MAKING WAY THROUGH THE BORDERLANDS:

LATINO YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES IN TRANSITION

FROM SCHOOL TO ADULT LIFE

by

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Transition services for youth with disabilities are mandated by IDEA. Transition services are supported services that help individuals with disabilities move from special education in high school to employment, post-secondary education or vocational training in the adult world. Outcomes for youth with disabilities vary depending on culture, ethnicity, race, gender and socioeconomic status. Latino youth with disabilities experience poorer post-school outcomes than do white youth with disabilities. This study seeks to identify and describe the transition needs of youth with disabilities from Latino backgrounds who are transitioning from school to adulthood and therefore engaging in

employment, post-secondary education or employment-related training. Through focus groups with Latino youth, their families, and the staff that serve them, I explored and identified the specific needs of this group with regards to receiving transition services. The findings of this study will guide the development of training for transition professionals in Oregon and will be disseminated to professionals in the field of transition across the country and around the world.

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STATEMENT OF PROBLEM & LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Although transition services for youth with disabilities are mandated by both IDEA and The Rehabilitation Act of 1998 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), how transition services are actually provided varies depending on district, county, state and region within the United States (Geenen, Powers, Lopez Vasquez, & Bersani, 2003). All youth with disabilities, regardless of cultural, ethnic, racial or socioeconomic background, are entitled to receive transition services. When the youth's culture and background differ from the culture and background of the system providing services, a culture clash or conflict emerges and the transition planning that often results can be insufficient or inappropriate (Kim & Morningstar, 2005). Youth from collectivistic cultures can receive transition planning focused on individualistic goals, resulting in the family feeling misunderstood at best and disrespected as part of the transition planning process at worst (Kim & Morningstar, 2005; Geenen, et al 2003). Furthermore, failure to understand and take into account cultural differences in transition planning leaves families feeling alienated, transition professionals stumped, and, worst of all, youth with disabilities without the services they truly need to experience post-school success (Geenen, et al, 2003). The issue of providing culturally appropriate transition services to youth from diverse backgrounds becomes increasingly pertinent to our service provision in a country where our student demographics are rapidly changing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Given the changing demographics of our students, special educators face challenges in providing culturally appropriate transition services to youth from diverse backgrounds. The Latino/Hispanic population is the fastest growing marginalized group in the United States today (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The purpose of this study will be to identify and describe the transition needs of Latino youth with disabilities and their families. To further investigate these issues, I performed a search of current research literature to identify factors that interact with and influence transition planning for Latino/Hispanic youth.

In this chapter, I explain the legislation that governs transition services, and describe issues specific to the Latino community in transition. Next, I clarify the theoretical framework for this study, and illustrate the models of transition and development I will use to frame this study. Then, I elucidate the methodology of my literature review and identify and describe the themes that emerged from the literature. Finally, I discuss how these themes helped structure this study and introduce my research questions.

Legislation and Outcomes for Diverse Youth

School-to-community transition services are mandated by both the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA, 2004) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1998 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) for high school students with disabilities to foster those students' post-school adjustment as adults. Transition services are part of a results-oriented educational and rehabilitation process that seeks to improve the academic and functional outcomes for youth with disabilities, including: post-secondary education,

vocational education, integrated and supported employment, access to adult services, independent living and community participation (U.S. Department of Education, IDEA 2004). Transition services include any or all of the following individualized interventions: focused academic instruction, community experiences, job placement and support, development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, acquisition of daily living skills, and functional vocational assessment (U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Act of 1998, 2004). Transition services are based upon the needs of individual youth, utilizing her or his strengths, preferences and interests. A transition professional might help a youth with mental retardation access vocational rehabilitation services or help an adolescent with learning disabilities develop strategies for post-secondary education entrance testing.

Despite the legislative focus on transition services as a vehicle to improve post-school outcomes, youth from marginalized groups are experiencing poorer outcomes (as measured by engagement in employment, post-secondary education or employment-related training) than youth from white, dominant, mainstream American culture (NLTS, 2004). In fact, in the recent National Longitudinal Transition Survey 2 (NLTS2) (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Garza, 2006), youth with disabilities in transition were surveyed during and after secondary education. In the following sentences, I compare the results of the NLTS2 for youth in poverty and youth from minority groups. Youth from lower SES households ($25,000. or less) experience lower levels of engagement in post-secondary education those of higher SES levels (16.2% compared to 32.7%). Furthermore, youth from lower SES families also experienced lower levels of

engagement in employment than did youth from higher SES households (51.3% compared to 68.3%). In addition, youth from lower SES households are *more* likely than youth from higher SES households to be earning *less* than $5.15 per hour in post-secondary employment (11.9% compared to 7.8%) and are *less* likely to be earning *more* than $7.00 per hour than youth in higher SES households (37.5% compared to 49.3%). African American youth experienced lower levels of engagement in both post-secondary (24.9% compared to 29.4%) and engagement in employment (52.3% compared to 69.1%) than did white youth. Compared with other ethnic groups (youth from White, Asian and African American backgrounds), Hispanic/Latino youth with disabilities experienced the poorest post-school outcomes. Hispanic/Latino youth experienced the lowest levels of enrollment in post-secondary education: 23.1% compared to 29.4% for white students. Hispanic/Latino also youth experienced the lowest levels of engagement in employment overall (40.0%). Moreover, Hispanic/Latino youth are significantly *more* likely (47.9%) than either African American (28.4%) or White youth (22.3%) to be earning between $5.15 and $6.00 per hour in post-secondary employment and significantly *less* likely (20.5%) than either African American (42.1%) or White youth (43.2%) to be earning more than $7.00 per hour.

Because of the comparatively poor outcomes for Latino youth with disabilities, this study focuses on the Latino population in general and on the transition needs of Latino youth with disabilities in particular. Through this study, I identify and describe the transition needs of Latino youth with disabilities and discuss the implications of the

specific needs of this group for transition service provision. I use the data I uncover to make recommendations for future research as well as to inform current practices.

The Latino Population in School-to-Community Transition

Nationally, the fastest growing cultural ethnic minority group is the Latino / Hispanic population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Throughout the remainder of this study, I use the term Latino to refer to members of communities with heritage from countries in Central and South America. I chose to use this term because this is the term that the majority of members of these communities are currently using to self-identify. In Oregon, the population of Latinos in the school system has increased 219% since 1991 (Oregon Report Card, 2003). Research indicates that Latino youth in general experience poorer outcomes than white youth: i.e. lower wages, higher dropout rates (NLTS, 2007); higher representation in special education classes (Kao & Thompson, 2003) and increased contact with the juvenile and adult justice systems (Snyder, 2004). Latino workers earn almost 15% less than white workers: $351.00 per week respectively compared to $403.00 per week for white workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003). Latino youth with disabilities fare even more poorly, experiencing lower hourly wages, lower rates of employment, and decreased rates of engagement in post-secondary education and occupational training (NLTS, 2007). White students with disabilities not only experience significantly higher wages, but also greater levels of employment (62% employed) than do their Latino (36% employed) counterparts (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003; NLTS – 2; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, 2003). Determining how to

best serve the diverse population of youth with disabilities is paramount to the success of both the youth themselves and transition service providers

The Latino population faces specific issues in the transition process that are neither part of the normal formula for transition services to youth with disabilities, nor the general awareness of transition staff (Franquiz, & del Carmen Salazar,2004). One such issue is cultural expectations and understanding of disability (Salas-Provance, Erickson & Reed, 2002). Latino families have varying ideas about the causes and cures of disabilities, including both medically based and folklore-based beliefs (Salas-Provance, et al, 2002). Furthermore, many Latino families tend to accept their children with disabilities as being where they are, rather than expecting them to be where they should be, developmentally (L. McWhorter, personal communication, 2007). Families seek special education services for their children with disabilities, but their expectations may be very different than those of white, dominant culture families. To treat Latino families as if they have the same understanding and expectations of disability as do families in the dominant culture is culturally inappropriate (Geenen, et al, 2003). Another important issue is familial needs and prospects, especially regarding independent living (Blue-Banning, Turnbull & Pereira, 2002). Many Latino families do not expect that non-disabled young adults will live alone or with roommates if they are unmarried. It is far more common in many families for unmarried young adults to live with their parents, siblings or extended family members than to live alone or with roommates. These living arrangements often meet the care-giving needs of family members, in that a young adult may help care for her siblings, or nieces and nephews, or older relatives while they

remain unmarried (collectivistic focus – greater good), rather than striking out on one's own (Rueda, Monzo, Shapiro, Gomez & Blacher, 2005). This very real difference has serious implications for transition planning for youth with disabilities, where independent living is often the ultimate goal. In addition, Latino families also often face barriers to parental participation in the transition planning process, such as professional attitudes that create feelings of isolation; contextual barriers such as poverty and single parenthood, and bureaucratic barriers, such as lack of information and knowledge and poor access to translation services (Kim & Morningstar, 2005; Geenen, Powers & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001).

Additionally, with recent immigration legislation, some members of the Latino population are increasingly wary of seeking government assistance, including school-based services (Geenen, Powers & Lopez-Vasquez, 2005; Kim & Morningstar, 2005). The administration of the previous eight years has taken a hard stance on immigration, defining illegal and undocumented immigrants as a threat to Homeland Security and deporting undocumented workers in droves (Chertoff, 2006; Hernandez, 2003) Families in which one or more members are undocumented immigrants are hesitant to seek services for their children, who are often U.S. citizens, out of fear that the illegal status of some of the family members may be discovered.

The U.S. Department of Education uses level of engagement in post-school activities, measured by education, employment or vocational training to measure success of transition services (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Given the differences in cultural expectations and understanding of disability, familial needs and barriers to family

involvement in transition described above, there is cause to question the cultural appropriateness of the very outcomes measures used to determine success of transition services for Latino youth (Kim & Morningstar, 2005; Holleran & Waller, 2003). These outcomes measures are potentially culturally biased to reflect the individual focus of White, dominant culture, rather than the collectivistic, family centered focus of Latino culture. The question that remains, then, is: is engagement, as described above, a culturally appropriate measure of success for Latino youth with disabilities? This study addresses these issues.

Purpose of Study and Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the transition needs of Latino youth with disabilities. I conducted this study one suburban school district in Oregon with the help of an existing statewide transition network. I used case study methods to answer open-ended questions about transition needs for Latino youth and their families. I describe this methodology in detail in Chapter 2. Through a working relationship with the statewide transition program, the results will be used to inform the training of professionals in the transition network and impact practice in the area of transition for all youth with disabilities in general and Latino youth with disabilities in particular. Qualitative, postmodern and deconstructive feminist theory supports the methodology for this study as described below.

With a background in qualitative postmodern and deconstructive feminist theory, I cannot responsibly do research about a marginalized group, such as Latino youth with disabilities, without using qualitative methodology. "Both researcher and participant are

being positioned by virtue of history and context" (Oleson, 2000, p. 226). Qualitative methodology enables me, as the researcher, to situate myself, and identify my biases and my privilege in the framework of the larger society in which we reside. I am, after all, the one asking the questions. Deeper than that, I am the one deciding which questions need to be asked and about whom. Using qualitative feminist methods allows me to partner with research participants to let their voice be reflected in the research process, not just the research findings.

To accurately identify and describe the needs of Latino youth with disabilities in transition, I want to be a student of the participants of this study, in that I learn from them about their experiences and needs and enable them the opportunity to create their own meaning through description (Oleson, 2000). I believe in conducting research *with* participants rather than on or about them. Postmodern feminist theory and qualitative methodology provides me the opportunity to more fully and responsibly give voice to the participants of this study (Fine, 1992). Furthermore, qualitative research limits the assumptions made by me as the researcher and equalizes, to some extent, the power imbalance inherent in the relationship of researcher to participant (Oleson, 2000). In order to learn from this group about their experiences and to represent these experiences as fully and completely as possible, I have chosen qualitative feminist methodology for this study.

Models of Development and Transition

In the past, psychologists studied the individual, sociologists studied groups, economists studied poverty and anthropologists studied culture. The work of

Bronfenbrenner (1998) changed the way researchers look at human experience. Rather than conceptualizing individual development in isolation, Bronfenbrenner (1999) developed the ecological model of human development wherein an individual develops within the contexts of certain settings throughout her or his life (See Figure 1 in Appendix A). The individual and the most proximal settings (known as the Mesosystem) are considered Microsystems and the Mesosystem includes family, classroom, religious setting and peer group. Slightly more distant settings, known as the Exosystem include community, school system, mass media and medical institutions. The Macrosystem, the system the most distal from the individual, includes national customs, legislation, cultural values, social conditions and economic patterns. In order to identify and describe the needs of Latino youth with disabilities in transition from school to the adult world, I will look for influences from these systems in the literature I have reviewed and this model will inform my focus group questions.

Another ground-breaking model is Halpern's (1985) model of transition. Previously, transition was thought to consist of specific training that resulted in employment (Halpern, 1985). Halpern (1985) suggested that the primary goal of transition is successful community adjustment and that transition services "... must then be concerned not only with employment, but also with residential environments and the quality of social and interpersonal networks" (1985, p. 486). Halpern's concept of transition is more ecological in nature, in that it takes into account employment, a Macrosystem, but residential environments, which are both Exosystems and Macrosystems, and social networks, which are Microsystems. Figure 2 Illustrates this

model and its relationship to Bronfenbrenner's (1998) speres of influence. I will use both Halpern's (1985) transition model and Bronfenbrenner's (1998) ecological model in my review of the literature and my case study development and implementation. I will review the literature by searching for themes related to the spheres of influence in Bronfenbrenner's (1998) model. I will also consider Halpern's (1985) model of transition in looking for information about employment, residential environments and social networks. When I develop and implement my case study, I will use the ecological model as a framework, asking questions that address each of the spheres of influence. During focus group development and implementation, I will follow Halpern's (1985) lead by seeking information about the quality of life, including, but not limited to employment, living arrangements and social networks.

Literature Review

I reviewed the available literature on transition for youth with disabilities, as well as specific literature about Latino youth with disabilities to identify themes that affect transition for this group. I used both Bronfenbrenner's (1998) ecological model of development and Halpern's (1985) model of transition to guide my thematic analysis. I searched for influences from Microsystems, Exosystems and Macrosystems. Moreover, I looked for themes that related to employment, residential environments, and social networks. As the themes emerged in my literature review, I organized the articles by theme. I describe both this process and the results below.

Criteria for Article Search

The study of diversity in education, and, more specifically, in special education and transition is a fairly new and rapidly evolving discipline. To generate the most inclusive potential pool of articles, I performed searches in Academic Search Premier, ERIC and PsychInfo. I used a combination of descriptors in each search. Descriptors used for each search, numbered 1 – 18, are illustrated in Table 1. Articles included in this review met the following criteria: (a) published within the last 10 years, preferably the last 7 because transition services have changed a little, but concepts of diversity have changed a lot in the past decade; (b) published in peer-reviewed journals; and (c) addressed diversity (racial, cultural, ethnic or socioeconomic) directly in the areas of risk and resilience, disability, and/or transition. My initial search using these terms generated a potential pool of 27 articles.

From these initial search criteria, I narrowed the field of articles further. Because my interest is in how transition services are provided in the United States to youth with disabilities, I excluded any articles dealing with service provision outside of the United States. I further excluded from the review below any articles that were, themselves, literature reviews or theoretical pieces. My final group of articles consisted of 14 articles, 8 dealing directly with transition for diverse youth, 4 addressing cultural issues specific to Latino youth, and 2 that looked at diverse youth in urban areas and included Latino youth as a sub-population.

After locating and reviewing the articles, I discovered that the themes that emerged fit into three main categories: a) community context (e.g. neighborhood, school,

employment, i.e. Exosystem); b) cultural context (e.g. family, language, traditions i.e. both Microsystem and Macrosystem); c) individual factors (e.g. risk & resilience, individual strengths and preferences, i.e. Microsystem). Using the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1998) as a framework, and Halpern's (1985) transition model as a guide, I analyzed the articles based on emerging themes identified in either the results or discussion sections of each article. I analyzed articles based on themes identified by the authors of each article. If the authors identified supports or barriers in a given area, like the school system, I coded that article as "school/community." In other articles, individual characteristics were sited as influencing transition, and I coded those articles as "individual." The majority of articles addressed influences to transition in all three areas: community, cultural and individual areas. After my initial coding, I did not look at the articles again for two days. I returned to the articles after this brief hiatus and re-coded them based upon the same coding schema, but allowing for new codes to emerge. Still, in this second round of coding, the same main themes emerged, and all sub-topics fit into one of these main themes. Table 2 (Appendix B) presents the articles by author, topic and themes identified.

Thematic Analysis of the Literature

Within the selected articles, all three themes of community context, cultural context and individual factors emerged in almost all of the articles; only two articles lacked information about individual factors (Sy, 2006; Geenen, Powers, & Lopez-Vasquez, 2005). Interestingly, community and culture did not emerge independently of one another. In fact, themes of culture and community are often so interwoven it is

difficult to report one without including reference to the other. With this caveat in place, in the sections that follow, I report and discuss the themes of community context, cultural context and individual factors as they influence the transition planning process for Latino youth with disabilities. These themes link back to Bronfenbrenner's (1998) ecological model of development (cultural context is both Macrosystem and Microsystem – i.e. family and culture, Community context is Exosystem – immediate community, school, employment – and Macrosystem – legislation; and individual factors represent the Microsystem). These themes also represent Halpern's (1985) model of transition necessarily including not only employment, but also residential environments (community and culture) and social and interpersonal networks (individual factors).

Community Context

The emerging theme of community context includes neighborhood (and therefore, urban or rural nature), school and employment environments.

Neighborhood

Often, the first and most basic description of the neighborhood in which an adolescent lives is rural or urban. Youth in urban areas experience a myriad of environmental risk-factors - such as poverty, drugs, gangs, and urban decay (D'Imperio, Dubow & Ippolito, 2000). In order to combat these risks, it is imperative that youth in urban areas feel a sense of importance and a positive involvement in their communities (D'Imperio, et al, 2000). Feeling a sense of community with others is a vital human need and when positive opportunities are not available, many youth find less savory ways to become involved with a community or group, often translating into high-risk behavior

(Moneta, et al, 2001). When conducting transition planning with youth in urban areas, it is crucial to incorporate this sense of belonging and importance into employment, education and community experiences.

