

Realizing the American Dream: A Parent Education Program Designed to Increase Latino Family Engagement in Children's Education

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ABSTRACT

Grounded in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's parent involvement process model, the Realizing the American Dream (RAD) parent education program targets Latino parents' involvement beliefs and knowledge to enhance their involvement behaviors. Comparison of more than 2,000 parents' self-reported beliefs, knowledge, and behavior before and after RAD revealed large effect sizes for knowledge, moderate gains in involvement behaviors, and modest changes in beliefs. Postprogram behaviors were predicted by postprogram knowledge and beliefs, prior behaviors and beliefs, and family income. Observational data from 3 sites showed that RAD was implemented with fidelity. Implications for school practice and promoting Latino parent engagement are discussed.

KEY WORDS

Family engagement; parent involvement; Latinos; intervention programs; parent education; parents' knowledge; skills; and beliefs

Parents can make a positive difference in children's educational outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2007; Wilder, 2014), but *how* parent involvement translates into improved student engagement and achievement remains an outstanding question. Underscoring parents' unique and collaborative contributions to their children's schooling, evidence from the past decade has identified two notable ways in which parent involvement influences student outcomes.

One way parents make a difference is through their interactions with teachers. Positive teacher–parent interactions can enhance student learning and engagement (Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Crosnoe, 2009; Dearing, Kreider, & Weiss, 2008; Hill & Chao, 2009). Conversely, when home and school fail to productively overlap, student learning and motivation suffers (Barber & Olson, 2004; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Marchant, Paulson, & Rothlisberg, 2001; Wyrick & Rudasill, 2009). Clear understanding of the relationship between the quality of parent–teacher interactions and student outcomes is still emerging. Some argue that parent–teacher interactions enhance student outcomes by shaping teachers' perceptions of and expectations for students (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Others argue that parent–teacher interactions influence students' perceptions of their teachers, which in turn impacts the quality of classroom learning (Topor, Keane, Shelton, & Calkins, 2010). Whatever the specific paths of influence, there is consensus that parent–teacher interactions contribute in additive ways to student outcomes. That is, they make a difference to student outcomes over and above parents' and teachers' individual contributions.

Another way parents make a difference is through their interactions with their children. Research in this area affirms parents' unique role in supporting academic outcomes. For example, parents' expectations for their children's academic success predicted adolescents' mathematical skills and enrollment in postsecondary education, functioning separately from the influence of teacher expectations (Gregory & Huang, 2013; Gregory & Weinstein, 2004). Moreover, research in this area has

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articulated the powerful role of parents' subtle involvement behaviors (Jeynes, 2010). Hill and Tyson (2009) reviewed 50 parent involvement studies and found that parents' academic socialization practices (e.g., communicating their educational expectations, communicating the value or utility of education, fostering educational and occupational aspirations, and making preparations and plans for the future) were more strongly associated with positive middle school student outcomes than were parents' overt, academically focused practices (such as helping with homework). Similarly, Wilder's (2014) synthesis of nine meta-analyses of parent involvement revealed parental expectations as the most robust predictor of student achievement and homework involvement as the weakest predictor. The positive relationship between parent expectations and student achievement was consistent across grade levels and ethnic groups.

These findings and claims have implications for school efforts to harness parents' contributions to the enterprise of school. Specifically, they suggest that schools might profit from understanding that the tone of parents' engagement—not necessarily parents' knowledge and use of specific academic skills—is among the most important variables to target (Auerbach & Collier, 2012; Jeynes, 2010). If some of the most robust predictors of student achievement are within the grasp of all parents regardless of their financial or other resources, then increasing these forms of involvement among low-income and marginalized families should be a central aim of school practice and public policy.

Can parents learn about the subtle aspects of their involvement and in turn see increased use of these forms of involvement? Several investigators have shown that when parent education programs target *psychological* factors, such as parents' conceptions of the role they should play in their children's education, their knowledge and skills for involvement, and their aspirations for their children, parents can (e.g., Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2004; De Gaetano, 2007). For example, Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) found that after completing a parent education program that emphasized role construction for involvement, Latino parents reported initiating more communication between home and school and more communication with their child about the value and importance of education. In another study comparing outcomes for students whose parents did and did not complete the program, Chrispeels and Gonzalez (2004) found higher high school grade point average and college enrollment rates among program completers' children.

In theoretical terms, these findings are consistent with social cognitive perspectives on learning and development (Bandura, 1994) because they illustrate that changing behavior first requires changing beliefs. More practically, they underscore the promise of tackling dimensions of parent involvement that are both strongly related to student success and open to social influence (e.g., role is constructed in part through social interaction with others in specific contexts).

