

ABSTRACT

SUPPORT GROUP FOR LATINO IMMIGRANT PARENTS

IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM:

A GRANT PROPOSAL

By

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The purpose of this project was to locate a potential funding source and write a grant to provide Latino immigrant parents involved in the child welfare system a support group which assists them during the family reunification and/or family maintenance process. An in-depth literature review regarding Latino immigrants represented in the child welfare system was performed in order to gain knowledge about prevalent risk factors, child maltreatment allegation trends, cultural characteristics, and effective interventions. Latino immigrant parents involved in the child welfare system encounter many barriers which include but are not limited to poverty, language limitations, cultural differences, legal status, inadequate employment, and educational background. The proposed support group is intended to enhance parental knowledge about the child welfare system and increase coping and empowerment skills of the Latino immigrant population. The actual funding and submission of this grant were not requirements for the successful completion of this academic project.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
 CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Purpose	2
Goals of Proposed Program	2
Definitions of Key Terms	3
Cross Cultural Relevance.....	4
 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	 7
Reunification Factors and Barriers	7
Socioeconomic Status of Latinos in the United States	9
Educational Backgrounds among Latinos	10
Legal Status.....	11
Types of Maltreatment among the Latino Population	13
Latino Culture	16
Parenting Practices and Values.....	16
Impact on Latino Children	18
Current Intervention Practices	20
Systems of Care	20
Support Groups	23
Summary	26
 3. METHODOLOGY	 28
Needs Assessment and Collection of Data	28
Identification of Potential Funding Sources	28
Weingart Foundation	28
Social Justice Fund for Ventura County	29
Annenberg Foundation.....	30
Annie E. Casey Foundation	31
The California Wellness Foundation	32

CHAPTER	Page
Criteria for Selection of Actual Grant.....	33
Description of Funding Source and Submission Process	33
 4. GRANT PROPOSAL	 35
Problem Statement.....	35
Description of the Program.....	38
Qualifications of Staff.....	38
Goals and Objectives	39
Target Population.....	40
Host Agency.....	40
Strategies and Interventions.....	41
Program Timeline	42
Evaluation of the Program	44
Communication.....	45
Budget Narrative.....	45
Salaries and Benefits.....	46
Direct Program Expenses.....	47
Indirect Program Expenses	48
In-Kind Contributions.....	48
Budget	48
 5. LESSONS LEARNED.....	 49
Identification of Needs for Proposed Program	49
Location of Potential Funding Sources.....	50
Strategies to Enhance the Likelihood of Funding.....	51
Grant Writing Process.....	52
Social Work Implications	53
 APPENDIX: LINE ITEM BUDGET.....	 54
 REFERENCES	 56

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Based on the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect Data System from 2012, 6.3 million children were involved in child abuse investigations (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012). In July 2014, according to data from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), it revealed that the total number of children receiving services was 36,422 in Los Angeles County (Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, n.d.a). Of those children, 21,855 children were identified as Hispanic (Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services, n.d.a). The public child welfare system cannot be discussed without recognizing the issues that arise from the problems of child abuse and neglect, as well as the child welfare system and expectations of case plan services. Many of the families who come to the attention of the child welfare system lack the natural supports necessary to help sustain their own family. Issues such as cultural differences, as well as the strains related to immigration, acculturation, and integration, may cause increased stress levels among the Latino immigrant population which impact behaviors that can lead to child abuse and neglect (Dettlaff, Earner, & Phillips, 2009). In addition, challenges specific to the Latino immigrant population which inhibit parents from successfully reunifying with their children include legal status, language needs and abilities, and accessibility to resources (Ayon, 2009).

Barriers to accessing services for Latino immigrants in the child welfare system are a pervasive issue due to the impact on successful reunification outcomes for families. As a result of the challenges that the population encounters, Latino families are commonly represented in the child welfare system. According to Garcia, Aisenberg, and Harachi (2012), from 1990 to 2010, the number of Latino children in the United States involved the child welfare system increased significantly from 32,000 to 84,727. Over time, researchers have highlighted various issues and obstacles related to successful reunification of Latino children with their families. Commonly identified challenges are attributed to fear of deportation, cultural differences, poverty, and lack of accessible services due to legal status (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2010).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project was to write a grant proposal seeking funds to develop a program designed to address the needs of Latino immigrant parents involved in the child welfare system. The proposed program consisted of a support group is tailored to culturally relevant issues as they pertain to Latino immigrants, specifically in the County of Ventura. In addition, the support group was designed to be accessible to parents who are in need of peer support, provide education about the child welfare system, and help to enhance coping, advocacy, and empowerment skills in order to achieve more successful reunification outcomes.

Goals of Proposed Program

The goal of this project was to secure funding for a program that will address the needs of the Latino population with open child welfare dependency cases. The outcome goals of the program will address the following:

1. Enhance parental knowledge about the child welfare system by reviewing policies, laws, and topics relevant to child welfare;
2. Increase coping and empowerment skills for the Latino immigrant parents through the group process, peer support, referrals to services, and translation of documents (i.e., case plans, court reports, etc.).

The goals of the support group for Latino parents involved in the child welfare system are to increase the level of understanding about the child welfare system and court process in order to help increase awareness about child maltreatment laws in the United States and ultimately reduce further child abuse and neglect among the Latino population. With the increased support from a free group, participants will gain knowledge about the child welfare system, as well as an increased understanding of the services they are expected to complete. Overall, through participation in the support group, Latino immigrant parents will gain knowledge of the child welfare system through peer support and shared knowledge from other parents in similar situations. The Latino immigrant parents will learn methods to advocate for themselves and their families as well as increase their understanding about child abuse and neglect.

Definitions of Key Terms

Child welfare system: The organization responsible for the following:

Provid[ing] services to families that need assistance in the protection and care of their children; arrang[ing] for children to live with kin or with foster families when they are not safe at home; and arrang[ing] for reunification, adoption, or other permanent family connections for children leaving foster care. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011, para. 1)

Child abuse: “Repeated mistreatment or neglect of a child by parent(s) or other guardian resulting in injury or harm” (Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services, n.d.b, para. 3).

Reunification: “The process of reuniting children in foster care with their families and reinstating custody to their parents/guardians. Reunification continues to be the preferred permanency option, when it can be done in a safe and timely manner” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011, p.12).

Permanency:

A legally permanent, nurturing family for every child and youth... when any of the following occurs: (1) The child is discharged from foster care to reunification with his or her family, either a parent or other relative; (2) the child is discharged from foster care to a legally finalized adoption; or (3) the child is discharged from foster care to the care of the legal guardian. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011, para. 13)

Support group: Refers to a group which utilizes the following:

Supportive intervention strategies by their primary goals: to foster mutual aid, to help members cope with stressful life events, and to revitalize and enhance members’ coping abilities so they can effectively adapt to and cope with future stressful life events. (Toseland & Rivas, 2012, p. 20)

Latino immigrants: Refers to migrants “consisting of persons from Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Central America, South America and other Latin countries (Dettlaff et al., 2009, p. 775).

Cross Cultural Relevance

Ventura County is recognized for their agriculture, and with that, there is a large community of farm workers characterized by Latino immigrants. Due to historical issues of domestic violence, poverty, language barriers, fear, and a lack of a support system, many of the Latino families are represented in the child welfare system. In an effort to

effectively engage with the Latino immigrant population, it is fundamental for social workers and service providers to practice cultural sensitivity by being open-minded, respectful, and willing to learn about their culture and values. Within the Latino population, there exist many different cultures, traditions, and language variations which should be considered when providing services to the population. Cultural aspects such as different values, beliefs, and varying compositions of family systems among the Latino immigrant population must actively be acknowledged in order to effectively engage with clients. The proposed support group is designed to provide Latino immigrant parents with support through activities, discussions of culturally relevant issues, and referrals to appropriate services.

In the effort to support successful family reunification and permanency for children, the support group can be used to better address the Latino community's needs through services that are tailored to their cultural background and values. The support group program will use bilingual and bicultural staff in order to address the needs of the Latino immigrant population. Due to the vast diversity among the Latino population, multicultural social work practice is essential in order to effectively engage with any individual. The support group program is intended to reflect Latino values related to the importance of mutual aid and collectivism.