For Latino youth, community plays a major role in the transmission of their culture. While family is a main hub for traditional Latino values, community is a close second (Holleran & Waller, 2003). For Latino youth, the need for a sense of community is so great that they create it within their school buildings with and through one another (Franquiz, 2004). Lacking these more positive outlets for community building, Latino youth can turn to risk behaviors. For Latino youth with disabilities, creating and participating in these social hubs can be more difficult. This offers transition professionals the opportunity to help their clients find social and community outlets.

Rural. While urban neighborhoods are rife with risks and potential struggles for Latino youth in transition, rural areas also present potential pitfalls. Geenen, Powers and Lopez-Vasquez (2005) identify access to services as a potential barrier in rural areas. The logistics of gaining access to social services, including translation services, in rural areas presents difficulty to Latino youth in areas that are predominantly white and English-speaking (Geenen, Powers & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001). Furthermore, professionals in more rural and predominantly white areas may lack the understanding and enhanced worldview necessary to appropriately address the transition needs of Latino youth with disabilities (Kim & Morningstar, 2005).

Socio-Economic Status. Independent of the relative urban or rural nature of their neighborhood, youth from diverse backgrounds who reside in economically depressed

areas also face challenges to transition (Taylor-Ritzler, Balcazar, Keys, Hayes, Garate-Serafini & Espino, 2001). In fact, in a study by Geenen, and colleagues, (2003), poverty was reported by parents of ethnically diverse youth to be the single greatest factor contributing to contextual barriers. Economically depressed districts may struggle with a lack of resources, and professionals working in transition in such districts often have to fight for every dollar they receive (Taylor-Ritzler, et al, 2001). However, Taylor-Ritzler and others (2001) found that with proper case management and life-skills instruction, minority youth with disabilities in economically disadvantaged areas can still experience successful transitions from high school to the adult world.

Regardless of their specific natures, the neighborhoods of Latino youth with disabilities influence the nature of their school and employment experiences and the transition planning they receive.

School Environment

Discrimination. The school environment is one of the most critical spheres of influence in the lives of youth (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). For Latino youth, often the very institution that is supposed to protect and support them can be a risk factor. Holleran and Waller (2003) found that Latino youth experience discrimination at the institutional level within their school environments. Primarily, this discrimination takes the form of contempt from the dominant, individualistic culture of the U.S. for the collectivistic emphasis of the Latino culture. Geenen, and colleagues (2001) discovered that although parents of culturally and linguistically diverse students are more active in the transition

process than white parents, the perceptions of professionals are that they are less involved. Such perceptions can add to the institutional discrimination already occurring.

Franquiz (2004) also found institutionalized discrimination in her study of Chicano/Mexicano students in a Colorado high school. The students in her study were devalued by teachers in their attempts to contribute to class and with regards to the contributions of their cultures. Geenen, and others (2003) identified insensitivity, discrimination and lack of accommodations as themes in a study that questioned ethnically diverse parents of transition-aged youth receiving special education services. These findings were supported by a quantitative survey of 308 parents of youth with disabilities.

Perceptions. The perceptions of school staff can have dire impacts on the futures of Latino students. In a large southwestern city, Williams and colleagues (2002) found that students in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are "tracked" -- placed on a specific academic track that focuses on a work-related diploma that won't help them prepare for college. Emphasis was placed on more labor-related training and coursework, rather than college prep courses. This institutional discrimination was often discovered too late by ESL students who began in their junior or senior year to look at requirements for graduation (Williams, et al, 2002). Furthermore, often students were placed into ESL classes prior to being screened for any special education needs and may have therefore been receiving no support for existing learning disabilities (Williams, et al, 2002).

Franquiz (2004) discovered that students from Chicano and Mexican backgrounds need to have space to meet and form a sense of community within their schools in order

to connect and gain support from one another. The opportunity to form solidarity as a group within the school walls was a protective factor. It increased their school attendance and their sense of collective self-esteem. Resilient Latino adolescents in groups studied by Franquiz (2004) were connected not only with a caring adult within the school, but also with a group of youth from similar backgrounds. This solidarity achieved by attending classes as small groups rather than individuals had a positive effect on the resilience of the youth involved.

Employment

A third environment that emerged as part of the community context is that of the workplace. People with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than people without disabilities (Geenen, et al, 2005). Employment has an impact on transition planning for Latino youth with disabilities, from the standpoint of prospective, as well as current employment opportunities. Furthermore, the cultural appropriateness of job-placement and supported employment opportunities must always be considered, along with the very employment goals transition specialists help the youth set.

In a recent qualitative study of 38 Hispanic parents of youth with disabilities, Blue-Banning, Turnbull, and Pereira (2002) reported that parental hopes for future employment for their children varied. However, often it was important to parents that the employment options for their daughter or son were consistent with the child's preferences and strengths. Although economic productivity is one of the hallmarks of the U.S. economy and social values, this value is not consistent across other cultures (Blue-

Banning, et al, 2002). Furthermore, Sy (2006) found that for Latinas who negotiate between home and school already, further stress is added by employment in adolescence.

The frequent disconnect between dominant culture's "best practices" and what may be culturally appropriate for diverse youth with disabilities has spurred forth numerous articles. As early as 1996, Greene wrote about empowering culturally and linguistically diverse families in transition planning. More recently, Trainor (2002) and Zhang and Benz (2006) examine the state of self-determination as a universal value. Harry (2002) and Lindley (2006) look critically at current trends in self-determination and self-efficacy for diverse populations with disabilities. These thought pieces suggest that one size does not fit all when it comes to transition planning. The idea that to be self-actualized, one must live independently and achieve "meaningful" employment is, indeed, culturally biased. If the ideals behind our measures of "success" in transition are culturally biased, the strong possibility exists that our measures of outcomes for youth in transition may be as well. As culture plays a role in the conflicts within the community context, it is a context to itself.

Cultural Context

When cultures are in conflict, it is easy to look at the culture that differs from the dominant as being the problem. Most of us are far too politically correct to do this openly, but when dealing with cross-cultural issues, the answer is often a crash-course in the culture of the "other" (Diller, & Moule, 2005). In the sections that follow, I will illuminate some of the cultural values and expectations in the Latino culture as they apply to transition. My hope is that the pages that follow also serve as an opportunity to reflect

upon the values of dominant culture with respect to these same issues, rather than as a description of how this "other" culture is different. The conflict lies between the two cultures – the dominant expectations that drive "best practices" and the needs and expectations of the marginalized Latino culture. It is in the cultural context that transition professionals can find the most amazing strengths upon which to draw for the success of their clients. Cultural identity plays a major role in the lives of Latino youth; family and community involvement, though vitally important, are smaller parts of the larger cultural identification that occurs (Holleran & Waller, 2003).

Family

Prior to discussing what the selected articles indicate about family and culture for Latino youth with disabilities, a caveat is needed. In our White, dominant culture, the concept of family with respect to transition planning includes parents and maybe, but seldom, siblings. Diller and Moule (2005) describe that family structure is a culturally influenced concept. In Latino culture, extended family is the norm, not the exception; in dominant culture, we might not think it appropriate for the mother's brother-in-law to be present in a transition meeting or IEP, but for Latino youth, this may be the only appropriate way to conduct such meetings (Diller & Moule, 2005). Therefore, in the ensuing discussion of family and culture, it is imperative that one broaden one's view of family to encompass extended family members and larger family structure than the nuclear family of the dominant culture.

Gender differences. For Latino youth, family is considered both a safe haven and a conduit for the transmission of traditional values (Holleran & Waller, 2003). The

experience of family can be a gendered one, as Latinas face pressures to be family caretakers and transmitters of culture and tradition more so than do their male peers (Williams, et al, 2002). Sy (2006) found that Latinas often engage in language brokering (i.e. translating for parents) in addition to other family obligations more often than their male counterparts. In addition, there is a more gendered social control in Latino families and communities, allowing male adolescents a great deal of freedom and restricting the movement of young women within society (Williams, et al, 2002; Holleran & Waller, 2003; Franquiz, 2004).

Values. Conversely, Sy (2006) found that Latinas who spent more self-reported time with their families underwent less school stress and enjoyed higher academic achievement than those who spent less time with their families. The Latino value of family closeness and loyalty is often in direct contrast to the individuality and independence valued by dominant U.S. culture (Franquiz, 2004; Sy, 2006). This distinction can have positive implications for the transition planning of Latino youth. Blue-Banning and colleagues (2002) found that Latino parents have a wide variety of hopes for their children's futures. Geenen, and colleagues (2001) report that Latino parents had an even higher involvement and participation in their children's transition planning than did white families. It is important to note that in the studies by Blue-Banning and colleagues (2002) and by Geenen and colleagues (2001), family included only parents; both studies suggested including a more broad definition of family in future research.

Expectations. The expectations of Latino families for their children with disabilities are very tied to culturally influenced understandings of disability and interpretations of the transition process. Rueda, Monzo, Shapiro, Gomez, and Blacher (2005) used focus groups to describe culturally based meanings of transition for Latina mothers of young adults with disabilities. In their study, mothers described transition as a process of sheltered adaptation that is centered in the home as opposed to the dominant culture's model emphasizing independence and economic productivity (Rueda, et al, 2005). The implications of this difference on practice are far-reaching. Typically, transition planning focuses on the individual desires of the student, productive employment as a goal, and independent living as a desired outcome (Rueda, et al, 2005). The mothers in their study did not consider productive employment as important as the acquisition of basic skills and social adaptation. Independent living is used for post-school outcomes assessments and mirrors the values of the dominant culture and its institutions (Blue-Banning et al, 2002). Conversely, Blue-Banning and colleagues (2002) found that the life Hispanic parents imagine for their children may not include independent living.

Language

In a recent evaluation of the transition services in Oregon, transition professionals identified language differences as one of the greatest challenges they face in working with diverse youth (Povenmire-Kirk, 2006). Of particularly importance was the availability of translation services and language classes for staff who work with Spanish-speaking populations. Transition staff are not the only ones who struggle with language

differences in the transition process. For Latino youth, language brokering (i.e. translating for parents and siblings) is a fact of everyday life (Sy, 2006). For Latino youth with disabilities, language can be a barrier to both family involvement and cultural understanding of appropriate goals (Geenen, et al, 2003).

Language is not only a potential barrier to communication, it is also a way to claim and transmit culture. Speaking in Spanish when among one's own group is one way these youth perform their cultural identity for others to see (Williams, et al, 2002). For ESL learners, community involvement could be a double-edged sword; those who wish to transition more to become members of the host culture may find maintenance of their first language a hindrance. Others, who wish to maintain their connection with their home culture, will find first-language communication to be a positive factor (Williams, et al, 2002).

Traditions

In any culture, there are traditions. Latino culture uses language and family to transmit traditions. Franquiz (2004) found the cultivation of *consejos* (verbal teachings) of mutual trust, mentoring and respect were important activities enabled by familial and cultural interaction. In contrast to dominant culture's independence and individualistic focus, Latino culture enjoys a much more group-centered collectivistic focus (Gonzales, Dumka, Deardorff, Carter & McCray, 2004; Rueda, et al, 2005). The idea that the greater good, the family and the community are more important than the individual is a guiding force in the lives of Latino adolescents (Holleran & Waller, 2003; Williams, et al, 2002; Franquiz, 2004). The Latino culture holds both family and community in high regard;

therefore, being involved with family and community are important and valued ways to express one's cultural identity (Holleran & Waller, 2003). Williams and colleagues (2002) found that the cultural identity of Spanish-speaking youth in ESL classrooms included interacting in a more gregarious and more dynamic fashion than their white peers. For the Chicano/Mexicano students in the study by Franquiz (2004), finding space to interact with others from the same culture was imperative to their academic success. Being around others with the same traditions and values is a positive and necessary experience for Latino youth.

It is imperative that transition professionals seek opportunities to learn about and understand the traditions and rites of passage of Latino culture (Geenen, et al, 2005). Rueda and colleagues (2005) identified the family and home as central to life and tradition in Latino culture. Moreover, these researchers found that professionals should defer to maternal expertise with regards to decision-making for children and their educational choices (Rueda, et al, 2005). With this in mind, cultivating open, culturally appropriate communication is paramount to the success of both transition planning and the youth themselves.

Individual Factors

In my conceptual model, I proposed that transition planning is influenced by community context, cultural context and individual factors. I also proposed that individual factors are influenced by community and cultural contexts. Below, I discuss some of the themes of individual factors that emerged from my review of the literature.

Risk & Resiliency

The capacity to experience positive outcomes in the face of adversity is known as resilience (D'Imperio, et al, 2000; Rak & Patterson, 2001). This ability to persevere in the face of seemingly over-whelming odds is further defined as a fluid and multidimensional process, which allows individuals to adapt successfully despite challenges (D'Imperio, et al, 2000). The capacity to succeed regardless of negative environmental influences is a human process that changes over time and has been called "resilience" (Galambos & Leadbeater, 2000). Garmezy (1983) defined protective factors as attributes present within the individual, environment or situation that mediate the individuals at-risk status by providing resistance to or ameliorating risk factors present for the individual. Gore and Eckenrode (1994) assert that internalizing factors within the individual such as self-esteem and willingness to access social supports promote resiliency within adolescents.

Individual Strengths and Preferences

The literature identified individual strengths and preferences as pivotal to the success of the transition process (Taylor-Ritzler, et al, 2001; Trainor, 2005). Salas-Provance and colleagues (2002) describe that individual beliefs about and attitudes toward disability can have a bearing on the transition process. Geenen and colleagues (2003) identified typical adolescent issues such as need for peer acceptance and social isolation as factors that affect the transition process. If an adolescent is socially skilled, their transition process may be easier than for less adept peers. Parents of both minority and non-minority adolescents expressed concerns about their children's relationships with other teenagers (Geenen, et al, 2003). Mastering social skills is difficult enough for a

non-disabled adolescent. When adolescence, minority status and disability combine, socialization can be significantly more difficult (Blue-Banning, et al, 2002). Rueda and colleagues (2005) describe the importance of incorporating both basic life skills and social adaptation into the transition planning processes of Latino youth.

The intersections of ethnicity, culture, language and disability create often competing needs for Latino youth with disabilities. For these youth, juggling their diversity status with family obligations, disability issues, school and peer commitments and career planning, all within a host-culture setting can put them at increased risk (Sy, 2006). Some youth have more strengths and abilities in this area and are better able to juggle these potential conflicts. Geenen and colleagues (2003) also found that youth struggle to manage competing responsibilities, while also experiencing adolescent conflicts with authority and the separation-individuation process.

Taylor-Ritzler and colleagues (2001) describe a continuum of help-recruiting skills in a group of minority adolescents from low-income households. They found that the adolescents come to transition services with varying levels of skills regarding self-advocacy and asking for help with specific tasks. Trainor (2005) also found varying levels of skill in diverse adolescents with LD experiencing transition. Students in Trainor's (2005) study identified themselves and their family members as pivotal participants in the transition planning process, rather than school personnel.

Conceptual Model and Research Questions

Based upon my review of the literature and emergent themes, I propose the following conceptual model to structure this inquiry seeking to identify and describe the

needs of Latino youth with disabilities with regards to transition planning. Developed from Bronfenbrenner's (1998) ecological model describing spheres of influence, I theorize that the community context and the cultural context influence both the transition planning process and individual factors. In contrast to Bronfenbrenner's (1998) ecological model (Figure 1), I suggest that community context includes residential settings (Halpern, 1985) such as neighborhood (an Excosphere) as well as school (including classroom – a Microsphere – and school system, an Exosphere). I further propose that culture, for Latino youth with disabilities, refers to their Latino heritage, which is heavily transmitted by and linked to familial culture and traditions, and therefore represents both Macrosphere and Microsphere levels of influence on the individual and her or his family's experience of transition. Moreover, individual factors (Microsphere) are influenced by community and culture (Macrosphere and Exosphere), and include the social and interpersonal networks brought to the foreground by Halpern (1985). Individual factors themselves also influence transition planning – a school-based (Microsphere and Exosphere level) service-- which influences post-school outcomes. Post-school outcomes, though of interest, will not be directly investigated in the present study, rather, for this study; the unit of interest is the transition planning process. I illustrate the relationships described in my conceptual model in Figure 3 (See Appendix A). I used this conceptual model to develop and implement the case study and to identify and describe the transition needs of Latino youth with disabilities.

The process of transition planning influences post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities; better transition planning leads to better post-school

outcomes (Kim & Morningstar, 2005). The focus of this study is the process of transition planning as experienced by Latino/Hispanic youth with disabilities who are transitioning from school to adulthood. Harry (2002) identifies the central issue as "not that professionals should change their own beliefs, but that they must learn ways of understanding and respecting the beliefs of the families they work with" (p. 135). In order to help transition professionals better understand the needs, expectations and goals of the Latino population, this study will deal directly with members of the Latino population to glean the answers and generate further dialogue about best practices with diverse groups. Given the fact that community context, cultural context and individual factors all influence the experience of the transition planning process of Latino/Hispanic youth with disabilities, my research questions are as follows:

1) What are the influences of Community Context on the transition planning experiences of Latino youth with disabilities?
    A. Big Picture
        - IDEA
        - Changing Demographics
    B. Community/Neighborhood
        - Urban/rural
        - SES / Availability of Services
    C. School Context
        - % of Latinos
        - Staff values and behaviors
    D. Employment

2) What are the influences of Cultural Context on the transition planning experiences of

Latino youth with disabilities?

A. Family
   - Needs
   - Expectations

B. Language
   - Availability of Translation Services

C. Traditions
   - Individual VS Collective

3) What are the influences of Individual Factors on the transition planning experiences of

Latino youth with disabilities?

A. Risk & Resiliency
   - Choices
   - Protective Factors

B. Individual Strengths and Preferences

Given the fact that Community context, Cultural Context and Individual factors all influence the experience of the transition planning process of Latino youth with disabilities,

4) What are the influences of Community Context and Culture Context on Individual Factors of Latino Youth with disabilities in the transition planning process?

