A praxis of empowerment: Critically exploring family-school-community partnerships in Mexico and the United States

Kylie Phares Dotson-Blake

*William & Mary - School of Education*

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A Praxis of Empowerment: Critically Exploring Family-School-Community Partnerships in Mexico and the United States

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Kylie Phares Dotson-Blake
April 2006
A Praxis of Empowerment: Critically Exploring Family-School-Community Partnerships in Mexico and the United States

by

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Approved April 2005 by

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the wonderful, caring people who opened their lives, homes and hearts to me as I conducted this research. Bertho and Maria Castro, you shared your beautiful, giving spirits with your children and as adults they positively transform the world everywhere they go. Oscar, Magaly, Heriberto, Elizabeth, Dante and Mercedes, thank you all for welcoming me into your family and selflessly sharing your lives with my family. I have learned so much from all of you and I am so grateful for your friendship!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to engage in an exploration of the similarities and differences between family-school-community partnerships in Veracruz, MX and North Carolina, US with intentional focus on encouraging the empowerment of Mexican immigrant families. Engaging in a critical ethnographic exploration of the experiences of Mexican nationalists and Mexican immigrants created a space for the sharing of participants’ personal life stories fostering the development of a collective consciousness leading to a community of empowerment. The paucity of research addressing partnerships as a means to facilitate empowerment with Mexican immigrant families lends viability to this study.

As the Mexican immigrant population continues to increase in the US, so does the impact of the population as a force in public education. Family-school-community partnerships have been linked with school success and provided an appropriate avenue for engaging Mexican immigrant parents. Thus, this study sought to explore the experiences of Mexican nationalists and Mexican immigrant parents to gain insight into effective ways of developing collaborative connections with Mexican immigrant parents in US schools.

This study utilized methods congruent with the research strategy of critical ethnography, including focus groups, observations and individual interviews. All data were analyzed through the lens of Critical Race and Latino Critical Theory in an effort to conceptualize the influence and impact of race and racism on the experience of Mexican immigrant parents with partnerships. Delgado-Gaitain and Trueba’s (1991) Ethnography
of Empowerment promoted the importance of linking research to praxis through the researcher’s engagement with participants. This study sought to harness the power of Ethnography of Empowerment through the development of a collective awareness of shared experiences among participants.

Data analysis revealed three major cross-case themes: Collective Worldview vs. Individualism and Autonomy, The Institutionalized Ideology of Racism, and A Portrait of Hope: Values as Resources for Empowerment. These themes allowed for the emergence of a comprehensive understanding of the raced experience of Mexican immigrant parents in family-school-community partnerships in North Carolina.
A PRAXIS OF EMPOWERMENT: CRITICALLY EXPLORING
FAMILY-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
IN MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Latinos in the United States

In the face of rapidly shifting demographics, the Latino population has become a major force in the overarching societal structure of the United States (US). Of note is the particular breakdown of age strata within the population. Even as this population has burgeoned, it has remained highly stratified in terms of age. Minimally represented are older Latinos, with only 5.1 percent of the total Latino population falling into the age bracket of 65 and older (US Census Bureau, 2003). Conversely, children and younger adults make up a much larger proportion of the Latino population, with 34.4 percent of the population being under the age of 18 (US Census Bureau, 2003). The next highest proportion of this population, 33.2 percent, falls into the age bracket of 25-44 (US Census Bureau, 2003). Of Latino groups (Cubans, Central Americans, South Americans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans), the Mexican immigrant population is the youngest group, with the median age being approximately 24 (Santiago-Rivera, 2003).

Individuals in early and middle adulthood (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999) are considered to be in the child-bearing and child-rearing phases of their lives (Walsh, 2003). Accordingly, as a function of their age strata, one may infer that this population will contribute significantly to the child population of the US. Also of note is the smaller representation of Non-Hispanic whites in the US of child-bearing age and under the age of 18, 28.4 percent and 22.8 percent respectively (US Census Bureau, 2003). The differences in the population percentages of Latinos and European Americans lead one to infer that the Latino youth population will increasingly be a considerably significant force.
in the realm of public education in the US.

Further supporting the power of this population in US education, the 2003 US Census Bureau estimated that there are 8.5 million Hispanic families in the United States and that 63% of these families include one or more children under the age of 18. Additionally, seventeen percent of all students enrolled in the public schools of the United States in 2000 came from Hispanic families (US Census Bureau, 2003; Capps, et al., 2004). Currently, in the US there are approximately 23.4 million children under the age of six, with 22 percent of this population being children of immigrants (Passel, 2005). It can also be inferred that this percentage will continue to expand, as children of immigrants are the most rapidly growing stratum of the US child population (Hernandez, 1999).