Specifically to the County of Ventura, Latino immigrant parents who come to the attention of the child welfare system face many obstacles due to challenges that are common among the population. The lack of support the families face due to being immigrants, barriers to accessing court mandated services, and a lack of knowledge of the child welfare system create multiple barriers for parents to successfully reunify with their

children. Consistent with the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics, the support group program will assist parents in becoming empowered through education of their rights, the child welfare system, and the development of human relationships. Furthermore, social work professionals will learn more about culturally relevant issues and the impact that immigration policies have on the community in order to raise awareness among child welfare agencies. Overall, this grant proposal is intended to raise awareness regarding the needs of the Latino immigrant population involved in the child welfare system and promote social justice through a support group that addresses culturally relevant topics.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines characteristics of the Latino population which increase their susceptibility to the child welfare system. The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of the Latino population and highlight the risk factors, prevalence of abuse and characteristics within the child welfare system, and implications for effective interventions. The first section of this literature review illustrates barriers that create challenges for the population within the child welfare system. Secondly, the child maltreatment types and prevalence among the Latino population are discussed. Next, social characteristics of the Latino population and the impact on children are described in the third section. Lastly, the fourth section of this literature review discusses effective interventions and services for the Latino population.

Reunification Factors and Barriers

In order to provide effective services and interventions for Latino immigrant families in the child welfare system, it is vital to understand the risk factors and barriers to reunification prevalent within the population. Such barriers create challenges during the reunification process and impact successful outcomes. In a study conducted by Garcia et al. (2012), the disproportionate representation of Latinos in the child welfare system was emphasized. The study highlighted the various reasons that resulted in an increase of the number of Latino children within the last several decades. The

participants of the study were caseworkers who identified themes that were likely to arise in Latino families in the process of reunifying with their children. The results indicated that Latino families face language barriers, have a lack of understanding about the definition of child abuse and neglect in the United States (Garcia et al., 2012). The findings also identified risk factors among Latino families such as gang affiliation, documentation status, and institutional factors such as eligibility criteria which limit service accessibility for this population (Garcia et al., 2012). In another study which outlined risk factors for immigrant caregivers, indicators such as high family stress, low social support, and history of maltreatment were among the top three most significant issues identified by caregivers of children involved in the child welfare system (Dettlaff et al., 2009).

Similarly, in a quantitative study, Osterling and Han (2011) reported that families of Mexican origin have significantly higher rates of abuse and neglect in comparison to non-immigrant families. Challenges such as acculturative stress, legal status, history of alcohol use, and different cultural values were found to be reasons for increased rates of child maltreatment; therefore these factors contributed to the vulnerability of the Latino immigrant population to the child welfare system (Osterling & Han, 2011). These research findings outlined several the differences among children of Mexican origin and non-immigrant children involved in the child welfare system, such as the increased rates of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse among children of Mexican origin (Osterling & Han, 2011). Current research findings in child welfare are vital to understand in order to properly intervene and address the issues that lead to child maltreatment among the Latino immigrant population.

In a study that measured the predictors for reunification, Latino families had a 28% chance of successful reunification, as opposed to White families which had a 39.2% chance of reunifying (Hines, Lee, Osterling, & Drabble, 2007). The explanatory and exploratory study reviewed 403 closed case records obtained through the CWS/CMS in which factors such as employment status and education level were analyzed in order to determine common themes as they related to reunification. Specific to the Latino population, it was found that employed mothers were significantly represented in successful reunification outcomes (Hines et al., 2007). This suggests that protective factors such as employment contribute to successful outcomes among the Latino population. On the other hand, many of the commonly identified risk factors for Latinos have included issues related to poverty, educational background, and the ability to access necessary services.

Socioeconomic Status of Latinos in the United States

According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, the total population in California is 37,253,956. Of the total population in California, 37.6% identify as Hispanic or Latino ethnicities which accounts for nearly 40% of California's population. Although the U.S. Census data does not collect information regarding the number of undocumented Latino immigrants, it does illustrate the high prevalence of Hispanic and/or Latinos throughout the nation. What we do know about the population is that many Latinos encounter barriers in daily life due to economic hardships (Gradin, 2012).

In a study which analyzed poverty among ethnic minorities, research indicated that families who are characterized as immigrants of Hispanic or Latino ethnicities are twice as likely to live in poverty compared to non-immigrant populations (Gradin, 2012).

Similarly, another study indicated that Mexican immigrant families have 20% lower earnings compared to the earnings of non-immigrant families and are 200% below the federal poverty threshold (Cardoso, Dettlaff, Finno-Velasquez, Scott, & Faulkner, 2014; Dettlaff et al., 2009). Furthermore, poverty among the Latino population is prevalent due to contributing factors such as having a higher number of children in their household, single parent households, and challenges related to immigration status which inhibits employment and educational opportunities (Gradin, 2012).

Educational Backgrounds among Latinos

Educational attainment continues to be an obstacle for the Latino population which is also related to the risk factors that contribute to the issues that lead to involvement with the child welfare system. Studies have suggested that there is a statistical significance between mono-lingual Spanish speaking Latinos and the impact this has on low educational and employment outcomes (Spence, Rojas, & Straubhaar, 2013). Only 11% of Latino individuals seek higher education, as opposed to 33% of Whites and 18% of Blacks, and 29% of Latino immigrant parents do not have a high school level education (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2010; Gradin, 2012). In another study which illustrated the poverty gap as it relates to educational attainment, the findings indicated that families who reported being supported mainly by a Latino head of household have significantly lower levels of education attainment which impacts labor activity (Gradin, 2012). In summary, as a result of the socioeconomic challenges characterized by ethnic minorities, especially among the Black and Latino population, this population is less likely to access educational opportunities. These conditions impact unemployment rates,

the likelihood of having low paying employment, and increases the risk of being incarcerated due to resorting to illegal activity (Gradin, 2012).

In a mixed-methods study which examined the educational outcomes and dropout rates of Latino immigrants from New York City, it was reported that the lack of educational attainment impacts employment opportunities and limits the education of future generations, such as their children (Lukes, 2014). The lack of employment opportunities for the Latino immigrant population is a consideration that accounts for economic barriers. The findings revealed that 47% of the participants attributed dropping out of school and the lack of pursuit of higher education to the financial needs of their families. These conditions have resulted in Latino immigrants seeking employment rather than completing or furthering their education (Lukes, 2014). In summary, it is evident that low educational level of attainment among the Latino immigrant population creates limitations in employment opportunities and requires reform. Supporting higher education among the Latino immigrant population can help to bridge the poverty gap and contribute to academic success, economical well-being, and lesser involvement in the criminal and child welfare system.

Legal Status

Various issues related to poverty, low educational attainment, language barriers, low paying employment, and challenges associated to legal status impact the Latino immigrant population in many aspects of their daily life. In a study which analyzes the characteristics of immigrant families involved in the child welfare system, it revealed that the lack of entitlement to services and public benefits places non-U.S. born families at risk of insufficient and inadequate nutrition (Cardoso et al., 2014). According to a study,

although a majority of children with undocumented parents have citizenship, most families do not meet criteria to be eligible to receive food stamps and other financial services which continue the cycle of poverty and inadequate health (Dettlaff et al., 2009). Furthermore, although current research regarding Latinos exists, there continues to be many challenges to accurately understanding the full scope of issues among immigrant children involved in the child welfare system. This is due to the lack of information regarding legal status collected and represented in reporting systems (Cardoso et al., 2014).

In addition, the Latino immigrant population deals with stressors related to fear of deportation and separation from loved ones (Cardoso et al., 2014). Specifically for Latino immigrant families, in 2011 there were close to 400,000 deportations in which half were comprised of parents separated from their U.S. born children (Cardoso et al., 2014). In a study which examined referrals and service use among Latino immigrants and non-immigrant families, a total of 561 parents involved in an investigation by the child welfare system were analyzed. Although the findings revealed that there was no substantial difference between parents who received services based on their legal status, they revealed that 37% of Latino families were referred to services such as financial assistance, healthcare, legal assistance, and employment services (Finno-Velasquez, 2013). Additionally, the findings indicated that most referrals were related to financial distress and requested services such as income assistance. About 27% of the referrals were comprised of income assistance related needs and supported the understanding that Latinos commonly struggle with financial stability (Finno-Velasquez, 2013). Furthermore, the study highlighted the underuse of concrete services by the Latino

population due to not meeting eligibility requirements as a result of being undocumented, having a lack of knowledge regarding how to access services, fear of deportation, and language barriers (Finno-Velasquez, 2013).

