & Stelsel, 2009 p. 74).

As a result of this study, the following conclusions unfolded:

1. The student – parent relationship was a major factor in school dropouts. In this study there were a lack of communication at home, dysfunctional home life that included a lack of supervision, and a lack of parental support in school.
2. Loss of interest and a lack of involvement in school extracurricular activities had an impact on students' school performance and weighed heavily on their decision to stay in or drop out of school.
3. Early parent-hood was another major contributing factor that leads students to drop out of school. The participants dropped out to care for their babies by providing financial support. They had to choose between finishing school and dropping out and as the participants reported, they dropped out.
4. Non-inspiring and non-supportive teachers had a great influence on students' decisions to drop out of school. The participants were not given equal and adequate opportunities to succeed in school.

The study's findings can be utilized by teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to provide additional information and a clearer understanding of Hispanic students' reasons for dropping out. The findings should be utilized to gather additional insight on how teachers, parents, and other stakeholders can work together to prevent Hispanic students from dropping out. Finally, it is important to note that the purpose of reporting the findings in this study was not to criticize or belittle educators, M Public School District, or the parents, but to spotlight areas that are affecting Hispanic students' progress in school. Dropping out of school can be detrimental to students' futures. Solving the

dropout crisis among Hispanic students will take a holistic approach and commitment from all stakeholders.

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### Appendix A: Participant's Interview Questions

You are a former high school student, who left the public school system, and I am really interested in hearing your thoughts and feelings about your experiences in public schools and since you have left.

So to start the interview session, I'd like you to think about a typical school morning when you were walking out your front door to go to school. What were you feeling? Were you looking forward to your day in school? Were you happy to be going to school? Were you wishing you did not have to go?

Why did you feel that way? What are some of the things that made school something you look forward to, or not look forward to? What did you like about going to school? What did you not like about going to school?

What were the things you really liked about your school, thinking about your own experiences there?

I want you to think about your very best day in high school, the day you felt like you were getting the most out of your educational experiences. Please tell me about that day as a student.

What were things you did not like about your school, thinking about your own experiences there? Is there a day or a particular experience that you can think of that sums up what was wrong with high school for you?

You get grades for your different subjects in school, and now I am going to give you a chance to turn the tables and have you give your old school a grade. Overall, in terms of giving you a good education and the kind of experience you want to get out of school, what grade would you give you old school – A, B, C, D, or F?

Why do you feel that way? What would the school have to do to get an “A”?

Did you feel like you had someone who supported you in your education – someone either at school or at home who looked out for you to help you get the most out of school, or who you could go to when you had a problem in school? Who was the person you could go to? Was there anyone at school– a teacher, coach, someone who worked in the lunchroom, anyone who believed in you, thought you were a winner? Anyone at home? How often did you talk to your parents each week? Did your mother and father complete high school? Did they continue beyond high school with their education?

Did your parents ever visit your school on your behalf? Did they attend parent-teacher conferences or ever come to school to meet with your teachers or school administrators? Did your parents want you to finish high school? Did they have the power to make you stay in high school or could they have been stricter in terms of making you go to school?



Did your parent, mother and father graduate from high school? If no, what grade did he or she stop in?

Let's talk about the transition from eighth grade to high school. How do you feel about the job your elementary schools and middle schools did in getting you ready for high school? Do you feel that your elementary schools and middle schools did a good job in getting you ready for the things you were expected to do in high school? What was the hardest thing about starting high school? Was there anything that was much more difficult than you expected it to be? Why do you feel that way? Anything especially difficult about any particular grade – was 9th grade a difficult transition year? If so, why?

Some students say they do not feel that their elementary and middle schools prepared them in learning how to read. Would you say this was a problem for you? Was literacy or language an issue in your education?

I asked how well prepared you were for high school.

Were there clear expectations for you in terms of what you were supposed to be learning and accomplishing before you entered high school? Was it clear to you what you were supposed to be learning and achieving in high school?

How did you feel about those? Were they realistic? Too high? Too low? Did you ever feel like you were not expected to succeed? Why did you feel that way? Did you ever feel like you just weren't smart enough? Why did you feel that way? Did you ever feel that no one cared or bothered to set any expectations at all?

Did you ever have to repeat a grade? Were you held back a grade? (If so :) How do you feel being held back affected you? Was it a good decision or a bad one? Why do you feel that way? (If not :) With the benefit of hindsight, looking back on it now, would it have been better if you had repeated a grade instead of moving on? Why do you say that?