Clearly, the Latino population forms a significant portion of the K-12 student population in the United States (US) and, as such, one can surmise that the academic progress of this population will significantly impact the performance determination of schools (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2001). However, in the face of specific stressors, Latino families and communities continue to struggle bitterly to help their children achieve academic success in US schools. Unfortunately, efforts to promote the academic success of Latina/o immigrant students have routinely gotten tangled in the web of the language debate between the separate camps of bilingualism and English as a Second Language (Abbeduto, 2002). Tragically, both of these approaches fail to effectively include a focus on the impact of cultural values and cultural capital on student success (Espinoza-Herold, 2003).
Statement of the Problem

Mexican immigrants enter the US filled with hope and excitement surrounding the expectations of new possibilities and future potential for their children (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Unfortunately, this hope quickly begins to dim as their families experience acculturative stress and racism, stressors which often manifest as intergenerational conflicts relating to their children’s struggle to balance living between two cultures, home and school (Trueba & Delgado-Gaitan, 1988).

School counselors are the professionals within US schools typically charged with addressing the psychosocial needs of students and families (Schmidt, 2003). These professionals struggle to meet the academic and psychosocial needs of their student population, but continue to prove unable to meet fully the needs of the Latino student population, a population that appears to enter the process with a great deal of personal investment and hope (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). This failure of school counselors to adequately engage Mexican immigrant families is ironic in the face of the strong cultural values concerning the importance of education that Mexican immigrant parents bring to their children’s educational experiences (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001).

Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) noted that the children of Latino families enter US schools filled with optimism and commitment to the value of education, values fostered by parents who also hold deeply rooted beliefs in the worth and importance of education (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). Tragically, in the face of specific stressors (conflicting values between home and school, language barriers, intergenerational conflicts related to acculturation, undocumented status, poverty, classism and racism), these students are not achieving high levels of academic success.

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This is paradoxical to the positive outcomes one might expect, based upon the students’ reported commitment to the importance of education (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Rather than achieving high levels of academic success, these students have inordinately high status dropout rates (Espinoza-Herold, 2003), psychosocial concerns related to the separation of their home and school experiences (Carasquillo, 1991; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004) and lower rates of school success than their peers (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

**Systemic Importance of Mexican Immigrant Educational Success**

While every single child’s academic success or failure should be of specific importance to the school professionals serving that child, the success or failure of the Mexican immigrant student population is of particular concern to the field of education as a whole, not just professionals working individually with Mexican immigrant children. The growth in the Mexican immigrant youth population presents a significant systemic concern, in that this population growth has not been reflected in positive academic gains. Rather, as the Mexican immigrant student population has grown in US schools, so has the overrepresentation of Mexican immigrant youth in status drop-out rates, academic struggles and academic disengagement or failure (Garcia, 2001). Moreover, these difficulties relate to the subsequent development of negative attitudes towards education and mounting psychosocial concerns within the Mexican immigrant youth population (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). As one considers the rapid growth demonstrated by the Latino population and the academic and personal difficulties manifested by immigrant Latina/o youth, the magnitude of these concerns for the US education and the overarching US society becomes strikingly clear.
Education professionals must seek to understand how the educational and psychosocial concerns manifested by Mexican immigrant students are linked to specific stressors facing this population and to overarching stressors facing minorities in US society, including institutionalized racism and classism. The No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA, 2001) specifically included Hispanic students as a distinct subgroup whose progress, as demonstrated by increased levels of achievement, is linked to performance determinations and subsequent federal funding for public education institutions. This link lends further credibility to the need for educators to study barriers to success and challenges faced by this student population. The political and institutional importance of an exploration of the barriers to Mexican immigrant student academic success and the means for overcoming such barriers is readily apparent when the extent to which this population is truly a force within governing policy of US education, such as the No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA, 2001), is made clear. However, before beginning to address the population’s academic concerns, one must first seek to seat the academic concerns within the larger context of societal stressors impacting the Mexican immigrant population. One means of contextually exploring the stressors facing Mexican immigrant families and children is through a thorough examination, through the lens of critical race and Latino critical theory, of the stressors and outcomes that manifest as a function of race and racism. Consequently, this theoretical lens is incorporated into an overarching critical framework for the proposed study.