In a qualitative and quantitative study of 18 families, 13 of which were undocumented, researchers examined the use of services, such as food stamps and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits (Xu & Brabeck, 2012). The researchers revealed that although children were eligible for services, 44.4% of the parents who were undocumented felt that it would negatively impact the family due to fear of deportation, as opposed to 24.1% of parents who were documented (Xu & Brabeck, 2012). In addition, there was a significant difference regarding the perception of families who had no experience with deportation or detention. The study indicated that 80.4% of the individuals without a history of deportation or detention did not feel threatened or fearful to access and utilize services (Xu & Brabeck, 2012). Such findings illustrate the affect legal status and stressors such as fear of deportation and detention may inhibit undocumented Latino families from accessing services to promote their well-being. These cultural barriers and risk factors should be understood by service providers as they continue to help better serve the specialized cultural needs of the population.

Types of Maltreatment among the Latino Population

In order to better recognize the issues that lead to Latinos' involvement in the child welfare system, it is imperative to understand how child abuse and neglect is represented by Latinos within the child welfare system. Of importance, 18.1% of Mexican families were brought into the child welfare system for physical abuse and 9.7% of the families became involved due to sexual abuse (Osterling & Han, 2011). In another

study, it was reported that 36.5% of immigrant families have been brought to the attention of the child welfare system for physical abuse, whereas only 29.2% of native caregivers were represented for physical abuse (Dettlaff et al., 2009). Of greater disproportionate rates, immigrant families had a 22.1% rate of cases open for sexual abuse, as opposed to a 5.8% rate for native caregivers (Dettlaff et al., 2009).

Another study illustrated the different rates among non-immigrant children in the child welfare system. Osterling and Han (2011) indicated that involvement of non-immigrant children consisted of 7% of the cases due to physical abuse and 1.7% of the cases due to sexual abuse. These findings depicted the lower rates of physical abuse and sexual abuse among non-immigrant children as opposed to Mexican immigrant children. Mexican immigrant children had substantially higher rates of child maltreatment than non-immigrant children which composed of 18.1% of cases open due to physical abuse and 9.7% of cases due to sexual abuse (Osterling & Han, 2011). Overall, Mexican immigrant children had higher rates of emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse (Osterling & Han, 2011). Regarding neglect, research illustrated that child maltreatment in the form of physical neglect is more commonly represented among native caregivers at 12.8% when compared to immigrant families which have a 0.6% prevalence of substantiated allegations of physical neglect (Dettlaff et al., 2009). According to a qualitative study based on immigrant families involved in the child welfare system in New York, an identified barrier the parents encountered was a feeling of misunderstanding (Earner, 2007). Many of the parents reported that they felt misunderstood and judged by their workers in terms of their disciplining practices when they did not perceive their practices to be inappropriate (Earner, 2007). These findings

revealed the significance of understanding cultural differences in perceptions of child maltreatment as they translate into the current rates minorities represented in the child welfare system.

According to research analysis based on the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being-II (NSCAW-II), differences among Latinos on the basis of legal status did not impact the allegations and substantiations of child maltreatment (Cardoso et al., 2014). The research consisted of a longitudinal study of children with Latino caregivers in order to determine if legal status played a role in becoming involved in the child welfare system. The researchers differentiated Latino caregivers with allegations for child maltreatment and substantiated allegations by categorizing them into groups based on their legal status, such as U.S. born, foreign-born U.S. citizens, legal residents, and undocumented non-citizen parents (Cardoso et al., 2014). The study revealed that the lack of legal status was not disproportionately represented in the number of substantiated cases across the sample size and there were no variations in the types of child maltreatment throughout the four categories (Cardoso et al., 2014). The findings suggested that there were no significant differences among Latino immigrant families when compared to non-immigrant families, and illustrated the importance of furthering research that is specific to the Latino immigrant population. Through continued research, interventions can be created which are tailored to better serve the Latino immigrant population.

Latino Culture

Parenting Practices and Values

Culture plays an important role in how parenting practices are established in any household. For the Latino population, research has suggested that as a result of immigration experiences, obstacles including considerations of poverty, stressors related to life events, fear of deportation, lack of service eligibility, and differences in discipline practices increase the risk for child maltreatment in the United States (Cardoso et al., 2014). Similar to cultural beliefs across many systems, when examining parenting practices among Latino families, research has indicated that parents value respect, honesty, and loyalty to the family unit (Fischer, Harvey, & Driscoll, 2009).

In a recent study regarding parenting practices, Fischer, Harvey, and Driscoll (2009) examined questionnaires completed by 98 Latino immigrant mothers in an effort to compare differences in parenting styles compared with the dominant culture. The findings illustrated that Latino families highly value firm parental control, which resembles a more authoritative parenting style (Fischer et al., 2009). A questionnaire distributed among mothers in America highlighted beliefs, practices, and values as they pertain to parenting practices which revealed that Latina mothers value affection and loyalty within their family (Fischer et al., 2009). Additionally, it was reported that values such as role modeling, relational qualities, and parental control play a significant role among the Latino community and increase their protective factors (Fischer et al., 2009).

Similarly, in a study which analyzed data based on the NSCAW-II indicated that many Latino immigrant families encounter fewer risk factors which are commonly associated with indicators of child abuse and neglect such as life stressors, history of

substance use, lack of parenting skills, and recent criminal activity (Cardoso et al., 2014). In an effort to gain a deeper understanding about the cultural differences of children with parents who are undocumented versus children of U.S. citizenship, information about the caregivers, neighborhoods, types of maltreatment, risk factors, and protective factors were taken into account. The study revealed that only about 5% of the children who came into contact with a child welfare agency between 2008 and 2009 lived with a parent who was undocumented (Cardoso et al., 2014). This could be attributed to the cultural values among the Latino population which serve as protective factors and reduce the likelihood of substance use and other criminal activity. Such research findings regarding Latino culture, traditions, and practices can be utilized to understand the values of the population, specific issues relevant to immigrants, and parenting practices.

In another recent study regarding parenting among Mexican and Dominican parents, the researchers compared factors such as levels of acculturation and parenting styles as it relates to their child's overall functioning. The data also supported that Mexican parents in the study commonly identify more with the authoritative style of parenting and had significantly lower rates of child school readiness when compared to the children of Dominican parents (Calzada, Huang, Anicama, Fernandez, & Brotman, 2012). Implications of this study depicted that Latina mothers implement parenting styles and encourage socialization imbedded with values of respect and obedience. They also reflected the parents' high level of encouragement for their children to develop independence and self-sustainability, yet the children had lower rates of educational readiness which could be attributed to the parents' lower levels of education as a result of being immigrants (Calzada et al., 2012).

Furthermore, in a qualitative study, the results revealed themes revolving around support among Latino families. The study showed that the Latino culture relies heavily on their extended family and social support networks for purposes of advocacy and guidance through the process of reunification with their children (Ayon, 2011). Parents discussed that their network of support, through family members, friends, services providers, and relationships with other parents involved in the child welfare system, contribute to their understanding of the process and their emotional well-being (Ayon, 2011). This information supports the benefits for implementing a support group to serve the Latino immigrant population.

Impact on Latino Children

Due to the abuse experienced, victims of child maltreatment are more susceptible to mental health issues, such as depression, and behavioral issues (Ayon & Marcenko, 2008). Specifically relevant to Latino immigrant families, evidence suggested that this population is at risk of experiencing various mental health issues including mood and anxiety disorders (Ayon & Marcenko, 2008). The findings indicated that there is a correlation between age and mental health issues represented as children older in age likely developing depressive symptoms (Ayon & Marcenko, 2008).

A cross-sectional study of 119 college students in an undergraduate program, students who identified as Latino were examined in an effort to understand the correlation between child maltreatment, bonding with parents, and struggles with major depressive disorder (Lizardi, Diaz, Liu, & Qian, 2008). Research findings indicated that child maltreatment in the forms of emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional neglect are significantly related to having a history of major depressive disorder, yet physical

abuse and physical neglect did not (Lizardi et al., 2008). Regarding parental bonding, although the research did not indicate if the lack of bond is attributed to being in out of home care, the findings revealed that maternal care or lack thereof is a determining factor for depression (Lizardi et al., 2008). These research findings illustrated the impact of Latino child maltreatment throughout the lifespan of the students in the sample size and highlights mental health issues, such as depression, which may arise (Lizardi et al., 2008).