CHAPTER II

METHODS

I used multiple source, multiple method design entailing multiple factors in a single case to explore the provision of transition services to Latino youth with disabilities in a local school district (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). By using multiple methods and multiple sources of data, I was able to use the analysis strategy of triangulation, thus increasing the reliability and validity of my findings (Brantlinger, Jimenez Kliner, Pugach & Richardson, 2005; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). Brantlinger and colleagues (2005) recommend the use of qualitative methodology in research about the experiences of youth with disabilities. The use of qualitative methods yields descriptive information that leads to a rich understanding of individuals with disabilities, their families and their service providers. Qualitative methodology allows for a more in-depth perspective of a given phenomena, gives voice to an individual's experiences, and empowers disenfranchised groups by allowing them to participate more fully in the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

In this chapter, I describe the setting of this study, including the district and the participants of the study. I will describe the data collection techniques, from instrument development to recruitment to the actual collection of data. I conclude this chapter with a description of the data analysis procedures I used.

Setting

Youth Transition Program

Many of the study participants were part of the Oregon Youth Transition Program (YTP) network, as either clients (students) or staff (teachers, aides). YTP is an ongoing service delivery program jointly funded by the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRS) and local schools statewide. YTP is operated as a collaborative effort between local school districts, OVRS and researchers at the University of Oregon. YTP's mission is to provide transition services for youth with disabilities through: transition specialists who work with school districts, OVRS counselors and other adult service providers. These services form a wrap-around network that help youth with disabilities successfully transition from high school to the adult world of work and responsibility. The goal of the YTP is to improve participants' post-school outcomes by preparing them for meaningful competitive employment or career-related post-secondary training (Benz, Lindstrom & Yovanoff, 2000).

The YTP yearly works with more than 1600 adolescents with disabilities in 38 communities across Oregon. The changing diversity of our nation and state is reflected in the backgrounds of these youth. Adolescents from non-white backgrounds comprise 23% of the YTP client population, and this number is steadily increasing. In addition to the racial and cultural diversity present in the YTP client base, 51% of current YTP clients report having financial difficulties and/or living in poverty (Lindstrom, Lichtenstein, & McGrath-Kato, 2006). Determining how to best serve the diverse population of youth

with disabilities is paramount to the success of both the youth themselves and transition service providers like the YTP.

A recent pilot study (Lichtenstein, Lindstrom, & Povenmire-Kirk, 2008) evaluated the current practices and training needs of YTP, OVRS and school staff regarding service provision to youth from diverse backgrounds. Staff across the board identified their own needs for specific information about providing transition services to youth from Latino backgrounds and their families. Because of this interest of YTP and OVRS staff in improving services provided to Latino youth with disabilities, the YTP will be a first-line path of access to the Latino population of interest. Specifically, I utilized the existing YTP network as a way to establish contacts with school personnel, to gain access to the district research clearance process and to help recruit study participants.

District Selection Criteria

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the transition planning needs of Latino youth with disabilities. I wanted to find a district with a significant Latino population that was neither too rural nor too urban, because communities that are too extreme experience their own issues that are specifically tied to their degree of urban or rural-ness. For this study, I applied the following criteria to select the school district from which I recruited participants: (a) have an existing transition program; (b) have an adequate population size (i.e., at least suburban); (c) represent cultural diversity with regards to the Latino population of interest; and (d) have an existing relationship with the

University of Oregon YTP technical assistance team to enable ease of recruitment and access to youth, families and transition professionals.

Based upon these criteria, I selected one suburban school district in Oregon, which I will call Anytown. This district has two main high schools: Downtown High School (DHS) and Uptown High School (UHS). Table 1 illustrates detailed characteristics of this district.

Table 1: District Demographics

Student Demographics	DHS		UHS		Anytown District	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Non-White	409	29.24%	232	14.83%	2,849	26.10%
Latino	246	17.58%	111	7.10%	1,523	13.95%
On IEPs	226	16.15%	191	12.21%	1,759	16.11%
ELL	75	5.36%	25	1.60%	722	6.61%
ELL and IEP	20	1.43%	13	0.83%	152	1.39%
Free & Reduced Lunch	552	39.46%	394	25.19%	4,762	43.62%
Total Enrollment		1,399		1,564		10,917

Anytown is a suburban city in Oregon, it is home to almost 60,000 residents. Anytown school district provides public education services to 10,917 students (District personnel). Anytown has a strong, multi-layered transition program and an existing positive relationship with the University of Oregon. 26% of Anytown School District's students are non-white, with almost 14% of their total population being of Latino origin. The demographics of Anytown School District are roughly proportional to the demographics of the state of Oregon.

Sample

My sampling strategy was devised to directly address the purpose of this study -- to identify and describe the transition needs of youth with disabilities from Latino backgrounds who are transitioning from school to adulthood. This sample was not intended to represent the entire population of Latino youth with disabilities; rather it was purposefully selected to represent variables of interest to this study. I utilized criterion purposeful sampling as described by Patton (2002).

Criterion sampling involves studying cases that meet predetermined criteria and facilitates quality assurance in result interpretation due to shared characteristics of the sample studied. For the purpose of this study, I had three different main groups of participants within the district: (a) school and transition professionals involved in the transition process of Latino youth with disabilities; (b) Latino youth with disabilities; and (c) family members of Latino youth with disabilities. I utilized the different perspectives of these three groups to develop a rich description of the services and processes present in Anytown School District and the needs yet to be addressed. Because my goal was to give voice to the Latino youth with disabilities and their families, their perspective was a key requirement of this study. The addition of the perspectives of the staff members enabled me to ensure that needs identified by Latino youth and their families were needs which truly existed, rather than needs that existed because of a lack of knowledge or communication about available services.

I conducted eight individual interviews with key district personnel, including ELL coordinators, administrators, multicultural liaisons and school psychologists. These

interviews helped direct my inquiry in terms of whom to invite to focus groups and how to understand what occurs in the school district with regards to the provision of services to the Latino population in general and Latino youth with disabilities in particular. Within the district, I conducted focus groups with staff at each of the two main high schools, one of the alternative high school settings and with the community-based transition team. Therefore, I conducted a total of six focus groups, four staff groups, and one each of the youth and family groups. I discuss the specific criteria I used in the selection of participants for interviews and for each group below.

School and Transition Professionals

For the purpose of this study, the "school and transition professionals group" (STG) included participants in the district who were part of the process of service provision to Latino youth with disabilities. These professionals were from the school district, the educational service district, or the statewide transition program (YTP described above). Key staff members from areas of Special Education and English Language Learner outreach helped me with recruitment of youth and families for this study. A total of 22 staff participated in this study; 8 were interviewed individually and 14 participated in the STGs. Table 2 presents the demographic information for these participants.

Table 2: Staff Participant Demographics

Focus Group	Role	Years in current position	Gender	Ethnicity
Downtown	Special education coordinator	19	Female	Caucasian

High School	Special education teacher – high incidence	9	Female	Caucasian
	Resource Room	3	Female	Caucasian
	Transition Specialist	5	Female	Asian
Alternative High School	School Counselor	11	Female	Caucasian
	Transition Specialist	8	Female	Caucasian
	Special Education Teacher	5	Female	Caucasian
	English Language Learner (ELL) Teacher	1	Male	Caucasian
	Teacher	15	Male	Caucasian
Community Transition Program	Transition Specialist	7	Male	
	CTP Case Manager	1	Male	Northern Cheyenne
	Special Education Teacher	13	Male	Caucasian
Uptown High School	Special Education Case Manager	1.5	Female	Caucasian
	Resource Special Education Teacher	6.5	Female	Caucasian
Individual Interviews	District ELL Coordinator	18	Female	Caucasian
	District Superintendent	6	Female	Caucasian
	Special Education Coordinator	19	Female	Caucasian
	School Psychologist/district services coordinator – mental health	17	Male	Caucasian
	Multicultural Liaison	12	Female	Latina
	Home-School Liaison	7	Female	Latina
	School Psychologist	4	Female	Latina
	Administrator	5	Female	Latina

Families of Latino Youth with Disabilities

With the help of members of the STG, I recruited family members of Latino youth with disabilities who met the following criteria: a) had a documented disability that qualifies for transition services under IDEA, (b) had a Latino/Hispanic ethnic/cultural background, (c) were between 14 and 20 years old, and (d) were either still enrolled in high school or were no longer in school. Given the research about the importance of extended families (Holleran & Waller, 2003) and the collectivistic community focus of the Latino community (Williams, et al, 2002; Diller & Moule, 2005), the district staff who recruited families invited "family members," rather than "parents" to this "family group" (FG). Because many of these family members spoke limited or no English, all related documents, from the recruitment script to informed consent forms to the instruments themselves were translated into Spanish by a native speaker. A bilingual, bicultural, multicultural liaison from the district made the initial contacts with the families in Spanish. At the focus group, I had a bilingual district interpreter present to ensure the accuracy of my data. A total of 10 family members participated in the family focus group, their demographics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Family Participant Demographics

Relationship to the Youth with the Disability	Age of Youth	Ethnicity	School
Father	16	Mexican	Uptown High School
Mother	16	Mexican	Uptown High School

Mother	15	Hispanic	Uptown High School
Mother	16	Hispanic	Uptown High School
Mother	18	Latina	Downtown High School
Mother	18	Latina	Downtown High School
Mother	15	Latino	Downtown High School
Father	15	Hispanic	Uptown High School
Mother	15	Mexican	Uptown High School
Mother	16	Latina	Uptown High School

Latino Youth with Disabilities

With the help of members of the STG, and members of the FG, I recruited participants to the "youth group" (YG) who (a) had a documented disability that qualifies for transition services under IDEA, (b) had a Latino/Hispanic ethnic/cultural background, (c) were between 14 and 20 years old, and (d) were either still enrolled in high school or were no longer in school. To ensure the accuracy of the data collected from this group, I took all the same precautions described for the family group above. Initial contacts were made by the multicultural liaison, a bilingual interpreter was present and all documents were translated into Spanish by a native speaker prior to the commencement of recruitment. A total of 6 students participated in the youth group, their demographic characteristics are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Youth Participant Demographics

Gender	Age	Ethnicity	School
Female	15	Mexican	Uptown High School

Female	16	Latina	Downtown High School
Male	16	Latino	Uptown High School
Male	14	Latino	Uptown High School
Male	18	Latino	Community Transition Program
Female	16	Latina	Uptown High School

Data Collection

Using multiple methods and multiple sources of data, I explored, substantiated, and developed a more complete understanding in order to explain the data I collected (Yin, 2003; Patton, 2002). My primary methods of data collection included both individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key district personnel and focus groups with district staff, families of Latino youth with disabilities and Latino youth with disabilities themselves. All interview and focus group participants completed brief demographic questionnaires. I also used observations of daily school activities, district web sites and publications to develop the case study description of Anytown school district. There were three primary groups: school and transition professionals (STG), Latino youth with disabilities (YG) and family members of Latino youth with disabilities (FG).

To organize numerous sources of data and collect consistent information across groups, I developed three different written focus group interview protocols, one for each of the three participant groups (See Appendix C), and the protocols for the youth and family groups were translated into Spanish by a native speaker. I also developed one

individual interview protocol for key district personnel (See Appendix C). All six focus groups (4 staff, 1 families and 1 youth) were audio-recorded. Four of the eight individual interviews were audio recorded. The remaining four interviews were not audio-recorded because either the (a) participants preferred not to be audio-recorded or (b) interview environment was too noisy for adequate recording to occur. In either case, for the interviews that were not audio-recorded, I took extensive field notes, and checked back often during the interview to ensure I had written down the information or quote correctly.

Instrument Development

Based upon the conceptual model in Chapter 1, I developed the interview protocol for key STG and the three separate sets of interview questions for each focus group, exploring connections between community context, cultural context, individual factors and the transition planning process. These protocols are available in Appendix C. For the STG, the questions came from both the literature on transition for diverse groups and the pilot study by Lichtenstein, Lindstrom, and Povenmire-Kirk (2008) about information and training needs for transition professionals. From these groups, I generated ideas of what further and specific information needs existed and identified issues to explore with the YG and FG.

For the YG and the FG, I developed two separate protocols with general questions based upon the conceptual model in Chapter 1 and the themes identified from the literature: community context, cultural context and individual factors as they influence transition planning. I also incorporated previously identified issues specific to the Latino

population. Next, I met with Latino community members to review the protocols to ensure the questions were both culturally appropriate and addressing the right issues and refined the questions based upon that feedback. For example, in the family focus group protocol, I had initially begun with questions about their experiences with the school district, but was advised by members of the Latino community to begin with more general questions about their family and neighborhood. When this process was complete, I piloted the refined instrument on a group of community members to ensure that I obtained the type of information I solicited. The final protocols were translated into Spanish by a native speaker from Mexico.

In addition to the three qualitative focus-group interview protocols, I also had participants of the focus groups fill out basic questionnaires that provided general demographic information about the participants, such as information about their years in the position (staff) and their gender and race/ethnicity (all participants). These questionnaires appear in Appendix D. All survey instruments and questionnaires were available in both Spanish and English, and an interpreter was present at the focus groups.

Recruitment and Data Collection

In order to generate a pool of participants, I recruited from several high school sites throughout the district. For the four STGs, I recruited through the YTP or special education contact at each location and held groups in central locations for each site at a time convenient to the majority of potential participants. I provided food for each focus group. I did not use stipends as incentives for staff group, as there was a demonstrated

interest in improving service provision to the Latino population among this group (Povenmire-Kirk, 2006).

For the family and youth group, I recruited my initial pool of participants by contracting with a bilingual district employee to call families and invite them to attend two previously scheduled focus groups, the first, for families and the second, for youth, a week later. Each group was scheduled at a central and accessible location, the same building in which language classes are routinely held. I provided a stipend ($15) to each participant of the youth and family focus groups as well bilingual childcare for the family group. A Spanish-English interpreter was present at each focus group.

Interview Procedures

Data collection occurred over a one year period, from January of 2008 through January of 2009. I conducted individual interviews with key district personnel first, to gain an understanding of the basic services and processes within the district. From these interviews, I created a list of special education, ELL and transition staff to invite to focus groups at each of the two high schools, the alternative education program and the community transition program. I conducted all of the staff focus groups during the winter and spring of 2008. Due to recruitment issues, the youth and family groups took place the following January (2009). Each interview lasted between 1 - 2 ½ hours, depending entirely on the participant. Each staff focus group lasted 1 ½ - 2 hours. The family focus group lasted 2 hours and the youth group lasted one hour. All recorded interviews and staff focus groups were transcribed verbatim, resulting in an average of 20 pages per interview and 30 pages per focus group. The family and youth groups were conducted in

English and Spanish (the youth group only had one participant who preferred Spanish), with a bilingual interpreter present. They were audio recorded and transcribed in English only.

Secondary Sources

In addition to interview data, all participants were asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire. I also utilized the district web site, the US Census web site and SchoolMatters.com, a web site that provides district and school-level demographic information, as well as district publications. I was able to further verify information collected by conducting member-checks with key district personnel and members of the Latino community within the district.

Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, the audio recordings of all interviews and focus groups were transcribed. I consulted a Spanish-English interpreter on any questions I had about translation of Spanish-language responses. Once all the data was transcribed and entered into NUD*IST 6, a qualitative data analysis program, I analyzed the data following a multi-stage process recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). I first developed a set of broad and descriptive codes, based upon my review of relevant transition and diversity literature. I used these codes to designate distinct labels to specific sections of data, such as "cultural - family" or "community - school – services available." During this process, I found that new and more specific codes emerged. I kept a record of new codes as they emerged, then I went back to the data and re-coded each section with the more inclusive

list of codes. Using the qualitative database, I created node reports – printed summaries of all text assigned a given node. I returned to the data in these node reports and explored the themes in terms of attitudes, ideas and needs identified therein. I conducted within group analysis of the focus group data, identifying themes within each group: professionals, youth and family members. I created a summary report for each participant group as a final step in my descriptive analysis.

In the second phase of analysis, I utilized cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to compare themes that emerged across the different groups. First, I created descriptive tables for each node, with columns for information for each group, the STG, YG and FG. I used these descriptive tables to analyze findings both within and across groups, and I identified similarities and differences in issues raised by members of different groups. I then created focus group summaries, condensing the most salient themes identified into bite-sized descriptive statements. Once I identified the themes within and across groups, I performed member checks with focus group participants to ensure that I represented the ideas they communicated and identified issues that they found important (Janesick, 2000). I completed these member checks in person, over the phone and via email, as was appropriate to the given situations. After conducting these member checks, I returned to the data and explored the connections and relationships between the findings. Once I had identified these relationships, I developed a new model to explain the relationships and findings in term of the primary purpose of this study: to identify and explore the transition planning needs of Latino youth with disabilities as they move from high school to adult life.

As described earlier in this dissertation, the methods I employed sought to answer the research questions guiding this study:

1) What are the influences of community context on the transition planning experiences of Latino youth with disabilities?
2) What are the influences of cultural context on the transition planning experiences of Latino youth with disabilities?
3) What are the influences of individual factors on the transition planning experiences of Latino youth with disabilities?
4) What are the influences of Community Context and Culture Context on Individual Factors of Latino Youth with disabilities in the transition planning process?

CHAPTER III

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

The findings below aim to describe the processes present in Anytown School District (ASD) in terms of providing transition services to Latino youth with disabilities. The research questions I identified in Chapter II will serve as an organizing framework for the presentation of these findings.

Community Context

Community context influences transition planning from the top down. Transition planning exists because of legislative requirement in IDEA, which occurs as part of the larger community context. Returning to Bronfenbrenner's (1999) Ecological Model, such legislation resides in the macrosystem, along with dominant cultural values and social conditions (Figure 1, Appendix A). The subject of this case study, Anytown School District (ASD), represents a part of the Exosystem, with individual schools, classrooms, teachers and peer groups existing in the mesosystem.

School District Context

In order to understand how transition planning services for a given individual may be impacted by the systems which surround that individual, we must first understand the processes in place to provide the services currently available. Within ASD, the change in population demographics has occurred rapidly. In 2000, individuals from a Hispanic or Latino background comprised less than 7% of the population. In 2008, that number has doubled to almost 14% (School Matters, 2009). ASD serves 10,917 students and has two

high schools, Downtown High School (DHS) and Uptown High School (UHS). Table 1 displays the demographics of ASD (Appendix B). DHS serves 1399 students, almost 20% of whom are non-white and almost 18% of all students are from Latino backgrounds. Sixteen percent of students in the district receive special education services and almost 40% qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. UHS provides a different demographic picture, with 1564 students, only 7% coming from Latino backgrounds, 12% receiving special education services and only 25% on the free and reduced lunch program.