Did your school make it too hard to move on to the next grade? Was it too easy to go from one grade to the next? Would it have been any different if you had known from the start that you had to get a C instead of a D in your classes to move on to the next grade? Did the school ever offer you a tutor or any additional help with schoolwork? Would you have agreed to use a tutor?

Let's talk about your goals. When you were a kid and people would ask you what you wanted to be when you grew up, what would you say? Is that still what you want to do today? Would completing high school have helped you achieve that goal? How specifically? What about educational goals? How far did you want to go in your education? Was it your goal to graduate high school? Go to college?

*Dropping Out*

Let's talk about the decision to leave high school. In your own words, why did you leave school?

When did you leave school? What grade were you in? How long had you been thinking about leaving school? Looking back, were there signs that other people noticed that indicated you were going to leave school? Did you stop attending class regularly? How often would you say you skipped school? Why would you skip school? Would you go to class when you were in school? Were you doing well in your classes?

How did you make the decision to leave school? How did you weigh the consequences of staying in school versus leaving school? Did you consider what you would be doing two, four, ten years down the road? Do you feel like you made the choice to leave school or that you were forced to leave? Why do you feel that way?

Did you have friends or siblings who also left high school before graduating?

I'm going to read out a list of reasons that people might choose to leave school. Please rank each as: #1 very important reason, #2 a somewhat important reason, or #3 not

important in your choice to leave school. If there is a reason I have left out, please tell me.

- \_\_\_ Could not get along with teachers
- \_\_\_ Could not get along with students
- \_\_\_ Did not feel a part of the school at all – felt very isolated
- \_\_\_ Missed too many days of school and couldn't catch up
- \_\_\_ Was suspended or expelled from school
- \_\_\_ Did not feel safe at school
- \_\_\_ Did not have a safe way to get to school
- \_\_\_ People I enjoyed spending time with were not in school
- \_\_\_ Could not keep up with schoolwork
- \_\_\_ Failing in school
- \_\_\_ Changed schools and did not like the new one
- \_\_\_ Became the parent of a baby
- \_\_\_ Had to care for a family member
- \_\_\_ Got married or planned to get married
- \_\_\_ Needed to get a job and make money
- \_\_\_ Had a disability that affected my learning and no one helped
- \_\_\_ Could not work and go to school at the same time
- \_\_\_ Classes were not interesting or relevant to me then or in the future
- \_\_\_ Standards for graduation were too high and I couldn't meet them

Let's talk about the items you checked as being #1-very important. Why was that a reason to leave school? How did it make finishing high school more challenging? What was it about school that you didn't like? Why did you feel that you didn't belong? Why didn't you feel safe at school? Was there a reason you were failing/could not keep up? If you missed days, how did the school respond – suspension, counseling, and no response?

If job-related: What was your job? How many hours a week was you working in addition to going to school? Did your job interfere with school attendance?

Did anyone notice you were having problems in school or know that you were thinking about leaving school before you left? Did anyone do anything to keep you in school? Friends? Teachers? Counselors? Coaches? Parents? Would that have made a difference? After you left, did anyone contact you or your parents at home to find out why you left? Did anyone encourage you to go back to school? Would that have made a difference? What did your parents say about your decision to leave school?

What would have made you stay in school? If you had someone who looked out for you or who you could go to when you have a problem in school, would having a person like that have helped keep you in school?

Thinking about leaving school, if you had to do it all over again, would you do it the same? What do you know now that you didn't know then? Do you have regrets about leaving high school? What do you know now that you wish you had known before making the decision to leave school?

We have just talked about several issues involving your high school experience and your decision to leave school. Of all the issues we discussed, what are the ones on which it is most important to make changes and improvements? What would have helped you do better in high school or complete high school? How involved were you in your high school? Were you involved in any extracurricular activities – sports, plays, and clubs?

Can you think of anything the school could have done to help you stay in school? Can you think of anything your family or friends could have done? If you could give your *family* one piece of advice that would have helped them keep you in school, what would it be? If you could give your *teachers or school administrators* one piece of advice that would have helped them keep you in high school, what would that advice be? What are the biggest changes and improvements you would make? How should things be different?

### *Life as a Dropout*

Thinking about the time between when you left high school and today, what are some of your experiences that have been especially good or especially bad since leaving school?

Did you have a job when you left? Did you think you would finish school later? Has it been what you expected it would be so far? Has it been easier or harder than you thought it would be?