This article contributes to the literature on formal efforts to engage Latino parents in children's schooling by reporting results for a parent education program, Realizing the American Dream (RAD). Representing the translation of theory into practice, RAD's 10 2-hr sessions address constructs identified in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005) theoretical model of the parent involvement process. As seen in Figure 1, the model is a multitiered framework focused on six successive questions.

Level 1 of the model focuses on the question "Why do parents become involved?" and identifies psychological and contextual factors that predict parents' engagement. These factors include *parents' motivational beliefs* (i.e., their role construction and self-efficacy beliefs, or their confidence in their ability to be productively involved), *perceptions of invitations to become involved* (opportunities can be expressed by the child, teachers, and the school), and *life context* (e.g., parents' skills and knowledge). These Level 1 factors predict Level 2 of the model, which asks, "What do parents do when they are involved?" Level 2 articulates a range of four forms of involvement behaviors: expression of expectations and values, home-based activities, school-based activities, and communication with teachers and school personnel. These categories of involvement are further refined in the model's third level, which argues that these varied forms of parent involvement contain four active ingredients or psychological mechanisms of learning. Specifically, Level 3 argues that regardless of the kinds of activities they engage in, parents tend to use one or more of the basic learning

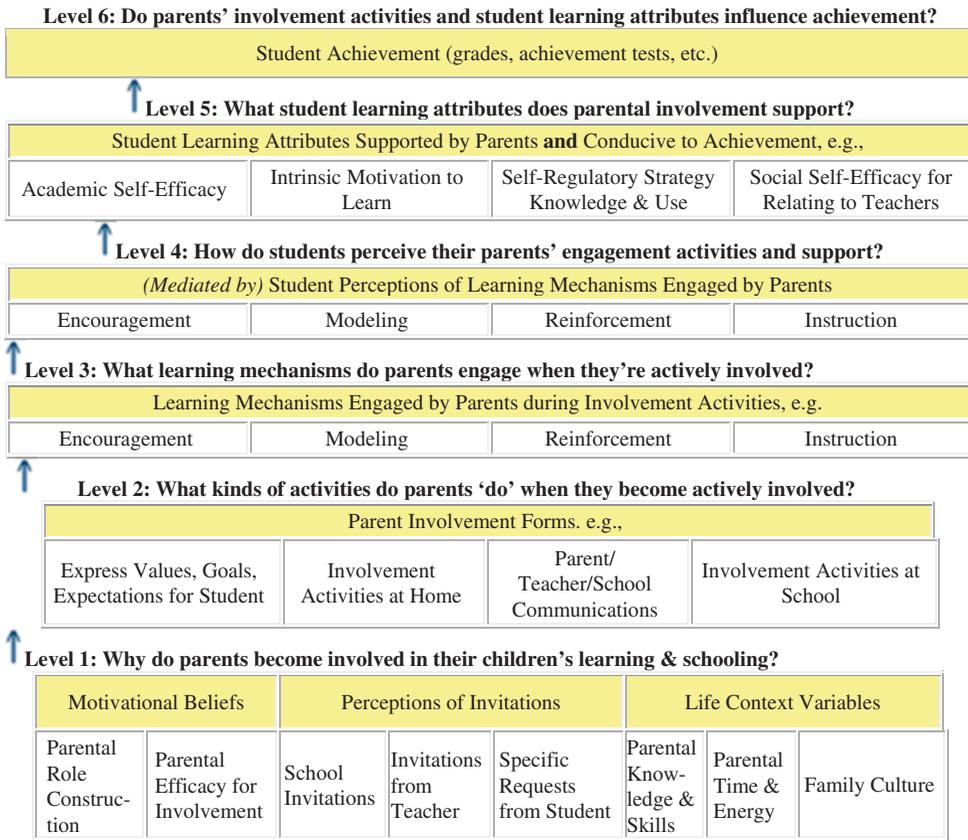


Figure 1. Model of the parental involvement process (adapted from Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005).

mechanisms of modeling, encouragement, reinforcement, and instruction. The model's culminating upper levels explain how parents' involvement behaviors and students' perceptions and attributes work together to influence student school outcomes.

The predictive validity of constructs at Level 1 of the model has been demonstrated across diverse demographic groups during the elementary and middle school years (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Lavenda, 2011). For example, in a study of nearly 900 parents representing a diverse array of ethnicities and economic resources, Green et al. (2007) found that the full set of Level 1 constructs predicted half of the variance in parents' home- and school-based involvement behaviors. Consistent with longstanding trends in the literature, these authors found higher rates of home-based than school-based involvement and decreases in both forms of involvement at the middle school level. A similar pattern was found for the subgroup of Latino families participating in their research: Parents were significantly more involved at home than at school (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011). Home-based involvement was operationalized narrowly in that research as helping with homework and talking with the child about the school day. Findings revealing strong levels of home-based involvement are important because they contradict the deficit models educators and schools can often hold about Latino families' engagement and the usefulness of school efforts designed to enhance their engagement (De Gaetano, 2007; Valencia, 2002).