Processes/Services Available: Special Education Services

The processes for special education intervention in this district were explained to me by a special education coordinator. In ASD, if a teacher or parent is concerned about a student's performance or behavior, the student will first receive additional support and instruction in their regular classroom(s). Often multiple paths of instructional support will be offered to the student prior to referral for special education evaluation. Students are referred for evaluation by special education student study teams (SST) only after more targeted intervention by the general education teacher has failed. This process looks a fairly similar for students who are English Language Learners (ELLs: students for whom English is not their native language and who are in the process of learning to speak, read and write English), with the exception of more layers of intervention prior to referral and the addition of the ELL teacher as a case manager and the ELL team. The district ELL coordinator explained a detailed flow chart of this process for ELLs (Figure 4), which appears in Appendix A. Once any student is referred for a special education evaluation,

the SST reviews all information and assessment data to determine if further assessment is needed. If so, the student is tested (in both languages for ELLs). If not, teachers continue trying interventions.

English Language Learners: District Services for the Latino Community

In addition to special education services coordinated through the ELL teacher/case manager, ASD provides a number of services to the Latino population (students with and without disabilities and their families) in the district. The entire ELL program in the district is based on sheltered instruction, a process in which grade-level subject matter is taught in English, using engaging and comprehensible methods that simultaneously promote English language skills and academic development (NWREL, 2003). Within the framework of the ELL services at the district level, ASD offers services to both their in-district Latino families as well as to the Latino community as a whole. In an individual interview with the district ELL coordinator, I learned about the Welcome Center, the New Beginners Program and the bilingual and endorsed staff within the district.

Welcome Center. One of the services that makes ASD unique is the Welcome Center for Latino families, which shares a building with the local parks and recreation teen center. New Latino families are directed to the Welcome center by community leaders, multicultural liaisons and school staff. Latino families who are new to the district and/or the country are able to access English language classes, interpretation, community resource referrals and a bilingual, bicultural, biliterate Welcome Center Coordinator part-time during the week. The coordinator offers English language classes to the Latino

community in the district two nights a week. The district provides childcare during these classes.

New Beginners Program. One of the structural changes ASD has made as a result of the rapid increase in the population of Latino students in the past 12 years is the New Beginners Program. Students who have limited proficiency in English are bussed (at district expense) to the one middle school and one high school (DHS) in the district that offer the most ELL services. At the middle school level, students receive four periods daily of intensive English instruction. In high school, students receive three periods of daily intensive English. This enables the district to serve the highest number of ELL students with fewer resources (Interview with District ELL coordinator, ELL staff).

Bilingual and endorsed staff. ASD currently has 18 certified teachers holding English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsements. There are 20 bilingual educational assistants (EAs) in the district. The district provides ELL services to over 720 students. Unfortunately, none of the bilingual or ESOL endorsed staff works in the areas of special education or transition.

Research Question 1. What are the Influences of Community Context on Transition Planning Experiences of Latino/a Youth with Disabilities?

School Context

In order to identify the key concepts for each research question, I drew from interview and focus group data from all three groups of participants. In identifying the influences of the community context on transition planning experiences for Latino youth

with disabilities, three main themes emerged: transition services as they are currently provided and the structure through which this occurs, employment services as they occur and staff values and behaviors in the school context.

Transition Services

Returning to the realm of special education, the federally mandated transition services are provided in ASD through a partnership of programs. Transition services are provided through both the school district and the community transition program (CTP). At both levels, there are staff members whose role is that of a *transition specialist.* This position involves helping students, families and IEP teams plan and attain the transition goals mandated by IDEA. A transition specialist might help students navigate community services, place students in supported work experiences, ensure students know how to ride the bus to and from work, or help run a school-based work experience, among many other activities to exhaustive to name (Interview with Transition specialist, CTP). ASD is one of a small number of districts in the state that have both a school-based transition program and a community based transition program. This unique combination of services has proven to be effective in leading to positive post-school outcomes.

School Transition Services

When a student receiving special education services approaches her or his 16th birthday, the transition specialist will conduct an interview with the student that focuses on the strengths and barriers the student faces in five transition areas: education, community participation, employment, independent living, and future plans. This process occurs for all students receiving special education services once they reach 16 years of

age. This information is shared with the IEP team and they plan goals and activities. Students who are still considered school age under IDEA receive transition services as part of their IEP. In ASD, once students graduate, they may have the opportunity to benefit from the Community Transition Program (CTP) (source: description from a focus group with special education and transition staff).

Community Transition Program (CTP)

CTP in Anytown School District is the YTP model and therefore is jointly funded by the district and a grant from Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services. During a focus group, CTP staff explained the process of gaining access to CTP services. After students graduate *with a modified diploma*, they can self-refer to CTP. Parents, teachers and case managers can also refer students to CTP. CTP also acts as case managers for some younger students who are still in school, but needing vocational rehabilitation and other services. "We all, I think, consider CTP to be the last house on the block. If students are here, it is because nothing else worked" (SPED staff – CTP). With a few exceptions, students graduating with regular diplomas do not have access to CTP services.

One way for students who were on IEPs and graduated with regular diplomas to tap into CTP services is through the screening and eligibility determination for OVRS. If OVRS is able to identify a "significant barrier to employment" through this process, students may be able to access CTP services. Another way is for young adults who have multiple needs and require more intensive transition services to self-refer, or to be referred by parents. CTP helps students get plugged into services that will benefit them

for the rest of their lives. These include (but are in no way limited to) helping students file social security claims, apply for food stamps or health services, learn to ride the bus, acquire job-related skills, navigate leisure activities (e.g. go to the YMCA and work out), and attend parenting classes. The services provided vary greatly depending on the individual needs of the student in question.

Employment Services

Employment services are provided to students receiving special education services at all levels of education, from the freshman year of high school through post-graduation. Figure 5 illustrates the types of employment-related training and experiences provided at each level (Appendix A).

Special Education Settings

At each of the high schools and the alternative high school, special education and transition staff provide essentially the same basic employment-related services to students. Staff members help students develop resumes and interviewing skills, and obtain food handler's permits and driving permits. All sites offer career exploration field trips and partake of career-related activities at the local community colleges and universities. There are also a limited number of job shadow opportunities within the district.

CTP Settings

Staff at the CTP are able to provide employment services for students who have either graduated (with a modified diploma) or aged out of special education without earning a diploma. These services generally include more targeted services toward the

goal of paid work experience, competitive employment and job placement. For students who graduate with a regular diploma, but who find that they have a significant barrier to employment, CTP staff will help students address that barrier with the ultimate goal being paid, competitive, long-term employment.

Staff Values and Behaviors

In addition to describing the services available for Latino youth in transition, one of the most important aspects of this case study was understanding the values and behaviors of the staff members. Working with students who come from different cultures often results in conflicts between cultural values (Rueda, et al, 2005; Salas-Provance, Erickson, & Reed, 2002). Staff values are expressed either directly or indirectly in conversations, or via behaviors. Throughout the interview and focus group process, a dichotomy emerged between staff who expressed values and behaviors in one direction and staff who expressed values and behaviors in another direction. Although there were no openly discriminating comments made, there is a palpable divide between those who feel affection and solidarity with the Latino community and those who feel resentment at having to learn new skills to be effective educators.

It seemed that staff in each of these two groups had no specific characteristics in common with other members of the same group. In other words, not all experienced staff or all classified staff shared the same values, or expressed similar beliefs. For example, one of the most dedicated staff I interviewed has been with the district for 19 years. Comparatively, one of the staff members who seemed the most put out by the "whole diversity issue" has been with the district 18 years. Many of the newer staff members

recognize the need to improve service provision to Latinos and are interested in improving their skills in this area, but some of the newer staff reported that they took classes in their teacher prep programs over "diversity and all that" and feel adequately prepared. Members of both groups were members of the dominant culture (newly hired special ed staff).

The only notable characteristic shared within a group is, I believe, an artifact of the research process. Certified staff were found in both groups; however, classified staff members were only found in the group that is dedicated to improving education for Latino students. I believe this difference to be because I only interviewed classified staff that were multicultural liaisons, bilingual EAs or otherwise employed specifically to provide services directly to the Latino community. Every one of these classified staff members were also bilingual and bicultural. The differences between these two groups occurred around four main themes.

Dedication to Helping Latino Community

Independent of a participant's race or culture, many staff members are dedicated to helping the Latino community, as evidenced by staff behaviors, both observed and reported. Students, co-workers and family members conveyed stories of staff going to great lengths to provide services to Latino students. These behaviors include: staff routinely meeting with parents when and where convenient for parents, taking personal time to obtain cultural and language trainings to assist in their ability to provide service, developing programs specific to the provision of services to Latino students, and working with their supervisors to be available to provide support at increasing levels to Latino

families. Some staff members stood out above others in their behaviors to support Latino students with disabilities and their families.

> Our superintendent has been wonderful. I have nothing but praises from our families for her…and my supervisors are just tremendous. They do a whole lot of work for the Latino families and they both recognize that there's a whole lot more work to be done, and they're willing to go the extra mile to get what we need, they're willing to do whatever it takes, one way or anther to make it happen!
> - Multicultural staff member, community member and parent

Conversely, other staff members were hesitant, unsure and often outright resentful that they had to do anything different in their daily processes because of a language or cultural difference. One staff member explained to me that the school district is "already over-qualifying Latinos [for special education services] and we just don't have the budget or the resources." Another expressed resentment at the district paying interpreters for career festivals when the staff, themselves, were expected to "volunteer" their time for the event.

Using Multicultural Staff as Cultural Brokers

Another area in which staff diverged was the willingness to utilize multicultural staff within the district as "cultural brokers" – community members who can help students and families feel safe and help facilatiate communication and understanding between two or more cultures (Cooper, Denner & Lopez, 1999). Many staff from the dominant culture embraced the multicultural staff within the district, utilizing both their language skills and their cultural fluency whenever possible. This group lamented the fact that more such individuals are not currently working with the district and held these staff members in high esteem. Other staff members from the dominant culture were resentful

and suspicious, afraid that multicultural staff might overstep their authority in dealing with families. Concerns were expressed about non-special education certified staff translating at IEP meetings and conducting assessments in Spanish.

> She (multicultural interpreter) isn't special ed certified, and I have concerns about what she is actually saying to families during IEP meetings. I know she is supposed to just interpret, but so many things require extra background. Sometimes the family's responses just don't add up. I'm not saying she's purposefully doing anything, it's just…
> - Special Education staff member

As for the multicultural staff members themselves, they recognized that they had support from certain colleagues and supervisors within the district, reporting that their supervisors frequently ask them what they need. Equally, they were aware that others don't trust them to simply do their job and they feel that many do not utilize them enough. These multicultural staff members occupy a place on the border between the institution of education and the Latino community.

> I would like for staff members to realize that yes, we [bi-cultural staff] are a little bit different, yes we have a different culture, yes we identify better with families, but it's only because we were where they are now. We know what it's like and we're not trying to do their [staff's] jobs, we're trying to make it easier for them…these kids come in already behind. Lack of a new language, lack of abilities in their own language, and so they come in already a year behind. It's going to take them twice as much time to get where everybody else is. Doesn't mean they have a special education disability that should qualify, it just means they need a little extra help…and it's frustrating to me, because I see what they're [staff] not seeing, and they're supposed to be the professionals…Some of them [staff] are really trying hard and some of them are not willing to. And it's frustrating because the ones that aren't willing to do this aren't willing to listen to any one of us that knows this. Those walls have to come down, but these people have to be willing to do that. So far, I've met a couple that just won't do it. They just won't. – Multicultural staff member

Connecting with Families

The divide continued along the theme of connecting with families. One group of staff members recognized that they lacked the skills, knowledge and ability to really make a connection with families throughout the transition process, identifying such issues as language, scheduling of meetings and cultural appropriateness of goals as areas of concern. These staff members were the same ones who valued their multicultural colleagues so much as those who could translate and interpret not just the language, but the culture and expectations as well. Another group of staff felt that families were purposely not engaging in the special education process because they either didn't care about their child's education, or didn't value it. This group did not take into account any systemic or institutional issues that might be underlying the lack of family involvement, nor did they view it as their responsibility to make the connection with these families.

> My sense is that, in the Latino community, the ability to make money and help the family is valued over that of education, especially for young males. From that standpoint, I just don't think the parents hold education as important, or at least, not as important, as money.
> - School Psychologist

Truly Individualized Education Services

Staff members differed on one final theme – that of truly individualized education. In response to the question *"Describe the transition planning process in your district. How does that look for Latino youth?"* the process of creating transition goals for students was, for some, "exactly the same process for every student" (Staff member).

Other staff members reported that every single transition process is unique because it differs depending on the individual and his or her needs, strengths and preferences.

> People good at transition, I think, realize that good transition services, good transition plans come from good transition planning. And that means that we're sensitive to every disability group to gender, to age and to culture.
> - SPED Staff

Some staff members conceded that they may use the same intake interview form, but that after that, every step taken is based upon individual answers to open ended questions. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, I received a rich picture of the transition process being one that varied greatly across not only program sites, but also across individuals within programs. Transition and special education staff varied in the levels of truly individualized services they provided, from the cookie-cutter approach to transition planning on one end, to plans that were as unique as the individual students they served on the other.

Research Question 2. What are the influences of Cultural Context on transition planning experiences of Latino/a youth with disabilities?

Again, as with RQ 1 above, for this RQ, I drew data from interviews and focus groups with families, but also with staff and with students to determine the themes that frame this section: traditions, family and language. When exploring the context of culture for Latino/a students, there is no more salient starting point than that of the family. Family is the location for cultural socialization and for the transmission of cultural values and traditions (Rueda, et al, 2005; Salas-Provance, Erickson, & Reed, 2002). Traditions

are so intertwined with culture in the Latino community that this discussion will first address traditions as a lens through which to view the remaining data.

Traditions

The Latino culture is rich with traditions (Taylof-Ritzler, et al, 2001; Sy, 2006). There are several cultural traditions that are particularly important to the transition planning process for Latino/a youth with disabilities. These traditions involve the collectivistic cultural focus and the Latino work ethic (Holleran & Waller, 2003; Gonzales, et al, 2004).

Individual versus Collective

The dominant culture in the U.S. is very individually focused. Goals are written based upon the individual being the unit of interest or intervention. In Latino cultures, the group is more important (Franquiz, 2004; Gonzales, et al, 2004). This collectivistic focus is illustrated by the sacrifices Latinos are willing to make for their families. Not only are parents willing to sacrifice their ways of life in order to secure a better future for their children, but children are also willing to sacrifice in order to help create a better present for their families. Parents of Latino youth with disabilities in my focus groups report moving to the U.S. so that their children could have opportunities they did not have, such as a good education or the ability to become bilingual. Parents want their children to have better jobs and more opportunities than they had.

> We taught our daughter every day, pretty much, about school, and that it's good for her to get educated and find a better job, and we use examples like: Look at us. Look at the working jobs we have. We don't want you to end up like us, earning the minimum wage and all that – we talk to her a lot about that.
> - Father, family focus group

Parents are also willing to work multiple jobs so that their children don't have to go to work and can stay in school and concentrate on learning. This collectivist value is transmitted to the children, who are often willing to quit school and go to work in order to help their parents with living expenses. This cultural tradition has implications for transition planning, especially around goals.

Strong Work Ethic

Another cultural tradition in Latino communities is that of a solid work ethic. Latino families consider hard work a positive aspect of one's character (Franquiz, 2004; Family focus group; Staff interviews; Staff focus groups). Students are expected to work hard in school and to do their best every day. Moreover, if students do engage in employment, they are expected to show up and work their best through the entire day.

> Our son, we want him to go to school and get a better job. His father works hard in construction. But our son, he just says, 'No, I want a real man job." And he did, he went out and got a job working construction, hard work. He is very proud that he works so hard and helps the family. We are proud of him, but we want more for him than hard work.
> -Mother

Many employers are currently unaware of this potential extra benefit in hiring Latino/a youth.

Family

Family is a significant influence in the lives of students. Family can influence students' lives in a positive way, in the form of work opportunities, support of educational aspirations and the sacrifices families make in daily lives to improve

opportunities for their children (Holleran & Waller, 2003). Family can also serve as a negative influence when family members are involved with gangs, drugs or the justice system (D'Imperio, Dubow & Ippolito, 2000).

Expectations

Parents in the Latino community have certain expectations and concerns that are tied specifically to the Latino culture. These expectations should be taken into account in the transition planning process for Latino/a youth.

Independent living. Parents at the focus group discussed the fact that living alone is not a culturally appropriate goal. This differs from the dominant culture, in which children are expected to move out either on their own, into a dorm or with a roommate soon after they turn 18 or graduate.

> As Latinos, we don't see our kids living alone. The culture here is more open to that idea, as soon as they graduate, they move out of the house. For us, it's until they get married. Our children, male or female, live with us until they marry… or until they get kicked out [group laughter]. - Father

In the field of special education, independent living is considered the flagship marker of post-school success. This culturally biased emphasis on independent living as a flagship goal can create conflict in providing culturally appropriate transition planning to this group.

Parents' attitudes toward employment. Parents expressed a number of strong attitudes toward youth employment. They want their children to get more education than they had and to have access to better jobs as a result. However, parents expressed fears that their students would neglect school if they went to work, or that their students might

drop out of school, especially if they were already struggling, if they got jobs while still in high school.

> For us, our son, we really want him to go to school, so he's willing to go to college after high school, and we're kind of scared that he wants to find a job, because if he starts working and earning money, he might get more interested in that than actually to keep going to school. So it's really hard to get him motivated to keep studying and all of that.
> -Mother

Many families expressed that they were encouraging their children to simply attend school rather than to go to work until after graduation. This finding is in direct conflict with the stereotypical assumption expressed by numerous staff members that Latino families often valued work and ability to help support the family more than education. There may be families in which the need for money outweighs the need for education for children, especially young males, as was presumed by some staff members, but the families that attended the focus group expressed a different value system.

School is responsible for education. Another expectation for Latino families is that the school is solely responsible for teaching their students. They often don't view themselves as part of the process (interview with bi-cultural staff member). Because they expect that the school will be responsible for their children's education, they are less likely to question whether or not the school is doing its job. Latino families need not only to be invited into the process, but need to be oriented as to all of the ways in which they can participate to help improve the outcomes for their children. A mother describes her own lack of understanding of the educational process, while simultaneously expressing satisfaction.