How has leaving high school affected the rest of your life? Do you feel like you would be in the same place you are today if you had stayed in high school? Do you feel like you would have been better off or worse off today if you had graduated high school?

What do you do with your time now that you are not in high school? Are you working? What do you do for a living? Do you like your job? Would you rather have another job? Is your lack of a high school diploma keeping you from getting the kind of work you'd like to have?

Have you gone back to a vocational school? Have you gotten your GED?

Wrap Up. Knowing everything you do now, what advice would you give to a 14 or 15-year-old who was thinking of dropping out of school? What would you tell them or want them to know from your experience? What advice would you give to students who are thinking about leaving high school before graduating?

THANK you

## Appendix B: Informed Consent Letter

## CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of high school dropouts. The researcher is inviting participants who are: Hispanic, dropped out of Lawrence Public High School, currently not enrolled in any classes taught by the researcher, and is 18 to 24 years old to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Cheryl Clayton-Molina, a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already know the researcher as a Professor, but this study is separate from that role.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore contributing factors that are causing Hispanic students to drop-out of high school.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in two (2) separate interviews.

The first interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes.

The second interview will take approximately 15-30 minutes.



Here are some sample questions:

Why did you drop-out of school?

What grade were you in when you dropped out?

How did you make the decision to drop-out of school?

How did you weigh the consequences of staying in school versus dropping out of school?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Mount Washington College and Professor Clayton-Molina will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this study will not pose any risk to your safety or wellbeing.

This study's goal is to provide stakeholders with additional information that will assist them in developing strategies that will decrease and possibly prevent Hispanic students from dropping out of high school.

**Payment:**

As a participant, you will be compensated \$50 for your participation of one hour.

Participants have to complete both sessions to receive compensation. Compensation will be given in cash at the end of the second session.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secured by filing it in the researcher's locked filing cabinet, as well as, in a password protected database. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via (xxx) xxx-xxxx and/or xxx@xxx.com. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is (xxx) xxx-xxxx. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

This is a qualitative phenomenological study explored through by interviews.

The researcher will give you a copy of this from to keep.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

### Appendix C: Definition of Terms

*Dropouts:* Students who leave school between July 1 and June 30 of a given year and do not return, graduate, or receive a GED by the following October 1. The Department calculates the annual dropout rate by dividing the number of students who drop out over a one-year period by the October 1 grade 9-12 enrollment, multiplied by 100 (State's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011).

*General Education Diploma (GED):* test is a four-subject high school equivalency test that measures skills required by high schools and requested by colleges and employers. The four subjects are Science, Social Studies, Mathematical Reasoning, and Reasoning Through Language Arts (GED Testing Service, LLC, 2014).

*Latino, Spanish, and Hispanic:* These terms are used interchangeably in this study. A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin. Hispanics of Puerto Rico origin – they are Puerto Rican immigrants or they trace their family ancestry to Puerto Rico (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008).

*Phenomenology:* phenomenology helps to define the phenomena on which knowledge claims rest, according to modern epistemology. On the other hand, phenomenology itself claims to achieve knowledge about the nature of consciousness, a distinctive kind of first-person knowledge, through a form of intuition (Smith, 2008).

## Appendix D: Approval to Utilize Hart's Research Data Collection Instrument

From: Mae Cooper xxxx@xxxx.com

To: 'CHERYL CLAYTON' <xxxx@xxxx.com>

Sent: Wednesday, September 22, 2010 2:23 PM

Subject: RE: The Silent Epidemic Perspectives of High School Dropouts Research

Hi Cheryl,

Attached are the survey questions and the focus group guide. The survey was done over the telephone and in person (through mall intercepts) and the focus groups were done all in person. We did four focus groups; with dropouts age 16 to 22 in Philadelphia and Baltimore. For the survey, we conducted 467 interviews with dropouts ages 16 to 25. You should be able to see the screening criteria in the attached questionnaire.

I was not at our company when this project was done, so I can't provide you with any more detailed information. Please understand that our office is very busy right now. I hope these documents will be sufficient.

Best,

Mae Cooper

-----Original Message-----

From: CHERYL CLAYTON [mailto:xxxx@xxxx.com]

Sent: Wednesday, September 22, 2010 7:28 AM

To: Mae Cooper

Subject: RE: The Silent Epidemic Perspectives of High School Dropouts Research

Good Morning

Thank you for the copy of your report. I find the information very helpful. However, because I am replicating your study, there is more detail information needed. The description attached to the report of the methodology used seems to be more of a summary, targeted for its audience.