Across tests of the model several consistencies have emerged. First, among the Level 1 constructs, parents' perceptions of invitations and opportunities to become involved is the most robust predictor

of parents' involvement, particularly their school-based involvement. Second, role construction and sense of efficacy for involvement play a smaller but important role in predicting parents' home-based involvement. Finally, family socioeconomic status has emerged as one of the weakest predictors of parents' home- and school-based involvement behaviors when Level 1 constructs are taken into account. These results suggest that targeting the psychological factors or motivations at Level 1 of the model is a practical and powerful means of enhancing parents' engagement or forms of behavior identified at Levels 2 and 3 of the model.

Consistent with this suggestion, Level 1 constructs of role, efficacy, and knowledge and skills are embedded across the RAD program. For example, multiple sessions emphasize parents' knowledge of basic elements of U.S. schooling (e.g., standardized testing, parent-teacher conferences), the importance of and strategies for working with their child's teacher and other school personnel, and ways to create positive interactions with their children at home. Reflecting the content at Levels 2 and 3, the RAD curriculum also emphasizes four ways in which parents can be productively involved: They can show their children the value of learning (modeling), they can support their children's motivation for school learning (encouragement), they can reward their children for effort and successful outcomes (reinforcement), and they can teach their children how to accomplish specific tasks (instruction).

Leveraging observational learning theory's emphasis on modeling (Bandura, 1994), each RAD program is taught by a trained facilitator whose demographics are similar to those of parents in the local school community. In this way, facilitators function as "cultural brokers" (Delgado-Gaitan, 1996, p. 28) between home and school. Classes are delivered onsite at the families' school and are offered in both Spanish and English. Sessions include an initial orientation, an interactive panel discussion with school principals, and a graduation ceremony. The curriculum's content and process is manualized and sequenced as follows:

- (1) Orientation
- (2) YOU make the difference!
- (3) Being a partner with your school
- (4) Academic standards and performance requirements
- (5) Success factors: communication and discipline
- (6) Success factors: self-esteem and motivation
- (7) Success factors: reading and responsibility
- (8) Your academic success plan
- (9) Community forum: parents, facilitators, and principal question-and-answer
- (10) Graduation ceremony

Since 2006 more than 16,000 parents of K-12 public school students have completed the RAD program. The majority of program completers are Latinos, many of whom are immigrants. The program has been offered in more than 190 unique schools in more than 45 Phoenix, Arizona, area school districts. This article has two goals. First, it introduces the RAD program and reports initial program evaluation efforts. Second, it uses pre- and post-RAD program parent surveys to describe the RAD program's impact on Latino parents' beliefs, knowledge, and involvement behaviors with an eye toward understanding what motivates positive change in their engagement practices. This work is important because previous research examining parents' motivations for involvement identified in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's process model, and in particular studies examining what drives Latino families' engagement, has been conducted via large-scale descriptive research. To my knowledge, RAD is the first formal effort to operationalize and test an intervention program built around the hypotheses inherent in a prominent process model of parent engagement. In this way, the research presented here offers another methodology for testing the validity of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's predictions.

Summary, purpose, and research questions

This study posed three research questions:

- (1) Do parents' self-reported knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors, as related to their involvement in their children's education, differ at entry into and graduation from RAD?
- (2) If positive differences in involvement behaviors are observed, what predicts these changes? What are the relative contributions of prior knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors and knowledge and beliefs acquired through participation in RAD?
- (3) Is the RAD program being implemented with fidelity across multiple sites?

Method

Participants and procedures

Participants included parents enrolled in RAD at Phoenix, Arizona, area elementary, middle, and high schools during the 2011–2012 academic year. Cohort 1 included parents who completed the program in Fall 2011 and represented parents of students enrolled in 19 elementary schools, five middle schools, and one high school. Complete data (matched pairs: participants who completed pre- and post-RAD program surveys) were obtained for 1,245 parents, which represented 78% of the semester's total 1,605 parents. Cohort 2 represented parents who completed RAD in Spring 2012; this group included parents of students enrolled in 13 elementary schools, seven middle schools, and 18 high schools. From this sample 1,126 matched pairs were available, which represented 76% of the total 1,486 spring RAD graduates.

During their participation in RAD, participants completed three surveys. The pre-program survey was administered in session two. The post-program survey was administered in session nine. RAD course instructors read aloud each survey item, in Spanish and English, when administering the surveys. At pretest they read aloud the informed consent letter in English and in Spanish. The 11-item demographic survey asking about participant age, gender, country of origin, occupation, annual income, and level of education was completed midway through the program in this same manner. All surveys and informed consent materials were available in English and in Spanish. Parents chose which version of the surveys they completed. Most participants completed a Spanish version (87%). Surveys and consent forms were developed in English and then translated into Spanish by native Spanish speakers. A native Spanish speaker completed a back-translation.