Another central theme to understand is the concept of acculturative stress and the impact it has on the overall mental health of the Latino population. Dettlaff et al. (2009) define acculturative stress as the result of the experience of immigration and the lack of required skills which are imperative to navigate in a different environment. Some of the most prominent differences that contribute to acculturative stress include the dominant language spoken, cultural practices, and experiences of discrimination based on ethnic background (Dettlaff et al., 2009). These are typical environments and conditions in which children are raised and encounter. Additionally, cultural beliefs regarding gender roles may be challenged due to the likelihood of women seeking employment and becoming more independent may be a stressor in parenting which impact children (Dettlaff et al., 2009). In order to provide relevant services to the Latino immigrant population involved in the child welfare system, service providers should be knowledgeable about acculturative stress and mental health issues which have impacted their likelihood of becoming involved with the child welfare system.

Current Intervention Practices

Due to the large influx of Latino immigrants to the U.S., current research has focused on effective interventions with Latino immigrant children and families. Significant emphasis has been drawn towards the importance of providing interventions and services that are based upon concepts such as cultural sensitivity and understanding, as well as being knowledgeable about diversity among the Latino community (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2010). Due to unique conditions and situations among Latinos in the child welfare system, it is vital to provide services that consider all aspects of physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Current research supports the effectiveness of providing services known as systems of care, which promotes cultural competence and utilizes a child, family, and community centered approach (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2010). The child, family, and community centered approach is intended to build upon strengths in each aspect of an individual's life (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2010). Overall, recent research has been focused on culturally sensitive services as it promotes more successful outcomes within the child welfare system.

Systems of Care

In 2005, Texas applied the system of care approach in their respective child welfare agency, known as Culturally Competent Systems of Care with Latino Children (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2009). As a result of the increase of Latino immigrants represented in the child welfare system, it became increasingly important for the child welfare system to effectively intervene with the children and families. The University of Texas developed a training curriculum for child welfare social workers intended to enhance knowledge of the Latino community and provide services through a system of care

approach which takes into account cultural considerations of Latino immigrant population involved in their child welfare system (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2009).

Participants in the training curriculum consisted of a total of 151 social workers in Texas which utilized the system of care approach with Latino families on their caseload. The social workers were tracked for six months post training. The method of delivery is constructed through a process of engagement, assessment, planning, implementation/intervention, and transition, all of which are stages of the working relationship between the assigned child welfare social worker and clients. Findings indicated that the social workers and families involved in the program had positive outcomes and feedback, yet challenges related to overwhelming workload demands were an impediment (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2009).

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, various react survey instruments, as well as case reviews were conducted. Results indicated that the overall worker reaction to the training was positive but only 40.2% of the social workers who participated in the training implemented the systems of care approach which was a consequence of high caseloads (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2009). In addition, regarding the outcomes of Latino families who were a part of the study, findings indicated that of the 41 cases reviewed, all of the clients did not experience further substantiated allegations of child maltreatment and there was increased family involvement in the case planning process with children and families (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2009). It also illustrated several challenges related to the level of involvement required by the case carrying social workers which inhibited successful implementation of the intervention.

Research regarding California and local efforts of systems of care implementation for Latino immigrant families involved in the child welfare system is limited, yet other fields have embraced similar interventions. In San Diego County, interventions are beginning to integrate and introduce practices based on culturally sensitive approaches to their respective Latino communities. Professionals from Rady Children's Hospital, including researchers and clinical practitioners, have worked together on a project known as "Adaptation Guidelines for Serving Latino Children and Families Affected by Trauma," (The Workgroup on Adapting Latino Services, 2008). The program was designed to create guidelines for addressing the needs of Latino children and families (The Workgroup on Adapting Latino Services, 2008). This particular project depicts the value of understanding Latino cultural attributes, issues, and traits that require attention, as they are not the same for non-Latino individuals.

In a qualitative study which examines the social worker role with Latino parents with an open child welfare case suggested that utilizing a culturally sensitive approach is necessary to build stronger working relationship with the families that professionals come into contact with (Ayon & Aisenberg, 2010). The researchers conducted 19 interviews with parents of Mexican origin in order to gain an in-depth understanding about how cultural values impact parents' insight regarding the child welfare system and their relationship with their social worker. Overall, the research outlined the positive role that family support and ties promote the general well-being of the children and families (Ayon & Aisenberg, 2010). In addition, the parents identified that they value respect from their social workers as it help build a more trusting relationship and increases self-disclosure (Ayon & Aisenberg, 2010).

Support Groups

In an effort to serve Latino immigrant parents involved in the child welfare system, a support group can be implemented to serve the population and their specialized necessities. There exists limited research regarding support groups for Latinos in the child welfare system, yet studies strongly support the benefit of peer support amongst group members. In a qualitative study, researchers conducted 20 in depth phone interviews with parents of children with special needs who participated in a support group called MyTime (Hammarberg, Sartore, Cann, & Fisher, 2014). The purpose of the study was to determine the benefits and obstacles for the support group and the participants. Several of the themes that arose in regards to the benefits of the support group were the opportunity to provide and receive support from members and learn about information that cater to the parents' needs (Hammarberg et al., 2014).

Regarding mutual support, the researchers indicated that the benefits of the support group are advantageous in various aspects such as improving mental and emotional health, raising awareness, and promoting supportive relationships with others going through similar relationships (Hammarberg et al., 2014). Of importance, the parents reported that the support group helped them become aware of funding and additional services which they were eligible for due to having a child with special needs (Hammarberg et al., 2014). In the same manner that the participants of this study were able to benefit from the MyTime support group, Latino immigrant parents involved in the child welfare system will be offered the opportunity to gain peer support from other parents and become knowledgeable of resources which can assist them in the reunification process.

One of the obstacles identified by the participants of MyTime was the lack of funding which limited the support group to meeting periodically as opposed to all year round (Hammarberg et al., 2014). A participant of the study verbalized that routines are important as a parent with a child that has special needs, yet due to the lack of funding for the support group, the group was unable to accommodate year round services (Hammarberg et al., 2014). This limitation illustrates the importance of acquiring funding in order to best meet the needs of the population being served. Other areas of improvement that were outlined in the study were the importance of having structured outlines for the sessions, as well as the importance for the group facilitators to be aware of the obstacles that group members may encounter such as not having access to the internet (Hammarberg et al., 2014).

Overall, the results of the study regarding the MyTime support group for parents revealed the importance of understanding socioeconomic differences amongst group members which impact their ability to access resources. Such feedback from the participants outlined the value of recognizing the diversity amongst group members which is relevant to the Latino immigrant population. Furthermore, the researchers strongly emphasized that the support group was able to foster peer support and enhanced members' social networks (Hammarberg et al., 2014). As a result of developing meaningful relationships, the support group enforced the participants' mental and emotional well-being and increased their knowledge and awareness of accessible resources as a result of information sharing (Hammarberg et al., 2014).

In a mixed method study regarding the benefit of support groups, Vilhauer analyzed several therapeutic factors as perceived by the participants (2009). The study

consisted of 20 women with metastatic breast cancer who participated in an online support group and completed questionnaires and an interview (Vilhauer, 2009). In order to evaluate the group member's perceptions of the usefulness of the online support group, the researcher based the evaluation criteria on psychiatrist Irvin Yalom's curative factors of group psychotherapy (Vilhauer, 2009). Similar to the MyTime support group study, several themes arose in the questionnaire and interview analysis. Several of the concepts which were identified as advantageous to the group members included the sharing of information, group member cohesiveness, instillation of hope, catharsis, which refers to the ability to express oneself, and altruism, which refers to the satisfaction in helping others (Vilhauer, 2009).

Overall, the study illustrated different ways in which participants in a group can benefit from member's support and building their self-esteem. In example, one participant expressed the value in helping others:

When you're by yourself you tend to dwell on what's going on with you and you don't look outward as much as you should. It's more inward looking and self-concerned. And I think being in a group does help you to look outward and to think about the other people more than yourself. (Vilhauer, 2009, p. 396)

In addition, an important concept that arose in the study revealed that information offered by group members enhanced other member's knowledge and advocacy skills. For example, regarding medical services, a group member indicated that since she began participating in the online peer support group, she learned how to advocate for herself in order to receive more thorough medical care (Vilhauer, 2009). This was a result of learning about group members' unique experiences which prompted the group member to advocate for her personal medical needs. It is evident in this example that peer support

serves many functions for the benefit of participants such as increased knowledge, awareness, and advocacy skills which can translate to the functions of a support group for Latino immigrant parents involved in the child welfare system.