With that being said, from a researcher's standpoint, I will need detail information on the methodology. I am assuming based on the characteristics of your report and methodology summary, that the research method used was more qualitative vs. quantitative. Also, here again I am only assuming, that this was a phenomenology study. It looks as though the tools used to conduct your study included surveys, focus groups, as well as interviews. How were the surveys done (mailed out, by telephone etc.)? The interviews, were they individualized or were they done as a group? Besides the students,

were there any other persons (teachers, community leaders, etc.) involved in the study?

The survey and interview questions, were they all open/ended questions?

Ms. Cooper, you have been very helpful. My goal is to put the results of this study into the hands of those who can and will make a difference. There are a lot of studies that have been done on dropouts, but I have yet seen one that focus on the student perspectives.

Your report stood out among all others. I spoke with the research analyst at the Department of Education in Massachusetts and I introduced her to your study and she was very impressed and welcomes the study in MA. I have been asked to submit a copy of the results of my study to that department. Once my study is submitted, argued and approved for publishing I will definitely submit a copy to you as well.

Greatly appreciated,

Cheryl Clayton, PhD Candidate

--- On Tue, 9/21/10, Mae Cooper <xxxx@xxxx.com> wrote:

From: Mae Cooper <xxxx@xxxx.com>

Subject: RE: The Silent Epidemic Perspectives of High School Dropouts Research

To: xxxx@xxxx.com

Date: Tuesday, September 21, 2010, 3:44 PM

Thanks Cheryl. You can find a copy of the report at the link below. The methodology is outlined on page 22. Hope this helps.

<http://www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/thesilentepidemic3-06.pdf>

-----Original Message-----

From: xxxx@xxxx.com [mailto:xxxx@xxxx.com]

Sent: Tuesday, September 21, 2010 3:21 PM

To: Mae Cooper

Subject: Re: The Silent Epidemic Perspectives of High School Dropouts Research

In order to replicate your study, I would have to follow all the steps that your team used to conduct the study. I would like to take a look at your questions as well. However, the methodology is the root of the study.

Sent from my Verizon Wireless BlackBerry

From: "Mae Cooper" <xxxx@xxxx.com>

Date: Tue, 21 Sep 2010 14:50:27 -0400

To: <xxxx@xxxx.com>

Subject: FW: The Silent Epidemic Perspectives of High School Dropouts Research

Dear Cheryl,

Can you please clarify for us- are you looking for the actual survey questions or for the methodology? Thank you,



Mae Cooper Hart Research Associates 1724 Connecticut Ave. NW Washington, DC  
20009 202-234-5570

-----Original Message-----

From: CHERYL CLAYTON [mailto:xxxx@xxxx.com]

Sent: Wednesday, September 15, 2010 7:31 PM

To: info@hartresearch.com

Subject: The Silent Epidemic Perspectives of High School Dropouts Research

To Mr. Peter D. Hart Research Associates,

My name is Cheryl Clayton and I am a PhD student at Walden University. I am in the process of starting my dissertation. My topic will be on dropouts in the state of Massachusetts. I have read several reports and studies on student dropouts. After reading the research, "The Silent Epidemic Perspectives of High School Dropouts" I knew that this was the type of research that I would like to conduct in Massachusetts.

Mr. Hart, I would like to replicate your study here in Massachusetts. I will be working together with my Dissertation Committee Chair and Members. If I have your approval, I would like to have a complete copy of your study showing all procedures and steps taken.

Mr. Hart, I have a very strong desire to work with youths. Right now I am working as a Case Specialist in the Juvenile Court System. I am also an Adjunct Professor at Hesser

College. One of my career goals is to devote my time and effort to bring about positive changes into as many of our young people lives, as possible. I believe in change and I know that there is a better place, than correctional institutions or the streets, for our young people to lay their heads at night. I believe that change is in education. Education is an essential key that will unlock many doors that are locked in the lives of our young people and place them back on the right path.

Mr. Hart, if you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at: Office - (xxx) xxx-xxxx Ext: xxx or Cell - (xxx) xxx-xxxx or via e-mail - xxxx@xxxx.com. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully submitted

Cheryl Ann Clayton, PhD Candidate

## Appendix E: Recruitment flier



**Why I Dropped Out: Hispanics' Unheard Voices - A Phenomenological Study**

Cheryl Clayton-Molina is conducting a study among Hispanics who dropped out of high school. High school dropout is a topic that is important to America. This is an interesting and important study that is being done for research purpose only.