Across cohorts 91% of participants identified as Hispanic, and most were female (Cohort 1 = 86%, Cohort 2 = 72%). A significant portion of participants reported an annual family income less than \$20,000 (Cohort 1 = 54%, Cohort 2 = 41%), and approximately 40% reported an annual income between \$20,000 and 40,000 per year (Cohort 1 = 36%, Cohort 2 = 41%). Primary occupations were homemaker (Cohort 1 = 47%, Cohort 2 = 40%) or laborer (Cohort 1 = 14%, Cohort 2 = 14%). Most program completers were in their 30s (Cohort 1 = 53%, Cohort 2 = 49%). Level of education differed by cohort. Most completers in Cohort 1 had a high school education or less (73%), whereas most Cohort 2 completers had some college or a 4-year degree (68%). Most participants identified Mexico as their country of origin (Cohort 1 = 60%, Cohort 2 = 71%). Most had been in the Phoenix area 10 years or more (Cohort 1 = 67%, Cohort 2 = 88%). [Table 1](#) summarizes the demographic data, including the proportion of missing data for each variable.

Table 1. Demographic data for the two cohorts.

Variable	Cohort 1 (N = 1,245)		Cohort 2 (N = 1,126)	
	Valid %	Total % Missing	Valid %	Total % Missing
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	91		91	
White	5		4	
All other	5	19	6	4
Gender				
Female	86		72	
Male	14	22	21	6
Education				
Less than high school	27		20	
High school	46		12	
Some college or 2-year degree	21		38	
4-year degree	5	28	30	30
Occupation				
Homemaker	47		40	
Labor	14		14	
All other categories	<10	35		21
Income				
<\$10,000	26		14	
\$10,000–\$20,000	28		27	
\$20,000–\$30,000	25		26	
\$30,000–\$40,000	11		15	
\$40,000–\$50,000	6		10	
>\$50,000	4	23	7	9
Age				
20–30	23		13	
31–40	43		49	
41+	26	19	39	4
Country of origin				
Mexico	60		71	
United States	6		13	
All other categories	<1	29		10

Measures: Beliefs, knowledge, and behavior

A total of 32 survey items assessed RAD participants' involvement-related beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors. Items were adapted from work by Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey 2005). For each item, parents indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement (1 = *disagree very strongly*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *agree very strongly*).

Beliefs were assessed with 13 items (Cohort 1, $\alpha = .78$ pre and $.79$ post; Cohort 2, $\alpha = .76$ pre and $.75$ post). Items related to participants' role beliefs (e.g., "I am my child's most important teacher") and self-efficacy for involvement (e.g., "I can help my child learn").

Knowledge was assessed with 10 items (Cohort 1, $\alpha = .90$ pre and $.92$ post; Cohort 2, $\alpha = .85$ pre and $.90$ post). Items focused on parents' understanding of RAD content, including knowledge of academic standards and requirements, how to work with their child's teacher and other school personnel, and awareness of parenting practices such as ways to discipline and motivate their child.

Behavior was assessed with nine items (Cohort 1, $\alpha = .86$ pre and $.88$ post; Cohort 2, $\alpha = .80$ pre and $.87$ post). Items focused on behaviors closely linked to the RAD curriculum (e.g., "I have made a plan to make sure my child succeeds academically and graduates from high school prepared to get a university education"), home-based behaviors that support learning (e.g., "I encourage my child to read regularly"), and behaviors that increase communication between home and school (e.g., "I keep in touch with the teacher[s] about my child's academic performance").

Observations

To determine the fidelity of the RAD program's implementation, observers collected observation data from three elementary school sites in Cohort 1 (representing 10% of the total programs offered at this developmental level). Each of the observed RAD courses was taught in Spanish by an experienced RAD facilitator. Each RAD session was observed by a pair of observers. The three RAD instructors and the three observers were female, were bilingual, and held a college degree. They were recruited from an experienced pool of RAD facilitators who undergo annual training and periodic professional development.

Using checklists corresponding to the sequence of instructional activities identified in the RAD facilitator's lesson books, observers rated the program fidelity by indicating whether each activity was fully implemented (coded 3), partially implemented (coded 2), or not implemented (coded 1). One observer completed the observations in real time as the lessons unfolded. Another rater completed the observation checklist while watching a video recording of the lessons. (If parents in the observed RAD courses objected to the sessions being recorded on video, they had the option to move to another class offered at the same time or to remain in the classroom but sit out of view.)