Critical Framework

This research was developed within a subsuming critical race theoretical framework. By engaging in a critical analysis of education, I am seeking to understand
the central role of power and politics in conceptualizing how schools are structured and practice (McLaren, 1994). As a function of engaging in a study grounded in critical race theory, all subsequent methods and strategies must also adhere to critical principles and assumptions. As such, this qualitative study was developed from the paradigm of critical humanism. Critical humanism is a paradigm that acknowledges “individual consciousness as the agent to empower, transform and liberate groups from dominating and imprisoning social processes” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 4). Furthermore, the study employed the perspective of Latina/o critical theory as a means for adopting an interdisciplinary approach for exploring social conditions impacting the Latino population. Latina/o critical theory links theory to praxis, requiring that research studies utilizing the theory include a component focused on immediate engagement with the intent to affect social change. The perspective of Latino critical theory is thus well-suited for the implementation of a critical ethnography strategy, specifically the critical ethnography approach referred to as ethnography of empowerment (Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba, 1991), which includes an intentional focus on social action. Employing critical ethnography as a research strategy enabled the study to appropriately address each of the parameters outlined by Latino critical theory, including the stipulation of social action and empowerment.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to engage in an exploration of the similarities and differences among family-school-community partnerships in Veracruz, MX and North Carolina, US, with the intent to encourage the empowerment of families involved in such partnerships by creating a space for the sharing of stories and, as such, the development
of a collective consciousness leading to a community of empowerment.

**Role of the Researcher**

Delgado-Gaitan (2001) described the role of the researcher conducting a critical ethnography as being different from the researcher’s role in a traditional ethnographic study, stating:

Commonly, the researcher and the research community are discussed in terms of an insider/outsider relationship. Without question many differences exist in the cultural experience of researcher and the collaborators in the communities who are the focus of the research. However relationships aren’t simply an insider/outsider dichotomy, because in complex societies … the researcher and the focus communities at some point become actors in a common culture (p. 7-8).

As a function of conducting a critical study in which I had to take an active role in encouraging the empowerment process with the participants, it was absolutely critical for me to make transparent my feelings, thoughts, perceptions and influence throughout the study. This process began in the initial “researcher as instrument statement” introduced in chapter three and continued throughout the research process through the maintenance of a log of reflexive journals.

**Research Questions**

The *research* questions were developed with the intent to provide an initial overarching introduction of the phenomenon under investigation. The *interview* questions provided the structure and framework needed for acquiring from participants the knowledge necessary for the desired understanding (Maxwell, 1996). By developing questions with an intentional focus on the experience of parents, this study was able to
explore the nuances of societal impact on these experiences. The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of Mexican nationalist parents and Mexican immigrant parents with family-school-community partnerships?

2. How are these experiences informed and impacted by their socioeconomic and cultural position in society?

3. How do participants in family-school-community partnerships with Mexican nationalist and Mexican immigrant parents perceive their individual roles and the roles of others in the partnerships?

4. How are the experiences and responses reflective of societal practices?

Significance of study

The Mexican immigrant population faces intense isolation and marginalization in US public schools. According to the literature, this isolation and marginalization is reflective of the pervasive isolation of Mexican immigrants in US society. As a function of this societal structure, school professionals continue to struggle to meet the needs of this population. This study makes significant contributions to the development of successful school-family-community partnerships through the exploration of the development and implementation of partnerships in Mexico, as compared to the US. This comparison brings to light important differences, providing a point from which to begin to empower families, schools and communities to enter into work together for the good of the children and, thus, for the good of our future society. Finally, this study provides the means for understanding the role of race in the development and implementation of such partnerships, informing schools and empowering parents.
Methodology

This research study utilized a qualitative research approach employing ethnographic methods. The study provided an opportunity for marginalized voices to be heard concerning family-school-community partnerships. The strategies used were chosen with the intentional focus of developing a community of sharing, through which parents and caregivers are empowered to affect change in the oppressive forces leading to their marginalization.

Procedures

The procedures used for data collection include focus group interviews, individual interviews, observations and the examination of material culture. I developed interview guides for the three focus group interviews and the individual interviews. These interview guides were intended to provide a structure allowing for the collection of data connected to the literature and to the initial research questions, while providing room for the participants to guide and shape the interview process.

Data were analyzed through the use of inductive analysis. This process allowed themes to emerge naturally from the data, with the researcher attending to diversity as well as to consistency (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Indigenous codes were used to identify segments of data, with the data segments next being grouped into themes. The initial themes that emerged were grouped into major themes, and the major themes were then analyzed through a parallel examination of the literature (Creswell, 1998). The themes were ultimately presented as a final product through the use of narrative summary and visual presentations of the data. This presentation approach allowed the researcher to honor the voices of the participants, both individually and collectively.
Delimitations and Limitations

This study was bounded by engagement with four parents, four educators (including one school counselor) and one community agency specialist in North Carolina and five parents, four educators and one community agency specialist in Veracruz. As a qualitative study, the small sample size was utilized for the opportunity to provide richness of data and thick description of the construct within the experiences of these individuals. Qualitative studies lead to logically generalizable, as opposed to statistically generalizable findings. While some view the lack of statistically generalizable findings a weakness of qualitative research, others, such as I, view the richness of data provided through qualitative research as a crucial contribution to professional awareness and action. A thorough exploration of the literature related to the study focus and the methodology of the study are presented, enabling the reader to, drawing from his or her personal experiences and awareness, make logical connections between this study and other similar settings and interactions.
CHAPTER TWO
A Selected Review of the Literature