> So my daughter is doing very good right now and by the time she has been actually in school learning, she's going to be really happy. And every meeting I have with the teachers, I see how interested they are in helping her out. So I didn't know much about education or any of that stuff, but I will leave them to do whatever they need to do to help her, and they did.
> - Mother

Language

One of the main issues presented in the cultural context of working with Latinos is that of language (Kim & Morningstar, 2005). The presence of a different language as a first language, as the primary language spoken in the home, and/or as the only language of the parents, creates potential challenges to providing special education and transition services to these youth. Conversely, there are also benefits inherent in speaking and understanding another language, if educators can build on these strengths and develop these skills in students.

Translation Services

As discussed above in Research Question 1, translation and interpretation services are lacking in the school district, even though this school district has more of such services than do many others. Parents report not having enough information in Spanish, such as letters that come home from school, announcements about extra-curricular activities, and even the phone calls from the school to report their child missing classes.

> Question: If you could get your school to change one thing about the way that they work with Latino families, what would it be? Answer: More bilingual services. We don't receive a lot of information in Spanish. We receive all the papers in English. We don't receive enough information in Spanish. Like when the school calls, because our kids aren't in class – it's in English!
> -Mother

Some parents report having older children, nieces, nephews, or family friends who have become interpreters. These anecdotes lead to the other facet of language discussed by parents, that of bilingualism as strength for their children.

Bilingual as Strength

Parents are acutely aware that their children speaking both English and Spanish can open doors in terms of jobs. Parents have made choices to give their children the gift of bilingualism. One mother reported that she purposefully sends her children to Uptown High School because there are fewer Latino/a students there and her children won't be able to speak Spanish to peers all day, they will have to speak English. Another mother explained that bilingualism is the reason she moved her family to the U.S. and Oregon.

> The reason I'm here is because I wanted my kids to learn English. I was living in Puerto Rico, but there, we had to pay extra money to get English classes. Here, they learn it because it's around them all the time, everywhere.

Parents have deliberately created an environment wherein their children can learn to speak English. The expectation is that their children will become bilingual and consequently have opportunities for better jobs and futures than their parents had.

Research Question 3. What are the Influences of Individual Factors on Transition Planning Experiences of Latino/a Youth with Disabilities?

In the Conceptual Model of Influence introduced in Chapter 1 (Figure 3), transition planning is influenced by community context, cultural context and individual factors. Based upon interviews and focus groups, the individual factors identified fall into two main categories: youth choices and protective factors.

Risk and Resilience

Individuals face numerous factors in their lives that can either increase their risk or increase their likelihood for resilience - the capacity to experience positive outcomes in the face of seemingly over-whelming odds (D'Imperio, et al, 2000; Rak & Patterson, 2001). Their own choices and sense of agency play an important role in the risk and resilience picture.

Choices and Agency

When I first completed the literature review, it appeared that youth choices, especially with regard to risk and resilience, influenced the transition planning process and thus, influenced post-school outcomes. After data collection and analysis, a more complex relationship between these factors has emerged. Latino youth with disabilities represent a group that is doubly or triply marginalized. First, they are marginalized by the cultural difference, then by the disability and finally by any potential language issues present. The concept of youth empowerment and sense of agency is crucial in this situation.

Youth disempowerment model? Although youth choices do play a role, many youth feel that their choices have been taken from them by the school, by their parents and by their teachers. Many students reported not being able to attend career exploration field trips because of their behavior, grades or disability.

> They take them to field trips, like to Universities, but he [son] doesn't get to do any of that - the hyperactivity that he has – the teachers are worried that if he goes he will do bad on the field trip, so he misses all of that stuff…the field trips that they get to do is because they're doing well in class, they're getting good grades. That's when they get to go. – Mother

Another opportunity taken from students involved study circles on racism – structured group discussions about racism and discrimination (Leighninger & McCoy, 2003). A Latina student explains:

> They have, like, study circles on racism and stuff, but it's only for people who keep their grades up and stuff. You can't get into it if you've been in trouble. Only the people that are good. The teachers said I can't go because of my referrals and trouble. – Latina Student

Although well intended, parents, too can take choices away from their children. Several of the youth I spoke to whose parents had clearly articulated reasons for sending them to UHS rather than DHS – with the increased Latino population and services – explained that they really felt that what they needed was at DHS, but their parents won't let them attend that school. In response to a question about what needs students have to help them be successful as adults, a Latino boy answered:

> well, for me, to get more help on what I want to be when I grow up. Like, I don't like my school because, like, I'm looking and I'm not learning what I want to learn and to be able to go where I could get help and that's DHS, but my mom won't let me. – Latino Student

In response to a different question, a young girl answered:

> Question: You want to go to DHS because there's a higher Latino population?
> Latina: yeah, and there's more teachers that know what you need.
> Latino: and help you out and stuff.
> Latina: They, they'll translate and they'll help you with everything there and over here, they just go like, ok, you didn't get it, and you say no, and they're like, oh, well, ok, let's look at the next thing, then. But I didn't get it, and then they move on. And I still don't get it. – Youth focus group

Protective Factors

Research has identified cultural identity, family, and sense of importance within a larger unit as protective factors for Latino youth (Holleran & Waller, 2003). Students in this study articulated their needs to feel like part of a community in their desires to attend DHS with the higher Latino population, as well as in their descriptions of being left out of groups such as field trips and study circles. In situations where parents have sent their students to schools with low Latino enrollment, the protective factor of cultural identity has been weakened (Moneta, Schneider & Csikszentmihalyi, 2001).

Being part of the community is imperative to the success of students, especially Latino students (Williams, Alvarez, & Hauck, 2002). One staff member in the alternative education high school described a Latino student receiving special education services at the time, who has experienced a turn around. The student had been earning poor grades and had never had a positive interaction with a teacher. A transition specialist has been taking the young man to the gym to work out two nights a week and the impact has been notable – the student is earning passing grades for the first time in his whole high school experience and his interactions with his teachers have become positive. The student describes his experience, "I've never been respected in school. People have never talked to me with respect ever. It just feels different here."

Feeling respected is a factor that has changed the lives of other students in ASD. One administrator described a program she had implemented wherein students who had been at risk became administrative assistants in the office. She had noticed that their behavior referrals and class-cutting had decreased and had found that their academic

performance had improved in most classes after becoming part of the office team. She explains "it's just funny because most of the kids that are up here now [in the office as assistants] are the kids that were at risk, but now they are doing better."

Research Question 4. What are the Influences of Community and Culture on Individual Factors?

In the conceptual model developed from the research literature and presented in Chapter 1 (Figure 3), I theorized that the relationship of influence included community context, cultural context and individual factors all influencing transition planning. I further theorized that the community context and the cultural context both also influence individual factors. Evidence supporting these theories exists throughout the data. I present the most relevant findings below.

Influences of Community on Individual Factors

The influences of the community on individual factors fell into two broad categories that mirror the findings from the individual section above: those influences that could increase risk-related issues in the lives of students and those influences that could increase protective influences.

Risk-related Influences of Community on Individual Factors

Research has identified racial and ethnic discrimination as risk factors for youth from marginalized groups (Holleran & Waller, 2003; Wong, et al, 2003; Li, et al, 2002; Williams, et al, 2002; D'Imperio, et al, 2000;). Diller and Moule (2005) describe discrimination in education as involving

> More than merely ignoring the contributions of ethnically and racially different people in the curriculum. It also includes being unaware of one's own prejudices and how they may inadvertently be communicated to students; being unaware of differences in cultural style, interactive patterns, and values and how these can lead to miscommunication; being unaware that many of the theories taught during training are culture-bound; being unaware of differences in cultural definitions of success as well as the existence of traditional cultural learning styles; and being unaware of the necessity of matching learning modalities to the cultural styles of students or of adapting teaching to the specific cultural needs of culturally diverse students. (p. 3)

Issues around discrimination came up at numerous points throughout my study.

Participants reported acts of discrimination from students and from staff toward Latino students and from staff toward bicultural staff members. An administrator reported a student coming to school with a compact wooden bat with "beaner beater" written on the side. A Latina youth reported that fellow students "always look at us like we're some kind of freaks. I hate it. I hate walking through the halls and I hate going to Uptown!" Students reported that certain teachers are:

> always on the Latino kids. It's like me and one other Mexican kid in the class, and the rest are whites, and she always picks on us. I can't stretch, or drop a pencil or nothing, and she's sending me to the office! – Latino youth

Other students reported the same types of experiences with the teacher in question and with others. Several teachers consistently hand out too few tests or quizzes in the rows of Latino students, forcing one or more of them to leave their seats to approach the teacher and request the tests or quizzes. "It's not just that they don't care if we learn, it's like they are trying to make us fail." (Latina youth).

Protective Influences of Community on Individual Factors

In contrast to the stories above, there are situations wherein the community in the form of school personnel and actions have had protective influences over Latino youth. In the alternative education high school, a staff member knew that young Latina, who was pregnant was going to be moving out on her own. The staff member began a collection box for items the student may need to start her own apartment and sent an announcement to staff members. Other students, Latino and white, heard about the collection box and began to bring in their own items for the box, including things for the baby, household items and clothing. This incident became a clothing and item exchange that has moved from a box in the lobby to a whole wall in a classroom. Students can bring in items to exchange and can take items that they need.

Another situation is the one previously discussed in Research Question 3, about students who were previously at risk at DHS being placed in administrative assistant positions in the office and experiencing positive improvements in their grades and behaviors. It is possible that meaningful involvement in the community helped create the positive outcomes for these students.

Influences of Culture on Individual Factors

Cultural context influences individual factors as well. Youth choices, as discussed above, are influenced by cultural beliefs and values. The traditional collectivist value of family over individual needs influences choices youth make. The influence of this cultural value can have protective or risk-related influences. If students stay in school and study hard and do their best to become successful to help their family in the future and

out of respect for their parents and the sacrifices they made, then the influence can be protective. Conversely, if student drop out of school to earn money to help support their families, as some staff suspect, then the outcome for the individual could be more risk-related.

Cultural understandings of disability can influence individual factors as well. Staff reported several incidents wherein parents did not believe or understand the label given a child. One of the most poignant stories related to me included an adolescent Latino with a learning disability in reading. He did well in math and scored above average on IQ tests, but continued to struggle with reading. His parents called him stupid and refused to accept that he had a disability (Interview with School Psychologist). Other stories staff told described parents who did not accept that their student had moderate to severe disabilities and would not likely attend college (Staff focus group). Parents reported feeling that they did not understand enough of what was going on in the yearly [IEP] meeting to feel like they could participate, "We just show up and sign the paper, but we don't know what they are telling us, we don't understand or know if it is true" (Mother in the FG).

Challenges

This case study identified a number of challenges faced by staff in their attempts to provide transition services to Latino youth with disabilities and by families and youth in their attempts to participate in the processes of transition. They are presented here in order of importance as identified by study participants.

Documentation – Citizenship

Providing educational services to students becomes extremely complex when issues of citizenship are involved. Some students are not legal U.S. citizens. Others were born here and therefore are citizens, but do not have documentation because their parents are not legal residents. Still more students are here legally, and are documented, but because of corruption in government institutions in the countries from which their families came, they are untrusting and do not wish to share their identifiable information with school personnel. Consequently, there are huge trust issues at play, as well as logistic concerns for staff members.

Building rapport is of utmost importance in dealing with adolescent students from any background.

> The thing I think is probably the most significant thing I've seen here is an ability to build rapport. So they [students] feel safe enough and trusting enough to even start the transition process with someone. It takes time to build the foundation. There is absolutely no other way. There is no magic interview or report or anything you can do with a student, I feel, at least, that can build that rapport as well as just time" –Special Education Staff

Staff members struggle with trying to build trust with students who can afford to allow staff members to get only so close. When one's family may be deported or imprisoned, the ability to trust government employees is significantly hindered and students keep school personnel at more than arm's length. Multicultural staff members appear immune to this distancing. Because these staff members exist in both the school/government and the Latino community realm, the rapport is easier, the trust is immediate, if not pre-existing, and the process of transition can be eased. Unfortunately, ASD has no

multicultural special education or transition staff, so multicultural staff involvement is on a consultant or interpreter basis with Latino youth with disabilities in transition.

On a logistical level, staff can only offer so much to a student who is undocumented. Special and regular education services do not require students and families to have a social security number. Many transition experiences do. OVRS, for example, provides a vast array of job-related services that are absolutely unavailable without a social security number. Legal employment of any kind requires an I-9 and proof of ability to work in the U.S. Students who lack documentation and have a disability are doubly restrained from participation in work-related activities.

One of the primary frustrations for staff regarding documentation is that there are currently no programs or clinics in place to help students with the process of documentation (source: Interview with Multicultural Staff). If a student is a citizen, but lacks documentation, there is no process set up for helping that student obtain the documentation. Families that have been here for decades have no recourse for applying for citizenship separate from the typical waiting list and most families are hesitant to begin the process because they don't want to draw attention to themselves. Parents also reported frustrations with issues around documentation; they struggle with encouraging their children to stay in school and graduate when the students lack the social security numbers needed to go on to college through financial aid programs or to work legally. Families have no notion of where to turn for help with these situations, especially if their children qualify as citizens, but the parents, themselves, do not.

Language Services

Across the board, staff recognized that there were not enough translation and interpretation services available. The insufficiency of translation services has created undue hardships for the staff and students. Bilingual EAs who are assigned to specific students are pulled out of their class to interpret in the office or counseling center when parents call the school. Students who qualify for a bilingual EA are often grouped in classes with 1-3 other ELL students, with the educational needs of the individual students coming in second to the interpretation needs. Downtown High School, the school with the highest number of ELL students (75 – see Table 1) had only three bilingual EAs during the 2007-2008 school year. In supported work experiences, if they happen at all for ELL students, those who need translators have to work in pairs because of the need for the bilingual EA, rather than because that work experiences is the best fit for the individual students (Special Education and Transition focus group).

Special Education faculty described a frustrating situation involving translation services, or lack thereof. The district has a translator whose job is to translate into Spanish any document that must go home to the general populace. However, when a Latino student with extremely involved special education and mental health issues was evaluated, the translator refused to translate the 10 page psychiatric report that would typically be submitted to the parents about their own child, because his job was to translate the documents that go to everyone or to the majority of students, not to individuals. Instead, he required the school psychologist to write a 3-4 page summary of the report and translated only that summary.

To compound the situation created by the lack of translation services, not all ELL teachers are bilingual, so the EA assigned to the class may be the only bilingual educator the students encounter in a normal day (School psychologist). The district has 20 bilingual EAs, but over 720 ELL students; that's almost 40 ELL students per EA.

Parents reported that when it's time for parent-teacher conferences, they [Latino families] must wait in a line because there are so few interpreters available. At one school, the multicultural liaison is the only individual available to interpret for these conferences. Although this school only has 25 students receiving ELL services, many students who are not currently receiving ELL services have parents who are not proficient enough in English to meet with the teacher without an interpreter. Consequently, more than 25 families may need interpreter services at parent-teacher conferences. Students also reported dissatisfaction with the interpreters available, especially at Uptown High School, with the lowest Latino population.

Another piece of the language puzzle is that Spanish is often only an oral language for Latino students. They don't read or write in Spanish and are trying to learn to read or write in English. Staff from different areas (i.e. ELL, Special Ed, multicultural liaisons, transition specialists, administrators and school psychologists) all identified the need for Spanish language classes for native speakers. Students express their frustration at being placed in beginning Spanish language classes with teachers who often are not only not native speakers, but aren't even fluent.

> Maestra, you don't know what it's like to sit in the room for an hour with that woman and have her tell you that a chair is a chair and a table is a table and that red is red – it's insulting. And then, to have her tell me that *papas* [potatoes –

> Latin American] are *patatas* [potatoes - Spain], but not *papas*– it just makes me so furious and frustrated that I want to quit! Just quit school and go to work where no one tells me that papas aren't potatoes.
> - Latina youth

Deficit of Resources

Staff reported an overall deficit of resources in the district that has become increasingly characteristic of public education over the past decades. Specifically, transition staff reported not having enough job-shadow and supported work opportunities for their students. Moreover, whether bilingual or not, there existed a lack of EAs for students receiving special education services. Although this district is doing more than most districts in Oregon to address the ELL population, the support needed to bring students with language barriers up to grade level was simply not present. Special education and transition faculty, as well as school psychologists reported having too many students on their caseloads to be able to provide all the necessary services to any individual.

Another issue reported by staff, families and youth was a lack of community work experience placements that were either interesting or appropriate for Latino youth with disabilities. One staff member acknowledged that there are many Latino owned businesses where bilingual students could be placed but that he lacked the language capacity to make and sustain these connections. Another staff member reported the compounded need for bilingual EAs to accompany ELL students on job placements and how the dearth of language services negatively impacted the community work experiences available.

Parental Understanding and Access

Staff reported difficulties getting families to attend meetings and participate in the special education and transition process. Families reported not having enough information or understanding about the process to understand their roles or participation opportunities. Parents further reported not knowing where to go to get information about their children's academic performance and the school's responsibilities for serving them. Moreover, many parents did not know whether their children were receiving special education services. The existing language challenges and lack of adequate translation services, coupled with a cultural difference in expectations increases opportunities for miscommunication or lack of communication at every phase of the IEP and transition process.

Culturally Biased Staff Attitudes

Another primary challenge faced in the effort to provide transition planning services to Latino youth is that of culturally biased staff attitudes and assumptions. Staff reported institutionalized racism at multiple levels, as well as ignorance of differences and the implications of such differences. Multicultural staff lamented the challenge of getting families back into the school building once they have had a negative encounter with a staff member, "it takes years to get them to come back to the school once they lose that trust." Specifically, staff from the dominant culture are failing to take into account their own dominant cultural assumptions and biases in situations of cultural conflict. "One of the biggest challenges I've had to face is getting staff to realize that they aren't your kids or my kids, but they are all OUR kids" (Multicultural Administrator). One of

the biggest surprises I faced throughout this study was finding out that cultural competence trainings are optional within the district.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will first summarize the findings of this study. Second, I will discuss the study's limitations. Next, I will describe how the conceptual model developed from the literature has changed based upon the findings of this study. Then, I will discuss the key themes and needs identified by the findings, as they relate to this new conceptual model. Finally, I will explore the implications for practice and make suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

The findings identified by this study include a number of transition planning needs for Latino youth with disabilities who are transitioning from high school to adult life. The research questions in Chapter II sought to determine the influences of three main areas on the transition planning experiences of Latino/a youth with disabilities: community context, cultural context and individual factors.