If you are interested in taking advantage of the opportunity to express your perception on the topic "Why I dropped out of high school", you may contact Cheryl Clayton-Molina at (978) 551-6682.

Requirements for participation: You are  
 18 - 24 years old,  
 Hispanic origin, and  
 A high school dropout from  
 Lawrence Public School District

Exclusion:  
 If you are a student whose currently taking a class  
 from Professor Clayton-Molina at  
 Mount Washington College or Middlesex College.

If you are eligible and complete this study, you will be compensated (\$45). The study consist of two sessions: an interview and a follow-up.

*Your name and answers will be kept completely private.*

**By Cheryl Ann Clayton-Molina**

## Curriculum Vitae

**Cheryl Clayton-Molina****Career Profile:**

Skilled, qualified and educated professor, administrator, critical thinker, supervisor and manager. Over 10 years of management experience in the healthcare field, over seven years' experience in trial court proceedings, and over five years of teaching experience at the college level. Success in implementing and developing educational tools and technologies in college classrooms. Success in implementing policies and procedures in the healthcare management. Skills and experience in investigating and analyzing health data.

**Professional Experience:**

Turn Around Visions, Lowell, MA, 2014 – Present

Motivational Speaker and Mentor (Founder of Program)

Public speaking

Mentoring (audience of concentration – primarily juveniles)

Middlesex Juvenile Court, Lowell, MA, 2006 – Present

Case Specialist IV

Provide customer service to juveniles, families, attorneys, litigants, law enforcement personnel, Department of Children and Family Services, and the general public,

Ensure that all court orders are processed, as well as, maintaining confidentiality and compliance of juvenile records.

Deputized to act on behalf of Assist Clerk Magistrate in court cases.

Middlesex Community College, Lowell, MA, 2011 – 2014

Adjunct Professor

Conducted lectures and practices in Health Insurance and ICD-9 Coding and Medical Administrative Assistance courses

Prepared lesson-plans and administer healthcare examinations

Consulted and advised students on career planning and job opportunities in the medical office profession

Mount Washington College, New Hampshire, 2009 – 2014 (satellite campus – Salem and Nashua- closed in 2014)

Adjunct Professor

Conducted lectures and practices in the Critical Thinking Workshop course by using experimental teaching and learning techniques

Consulted and advised students on career planning and job opportunities in their field of study.

Prepared lesson-plans

Lectured in Political Science and Arguments of America

New Hampshire Community Technical College, Nashua, New Hampshire, 2005 - 2008

Adjunct Professor

Conducted lectures and practices in Medical Office Practice 1 & 2, Legal and Ethical Issues in Health Care, Medical Terminology and College Success Strategies

Researched and compiled bibliographies of specialized materials for preparing reading material

Consulted students on job opportunities in the medical office professions.

Work Opportunities Unlimited, Lowell, Massachusetts, 2005 - 2006

Youth's Resource Specialist

Prepared youth for the workforce by conducting occupational skills lectures and training, including mock trial trainings within the community

Assisted youth in formulating career goals/plans and resume building

As a job developer, coordinated with local workforces in communities and businesses to create job opportunities for the youth

Initiated and executed numbers of workshops on Youth Life Skills focusing on personal, educational and career development skills,

Successfully placed and monitored youth's on work assignments, and

Tutored.

Albany Area Community Service Board, Albany, Georgia, 1994 - 2004

Health Information Management Administrator

Supervised and managed a staff of 10

Managed the daily operation of the Medical Records Department in seven counties

Chaired the Medical Records Forms and Audit Committees, Co-chaired the Medical

Records Compliance Committee, and a Risk Management committee member

Instrumental in developing and revising medical records policies and procedures

Conducted thorough investigations of medical complaints and reports

Conducted monthly medical records audits and generated monthly reports to track deficiencies

Successfully assisted the agency in passing external State audits by initiating and executing numbers of internal compliance and billing audits in seven counties

Initiated and coordinated annual medical records trainings, as well as monthly training as needed

Compiled monthly statistics for evaluating and planning of healthcare and health related programs

**Educational Summary:**

PhD in Public Policy Administration, Walden University, anticipated graduation date – 2015

Master of Public Admin/concentration in Public Policy, Albany State University – 2004

Bachelor of Art - Political Science, Albany State University – 2001

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