Summary

In summary, although there exists minimal research specific to support groups that serve Latino immigrant parents involved in the child welfare system, current studies have revealed the benefit of providing culturally competent services and the advantages of support groups. The advantages are evident in research such as the systems of care approach utilized in the Texas for child welfare social workers, services tailored to Latino's by Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego, and increased skills and self-efficacy through the use of support groups, such as MyTime. Furthermore, it is evident that the Latino immigrant population encounters many barriers which may lead to them becoming involved in the child welfare system. As a result, it is imperative to understand the impact that poverty, educational background, legal status, and differences in cultural practices has on parents' ability to reunify with their children. Oftentimes, the families feel limited in their capacity due to lack of knowledge regarding services and fear of negative consequences such as deportation. In an effort to increase awareness, more research regarding immigrants is needed as this data will help support the development of programs that serve the population. Current research, such as the system of care approach, emphasizes the positive impact of providing culturally competent services across many disciplines in order to engage families and help support them through the reunification process.

By providing culturally competent services in a peer support group, Latino parents will build stronger social connections among their community, enhance their protective factors, and increase the likelihood of achieving successful reunification outcomes. Social workers who work with families in public child welfare should have knowledge regarding the barriers that Latino immigrant families encounter in better to meet their needs. The research represented in this literature review reveals the need for providing a support group that is culturally sensitive to Latino immigrant parents who are involved in the child welfare system and addresses their specialized needs. The support group is intended to offer culturally relevant services and enhance successful reunification outcomes.

Overall, current research findings can be utilized to implement interventions which incorporate the understanding of cultural values, such as the importance of family, and support services for Latino parents involved in the child welfare system. By intervening with Latino immigrant families through a support group, issues such as the long term affects of child maltreatment and acculturative stress can be discussed so that parents can provide support to one another. This approach is intended to incorporate fundamental cultural values, such as respect and the importance of social connections, which are important to the Latino immigrant population. The proposed support group is intended to empower participants by enhancing their awareness about child maltreatment, increasing their knowledge regarding available resources, strengthening their support networks, and promoting increased rates of successful family reunification outcomes.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Needs Assessment and Collection of Data

In order to better understand the deficiencies in service delivery and barriers for Latino immigrants in the child welfare system, literature and studies which highlight relevant themes and risk factors were reviewed. In addition, research regarding Latino culture, values, and parenting practices was examined in order to support the importance of providing culturally competent services to the Latino immigrant population.

Identification of Potential Funding Source

Potential funding sources were researched through internet search engines, including but not limited to Google and Yahoo, as well as The Grantsmanship Center and the Child Welfare Foundation. Key terms used to identify funding sources included the following: child welfare, social justice, Latino, Latino immigrants, children, child abuse, neglect, and permanency.

The potential funding sources identified were as follows: Weingart Foundation, Social Justice Fund for Ventura County, Annenberg Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and California Wellness Foundation.

Weingart Foundation

The Weingart Foundation was identified as a potential funding source through The Grantsmanship Center website's Funding Sources list for California. The Weingart

Foundation was listed in the Top Grantmaking Foundations in California. A thorough review of the Weingart Foundation website indicated that it is a private nonprofit foundation. The foundations' geographic focus included the following counties: Los Angeles, Riverside, Santa Barbara, Orange, San Bernardino, and Ventura County, which was consistent with the proposed population of the support group. Furthermore, the foundation had a rolling/open application status and supports programs with an emphasis of health, human services, and education (Weingart Foundation, 2014).

Similarly, other considerations for the Weingart Foundation encompassed similar values related to providing support to communities that struggle with issues of poverty. In addition, the Weingart Foundation strives to address the needs of children and youth which can be reached by empowering the Latino immigrant population in the support group (Weingart Foundation, 2014).

The main limitation of using the Weingart Foundation is that they have limited funding for new programs. Programs funded by the Weingart Foundation must be proven to be effective. An alternative approach to be eligible for funding would be to run the support group based on volunteer staff for a minimum of 6 months in order to conduct a study that determines whether or not the support group was effective for Latino immigrant parent population in the child welfare system.

Social Justice Fund for Ventura County

The Social Justice Fund for Ventura County, which is a private nonprofit funding organization, was identified through a review of The Grantsmanship Center website's funding sources list. The Community Foundations in California were reviewed based on geographic focus. The Ventura County Community Foundation's list of funders was

reviewed and different funders were ruled out based on different visions. Next, the Social Justice Fund for Ventura County foundation's website was analyzed which indicated that their values are centered on human rights, equal treatment, fairness, a voice in the community, and access to opportunities which closely resembled the values of the proposed support group (Social Justice Fund for Ventura County, 2014). In addition, the foundation was raising money with the goal of \$300,000 by the end of 2014 which would accommodate the budget needs for the proposed program (Social Justice Fund for Ventura County, 2014).

The limitation with this identified funding source was the application status. The website indicated that the application status will not open until November 2014. In addition, an undeterminable limitation included the possibility that the foundation would be unable to raise the funds required to meet the needs of the support group.

Annenberg Foundation

The Annenberg Foundation was located through The Grantsmanship Center website. Along with other foundations, The Annenberg Foundation was listed in the Top Giving Foundations in California. The Annenberg Foundation is a private family foundation which was established in 1989 by Walter H. Annenberg (The Annenberg Foundation, 2014). Considerations for this potential funding source included the Annenberg Foundation's new approach for selecting grants as they are open to innovative programs and ideas that aim to increase community involvement (The Annenberg Foundation, 2014). The foundation values responsiveness, accessibility, fairness, and involvement of communities in order to create strong leadership roles and encourage networking among populations (The Annenberg Foundation, 2014). It also focused on

funding programs which involve aspects of education, community, and culture.

Furthermore, the foundation had an open application status and a geographic focus on the five-county region of Greater Los Angeles, which includes Ventura County.

Some of the foreseen challenges of using the Annenberg Foundation was that the funding source emphasized sustainability of financial needs and infrastructure. Due to the support group being a new project, it would be difficult to provide evidence of sustainability. An additional limitation included proving the support group's goals and the guidelines for the foundation are consistent with one another. Although the values and goals are similar in many ways, it would be beneficial to add in-depth literature in order to better convey the foundation's vision of fostering innovation and history of the program effectiveness.

Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation was discovered through a Google internet search using key words including but not limited to "funding," "foundation," "grant," "child welfare," "Latino," "Latino immigrants," "children," "child abuse," "neglect," "permanency." The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private foundation which emphasizes the importance of strength in families and communities across the United States (2014). The foundation values accessibility and equal opportunities for children and families who are impacted by poverty (Annie E. Casey, 2014). In addition, the foundation relies on partnerships with agencies in order to encourage community relationships and support, which ultimately are more cost-effective. Overall, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is concerned about the well-being of children and intends to create increased positive outcomes for families in the child welfare system (2014).

A limitation of utilizing the Annie E. Casey Foundation for this grant is the process of submitting the application as the researcher would be required to submit a letter of inquiry which the foundation must approve. Upon approval, the foundation would request an application from for the proposed grant which may delay the process of securing funding.

The California Wellness Foundation

The California Wellness Foundation was identified through The Grantsmanship Center website. It was listed in the Top Grantmaking Foundations in California. The California Wellness Foundation website indicated that it is a private and independent organization which promotes health, wellness, and disease prevention (2014). The application status was open but the foundation required a letter inquiry prior to submitting an application. Other considerations for this funding source included the importance of building healthy communities by addressing the needs of underserved populations, which is relevant to the Latino immigrant population involved in the child welfare system. The needs for a support group which serves the Latino immigrant population in Ventura County were consistent with the goals of the foundation in that the population requires support and education which encompass aspects of health and well-being.

Limitations with this funding source included the foundation's emphasis on health and disease prevention. In order to better meet the mission of the foundation, the researcher would have to incorporate a health education component into the goals of the support group. Overall, the goals of the support group aim to educate and empower the Latino immigrant population of Ventura County and ensure the health, safety, and well-

being of children. By providing educational support, the population will develop skills and increased confidence to advocate for themselves, their families, and their respective communities in order to build healthier environments in different facets of their lives.