In summary, RQ 1 found that transition planning experiences of Latino/a youth with disabilities were influenced by community context through the school context, which included both transition and employment services and through the community transition program, which also provided transition and employment services to youth with disabilities. Another area of community context that influenced these experiences for Latino/a youth with disabilities was that of staff values and behaviors, specifically regarding: dedication to helping the Latino community, use of multicultural staff as

cultural brokers, connecting with families, and providing truly individualized education and transition services.

For RQ2, cultural context influenced the transition planning experiences of Latino/a youth with disabilities through traditions, such as individual versus collectivist focus and a strong cultural work ethic. Cultural context also influenced these transition planning experiences through family expectations around independent living, employment and education. Finally, cultural context impacted these experiences through language, in terms of translation needs and services as well as the strengths inherent in being bilingual.

In RQ3, I found that transition planning experiences of Latino/a youth with disabilities were influenced by individual factors primarily along the lines of risk and resiliency and protective factors. The concept of youth empowerment or disempowerment in terms of access to choices and agency became salient throughout my investigation.

Finally, for RQ 4, Community and cultural contexts influenced individual factors in several ways. Community influences fell into two broad categories: risk-related influences and protective influences. Cultural influences impacted individual factors in two primary ways: through collectivistic focus of the Latino/a culture and through cultural understandings and expectations surrounding disabilities.

I identified several themes of needs that cut across all four research questions and all sources – staff, youth and families. These needs can be grouped into five main themes:

documentation, culturally appropriate practices, language services, family participation and work related experiences.

In terms of documentation, staff and families reported challenges in providing services to students who are undocumented citizens, or who are not citizens. Staff and families also reported difficulties in keeping students engaged in learning when the documentation they need to attend college is lacking. Issues surrounding cultural appropriateness of goals and practices occurred in the realms of both processes and skills and training for staff. The area of language services includes both the need for appropriate types of language classes for Latino youth, as well as the ever-present need for more translation and interpretation services. The issue of family participation includes helping families understand the processes and where they are expected or invited to participate, as well as how their participation will help their students. Families, youth and staff all identified the area of work-related experiences as an area of need.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of this study. First, the setting, only one school district, resulted in a smaller sample size than one would hope for across all groups. Although sample size is not considered important in most qualitative work, I had hoped for more students and families in order to give voice to the marginalized, disenfranchised members of the Latino community. Furthermore, there are limitations inherent in using a single district for a case study, such as sample size, specific district characteristics and a lack of comparison groups. Conversely, there also are natural strengths to working with

only one school district, like the depth of understanding of what's really happening in the district that one can achieve while working so closely with one group of people.

Second, although I had access to the majority of key staff members, the issue of gaining access to youth and families encountered difficulty at every turn. I am not a district employee, and therefore could not recruit families directly and had to rely upon district staff to do the recruitment for me. Although the staff members were supportive, the recruitment process was complex and cumbersome and may have resulted in fewer study participants in the family and youth groups. Moreover, the necessary involvement of district personnel in the recruitment process may also have created a situation in which families and youth did not feel that they could talk to me as someone separate from the school district.

Third, I had little data from Latino youth, which was disappointing for a study focusing on identifying and describing the needs of Latino youth with disabilities. When I finally did attract the youth into the focus group and asked them the questions I had developed, they didn't talk very much. The few quotes included in the previous narrative represent the majority of the lengthy portions of the transcripts from the youth focus group. It is possible that the focus group technique, which worked so well for the families, may have stifled some of the sharing in the youth group. In retrospect, I did not take into account enough the stigma associated with having a disability, especially during adolescence. These Latino students with disabilities are twice marginalized: once by their membership in a culture that differs from the dominant white American culture and once by their disability. Many of these students are marginalized a third time by the fact that

English is not their first language. All of this interaction of difference is occurring at the same time as adolescence – a time in which many youth are seeking ways to fit in with others, not to be separate from them. Latino youth with disabilities might have been more likely to participate in individual interviews – situations in which they would not have been identified to potential peers as having a disability.

Fourth, although I met with members of the Latino community to work on my instrument development, I did so with a set list of questions I wanted to ask. It is possible that my own culture and intentions caused me to ask the wrong questions. More involvement of community members from the ground up about issues facing the Latino community as a whole and Latinos with disabilities in particular may have resulted in a different set of questions and a more rich data collection experience. Along the same lines, my own lack of fluency in Spanish may have positioned me as an outsider from the beginning and decreased the willingness of youth and families to share information with me.

Fifth, Latino youth experience higher dropout rates than do whites (Jones & Castillo, 2003). I have no information on Latinos who leave school, and no access to those individuals who could illuminate the reasons and details of that process. It is possible that there are needs present for these early leavers that, if addressed, could improve the likelihood of these students graduating.

A sixth limitation, specifically with regards to the staff values and behaviors expressed during focus groups, is that the focus groups were building specific. All staff members in a given high school setting met during the same focus group meeting.

Although this arrangement was most convenient for staff and the district, it also may have impacted the information certain staff members were willing to share with regard to values and behaviors. For example, staff members in a group with colleagues voicing negative views of the Latino community may have engaged in socially desirable responses rather than voice their own opinions counter to those of their colleagues. Conversely, staff in groups who seemed more supportive of and dedicated to the Latino community may also have stifled responses and impressions counter to those voiced by others within the group.

Finally, although this is a qualitative study, one last limitation is the lack of a comparison group against which I could compare the experiences. It would be interesting to compare the experiences of the group of Latino youth with disabilities and their families to two different comparison groups: a group of Latino youth without disabilities and their families and a group of dominant culture youth with disabilities.

Evolution of the Study

In spite of the above-mentioned limitations, this study identified several key themes in terms of the transition needs for Latino youth with disabilities. My initial conceptual model based on the literature (Figure 3) proposed that community context, cultural context and individual factors existed as three discrete influences upon transition planning. Based upon my data collection and analysis, I have developed a second model illustrating the relationship of these three spheres to the transition planning needs of Latino youth with disabilities and their influence on the transition planning process (Figure 6). The data revealed that the only needs identified were present across all three

contexts: community context, cultural context and individual context. Therefore, the transition planning needs for Latino youth with disabilities identified by this study exist only in the area where all three contexts converge (the area occupied by all three spheres in Figure 6: Community Context, Cultural Context and Individual Factors.

Each of the three interlocking circles represents what the initial conceptual model (Figure 3) illustrated as discrete entities: community context, cultural context and individual factors. In this study, I investigated each of these spheres by interviewing participants who might reside in each circle: staff from the community context, family from the culture context and individual youth from the realm of individual factors. I also crafted questions that would probe participants' knowledge of and experiences with each of these contexts. The transition planning needs identified were mentioned by members of each group and/or were mentioned within the context of each sphere.

If these needs -- identified across all three contexts and all four research questions – were addressed, each of the three separate contexts would be impacted significantly. However, because the needs are about transition planning services, the majority of the work that could be done to address these needs would take place in the community context, specifically the school context, where transition services are provided.

Key Themes: Needs Present across Groups

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the transition planning needs of Latino youth with disabilities who are transitioning from school to adulthood. Through interviews and focus groups, staff, families and students identified needs within the context of transition planning and special education services. Many of these needs are

based upon the challenges identified in Chapter III, above. Every key theme described below is a need identified by study participants in all three of the circles in Figure 6. The needs described and discussed below represent the area of overlap of all three circles – community, culture and individual – these transition planning needs exist where all three circles unite. I identified these five themes directly from the data, they therefore represent an integration of my findings rather than my professional recommendations (present in the *Implications for Practice* and *Suggestions for Future Research* sections that follow).

There are many similarities in the experiences of Latino families and those of families from dominant culture low SES backgrounds. Both groups, for example, experience miscommunications with school personnel and are often misunderstood by school staff (McLoyd, 1998; Murnane, 2007; Rouse & Barrow, 2006). Furthermore, the lack of parental involvement reported by participants in this study mirrors thehe lack of parental involvement in families of low SES backgrounds (Rouse & Barrow, 2006). However, there are certain challenges faced by Latino families that are distinct to this community that must be addressed: specifically in the areas of documentation for citizenship, cultural differences and language barriers.

Documentation – Citizenship

Staff, families and students all need information on how to get students documented for citizenship. Families need guidance navigating the documentation process. Staff members need to know what resources are available within the community to help students who are un-documented. Staff members also need to know the basic processes to help kids get documented and the district would benefit from a liaison

through some social service agency that could help connect families and staff to programs to begin this process.

Families shared the frustrations of the staff members around citizenship and documentation. Families wonder how to get their children documented and how to continue to keep their children interested in school when they have no documentation to attend college. One family talked about a young man they knew who worked to pay his own way through college and never had to show a social security number until he had his degree and wanted to work. Other parents described arguments with their children about documentation. Their kids wanted to know "what's the point" of continuing to work hard in school if they won't be able to work here. "Even if I do graduate from college, without a social security number, I can't work here anyway" (Latino youth). Parents asked about programs for documentation for their children. This area continued to be a source of frustration for families, staff and students.

Culturally Appropriate Goals and Practices

The second area of need participants identified is that of culturally appropriate practices, including transition goals. Many staff members reported using the "same transition planning process for every student." The findings of this study indicate that Latino students differ from students from the dominant culture in ways that have significant implications for transition planning goals. For example, independent living, the very flagship goal of special education services, may be a culturally inappropriate goal for Latino youth with disabilities whose parents expect them to live at home until they marry. With these potential cultural differences in mind, goals written around the

transition area of independent living for Latino youth must take on a different flavor; transition professionals must look toward goals that include living "independently" without the environment of living alone. Moreover, to increase parental support and buy-in of such goals, transition specialists need to communicate to parents that such goals are to prepare their students to live without their parents after marriage, or to be as self-sufficient as possible within their families' homes.

One way to ensure that culture is taken into account in appropriate and meaningful ways is to make certain that staff have the necessary skills and training to be culturally competent educators. Lacking basic information about such potential differences creates an environment in which transition professionals with the best of intentions may alienate clients and their families by creating inappropriate goals. If transition professionals are aware that such cultural differences may be present, they can be prepared to create goals that are appropriate to the cultural values of each individual client.

Required cultural competence training for all staff. Currently, cultural competence trainings are optional. The district requires staff to attend a given number of trainings a year, but the staff members themselves choose which trainings to attend. This results in cultural competence trainings that are much like "preaching to the choir." One multicultural staff member described these trainings:

> You go to these trainings and you see all these nice people, but they are the same nice people who are there every time. And they are all the people who already recognize the problem and are already trying to help find solutions. They aren't the people who need to have these trainings. – Multicultural liaison

Staff members who complained the most about lack of family involvement or interest in student success (specifically with regard to Latino families) are the same people who said that they "did that training in college, because everyone had to" (Special Education staff member).

Minorities in positions of power. Special education staff, school psychologists and administrators all recognize the need for staff members that more accurately represent the student population. If the student population in the district is almost 30 percent non-white (Table 1), it would make sense for the staff population to mirror this demographic, but this is not the case. One multicultural staff member suggested that the problem is more deeply systemic than simply the district level and centers around a deficit of college graduates from minority (especially Latino/a) backgrounds. This individual recommends that the district invest now in the students who are here, are bilingual, and bicultural.

> Hopefully, some of our graduates will go on to college and will come back to work here, because they have been here and they know what it's like and what the community needs. But I think it would be great if the district were able to help them in some way, to support them in their education enough to get them graduated and get them into college.

It may be that the best way to get representation of minority communities in the staff pool is to use a "grow your own" method suggested here. An active recruitment and financial support program could improve the district opportunities for staff members from diverse cultural and linguistic background.

Language Services

Participants identified several needs in the areas of language services. As described in the findings chapter, there is a need for more translation and interpretation

services, which I will discuss at greater length below. First, I want to address a need participants identified that surprised me.

Spanish classes for native speakers. Spanish is often an oral language for Latino/a students. Many of them do not read or write in Spanish and therefore struggle in English. Staff, parents and students identified a need for Spanish classes for native speakers. A bilingual, bicultural staff member points out that regular high school Spanish classes can act as a risk factor for native speakers, because "once they get that first F in Spanish, they are more willing to drop out." Staff further point out that being bilingual is a benefit, a marketable skill for students, but that being bicultural, bilingual and *bi-literate* would improve the chances for employment tenfold.

Native speakers of Spanish may have the oral language skills, but they often lack basic grammar and literacy skills. Furthermore, as several community members pointed out, if native speaking students could be exposed to Spanish literature, they could improve their cultural identity and self esteem about being Latino and recognize the contributions made to the arts and the world by people who came from the same backgrounds.

Translation/Interpretation services. Families and staff alike have identified a definite need for translation and interpretation services within the district. Translation services and bilingual staff members need not be bicultural, but fluent or at least aware of their limitations. Members of the dominant culture who are bilingual or have some Spanish language skills are also welcome and helpful additions to the translation pool.

> Interviewer: Is it helpful to have someone who is from the dominant culture, but who is bilingual? Parent: Yes! Just anybody who would be able to say: Ok, look, I'm not Latino, but I speak Spanish. I'm willing to compromise. I'll teach you some English; you teach me some of your culture.

Help to Increase Family Participation

Staff and families alike identified the lack of family participation as a challenge. Some staff members attributed this lack of participation to a deficiency in interest on behalf of the families; others recognized a lack of accessibility of services. Families identified a lack of information and knowledge about where to go for answers.

> I need more information. I mean, I'm getting all this information from [the multicultural liaison], but what happens when I leave? Where am I going to go? Who am I going to ask? …we need someone to help us understand when we need to be involved and to help the school understand that we work during the day. Some of us work at night, too.
> – Mother in the family group
> *When this mother spoke, everyone else agreed vehemently.*

Families need some sort of navigator to help them understand the areas where they can get involved and what the school expects of them. A school psychologist explained part of the cultural expectation that creates a difference, "parents also believe that the school has the full responsibility for teaching their kids, so they don't really think of themselves as part of the system." Conversely, the parents who participated in the family focus group were very involved and interested in their children's education, but some don't know where to turn for answers. One mother explained, "I always ask the teachers about after graduation – what to do, scholarships and all of that. I've been trying to keep up."

Navigating SPED services. Families need help navigating and participating in the process of special education services. Understanding and participating in special

education services is an issue for all families, regardless of culture, race, SES, religion, or ethnicity (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1988; Simeonsson, Edmondson, Smith, Carnahan, & Bucy, 1995; Harry, 2008) Families do not know where to go or who to ask for help. They often do not understand what services their children are entitled to under special education law or how their involvement in educational processes may help their children. Some staff members from the dominant culture interpret a lack of parental involvement as a lack of parental interest; this is a misunderstanding. A staff member who is also a parent and a community member explains below.

> There is nothing in a school for a Latino family that is more respectable than a teacher. Knowledge, to us, is like gold. And when parents don't speak – when they look at the teacher and nod, it doesn't mean that they're being disrespectful or that they have no questions. It means that they're feeling belittled because they're not understanding what the teacher is saying because they didn't have the education or they had first or second grade education and they feel they can't intelligently enough say what they have to say.

Helping parents to not only understand the services available, but also the processes for obtaining these services, who to talk to, and where to go for answers, will only benefit the students, the staff and the community.

Work Experiences and Community Opportunities

Another area of need identified by staff, families and students is that of work experiences and other opportunities. Families and youth don't just want increased work opportunities for students with disabilities, they also want increased extra-curricular activities during the summer and after school. In the following sections, I will explore the need for community-base work experiences and discuss the parental request for more extra-curricular options.

Increased community-based work experiences. Staff and families identified a need for increased community-based work experiences. One ELL teacher from an alternative setting explained that he was trying to build connections with Latino/a business owners so that he could find some job shadows and placements for ELL kids that would not require a bilingual EA. Transition specialists at a mainstream high school reported a lack of job shadows and work experience opportunities, but did not identify themselves as the source of procurement for these placements. Special education staff at the CTP reported that they are always looking for competitive employment opportunities that match the strengths and interests of the students with whom they work. Staff feelings of responsibility for such experiences differ by site, as do the attitudes about whose responsibility it should be.

Along the same lines as the challenge created by the deficit in resources, staff expressed a need for more time and personnel to help students navigate the "real world" of work. In order to be successful on the job, students need to understand how to deal with the influences of coworkers, how to fill out pre-employment paperwork, what to do when you have to call in, the importance of punctuality and hygiene, among other things. These issues may be glossed over during transition curriculum, but some students need more support and targeted instruction in many of these areas. Therefore, the need exists not only for more work experience opportunities, but for more personnel to support the students during their work experiences.

More extra-curricular options. During the family focus group, parents expressed a need for more extra-curricular opportunities for students during the summer and after

school. A mother asked for classes in dance, leadership, community integration, etc. Other parents in the group expressed that they felt that there were opportunities available but that most of the information that comes home about summer opportunities is in English, so the need for more translation services arose again around information coming home. Still more parents wanted more opportunities for their students to be involved in university and community college based summer programs. Several families had previous summer involvement with such programs, but reported that only the students with higher grades and few or no office behavior referrals could participate in these programs. They saw this restriction as blocking students who are more at risk from potentially protective experiences.

Implications for Practice

Special education and transition professionals have needs that require the investment of time and money from the district. As is the reality in any institution, there are systemic limitations to what types and how much change is possible. Addressing the need for more translation services would go a long way toward ameliorating many of the major challenges faced by staff and families in the provision of transition planning services to Latino youth with disabilities. However, there may be reasons, including budgetary concerns, why these seemingly simple fixes are not being done. There is a need for policy analysis to guide the type of systemic changes implied by the needs identified above. Moreover, before any of the all too often limited time, money and resources are invested, further analysis should confirm the most critical areas of need of

those identified herein. That said, what can individual educators do to improve their own ability to provide services to Latino youth with disabilities and their families?

Seek Training and Develop Skills

Transition and special education professionals can choose to seek out training in cultural competence. We can request more information about the cultures with whom we work. We can forge alliances with the Latino community to find their own cultural brokers and can create bonds with the bilingual bicultural staff available within the district that go beyond co-workers, but become colleagues striving toward equal access to education for Latino/a youth. We can also seek out opportunities to learn Spanish. These opportunities could come from rapport-building time spent with students who are bilingual, but are more comfortable in Spanish. Students have a lot they can teach us as well.