Introduction

This selected review of the literature will begin with an exploration of diversity within the Latino population. Following this exploration and a clarification of nomenclature, the discussion will progress into an examination of stressors facing Mexican immigrant families and children. These stressors will be explored as a function of the children’s involvement in education, with a particular focus on the role of institutionalized and embedded racism. Family-school-community partnerships, as a means of positively impacting student success, will be defined and investigated. The current involvement of Mexican immigrant parents in such partnerships will be a focus, as will barriers to such involvement. From the discussion of current involvement and barriers, the discussion will proceed to an intense look at critical race theory and Latino critical theory as theoretical frameworks for critically examining the role of race and racism in current educational practices serving to impede the involvement of Mexican immigrant parents in family-school-community partnerships. The chapter will conclude with a call to the profession to fill gaps in the current literature focused on Mexican immigrant families and family-school-community partnerships.

Defining the Latino Population

The growth in student population (up eleven percentage points from 1972) is reflected in the growth of the overall Latino population in the United States (US). Schmidley (2001) asserted that the total immigrant population tripled between 1970 and 2000. At present, more than half (66.9%) of Latina/Latino (Latina/o) immigrants arrive in
the US from Mexico (US Census Bureau, 2003). However, though the majority of Latina/o immigrants arrive from Mexico, wide diversity exists throughout Latino culture within the Latino immigrant population of the US. This diversity can be noted in the modification of the Spanish language, the differing geographical locales from which individuals, families, or communities immigrated, and within other distinctive cultural variables (Garcia & Zea, 1997).

The descriptor used to encapsulate the complexities of the Hispanic/Latino cultural community within the US population has historically been Hispanic (Clemente & Collison, 2000). However, the term Hispanic is regarded by many as being inadequate for use as a total population descriptor (Patton & Day-Vines, 2005), as it neglects to address the unique identities (i.e., ethnic, language, social, political, historical and personal) of individuals from Mexico, Central and South America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean (Stavans, 1995). Immigrants from these separate geographical areas often identify more strongly with their nationality, rather than with their language (Oboler, 1995). As such, the terms Latina/o (in reference to heterogeneous groups, female and male, respectively) have become more widely accepted, in a cultural effort, to formulate an identity with Latin ethnic and cultural roots, rather than the historical roots founded in Spanish colonialism (Clemente & Collison, 2000).

*Ethnicity and its role in nomenclature*

As a term, ethnicity is used to describe the shared cultural heritage passed within a group from one generation to another (Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). Cultural tenets typically associated with a group’s ethnicity include, but are by no means limited to, shared values, beliefs, language, a sense of group and individual identity related to the
aforementioned variables and a common history. Pinderhughes (1989) also defined ethnicity as the connectedness espoused by a group based upon common defining characteristics, including region, nationality or religion through which the transmission of cultural referents and patterns occur over time, leading to the development of a common group history. However, Robinson and Howard-Hamilton (2002) also noted that individuals can share a common ethnicity, such as Latino, but represent different racial or religious groups. Thus, adopting a population descriptor founded in a group's ethnicity rather than race respects the racial and religious diversity of sub-groups within the population. This is particularly important with the Latino population, a population spanning many different races and evidencing great diversity in language modification and cultural variables (Clemente & Collison, 2000). Falicov (1998) noted that it is imperative for educational and counseling professionals providing services to the Latino population to honor and respect racio-ethnic diversity within the population.

Nomenclature in terms of study focus

The focus of this research centered on the specific experiences of immigrants entering the US from Mexico. Thus, for the purposes of this discussion, the population descriptor used will be Mexican immigrants. When information presented was gleaned from the experiences of the larger group of Latina/o immigrants in the US, the terms Latina/o will be used. Furthermore, when the authors cited specifically uses another term (i.e. Hispanic, Mexican-American, etc.) the use of their chosen term will be honored.

Specific Stressors

Mexican immigrant families with school-aged children manifest issues directly related to specific stressors experienced by the population. Often these stressors are
inseparably related to the individual’s or family’s immigrant status in their new community. Stressors such as conflicting cultural values between home and school (Espinoza-Herold, 2003), isolation due to language (Garcia, 2001), intergenerational conflicts resulting from differing levels of acculturation (Suarez-Orozco, 2001), fear and/or anxiety related to illegal status (Valdes, 1996), socioeconomic status (Dryfoos, 1996; Garcia, 2001), classism (McGoldrick, 1998) and racism (Nunez, 1994) are some of the stressors impacting the Mexican immigrant population. These stressors are ultimately harmful to the overall health of family functioning. Furthermore, these stressors tragically impact the ability of Mexican immigrant students to be successful in US schools (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). For the purpose of this research, each of the aforementioned stressors will be explored as a function of the family and child’s interactions with US education and in relation to its impact on family functional health and the psychosocial health of individual family members.