Analyses and results

Research question 1: Do parents' self-reported knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors differ before and after RAD?

Missing pre- and postprogram survey data were replaced with the item mean if it represented less than 2% of the total data; otherwise, cases with missing data were excluded. This decision rule was not followed for the demographics survey, which had a greater proportion of missing data. Because the scales assessing parents' beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors were adapted from scales created and previously validated by Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker et al., 2005), it was necessary to confirm that the adapted items retained the expected three-factor structure reflecting the psychological constructs of parents' beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors. To determine this, I conducted exploratory factor analyses using promax rotation with maximum likelihood extraction. Results supported a three-factor structure for the pre- and post-RAD survey (see Table 2 for Cohort 1 results and Table 3 for Cohort 2 results).

Meaningful pre/post differences were observed in parents' beliefs (see Table 4); a larger effect size was found for Cohort 2 (average Cohort 1, $d = 0.20$; Cohort 2, $d = 0.48$). Many items in this scale (e.g., "It's my responsibility to make sure my child finishes high school") were near the ceiling at pretest, showing little room for change. The item that changed most dramatically from pre- to postprogram reflected parents' beliefs about the role home-based activities play in children's learning: "My child spends more of his or her learning time at home than at school."

The largest pre/post differences were observed for parents' knowledge (see Table 4; average Cohort 1, $d = 1.13$; Cohort 2, $d = 1.29$). All items increased, and examination of individual items across both samples indicated that the items that changed most were closely linked to the RAD curriculum (e.g., academic terms and concepts; steps required to succeed academically and go to a university; and how to work with the child's teacher, principal, counselor, or parent liaison).

Similarly, meaningful pre/postprogram differences were found for parents' behaviors (see Table 4; average Cohort 1, $d = 0.73$; Cohort 2, $d = 0.72$). All items increased significantly, and those that increased most were closely linked to the RAD program content (e.g., "I have made a plan to make sure my child succeeds academically and graduates from high school prepared to get a university education"). In a notable difference between the two samples, Cohort 1 demonstrated a medium effect size for the item "I talk with my child about the importance of continuing his or her education beyond high school." By contrast, Cohort 2 showed a small effect size (with means near the ceiling);

Table 2. Factor loadings by item, pre- and postprogram (cohort 1, *N* = 1,245).

Item	Pre-RAD Factor			Post-RAD Factor		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
1	.01	.52	.02	-.07	.51	.12
2	.03	.21	.08	.15	.27	.06
3	.05	.33	.01	.10	.36	.05
4	-.04	.73	-.06	-.07	.82	-.05
5	-.10	.77	-.06	-.06	.89	-.15
6	-.04	.66	.10	.08	.68	.00
7	-.06	.79	-.02	-.12	.78	.11
8	.08	.34	.04	.21	.18	.05
9	-.06	.75	.02	.08	.63	.02
10	.00	.74	-.02	.09	.56	.06
11	.08	.66	-.08	.26	.42	.00
12	-.11	.01	.13	-.08	-.01	-.02
13	.06	.68	-.07	.27	.52	-.07
14	.79	.01	-.21	.72	.02	-.04
15	.83	-.04	-.18	.73	.04	-.06
16	.75	.03	-.12	.73	.06	-.05
17	.72	.15	-.17	.81	.05	-.11
18	.67	.16	-.10	.77	.07	-.09
19	.66	.09	.02	.70	.06	.07
20	.63	.02	.08	.65	-.03	.14
21	.50	.15	.07	.52	.10	.17
22	.81	-.17	-.01	.68	-.08	.14
23	.65	-.22	.22	.50	-.13	.28
24	.02	-.07	.90	.15	-.08	.65
25	-.02	-.03	.89	.15	-.08	.65
26	.27	.23	.24	.33	.16	.28
27	.67	-.19	.15	.48	-.11	.29
28	.00	.47	.22	.01	.37	.40
29	.33	.15	.26	.25	.13	.40
30	.07	.26	.45	-.14	.15	.73
31	.22	.15	.39	-.01	.07	.68
32	.33	.08	.36	.05	-.04	.71

Note. RAD = Realizing the American Dream. Bold text indicates the item's loading on each factor.

however, the variance for this item decreased from pre- to postprogram, suggesting more uniformity in parents' behavior.

Zero-order correlations for the two samples are reported in Table 5 (Cohort 1) and Table 6 (Cohort 2). Across cohorts, beliefs, knowledge, and behavior were positively correlated at pretest, and the strength of these associations increased at posttest. Significant positive links were found between pre- and post-RAD beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors. For Cohort 1, parent level of education was positively correlated with family income; pre-RAD beliefs; and post-RAD beliefs, knowledge, and behavior. For Cohort 2, level of education was positively related only to family income. Pre-RAD constructs were positively correlated with all post-RAD constructs for Cohort 1; for Cohort 2, only pre-RAD beliefs was positively related to post-RAD variables.