Consider Yourself the First Line of Action

Although there is a need for an outside person to help families understand the processes of special education and transition within a district, we needn't wait for the system to change in order to meet the needs of this population. Educational professionals can partner with families and bilingual bicultural staff to understand the areas where families lack information and create brochures or handouts that help describe the process and tell families when and how to get involved.

Transition and special education professionals can also become the first line of access to increased community work experience opportunities. By forming relationships with community members and utilizing the bilingual bicultural staff members in the

district, special education and transition staff can open doors for many more community work experiences for all of the students on their caseloads. Developing personal contacts in a collectivistic culture like the Latino community can help transition professionals create alliances that will improve their access to work experiences for their students.

Strive to Create a Protective Service Web

Staff can work towards creating an environment in which all of the services provided serve as protective factors. Guiding questions in this process include: How can we help students feel a sense of belonging in the community? How can we give students a sense of importance in the school building? What choices can we provide to these students to increase their sense of their own agency? How can we help student communicate their needs and wants to their teachers, their parents, their employers?

Suggestions for Future Research

There is a dearth of research on the topics of Latinos and disability, Latinos in transition, and Latinos with disabilities in transition. More research is needed. Future research should perhaps utilize individual interviews with youth, or a focus group, individual interview, repeat focus group format with the same youth. It would help to illuminate the lived experiences of Latino youth with disabilities to conduct case studies with the individual youth, themselves, as the cases, rather than a district-level case study. Future research may obtain better information by taking more time to build rapport with youth and families prior to asking questions. Improved incentives would also benefit future studies. I do not feel that the incentives I offered were enough to make youth who

are doubly and sometimes triply marginalized want to take part in the study, so an increase or adjustment of incentives for youth participation is indicated.

Researchers should work more with community leaders to develop the study, to identify needs and issues for the Latino community and to recruit study participants. Understanding of the processes and experiences specific to this population would be enhanced by the use of comparison groups. Future research could compare the transition planning experiences of Latino youth with disabilities to several different groups. It would be interesting to have a group of Latino youth without disabilities to discuss needs, wants and issues around transitioning from high school to adult life. Furthermore, many (but not all) of the Latino families involved in this study came from lower SES backgrounds. Future research should attempt to tease out the issues of SES versus the issues of culture as they relate to the access and agency of Latino Families in the transition process. Furthermore, future research should investigate the transition services provided to Latino families from higher SES groups and their relative satisfaction with such services.

Because there are many similarities in the experiences of marginalized groups, research should focus on comparing the transition planning experiences of youth from different marginalized group backgrounds. Potential comparison groups include: dominant culture youth from low SES backgrounds, African American youth from high, middle and low SES backgrounds, Asian youth from high, middle and low SES backgrounds, and youth from different refugee populations.

The Latino community is growing, nationwide, and consequently, the number of Latino students with disabilities in our schools will continue to increase. Research that adds to our understanding of the needs of this population will serve to not only improve the quality of education we are able to provide, but also the quality of life of our community as a whole.

Summary and Conclusion

This study identified specific transition planning needs for Latino youth with disabilities and contributes to a presently sparse body of research on Latino youth with disabilities in transition from high school to adult life. The key needs identified fall into five main categories: documentation for citizenship, culturally appropriate goals and practices, language services, family involvement and access and work and community opportunities. The findings presented here extend the findings of the limited research available about this group. There are implications for changes in how services are provided to Latino students at both the systemic (district) and individual (educational professional) levels. More research is needed to illuminate the experiences of Latino youth and the interactions of cultural and community values with educational systems and services. The Latino population is the most rapidly increasing cultural ethnic minority in the U.S. Creating systems that truly meet the educational needs of our population – including those who are Latino -- is of paramount importance to those individuals' future, but also has critical implications for our future as individuals, as communities, and as a global society.

APPENDIX A

FIGURES

Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's (1999) Ecological Model

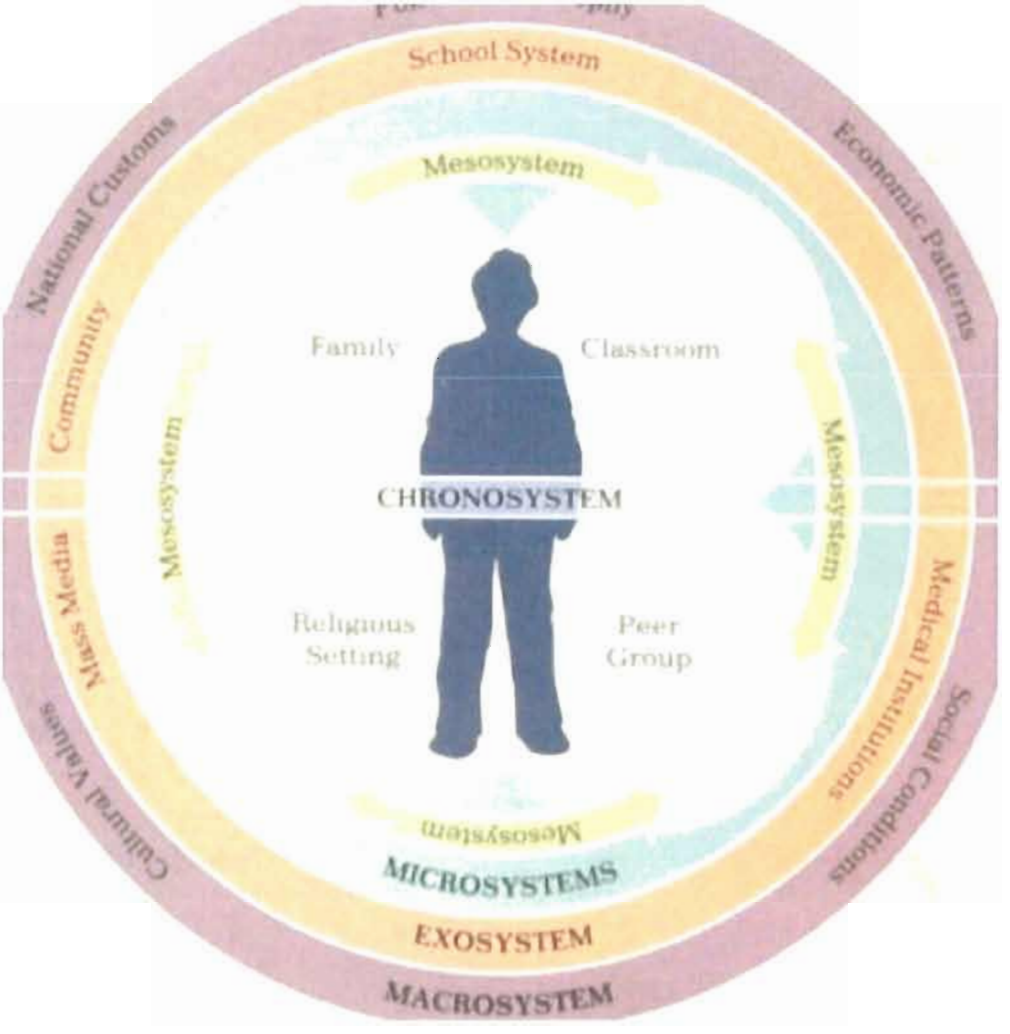


Figure 2: Halpern's (1985) Transition Model and its Relationship to Bronfenbrenner's (1998) Spheres of Influence