_Conflicting Values Between Home and School_

Entrance into the educational system of the United States is a life-changing experience for Mexican immigrant children. These children enter the US educational system filled with hope and high expectations (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). They also enter with a lengthy tradition of, respect for, and identification with both nuclear and extended family, termed familismo (Santiago-Rivera, 2003). Furthermore, these students embody characteristics typifying their collective worldview, including cohesiveness and interdependence (Gracia & De Greiff, 2000). Unfortunately, US educational institutions typically do not value the cultural capital these students bring to
their educational experiences, requiring instead that students quickly acculturate to American educational ideals (Espinoza-Herold, 2003).

In the following section, specific cultural values of Mexican immigrant families will be explored with an intentional focus on the relationship of these variables to the cultural disconnect Mexican immigrant children face between home and school.

*Cultural values and US education.*

**Familismo** – Familismo refers to the cultural tradition of strong identification, loyalty and reciprocity to extended and nuclear family. Three characteristics specific to familismo noted by Marin and Marin (1991) include “(a) perceived obligation to provide material and emotional support to the members of the extended family, (b) reliance on relatives for help and support, and (c) the perception of relatives as behavioral and attitudinal referents” (p. 13-14). Some specific characteristics embodied by individuals as a function of familismo include interdependence, cohesiveness, cooperation and affiliation (Santiago-Rivera, 2003).

**Familismo as capital.**

In Mexico the characteristics related to familismo ensure an individual’s and family’s survival. Familismo promotes the shared responsibility of childrearing, provision of financial resources and emotional connectedness. Valdes (1996) stated that “among the Mexican elite, success depends not on individualism, not on independence, but on family ties and family networks” (p. 186). Valdes wrote that at all societal levels within Mexican culture, family networks are “social capital and the main vehicles for economic mobility” (p. 187). As such, these networks are nurtured and cared for, in effort to maintain familismo, a cultural value crucial to the success of individuals and families.
**Familismo as perceived in US schools.**

The interconnectedness and responsibility to others that provide such strong social capital in Mexico stand in stark contrast to the independence, individuation and autonomy highly valued in US society. Mexican schools seek to capitalize upon the cultural value of familismo, organizing classroom instruction and activities around the central concepts of cooperation and interdependence (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). US schools typically do not promote extensive group participation, requiring instead that students engage in individual work and assessments. As a result, Mexican immigrant students often have difficulty understanding and adjusting to the different approach and may be punished for not adhering to the rules requiring individual work (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). Disciplinary measures to control for differences in cultural orientations impede the integration of Mexican immigrant students into the culture and community of US public education. Additionally, the stark contrast between the importance of interconnectedness in the children’s home lives and independence in their school lives creates a state of disequilibrium and isolation from sources of family and cultural support.

Simpatia – Simpatia can be translated as the value related to the desire to promote agreement and thus reduce conflict. Reducing conflict is seen as being directly related to an individual’s personal demeanor, with the culture valuing a pleasant, non-confrontational demeanor.

**Simpatia as capital.**

A pleasant demeanor is seen as necessary for maintaining the interconnectedness necessary for the collectivist worldview structuring the culture of Mexican immigrants. The nature of simpatia encourages conformity and adherence to family hierarchy. These
qualities allow for the smooth functioning of family interactions, enabling the family to work together to accomplish much more than possible if members spend time vying for authority.

_Simpatia as perceived by US schools._

US education values and rewards competitiveness as a personal characteristic, with many assessments being designed to induce competitiveness within the classroom (i.e., oral question and answers, spelling bees, etc.). The importance of simpatia as a cultural value leaves Mexican immigrant children well-equipped to be agreeable, pleasant-natured students, however it also renders competition with one’s peers a more difficult endeavor for these students. Instead of valuing the warm interpersonal relationships Mexican immigrant students are able to develop with peers and the cooperative nature these students exhibit in classroom activities, US schools often penalize students who are less assertive, rewarding students who are more competitive and aggressive.

In American schools, Mexican immigrant children are quickly inundated with the importance of independence and individuation (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). These values conflict with traditional Mexican cultural values, and the children must shirk the cultural capital of their home life for the expectations of their school culture (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). The dramatic separation of home and school cultural expectations imposed upon children often leads to dissonance and disequilibrium within the family, amplified by other stressors, including isolation due to language and conflicts related to acculturation. _Language as an Isolating and Divisive Variable_

Language serves as an isolating factor, contributing to the stress experienced by Mexican immigrant families. Mexican immigrant children are often caught in the middle...
of two worlds separated by a clearly defined barrier: language. At school, the children are exposed to English much more intensely than are their parents, who often accept jobs that provide very little exposure to the English language (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Due to the level of involvement children have with the English language, typically they become adept with the language much more quickly than their parents. Many children even begin to lose some of their native language (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). This loss of language leaves parents and children unable to communicate their thoughts, feelings and needs effectively to one another (Garcia, 2001).