Research question 2: If positive differences in involvement-related behaviors are observed, what predicts this change?

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model posits that involvement behaviors are a function of parents' motivational beliefs, perceptions of invitations from others, skills and knowledge, and family culture. To test this hypothesis—and the extent to which the program influenced parents' postprogram behaviors—I conducted hierarchical regressions using factors in the following blocks: Block 1 included demographic variables (education, annual family income, and ethnicity); Block 2 included parents' preprogram self-reported beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors; Block 3 included parents' self-reported involvement-related beliefs and knowledge at posttest. Results are reported in Table 7.

Table 3. Factor loadings by item, pre- and postprogram (cohort 2, $N = 1,126$).

Item	Pre-RAD Factor			Post-RAD Factor		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
1	.00	.46	.07	-.04	.44	.09
2	.00	.19	.10	-.07	.29	.27
3	-.04	.35	.09	.07	.29	.09
4	-.02	.69	-.10	-.10	.70	-.02
5	.03	.70	-.14	-.07	.75	-.09
6	-.03	.66	.07	-.02	.66	-.02
7	-.03	.71	.05	-.07	.74	.00
8	-.03	.27	.19	.14	.16	.19
9	-.01	.70	.00	.11	.63	-.03
10	.03	.62	.06	.08	.52	.08
11	.07	.60	-.05	.13	.46	-.04
12	.02	-.01	.08	.05	-.03	.08
13	.03	.61	-.06	.10	.52	.00
14	.80	.01	-.13	.62	.01	-.04
15	.87	-.02	-.20	.68	.09	-.12
16	.68	.04	-.05	.74	-.02	-.01
17	.47	.12	-.07	.80	-.06	-.05
18	.48	.06	-.02	.81	.00	-.08
19	.35	.06	.02	.55	.05	.11
20	.54	.06	.15	.54	.05	.18
21	.36	.23	.17	.62	.09	.04
22	.78	-.15	.07	.73	-.07	.01
23	.51	-.15	.35	.60	-.10	.18
24	-.10	-.05	.93	-.08	-.06	.94
25	-.07	-.06	.94	-.01	-.04	.94
26	.15	.12	.02	.41	.25	.00
27	.63	-.14	.16	.41	-.09	.28
28	.11	.35	.13	.24	.36	.05
29	.32	.12	.22	.46	.07	.12
30	-.03	.17	.63	.06	.13	.58
31	.16	.15	.43	.18	.10	.49
32	.10	.05	.59	.16	-.01	.57

Note. RAD = Realizing the American Dream. Bold text indicates the item's loading on each factor.

For Cohort 1, 63% of the variance in parents' involvement behaviors was accounted for by the predictor variables, $F(2, 835) = 181.02$, $p < .01$, adjusted $R^2 = .63$. Block 1, demographics, predicted a small portion of the variance but did not reach statistical significance ($\Delta R^2 = .07$, $p < .103$). Block 2, parents' prior beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors, reached statistical significance ($\Delta R^2 = .13$, $p < .01$), as did Block 3, post-RAD beliefs and knowledge ($\Delta R^2 = .50$, $p < .01$). Individual predictors of involvement that were important in the overall results included prior beliefs ($\beta = -.06$) and behavior ($\beta = .19$) and postprogram beliefs ($\beta = .18$) and knowledge ($\beta = .63$).

Similar results were found for Cohort 2. A significant portion of the variance in parents' self-reported post-RAD behaviors was accounted for by the predictor variables, $F(2, 710) = 91.80$, $p < .01$,

Table 4. Descriptive statistics, t tests, and effect sizes for parents' beliefs, knowledge, and behaviors by time and by cohort.

Variable	Time	Cohort 1 ($N = 1,245$)				Cohort 2 ($N = 1,126$)			
		M	SD	t	d	M	SD	t	d
Beliefs	Pre	3.57	0.32	5.48*	0.20	3.51	0.31	11.46**	0.48
	Post	3.63	0.28			3.65	0.27		
Knowledge	Pre	3.13	0.56	31.38**	1.13	3.12	0.56	28.73**	1.29
	Post	3.67	0.38			3.68	0.35		
Behavior	Pre	3.40	0.46	22.79**	0.73	3.29	0.5	17.71**	0.72
	Post	3.70	0.35			3.61	0.38		

Note. Beliefs = $.05/13 = .004$. Knowledge = $.05/10 = .001$. Behavior = $.05/9 = .001$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$, analyses corrected for multiple comparisons.

Table 5. Zero-Order correlations for all study variables (cohort 1, *N* = 1,245).