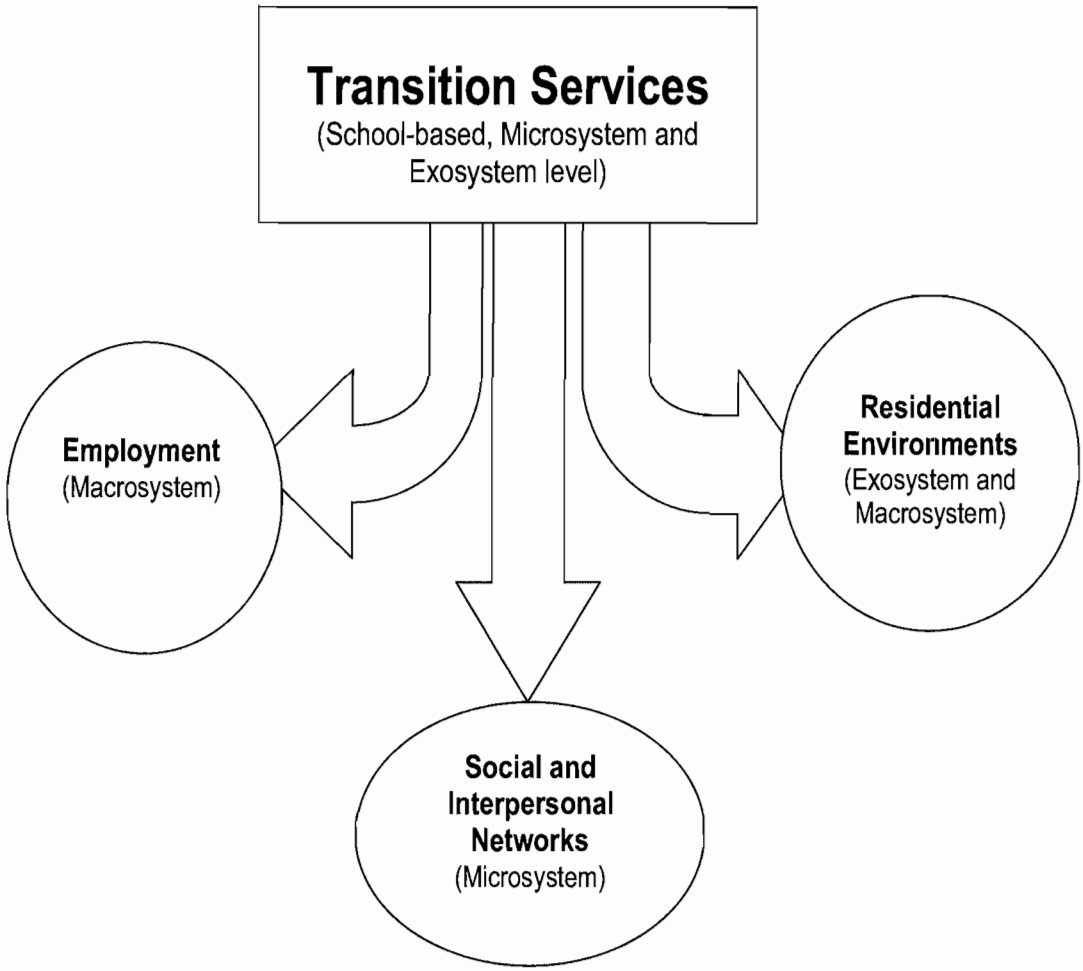


Figure 3: Conceptual Model

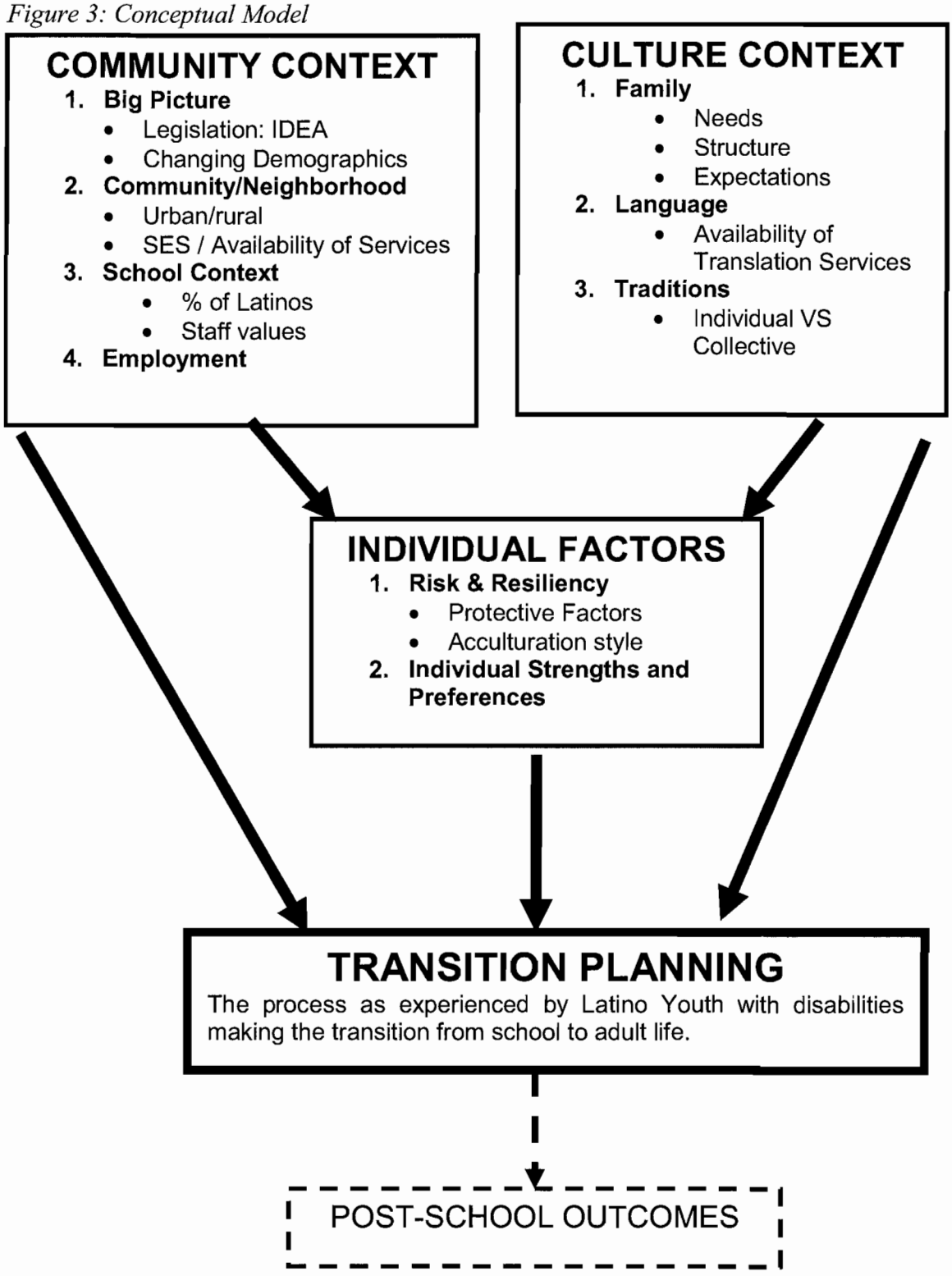


Figure 4: ELL SPED Flowchart

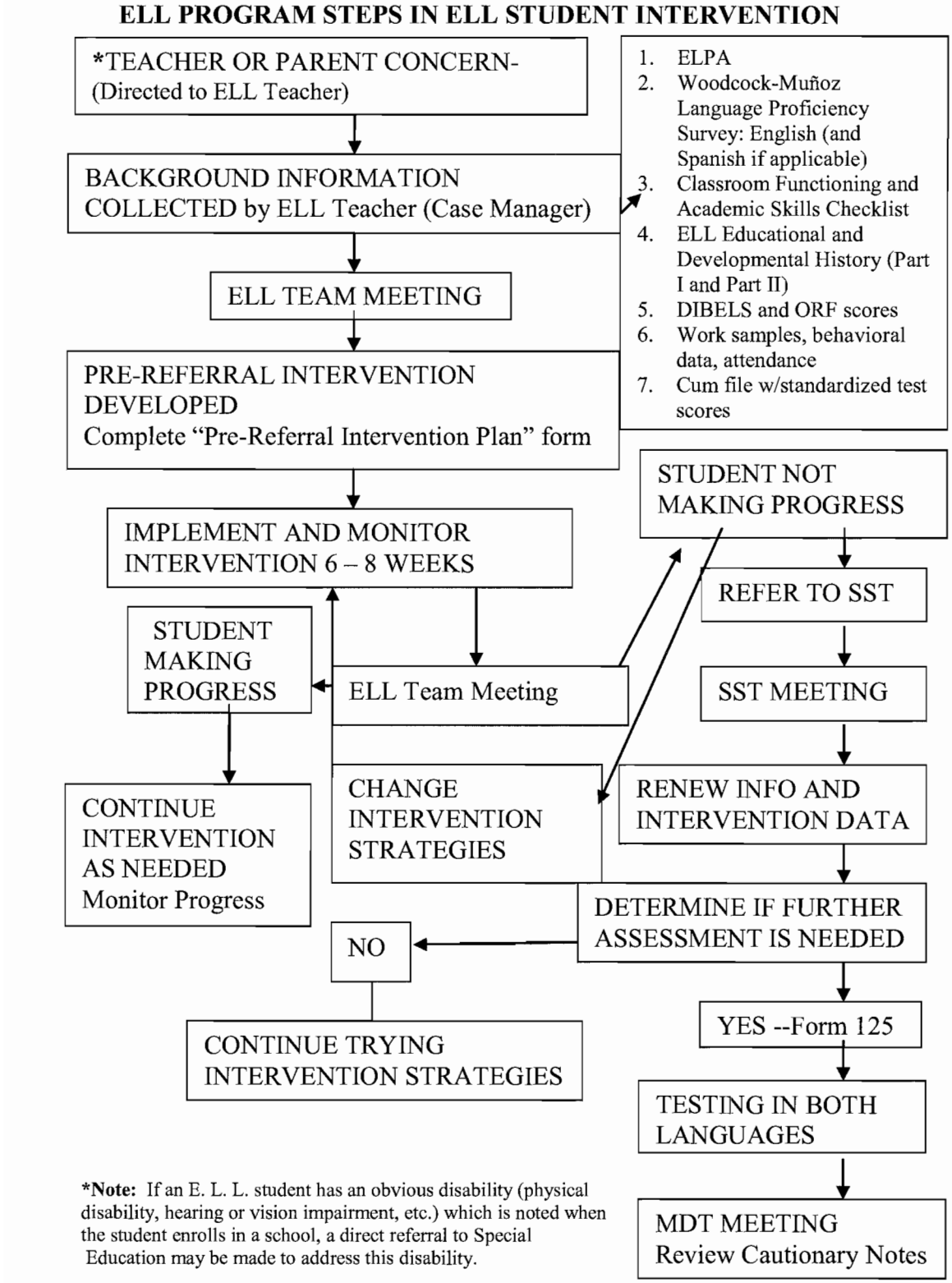


Figure 5: Provision of Employment Services Flowchart

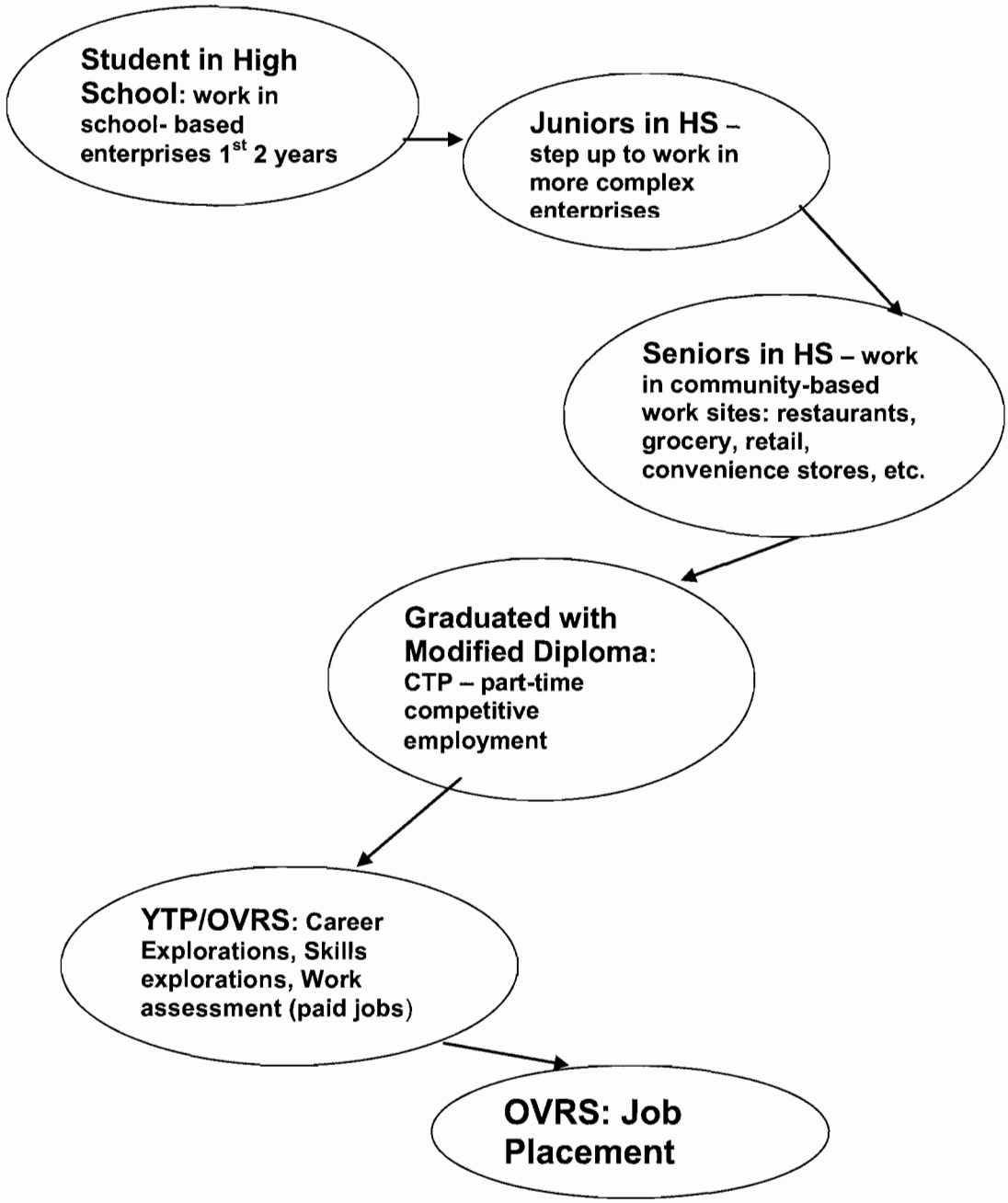
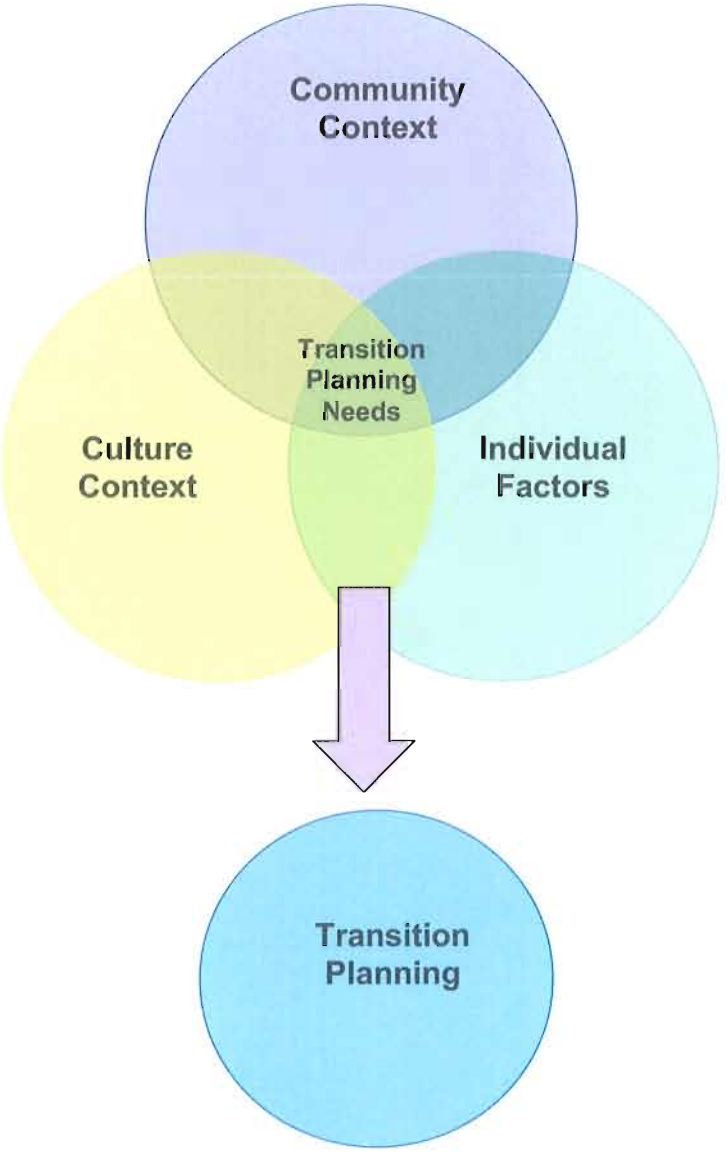


Figure 6: Conceptual Model of Relationships between Contexts and Needs



APPENDIX B

TABLES

Table 5: Descriptors Used in Literature Review

Descriptors Used	Search Number																	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Transition	X		X	X	X	X		X		X	X						X	
Latino / Hispanic	X	X			X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X			
Youth						X			X	X					X			
Adolescent / Adolescence		X		X	X		X				X	X		X				X
Resilience / resiliency													X	X	X	X		
Disability	X	X	X				X	X	X			X					X	X
Mexican			X	X														
Diversity										X	X	X				X	X	X

Table 6: Themes by Context across Articles

Authors	Topic	Themes of Context		
		Community	Culture	Individual
Blue-Banning, Turnbull, & Pereira	Parental expectations for Hispanic youth w/disabilities	YES	YES	YES
D'Imperio, Dubow, & Ippolito	Stress-affected urban adolescents	YES	YES	YES
Franquiz	Academic resilience of Chicano/a youth and school programs	YES	YES	YES
Geenen, Powers & Lopez-Vasquez	Multicultural aspects of parental involvement in transition planning	YES	YES	YES
Geenen, Powers & Lopez-Vasquez	Barriers and strategies for parental involvement for culturally diverse youth	YES	YES	
Geenen, Powers, Lopez-Vasquez, & Bersani	Promoting transition of minority adolescents	YES	YES	YES
Gonzales, Dumka, Deardorff, Carter, & McCray	Improving outcomes for Mexican-American adolescents in transition	YES	YES	YES
Holleran & Waller	Ethnic identity and resilience for Chicano/a youth	YES	YES	YES
Moneta, Schneider, & Csikszentmihalyi	Self-concept and self-worth in urban adolescents	YES	YES	YES
Rueda, Monzo, Shapiro, Gomez, & Blacher	Latina mothers of youth with disabilities	YES	YES	YES
Salas-Provance, Erickson, & Reed	Ideas of disability from four generations of one Hispanic family	YES	YES	YES
Sy	Family and work influences on Latina transition	YES	YES	
Taylor-Ritzler, Balcazar, Keys, Hayes, Garate-Serafini & Espino	Promoting attainment of transition related goals for low-income minority youth with disabilities	YES	YES	YES
Trainor	Self-determination perceptions and behaviors for diverse students with LD in transition	YES	YES	YES
Williams, Alvarez & Hauck	Latina youth, resilience and acculturation	YES	YES	YES

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Staff Focus Group Protocol

Introduction: *"Thanks for coming. My name is Tiana Povenmire-Kirk, and I'm from the University of Oregon. I asked you to come here today to help us get a better understanding of how the Transition Program here in Springfield School District serves Latino youth and their families. You're here today because your input is really important to me, and by sharing your thoughts and experiences, I can get a more detailed and accurate picture of how theses services are provided, what's working and what's not and how I can help support you with resources, information, and training."*

"I'd like to hear from everyone in the group, but your participation in this group is purely voluntary. I want you to think of this more as a conversation than questions you have to answer, so feel free to contribute when you want to. Because this is a group interview, known as a focus group, others in the group will hear what you say. I will not share your information with anyone else, but I can't guarantee that other group members will not repeat what they hear in this group. Therefore, there is a risk of a loss of confidentiality. If you want to tell me something but don't want to say it in front of the group, we can set up a time to meet individually so you can share your information Are there any questions before we start?"

"Before we begin with the questions, please introduce yourselves, speaking your name clearly for the recorder. I'll start: My name is Tiana"

1. Describe the transition planning process in your district.
    - How are students identified for transition services?
    - How do you identify goals and post-school plans for youth?
    - How does that work? In groups? Teams?
    - How does that look for Latino youth?

2. What are your school's transition goals for students in your program?
    - How well do you feel the school's transition goals align with those of the youth? Why?

3. How do you work with families to help them prepare their students for transition to adult roles?

4. Tell me about any challenges or barriers you face working with Latino youth and their families.

- What pieces are missing from your framework to better understand and provide services to members of the Latino community?
- What types of support, resources or training would help fill in these gaps?

5. If you could change one thing about the transition process in your district, with regards to providing services to Latino youth, what would it be?

6. Is there anything else you think would be important for me to know about this topic?

Conclusion: "Alright, we're done with our questions. Do you have any questions for me? Thank you so much for your time. Your input has been very helpful for us to get a better understanding of your school's service to Latino youth."

Family Focus Group Protocol

Introduction: *"Thanks for coming. My name is Tiana Povenmire-Kirk and this is _____, and we're from the University of Oregon. We asked you to come here today to help us get a better understanding of how the Youth Transition Program here in _____ School District serves Latino youth and their families. You're here today because a family member with a disability who participated in a youth focus group identified you as someone they wanted us to speak with about your thoughts and experiences, we can get a more detailed and accurate picture of how theses services are provided, what's working and what's not and how we can help support you."*

"We'd like to hear from everyone in the group, but your participation in this group is purely voluntary. We want you to think of this more as a conversation than questions you have to answer, so feel free to contribute when you want to. Because this is a group interview, known as a focus group, others in the group will hear what you say. I will not share your information with anyone else, but I can't guarantee that other group members will not repeat what they hear in this group. Therefore, there is a risk of a loss of confidentiality. If you want to tell me something but don't want to say it in front of the group, we can set up a time to meet individually so you can share your information Are there any questions before we start?"

"Before we begin with the questions, please introduce yourselves, speaking your name clearly for the recorder. I'll start: My name is Tiana"

First, I'm going to ask you some general questions

1. How many children are in your family? How old are they?

2. How long have you lived here in Anytown? What is that like?

3. Tell me about who has helped you prepare for your child's life after high school. How have they helped you?

Next, I'm going to ask you some questions about your experiences with the high school services and programs.

4. What help have you received from the school to prepare your child for graduation and adulthood? How has that worked?

5. What are the school's goals for your child after graduation? How do they match what you would like to see for your child?

6. What does the school do to deal with the needs of youth that are non-white? How's that working?

Now, I'm going to ask you some questions about the future.

7. What do you hope your child is doing right after high school graduation? What about furhter in the future?

- Do you see your child living on his or her own in the future?

8. What are your plans for the typical kids in your family after high school graduation? What about further in the future?

9. If you could get your school to change one thing about the way they work with Latino families, what would it be?

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Conclusion: "Ok, we're done with our questions. Do you have any questions for me? Thank you so much for your time. Your input has been very helpful for us to get a better understanding of your school's service to Latino youth."

Youth Focus Group Protocol

Introduction: *"Thanks for coming. My name is Tiana Povenmire-Kirk and this is _____, and we're from the University of Oregon. We asked you to come here today to help us get a better understanding of how the Youth Transition Program here in _____ School District serves Latino youth and their families. You're here today because your input is really important to us, and by sharing your thoughts and experiences, we can get a more detailed and accurate picture of how theses services are provided, what's working and what's not and how we can help support you."*

"We'd like to hear from everyone in the group, but your participation in this group is purely voluntary. We want you to think of this more as a conversation than questions you have to answer, so feel free to contribute when you want to. Because this is a group interview, known as a focus group, others in the group will hear what you say. I will not share your information with anyone else, but I can't guarantee that other group members will not repeat what they hear in this group. Therefore, there is a risk of a loss of confidentiality. If you want to tell me something but don't want to say it in front of the group, we can set up a time to meet individually so you can share your information Are there any questions before we start?"

"Before we begin with the questions, please introduce yourselves, speaking your name clearly for the recorder. I'll start: My name is Tiana"

First, I'm going to ask you some questions about yourself and your family.

1. Tell me about your family and the neighborhood where you grew up? Tell me about where you live now?

2. Tell me about your culture? How would you describe your culture to someone who knows nothing about you?

Now, I want to move on to some questions about your experiences in school.

3. Who's helping you figure out what you want to do after you graduate? Tell me about that.

4. What types of work experiences have you had?
   - What's your favorite part of these experiences?
   - What's your least favorite part?

5. What's your favorite class in school? Why?

6. What's the hardest thing about being in High School?

7. What do people at the school expect from you after you finish high school? How does that agree with what you want for yourself?

8. What does your school do to help address the needs of students that aren't white? How's that working?

Now, I'd like to ask you some questions about your thoughts on the future.

9. What do you want to be doing right after you graduate from high school? What about further in the future?

10. Tell me about the things you are good at? What types of things do you really like to do?

11. If you knew a younger student who was just getting ready to start high school, what advice would you give them? What should they know?

12. If you could tell your teachers one thing about working with Latino youth, what would it be?

13. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

Conclusion: "Ok, we're done with our questions. Do you have any questions for me? Thank you so much for your time. Your input has been very helpful for us to get a better understanding of your school's service to Latino youth."

STAFF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction: *"Thank you for taking time to meet with me. My name is Tiana Povenmire-Kirk and I'm from the University of Oregon. I asked you to meet with me today to help me get a better understanding of how Springfield School District serves Latino youth and their families. Your input is really important to me, and by sharing your thoughts and experiences, I can get a more detailed and accurate picture of how theses services are provided, what's working and what's not and how we can help support you with resources, information, and training."*

"Do you have any questions for me before we start?"

1. Tell me about your position in Springfield School District.
    - What is your role?
    - Who do you work with?
    - Who supervises your position?
    - What is your favorite thing about your job?
    - What challenges do you face in your position?

2. Tell me about your experiences with Latino youth and their families?
    - What is the process for providing services to these students?
    - What works about this process?
    - What would you like to see happen differently? How?

3. Can you tell me about a time when you felt really successful in your work with Latino youth and their families?
    - What made that situation stand out?

4. Tell me about a time when you were really frustrated in your work with Latino youth and their families.
    - What challenges of barriers were present?
    - How could this situation be improved?

5. In your opinion, what changes, if any, would you like to see in the process for service provision to Latino youth and their families?

6. What specific training would support you in doing your job?

7. Is there anything you would like to tell me that we did not already cover?

"Those were all the questions I had for our interview today. Thank you for your time and thoughtful answers. Do you have any questions for me? Thank you again. Please feel free to contact me or my faulty supervisor, Dr. Lindstrom, at the numbers on your copy of the consent form if you have any questions or think of anything else."

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRES

Staff Demographic Questionnaire

Current Position_____

Years in position_____

Years in transition work (incl. current position) _____

Other positions held in transition work _____

High School/Site_____

Gender_____

Ethnicity_____

Family Demographic Questionnaire

Relationship to youth with a disability_____

Gender_____

Ethnicity_____

Age_____ School youth attends_____

Youth Demographic Questionnaire

School _____

Receiving (or received) YTP services? _____

Graduation year (anticipated or past) _____

Age_____ Gender_____ Ethnicity _____

Disability_____

Plans after Graduation _____

_____

May I contact your family members to invite them to participate in a family focus group? _____

Name of family member_____

Contact info_____

Name of family member_____

Contact info_____

Name of family member_____

Contact info_____

Name of family member_____

Contact info_____

Barriers to successful transition: mark an 'X' in the appropriate box – check as many as apply and provide any additional information in the space provided.

	Financial Concerns/ Poverty	
	Transportation Issues	
	Homelessness	
	Pregnant/Parenting	
	Limited Family involvement	
	Family Health Concerns	
	Difficult Family Circumstances	
	History of Student Substance Abuse	
	Adjudication	
	Student in Foster Care	
	Other	

Strengths: mark an 'X' in the appropriate box – check as many as apply and provide any additional information in the space provided.

	Family Support	
	Active/Motivated in School	
	Existence of Support Network	
	Good Communication Skills	
	Prior work experience	

	(paid or unpaid)	
	Engaged in Community Activities	
	Strong, Supportive relationship w/ at least one adult	
	Positive Approach to managing disability issues	
	Other	

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