Criteria for Selection of Actual Grant

The identified funding source was reviewed and selected based upon the following guidelines:

1. The funding source had similar interests related to their mission and values of social justice, child safety, well-being, and permanency;
2. The funding source was able to accommodate the designed program, which included but is not limited to staff, supplies, and geographic location, specifically Ventura County;
3. The funding source had a rolling/open application status.

Description of Funding Source and Submission Process

The funding source that was selected for the proposed grant is the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The funding source was discovered by using a Google internet search with the following phrase: “foundations for child welfare services.” The Annie E. Casey Foundation has an open application status and is able to accommodate program needs long-term if needed. In addition, a focus area of the Annie E. Casey Foundation includes the child welfare system with the goal of “improving the lives of millions of children, families and communities across the country (2014, para. 1). The foundation offers various program paths which essentially support positive outcomes for children and families. Regarding the Latino immigrant support group, the grant would fulfill the functions of a civic site, which is defined as an innovative approach to engaging children

and families, and a center for working families, which is geared towards low-income families (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). Through these efforts, Latino immigrant parents will be provided with the support and education that will facilitate reunification with their children.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation was founded in 1948 by Jim Casey, George Casey, Harry Casey, and Marguerite Casey in order to provide services to at-risk children and families (2014). Casey Family Programs, which was founded by Jim Casey, is associated to the Annie E. Casey Foundation and provides in-depth information about the child welfare system in the United States to improve practice and policy (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). Over the years, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has supported efforts that promote the well-being of children with a concentration on the reform of child welfare and juvenile justice systems across the nation.

CHAPTER 4
GRANT PROPOSAL

Problem Statement

As a result of the large influx of the Latino population in the United States, their involvement with the child welfare system has become a more prevalent issue in recent decades. According to Dettlaff et al. (2009), this trend reveals that as of 2000, the Latino population in the United States increased nearly 29% which accounts for approximately 15% of the total population. Accordingly, the number of Latinos involved in the child welfare system has been on the rise as well. As of 2007, there has been a 21% increase of Latino families with open dependency cases as a result of child abuse and/or neglect (Ayon, 2011). Furthermore, Garcia et al. (2012) reported that in the United States, children who identified as Latino and were represented in the child welfare system increased from 32,000 to 84,727 between the years of 1990 to 2010. In the County of Ventura, Latino children involved in the child welfare system are disproportionately represented. According to data from 2012, 555 of 842 children in the child welfare system in the County of Ventura were identified as Latino (Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, 2014).

Latino immigrants have specialized challenges due cultural differences which contribute to the increased vulnerability to the child welfare system (Osterling & Han, 2011). Some of the common barriers that Latino families come across are a result of

poverty which can be attributed to conditions such as the fear of deportation due to the lack of legal status and lack of accessible services due to language barriers, low educational background, and lack of transportation (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2010). Furthermore, children of immigrant parents have been identified as being at-risk of child maltreatment due to the common stressors and barriers attributed to differences in cultural norms (Dettlaff et al., 2009).

Current studies have analyzed Latino prevalence in the child welfare system, risk factors, and characteristics in order to better understand and effectively intervene with the population. Research has revealed that families of Mexican origin have substantially higher rates of child maltreatment when compared to non-immigrant families as a result of acculturative stress, alcohol use issues, lack of citizenship in the United States, and disparities in cultural values and practices (Osterling & Han, 2011). Once involved in the child welfare system, Latino families with substantiated allegations of child maltreatment were found to have a more difficult time reuniting with their families due to the identified risk factors and barriers. According to Hines et al. (2007), the Latino population had a 28% rate of successful reunification. When compared to reunification outcomes among non-immigrant families, the findings indicated an approximate 10% increased rate for reunification (Hines et al., 2007). Such findings illustrate the need for effective interventions that address the specialized characteristics of the Latino immigrant population.

A contributing factor which accounts for the lower rates of successful reunification outcomes is the lack of resources and accessible services available to Latino immigrants. A study which analyzed services and referrals for Latino immigrants

indicated that the area of most need were related to financial deficiencies, yet many of the families were not eligible for services due to being undocumented and were challenged with language barriers which inhibited them from seeking services which they were able to receive (Finno-Velasquez, 2013). Furthermore, according to Xu and Brabeck (2012), undocumented parents are less likely to apply for services, such as food stamps and WIC benefits, despite their children being eligible because of their fear of deportation. Such findings reveal that the Latino immigrant population can benefit from general education regarding services they are eligible to receive.

Another important consideration that is accounted for in current research is that many Latino parents feel misunderstood due to cultural differences in child discipline practices (Earner, 2007). The impact of cultural differences is evident in the rates of different types of substantiated child maltreatment allegations among the Latino immigrant population. Dettlaff et al. (2009) reported that physical abuse allegations accounted for 36.5% of immigrant families involved in the child welfare system which is a higher rate compared to non-immigrant families. Such findings reveal that there is a high need of educational support for Latino immigrant families regarding acceptable forms of child discipline.

In summary, it is evident that there are many risk factors and reunification barriers among the Latino immigrant population involved in the child welfare system. As a result, the population requires additional support and services that will help them during the family reunification and family maintenance process. In order to assist these families, the proposed support group will take into account cultural considerations and address common barriers that Latino immigrants encounter. The support group will also address

the needs of enhancing participants' social network by building upon the resources and strengths they have currently have in place.

Description of the Program

The purpose of the proposed program is to provide Latino parents involved in the child welfare system a place in which they can gain peer support related to their family reunification and family maintenance dependency processes. By offering the Latino parents the opportunity to meet and participate in a support group, they will be able to share their experiences and knowledge with others going through similar circumstances. The support group for the Latino immigrant parents will tailor discussions relevant to cultural issues they encounter. Overall, the support group will assist parents in learning about the child welfare system through the group process.

The proposed support group will be a closed group which will meet once a week for an hour and a half for a 12 week period. The sessions will be held on Thursday and Friday evenings and will be facilitated in Spanish in order to address the language needs of the target population. The support group sessions will be held at the Oxnard Regional Children and Family Services office in the County of Ventura. The office is accessible and able to accommodate group meetings in a confidential space that allows for privacy.

Qualifications of Staff

In order to best serve the target population, the support group facilitator will have a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree with prior knowledge or experience of child welfare related work. In addition, someone with a Bachelor of Social Work degree with prior knowledge or experience of child welfare related work will be hired to co-facilitate the support groups held on Thursdays and Fridays and provide case management

services. The staff will include two social work interns to help with co-facilitation of the group sessions and provide brief case management services for parents in need of additional support. Lastly, all staff must be bilingual in English and Spanish in order to engage the target population and effectively communicate with the participants of the support group.

Goals and Objectives

The outcome goals of the support groups for Latino immigrant parents with open child welfare dependency cases are to enhance overall parental knowledge about the child welfare system by reviewing policies, laws, and topics relevant to child welfare and increase coping and empowerment skills among the target population. By providing a support group that incorporates relevant topics that address the cultural needs of the Latino immigrant population, parents will feel better prepared to reunify with their children.

These goals are intended to increase the level of understanding about that the child welfare system in an effort to help reduce further child maltreatment among the Latino community. In addition, the participants of the proposed program will gain peer support and learn how to advocate for themselves and their families. The support group will achieve the identified goals through the following objectives:

Objective 1: To increase parents' level of knowledge about the child welfare system, child maltreatment laws, and the process of family reunification and/or family maintenance by the end of their participation in the support group as evidenced through administered pre-tests and post-tests.

Objective 2: To obtain strong levels of agreement in areas regarding the organization of the program, leadership effectiveness, and usefulness of the group sessions as evidenced in the satisfaction surveys which rate parents' perception of leadership and overall benefit of the program.

Objective 3: To increase coping skills, support networks, and sense of empowerment and ability to advocate for their needs by the end of their participation in the support group, as evidenced in satisfaction surveys which rate parents' overall agreement with statements that coincide with these outcomes.

Target Population

The population the program intends to serve is Latino immigrant parents residing in Ventura County who are involved in the child welfare system. The parents must be receiving family reunification or family maintenance services through the County of Ventura Children and Family Services. The parents may have needs related to language barriers, both spoken and written, inadequate support systems, and education regarding the family reunification and family maintenance process through the child welfare system. The Latino immigrant parents must have an open dependency case with children under 18 years of age. Lastly, the Latino immigrant parents may be monolingual Spanish speaking or speak limited English and in need of additional support throughout their family reunification or family maintenance dependency case.