Variable	Demographics			Pre-RAD			Post-RAD		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Education	—								
2. Income	.25**	—							
3. Ethnicity	.05	.07*	—						
4. Beliefs (pre)	.08*	.03	-.02	—					
5. Knowledge (pre)	-.03	-.05	.01	.32**	—				
6. Behavior (pre)	.04	-.03	-.01	.47**	.68**	—			
7. Beliefs (post)	.09**	-.01	-.01	.26**	.08**	.17**	—		
8. Knowledge (post)	.07*	-.01	-.01	.27**	.23**	.29**	.62**	—	
9. Behavior (post)	.08*	.01	-.01	.27**	.25**	.37**	.61**	.79**	—

Note. RAD = Realizing the American Dream.

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6. Zero-Order correlations for all study variables (cohort 2, *N* = 1,126).

Variable	Demographics			Pre-RAD			Post-RAD		
	1	2	4	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Education	—								
2. Income	.31**	—							
3. Ethnicity	.04	.00	—						
4. Beliefs (pre)	-.02	-.04	-.02	—					
5. Knowledge (pre)	-.06	.01	-.03	.31**	—				
6. Behavior (pre)	.00	-.02	-.02	.40**	.63**	—			
7. Beliefs (post)	.06	.06	-.01	.07*	.08*	.10**	—		
8. Knowledge (post)	.00	-.01	.03	.04	.06	.06	.60**	—	
9. Behavior (post)	.03	.04	.01	.04	.01	.06	.56**	.70**	—

Note. RAD = Realizing the American Dream.

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7. Hierarchical regression analyses for variables predicting postprogram involvement behaviors across cohorts, final model (cohort 1, *N* = 845; Cohort 2, *N* = 720).

Variable	F	Adjusted R ²	B	SE B	β	p
Cohort 1						
Dependent variable: post-RAD behavior	181.02**	.63				
Education			.00	.01	.01	.69
Annual income			.01	.01	.02	.33
Ethnicity			-.01	.02	-.01	.50
Beliefs (pre)			-.07	.02	-.06	.01
Knowledge (pre)			-.02	.02	-.03	.25
Behavior (pre)			.13	.02	.19	.01
Beliefs (post)			.23	.03	.18	.01
Knowledge (post)			.58	.02	.63	.01
Cohort 2						
Dependent variable: post-RAD behavior	91.80**	.50				
Education			.00	.01	.00	.99
Annual income			.01	.01	.06	.03
Ethnicity			-.02	.02	-.02	.48
Beliefs (pre)			.04	.03	.04	.20
Knowledge (pre)			-.06	.02	-.10	.01
Behavior (pre)			.07	.02	.10	.01
Beliefs (post)			.25	.05	.17	.01
Knowledge (post)			.64	.03	.59	.01

Note. RAD = Realizing the American Dream. Bold text indicates the item's loading on each factor.

***p* < .01.

Table 8. Percentage of interrater agreement by site and by time.

Site	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Overall
Site 1	100	76	90	92	91	68	86	86.14
Site 2	100	89	67	94	100	88	72	87.14
Site 3	100	94	87	89	64	75	89	85.43
Average	100.00	86.33	81.33	91.67	85.00	77.00	82.33	86.24

Table 9. Fidelity ratings by site and by time: percentage of the curriculum fully or partially met.

Site	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6	Session 7	Site Average
School 1	100	92	95	81	76	70	67	83.00
School 2	100	91	88	96	71	71	89	86.57
School 3	100	86	80	66	74	73	43	74.57
Session average	100.00	89.67	87.67	81.00	73.67	71.33	66.33	81.38

adjusted $R^2 = .50$. Block 1 predicted a small portion of the variance but did not reach statistical significance ($\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .21$). Block 2 predicted a small and statistically significant amount of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .02, p < .01$). Block 3 explained the remaining variance ($\Delta R^2 = .48, p < .01$). Individual predictors that emerged as important included annual family income ($\beta = .06$) and pre-RAD knowledge ($\beta = -.10$).

Research question 3: Is the RAD program being implemented with fidelity across sites?

Reliability between raters at each site was computed by comparing the observers' ratings for each activity on a curriculum checklist (0 = *not met*, 1 = *partially met*, 2 = *fully met*). Ratings were compared for seven formal class sessions. (The orientation, principal's forum, and graduation were not included.) When observers did not agree, the lower rating was used. Overall reliability between raters was acceptable ($r = .86$). Reliability between raters at each of the three sites was .85, .81, and .79. Table 8 summarizes the interrater agreement by site and by time.