Consequently, many divisive situations arise in families as a function of the differences in the language experiences of the parents and children. One such divide occurs in the parents’ interpretations of the children’s responses to parental guidance. Parents often continue to address children in the family’s native language. The children, who have begun to lose some of their native language, are left unsure of how to respond. This lack of response may be interpreted by the adults as disrespect or rejection (Garcia, 2001). As a result, parents may view the process of learning English as nullifying their family’s native language and culture (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). It is difficult for parents and children to engage in positive interactions involving the children’s education when parents view the process as invalidating their home culture, leading to further social and emotional divisions between parent and child.

Dissonance also results from a shift in power that occurs in a family’s structural hierarchy (Minuchin, 1974). When parents are unable to speak, read or write in English, children often serve as translators, unbalancing the family hierarchy by situating children in positions of power and relegating parents to dependency. In Mexican immigrant
families, in which the parental hierarchy traditionally holds the power (Riveria-Santiago, 2001), children may be reluctant to share undesirable information with their parents. For example, when serving as translators, children may omit information that they view as disappointing or troubling to their parents. These omissions can lead to parents not getting pertinent, important information.

A final divide comes in the form of an inability to communicate effectively feelings and emotions between parent and child. Unfortunately, as a child's ability to communicate in the native tongue of his or her parents atrophies, the child also finds himself or herself unable to communicate the nuances of feelings, emotions and experiences to his or her parents (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). This experience further divides parent from child. Garcia (2001) reported that “a national survey found evidence of serious disruptions of family relations occurring when young children learn English in school and lose use of home language” (p. 17). These divides are tragic experiences for Mexican immigrant families, whose culture highly values close relationships and strong bonds within one's family as an important source of health and survival (Riveria-Santiago, 2001).

Acculturation as an Intergenerational Stressor

Intergenerational conflict often erupts, creating rifts in the family, due to differences in levels and rate of acculturation between parents and children (Carrasquillo, 1991). Children typically acculturate much more quickly than do their parents, due to their immersion in the school environment (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). Schools provide a high level of cultural contact, and this intensity of exposure promotes the adoption of American mannerisms and values more quickly by children than by their parents.
Paradoxically, parents often take jobs that leave them more culturally isolated (i.e. jobs that involve working with individuals from their native homeland rather than providing a high level of contact with US culture) (Valdes, 1996). Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) described this process as undermining family cohesion and parental authority.

Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) explained that “the child’s fast absorption into the new culture will create particular conflicts and tensions” (page 74), possibly resulting in embarrassment about their parents’ traditional values and ways of acting. Paradoxically, immigrant parents commonly consider the values and practices of the mainstream youth culture to be objectionable and detrimental to their children’s well-being (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). This creates a rift in the household, with children trying to fit in with their mainstream peers at school and parents actively resisting this engagement.

McGoldrick, Giordano & Peace (1995) discovered that values and identification with one’s culture of origin remain significant in one’s life and impact the family life cycle for many years following immigration. Unfortunately, dissonance between cultural beliefs and dominant societal values leads to the amplification of stressors experienced by Latino families during stages of the family life cycle. This amplification leads to significant difficulties in functioning during transitions, leaving family life cycle stages unfulfilled and incomplete, and ultimately placing the family’s health in jeopardy.

*Immigrant Status (Documented or Undocumented) as a Stressor*

Any migration is stressful for individuals and their families. Unfortunately, this typical stress is amplified by their status as undocumented immigrants for many Latinas/os in the US (Passel, Capps, & Fix, 2004). The Pew Hispanic Center (Passel,
2005) reported that as of March 2005 the number of undocumented residents had reached an estimated 11 million, with undocumented Mexican immigrants composing the majority of the group at more than 50 percent, or six million. Furthermore, the Pew Hispanic Center (Passel, 2005) reported that 80 to 85 percent of all immigrants from Mexico in recent years have had undocumented status. North Carolina and Arizona have risen to the forefront of states in the US with the most rapid growth in the number of Mexican immigrants with undocumented status (Passel, 2005).

The undocumented immigrant population consists largely of young adults. However, the population also includes a substantial number of children. The Pew Hispanic Center (Passel, 2005) reported that approximately 1.7 million people or one-sixth of the undocumented immigrant population is under 18 years of age. Children with undocumented status face stressors specific to their status as students in US institutions of public education. Valdes (1996) reported that children often fear being distinguishable from their peers due to apprehension that recognition may bring deportation and separation from family and friends.

Undocumented status carries with it particular personal and familial stressors. Individuals who enter the US without proper documentation face the stress of possible injury or harm. Immigration status impacts the ways in which children are able to adapt to the turmoil of immigration (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001), by impacting the openness with which these children are able to embrace their new lives and country.