Host Agency

The identified agency for this project is the County of Ventura Children and Family Services in California. The mission of the agency is: "We strengthen families, support self-sufficiency and promote safety, health and well being," (County of Ventura,

2014, para. 1). Children and Family Services provides child protection services to Ventura County, which includes the cities of Oxnard, Simi Valley, Ventura, Santa Paula, Fillmore, Ojai, Camarillo, Moorpark, and Thousand Oaks. The agency provides services to the community which includes investigation of child abuse referrals and ongoing case management.

The agency will benefit from this project as it is intended to provide the additional support to Latino families which case carrying social workers may be unable to provide due to their language limitations, time constraints, and other responsibilities.

Strategies and Interventions

Current studies have highlighted the various needs of the Latino immigrant population involved in the child welfare system. Due to the needs that have been identified, as service providers, it is important to consider current intervention strategies and practices which are effective. There has been a strong emphasis regarding the importance of providing culturally sensitive services which demonstrate an understanding of differing cultural practices, barriers, and characteristics. According to Dettlaff and Rycraft (2010), current interventions, such as systems of care, which use a child, family, and community centered approach while emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding, is vital to the success of vulnerable populations such as Latino immigrant parents who have an open dependency case. Other current research has supported that family support and ties play a significant role in the overall well-being of children and families (Ayon & Aisenberg, 2010). For the proposed support group program, staff will participate in a cultural sensitivity training to ensure that they have an understanding of

the cultural issues and strengths that are commonly present among Latino immigrant parents involved in the child welfare system.

Additionally, studies have proved that there are benefits from peer support through the group process (Hammarberg et al., 2014; Vilhauer, 2009). In a current study regarding a support group for parents of children with special needs, the qualitative results revealed that the benefits of the support group intervention include improved mental health, increased awareness regarding common issues that were experienced among the group participants and the opportunity to build supportive relationships (Hammarberg et al., 2014). Similarly, in a mixed method study about the benefits of a support group for women with metastatic breast cancer, the results revealed that participants valued themes of sharing of information, group member cohesiveness, instillation of hope, and altruism (Vilhauer, 2009). These themes are reflective of psychotherapist Irvin Yalom's curative factors of group treatment. Furthermore, the study revealed that peer support and shared information enhanced the participants' ability and skills to advocate for their needs (Vilhauer, 2009). The benefits of support groups are evident in current studies and although there is limited research specific to services for Latino immigrant parents involved in the child welfare system, the current interventions can be applied to the population and allow for growth and opportunities to assist them throughout the family reunification and family maintenance process.

Program Timeline

The proposed support group program is expected to run for one year. Each cohort will participate in group sessions for 12 weeks, allowing for four cohorts to be served throughout the year. Each cohort will include 10 to 15 participants who will be referred

by child welfare social workers. The following is a step by step outline of the tasks that will be completed in order to implement this program.

1. Hire staff, one with a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree and another with a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree, who meet the qualifications, such as being bilingual in Spanish and English and having experience and/or knowledge about the child welfare system. The MSW will take the lead in running the support groups.

2. The MSW and BSW will coordinate with local universities in order to identify two interns which will help co-facilitate groups and provide short-term case management to participants throughout the academic year. The interns will receive weekly supervision from the MSW and/or BSW to review educational requirements and process their experiences as an intern.

3. The MSW, BSW, and two social work interns will attend and participate in a cultural competence workshop that will address the needs of the target population. The training will be selected based upon what is available at the time.

4. The MSW and BSW will outreach to the three regional Children and Family Services offices in Ventura: Oxnard, Simi Valley, and Ventura. They will present to child welfare social workers during staff meetings and provide flyers in order for the referral process to begin.

5. Once referred by the child welfare social worker, the MSW and BSW will contact the parents in order to invite them to the group session. Incentives such as food and assistance in translating case documents will be discussed. Additionally, services which will include brief case management assistance will be offered and scheduled.

6. Participants will participate in weekly, 1.5 hours group sessions facilitated by a combination of the MSW, BSW, and two interns. During the first session, a pre-test regarding the participants' understanding of the child welfare system will be administered. This will allow the program facilitators to gain an understanding of the participants' level of understanding and needs. In addition, participants will be provided with brief case management sessions in order to address specialized needs weekly as needed.

7. At the end of the 12 week program, the participants will complete an evaluation that incorporates a post-test component that assesses their level of understanding about the child welfare system. The evaluation will also incorporate a likert scale questionnaire to rate overall perceived coping, empowerment, and advocacy skills, benefits of the support group, and leadership effectiveness.

Evaluation of the Program

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the support group program for Latino immigrant parents, the participants will complete a pre-test in the first group session that rates their knowledge about the child welfare system. During the last session, a post-test will be completed in order to determine if the participants gained knowledge about the child welfare system. The evaluation will also include a likert scale questionnaire. The likert scale questionnaire will utilize a rating scale that ranges from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Areas of evaluation will rate the participants level of agreement with statements such as was the support group organized, were the support group facilitators knowledgeable in the topics discussed, was the information useful, was the information easy to understand, the group has helped me better understand the family

reunification and/or maintenance process, and the group has helped me gain coping skills that will help me advocate for my needs. In addition, there will be two areas in which participants can provide feedback about what they have perceived as most useful about the support group and how the support group could be improved.

Client outcomes which demonstrate program success will include increased knowledge of the child welfare system and increased sense of skills and empowerment as reported by the participants of the proposed support group. The evaluations will be conducted and reviewed by the MSW and BSW support group facilitators.

Communication

In order to increase and promote participation of Latino parents, communication with community agencies will be vital to the support group's success. Having a close relationship to the children and family services agency will allow for program staff to deliver presentations during their agency meetings that can refer parents which will benefit from the program. The ultimate goal is to effectively collaborate with child welfare social workers as well as other outside service providers in order to support the families in successfully reunifying with their children and increasing their protective factors which will reduce the likelihood of returning to the attention of the child welfare system.

Budget Narrative

The budget for the proposed program will require \$161,530 yearly. The funds are intended to cover the salaries and benefits of staff that include a Master of Social Work, a Bachelor of Social Work, and two bachelor level social work interns. The staff will be responsible for running and co-facilitating group sessions, as well as providing individual

case management services to participants. The funds will also cover training, print materials, equipment, food, and other miscellaneous costs and indirect expenses.

Salaries and Benefits

Master of Social Work (MSW): The MSW will have a projected salary of \$56,500 per year. The MSW will be responsible for overseeing the program tasks and functions. This position will require bilingual skills in Spanish and English. It will be a full-time position. Benefits are calculated at 26% and include social security, unemployment, worker's compensation, retirement, and medical which amount to \$14,690 annually.

Bachelor of Social Work (BSW): The BSW will have a projected salary of \$45,000 per year. The BSW will be responsible for co-facilitating support groups twice a week and providing case management services to participants. The BSW will also oversee the tasks of the interns. This position will require bilingual skills in Spanish and English. It will be a full-time position. Benefits are calculated at 26% and include social security, unemployment, worker's compensation, retirement, and medical which amount to \$8,550 annually.

Social work interns: The two bachelor level social work interns will be paid a \$500 academic year stipend. The social work interns will be responsible for helping set up for the group session, co-facilitating, and providing brief case management services to parents in need of additional support. This position requires bilingual skills in Spanish and English and must be enrolled in a social work program. This amounts to a total of \$1,000 per year for two interns.

Direct Program Expenses

Office supplies: Office supplies, which include but are not limited to pens, pencils, paper, notepads, staplers, markers, etc. is calculated at \$200 per month. This amounts to \$2,400 annually.

Expendable equipment: This includes a minimum of two laptop computers and two portable printers for the purposes of documenting group session progress notes, individual session progress notes, translation of documents, etc. These expenses account for \$4,500 of the annual budget.

Internet: Two portable internet flash drives are calculated at \$60 per month. The cost of two portable internet flash drives amount to \$720 annually.

Cellular telephones: The cost of two cellular telephones, which are designated for the MSW and BSW for the purpose of being in contact with participants of the program is \$60 each per month which amounts to \$1,400 annually.

Training: The MSW, BSW, and two social work interns will attend cultural competence training prior to beginning the support group. The training expenses are \$100 per staff person, which amounts to \$400 annually.