Having established reliability, I then used observers' ratings to compute fidelity statistics. At Site 1, 92% of the curriculum was fully or partially met; at Site 2 this figure was 89%; at Site 3 it was 84%. For all three schools, fidelity statistics were as follows: 58% was fully implemented, 32% was partially implemented, and 11% was not implemented. Observers' qualitative notes provided insight into factors that influenced lesson fidelity. These included technical issues (PowerPoint failures), use of classroom time (e.g., spending more than the allotted time on one aspect of the lesson meant truncating another portion), and lack of instructor compliance (e.g., omitting the material altogether). Observers' notes indicated that instructors' adherence to the curriculum tended to shift across the curriculum as parents began to interject many of their own questions and content into the curriculum. Table 9 summarizes the fidelity ratings by site over time.

Discussion

This article introduces a theoretically grounded intervention program targeting parents' motivations for involvement in their children's education as tools for enhancing their involvement behaviors. Program impact was assessed with pre/postprogram surveys assessing parents' (a) beliefs about how they should be involved (role construction), (b) beliefs about whether they can make a positive difference (self-efficacy for involvement), (c) knowledge of schools and ways to be productively involved, and (d) involvement forms. Program fidelity was assessed via observation.

Supporting Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) assumption that constructs at Level 1 of their process model are amenable to intervention, surveys showed meaningful differences in parents'

beliefs, knowledge, and behavior at entry into and graduation from the RAD program. Consistent with results for similar parent education programs (e.g., Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001), the largest effect sizes were found for parents' knowledge, including their understanding of how to work with their child's teacher, awareness of academic requirements, and understanding of how to communicate effectively with their child.

Relative to results for parents' knowledge, results for parents' role and efficacy beliefs were significant but modest. However, there was little room for increase given parents' strong and positive beliefs at the beginning of the RAD program. This finding is logical given the voluntary nature of program participation—it attracts parents who already believe they *can* make a difference but may not *know how* to put their beliefs into effective action.

Parents' involvement behaviors showed moderate to large effect sizes. Consistent with the program's emphasis on parental expectations and planning for the future, the largest pre/post difference was found for "I have made a plan to make sure my child graduates from high school prepared to get a university education." Parents also reported significant increases in their communication with their child and their child's teacher. Their support of children's learning activities at home (e.g., encouraging children to read, practicing academic skills) was also higher after the program.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model also asserts that parents' beliefs and knowledge predict their involvement behaviors. This claim has been validated by large-scale survey research (e.g., Green et al., 2007; Lavenda, 2011), and similar results were found in this intervention program: Parents' beliefs and knowledge explained 63% of the variance in Cohort 1's post-RAD involvement behaviors and 50% of the variance in Cohort 2's post-RAD involvement.

Across the two cohorts, postprogram knowledge emerged as the primary predictor of postprogram behaviors. Postprogram beliefs and prior behavior were also small but positive predictors. Weaker but significant negative predictors were prior beliefs (for Cohort 1) and prior knowledge (for Cohort 2). Demographic variables played a small role in predicting the postprogram involvement behaviors of parents in Cohort 2, which was a more variable group relative to Cohort 1. Taken with the results of other successful parent education initiatives (e.g., Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; De Gaetano, 2007) and reports of low-income mothers' successful involvement forms (e.g., Weiss et al., 2003), these findings suggest that parent education programs can enhance parents' involvement behaviors by targeting their motivational beliefs and knowledge of diverse ways they can and should be involved (i.e., providing academic support to their children and socializing their children for school success).

As Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, and Kayzar (2002) noted, evaluating the efficacy of parent education programs is a process frequently undermined by methodological weaknesses, and this study is no exception. Limitations include self-report bias, the lack of a comparison group, and the reality that pre/post differences cannot be directly attributed to RAD given the complex set of factors that influence the parent involvement process. Although reliance on self-report is a threat to internal validity, it is difficult to imagine assessing parents' subjective beliefs about how they can and should be involved in more psychologically valid ways. Future work should, however, include multiple reporters' perspectives on parents' involvement behaviors before RAD and track the durability of parents' engagement over time. Finally, the RAD program assumes that it targets parent involvement behaviors that influence student outcomes. Future work should test this assumption by collecting data on RAD completers' children, such as attendance records, teacher ratings of engagement and learning, and other achievement data, and conducting matched comparisons with a control group of students whose parents are not enrolled in RAD.

RAD's impact must also be interpreted in light of the characteristics of the parents who attended the program. In general, participants were low-income Latinas with mostly high school educations who had immigrated to the sixth largest city in the United States. Whether the RAD program would have similar results for other demographic groups remains an open question.

In sum, this article reports initial tests of a promising parent education program that has a strong theoretical framing in psychological research and studies of the parent involvement *process*. Its findings support current arguments that schools might profit more if their parent involvement initiatives (a) targeted a range of effective involvement behaviors, especially the psychological forms of involvement that support students' aspirations and socialization for school; and (b) addressed parents' beliefs and knowledge regarding the many ways they can and should be involved.

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