Socioeconomic Stress

Socioeconomic stress is a significant variable in the academic success and psychosocial health of any student group. Students who live in poverty are reported to
experience higher rates of violence (Dryfoos, 1996) and substance abuse (Walsh, Buckley, & Howard, 1999), as well as lower rates of academic success (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Additionally, the Children’s Defense Fund (2004) reported that children who live in poverty are more likely to die in infancy, lack adequate food, healthcare and housing, have lower birth weights, which often result in postnatal illness, and receive lower scores in reading and math.

Minority students, specifically African American and Latino students, are twice as likely to live in poverty and attend high poverty schools as are European American children (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Strikingly, Garcia (2001) reported that while non-White children account for less than 30 percent of all children under the age of six in the US, over 50 percent of all children living in poverty are non-White. There has also been demonstrated a strong statistical correlation between poverty and drop out rates, low academic achievement and school failure (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

Latinos traditionally have obtained employment in the US in low-wage occupations requiring minimal education. This low-wage employment has led to 74% of Latinos earning annual incomes less than $35,000, with 23% of Latinos living below the poverty level (Santiago-Rivera, 2003). This percentage stands in stark contrast to the eight percent of non-Latino Whites facing the same fate. The poverty rate for Mexican immigrants hovers at 25.8%; this is the second highest poverty rate for immigrant populations in the US, with the first highest being Dominican immigrants (US Census Bureau, 2001). The percentage of Mexican immigrant children under the age of 18 living in poverty is 35.4%, as compared to a rate of 10.6% for Non-Hispanic Whites. The
Children's Defense Fund (2004) reported that children of Mexican heritage account for 73 percent of all Latino children in the US who are living in poverty. When one considers that many Mexican immigrant families in the US live below the poverty level, and the research suggests that the environmental context in which these students live impacts their academic achievement, it becomes apparent that any discussion of the academic success of Mexican immigrant students must include a description of the socioeconomic stress faced by the population.

In addition to stress related to socioeconomic status, Mexican immigrant families and children also experience stress related to social class. While socioeconomic status is often seen as a central variable defining one's social class, the literature makes it clear that social class is multidimensional. As such, social class must be explored as a multifaceted construct which serves an additional stressor in the lives of Mexican immigrant families.

**Social Class: A Multifaceted Construct**

Social class must be understood contextually, as social class is a multifaceted construct, not based entirely upon one's socioeconomic status. Kliman (1998) highlighted the complexity of social class as a construct, stating "class involves multiple relationships to economic and other social structures: race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, physical and mental well-being, and geography. It also involves relationships between classes. One's economic and social circumstances exist in relation to those of others" (p. 51). Perceptions of class within a particular community may be tied to the value system, expectations and hopes a family holds for their children, rather than strictly to the family's per capita income (Boyd-Franklin, 1993). The differences in perceptions of
social class between and within communities elucidate class as a multifaceted, contextual relationship among families, community and economy (Mirkin, 1998). Social stratification is founded upon the building blocks of social status or class position (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001), clarifying the importance of social class, a fundamental characteristic perpetuating dominant ideologies through the maintenance of oppressive social praxis.

Social class functions in the lives of Mexican immigrant families as a covert stressor. I refer to social class as a covert stressor, due to the fact that often people believe that the social class of Mexican immigrant families is solely a function of the language barrier and socioeconomic status. This, however, is not the case. Social class, as a construct, plays a highly complex role in the lives of Mexican immigrant families. The negative contributions of social class as a stressor are more intensely noted in families who emigrate from a country in which they had middle class status, rather than immigrant families who enter the US from home countries in which they were members of the lower class (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Middle class immigrants are often forced to accept positions well below those to which they are entitled in their native country as a function of their training and qualifications (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). For example, a Mexican immigrant woman formally trained as an educator in her home country may be forced to accept a position as a member of a janitorial crew when her former training is not certified or accepted by US institutions. At home and in their local community, individuals may be viewed as having high status and great power, while at work or in the larger society, they are “assumed to be poor and uneducated, are patronized by bureaucrats and health care workers, suspected by police
and store clerks, and lied to by realtors and employers” (Klinman, 1998, p. 53). These incongruent roles which middle-class immigrants must fill often lead to a sense of inferiority, depression or even anger.

Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) also noted that because of their marginalized status “middle-class immigrants may suffer for the first time the painful experience of prejudice and discrimination in the new country” (p. 83). As a result of stereotypes and status, Mexican immigrant families are often refused access to the opportunity for class advancement by being relegated to inferior schools and low-wage, low-opportunity, manual labor jobs. Racism amplifies the oppression faced by members of society having lower social status. Kliman (1994) stated that in a society such as the US, a society viewed by many as racist and classist, social class and race cannot be understood in isolation. Consequently, the following section will explore the impact of racism as a stressor in the lives of Mexican immigrant families.