Copying and printing: Copying and printing include costs of flyers that will be distributed to Children and Family Services offices. The cost will amount to \$500 annually.

Food: Food will be provided as incentives for participants to attend the group sessions. It will be a vital component as many of the participants work long hours. Food expenses will be \$200 per month and amount to \$2,400 annually.

Indirect Expenses

Human resources, payroll, accounting, and audit: The cost was calculated at 15% of the total salaries and benefits, direct expenses, and indirect expenses. These expenses will allow for all responsibilities of hiring staff members, payroll, accounting, and audit which amount to \$20,709 annually.

Liability insurance: The cost of liability insurance was calculated at 2% of the total salaries and benefits, direct expenses, and indirect expenses which amount to \$2,761.20 annually.

In-Kind Contributions

Rent and utilities: The cost of rent and utilities will be covered through the Children and Family Services regional office in which the proposed program will be held. This cost was calculated at \$33 per square foot of space which amount to \$9,900 annually.

Projector equipment: The projector equipment will be obtained through the Children and Family Services regional office in which the proposed program will be held. The total cost of the projector equipment is approximately \$500.

Budget

See the Appendix A for the line-item program budget.

CHAPTER 5

LESSONS LEARNED

Identification of Needs for Proposed Program

The grant writer learned many valuable skills throughout the writing of the project. First and foremost, the importance of being dedicated and passionate about the topic was essential to drive this project to the finish line. In prior work experience, the grant writer was able to work with many Latino immigrant families involved in the child welfare system which encountered many of the barriers and challenges throughout the family reunification and family maintenance process as outlined in the literature review. Having observed the high level of need that this specialized population required, the grant writer became interested in learning more about the reasons that explain why they are commonly represented in the child welfare system, barriers to reunification, and current practices that serve the population.

Although it is evident that this population has an overwhelmingly high level of need, the grant writer found it challenging to find relevant research that illustrated the scope of the problem. The grant writer learned that this is due to information regarding legal status not being collected by child welfare agencies and other entities. Additionally, there is limited research regarding services for Latino immigrant families involved in the child welfare system. This made it difficult for the grant writer to justify the need and effectiveness of the proposed program.

Consequently, due to the lack accurate information that reflects the legal status of Latinos involved in the child welfare system, as well as the limited research regarding support groups for the population, the grant writer reviewed available research regarding current practices and interventions. The research highlighted the benefits of support groups and the importance of providing culturally relevant services to different target audiences which prompted the grant writer to combine these findings in order to justify the need and effectiveness of the proposed program. In summary, this grant writer learned about the needs of the population such as having inadequate support systems, language barriers, legal status, and poverty among many other conditions. Additionally, this grant writer learned that research and current interventions for Latino immigrants involved in the child welfare system are extremely scarce, which illustrates the need to develop programs that cater to culturally diverse populations.

Location of Potential Funding Sources

Another valuable lesson that the grant writer learned was the process of locating potential funding sources for the proposed program. Initially, the grant writer was not aware of the details that must be considered in order to identify funding sources that are relevant to the goals of the program being developed. In order to complete the searches, the grant writer utilized Google and Yahoo searches, which proved to be helpful, yet The Grantsmanship Center website was the most beneficial in narrowing down potential funding sources. Due to the proposed program being developed to serve a very specific population, the grant writer was able to review foundations by geographical regions which they funded. This also made the grant writer aware of additional foundations, their missions, and current programs which are funded across the nation.

Strategies to Enhance the Likelihood of Funding

In order to enhance the likelihood of funding, the grant writer reviewed relevant foundations which supported the proposed program's mission. The grant writer learned that factors such as financial needs, demographics, and the type of programs which the foundation is interested in funding must be consistent. In future practice, the grant writer will establish a relationship with the identified foundations in an effort to increase the chance of securing funding. The grant writer will attempt to communicate with other programs which are currently funded by identified foundations. This will help the grant writer gain a better understanding of current programs that the foundation is funding.

Furthermore, in order to increase the likelihood of funding, the grant writer will use networking as a strategy to get familiarized with funders. Overall, grant writing is a competitive practice in which the grant writer should fully dedicate ample time to research and develop a clear and strong application. There are many steps to the process which require extensive research, such as a needs assessment, evaluation strategies, and plans for sustainability. The grant writer learned of the different considerations which should be taken into account in future opportunities. The grant writer gained knowledge about the value of collaborating with other agencies in order to increase the possibility of being funded. By partnering with existing agencies, the proposed program will be more reputable and have more recognition by foundations, consumers, and agencies which would refer clients to the program. Overall, skills such as networking, establishing relationships in the community, and partnering with existing programs are essential in order to increase the likelihood of being funded.

Grant Writing Process

The grant writer gained experience in constructing an intervention that is supported by current research and evidence based practices. The grant writer learned the importance of being clear and structured in the development of the proposed program in order to cater to both the goals of the foundation and the project. The grant writing process required a high level of involvement and organization. In addition, the grant writer gained knowledge about the nature of the process and submission to foundations. Although submission was not required for this project, the grant writer learned about being aware of factors such as whether a foundation has an open versus closed application status, searching for foundations with similar mission statements, ensuring that foundations are able to accommodate and support the financial requirements of the proposed program, and how to apply for a grant. The Annie E. Casey foundation outlined that in order to be eligible to submit a grant application, the grant writer is required to submit a letter of inquiry which the foundation will review. Upon review, the foundation must approve the letter of inquiry and will contact the grant writer to inform them that they are eligible to submit a grant application.

Moreover, another valuable lesson that the grant writer learned was how to construct a budget. The budget helped the grant writer become familiarized with the many factors that must be accounted for in a budget. This aspect of the grant writing was especially valuable as it revealed the costs of running a program and the efforts that are dedicated to the planning process. In summary, the grant writer learned that the grant writing process requires extensive time, research, organization, and a structured

approach. The grant writer also learned of the importance of grant writing as it helps fund many non-profit organizations that serve populations in need.

Social Work Implications

This grant proposal is significant to the social work profession as it is intended to attend to the Latino immigrant population involved in the child welfare system. It is important for social workers to learn about cultural issues specific to the immigrant population from the area in which they are begin served. Furthermore, as social work professionals, it is vital to understand current trends in our society. Latino immigrants involved in the child welfare system are among many at-risk populations represented in the child welfare system. Current in-depth research has supported the need for effective culturally sensitive services. This project is relevant to the social work profession as it began when the grant writer learned of the many challenges that the Latino immigrant population encounter when involved in the child welfare system. Such experiences lend the opportunity for social workers to advocate for the families that are impacted by circumstances in which they require a high level of support. There is limited research regarding effective services and interventions for this vulnerable population. Furthermore, it is essential for social workers who work with diverse populations to have a thorough understanding of how cultural practices impact the child welfare system and the needs assessment required to better comprehend risk factors and barriers which are commonly encountered. By becoming aware of these conditions, social work professionals are offered the opportunity to become change agents in their community and work environments.

APPENDIX
LINE ITEM BUDGET

APPENDIX A: PROJECT BUDGET

Line Item Budget

Expenses	Amount
SALARIES AND BENEFITS	
Master Level Social Worker Bilingual Spanish/English Benefits @ 26% of FTE	\$56,500 \$14,690
Bachelor Level Social Worker Bilingual Spanish/English Benefits @ 26% of FTE	\$45,000 \$8,550
Social Work Interns 2 @ \$500 per academic year	\$1,000
TOTAL SALARIES AND BENEFITS	\$125,740
DIRECT EXPENSES	
Office Supplies @ \$200 per month X 12 months	\$2,400
Expendable Equipment, Laptop Computers, Printers	\$4,500
Internet @ \$60 per month X 12 months	\$720
Cellular Telephones 2 @ 60 per month X 12 months	\$1,400
Training 4 Staff @ \$100	\$400
Copying and Printing	\$500
Food @ \$200 per month X 12 months	\$2,400
TOTAL DIRECT PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$12,320
INDIRECT EXPENSES	
Human Resources, Payroll, Accounting, Audit @ 15%	\$20,709
Liability Insurance @ 2%	\$2,761.20
TOTAL INDIRECT EXPENSES	\$23,470.20
IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS	
Rent and Utilities	\$10,500
Projector Equipment	\$1,000
TOTAL IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS	\$11,500
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$161,530.20

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