**Institutional and Embedded Racism**

W.E.B. DuBois stated in 1903 that the defining issue of the 20th century would be the problem of the color line. Unfortunately, the issue of the color line, and specifically, issues of individual and institutional racism continue to define interactions within 21st century US society (Patton and Day-Vines, 2004). bell hooks (1996) further explained that US society continues to prevent individuals from becoming aware and addressing hurtful realities of difference and race by maintaining a pervasive societal foundation of denial and repression. Thus, any researcher seeking to comprehensively and most honestly explore the experiences of minority populations in the US must intentionally include a specific focus on issues of race and racism.
Traditionally, discussions of race and racism in the US have centered on the black-white dichotomy, neglecting to consider the raced experiences of Latinos. Nunez (1999) addressed this inadequacy directly, stating that the current discourse fails to adequately address the role of the Latino population and "negates the role that Anglo-Latino relations played in the consolidation of a racist ideology in the United States" (p.3). As such, Nunez (1999) called for the development of a distinct Latino Critical Race Theory as the "best way to attack the effects of racism on Latinos" (p. 3). In response to the call to action by both bell hooks and Nunez, this study utilized Latino Critical Theory as a vehicle for exploring the role of institutional racism on the experiences of Mexican immigrant parents in partnerships.

_Institutionalized racism._

Institutionalized racism plays a critical role in the educational experiences of Mexican immigrant students. Institutionalized racism refers to institutional structures and practices that maintain racist ideologies within society (Citron, 1970). Darder (1991) specifically defined institutional racism as "a form of racial discrimination that is woven into the fabric of the power relations, social arrangements and practice through which collective actions result in the use of race as a criterion to determine who is rewarded in society" (p. 41). However, the origins of institutionalized racism can only be understood through a historical examination of the interactions of Anglo-Saxons and other races in America. Though a historical exploration of this magnitude is beyond the scope of this discourse, the paper will seek to explore the ways in which educational practices and schooling in America maintain extensive institutionalized racism. For those interested in further exploring the historical development of institutionalized racism in the United
States, I refer to Nunez’s (1999) discussion of institutional versus racial superiority or Horseman’s (1985) discussion of the development of institutional superiority.

*Embedded racism.*

Nunez (1994, 1999) presented the concept of embedded racism as the means for understanding how schooling perpetuates societal discrimination through the development of institutionalized racism. Nunez (1994) defined embedded racism by describing the role of social institutions as a source of educational underachievement by minority students, stating:

This concept relies on the notion of “embedded racism” which resides within Americans and colors their perceptions of culturally diverse communities. The source of embedded racism is institutionalized American social structures which demean non-White cultures (p. 5).

Embedded racism, according to Nunez (1999), is perpetuated through interactions between students and teachers, interactions through which are manifested the discriminatory and oppressive structures of the institution. Embedded racism serves to legitimize inequality through the interactions of teachers and children in education (Nunez). This legitimized inequality is incorporated into the worldview of children, who come to view racism, oppression and discrimination as necessary facets of everyday life. Engagement in a culture of schooling in which racial ideology is a fundamental aspect promotes the internalization of racist views that children carry with them for the rest of their lives. For minority students, this often means living with what W. E. B. DuBois (1903) termed a “double-consciousness,” referring to the “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that
looks on in …contempt and pity” (p. 364-365). This embedded racism and subsequent double consciousness impacts every interaction, action and decision individuals make throughout their lives, perpetuating the cycle of internalization of racist ideology into institutionalized racism.

Figure 2.1

Role of Embedded Racism in Cycle of Institutionalization of Racism

Impact of racism on the educational experiences of Mexican immigrant children.

As a result of institutionalized racist stereotypes faced by Mexican immigrant
children, their families and, on an overarching level, their culture, "the burden of the child's failure [academically] is placed upon the child and her home environment" (Nunez, 1999, p. 45). Accusations and blame leave Mexican immigrant parents burdened with guilt and marginalized in interactions with school professionals, often leading to the total disengagement of parents from the schooling experiences of their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001). Thus, the racist ideology prevalent in educational structures and unconsciously manifested in the practices of school professionals becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy with Mexican immigrant children suffering high rates of school failure. By employing a critical race framework for exploring family-school-community partnerships involving Mexican immigrant parents in the US, it is possible to uncover educational assumptions and institutional structures that function within the educational institution to legitimize inequality (Nunez, 1994).

**Family & School Related Concerns that Manifest as a Function of Specific Stressors**

Many explicit family and school-related concerns manifest as a function of the specific stressors faced by Mexican immigrant families and children. In the face of the specific stressors described above, including language barriers, intergenerational conflicts related to acculturation, poverty and racism, these students are not achieving the level of academic success one would expect, based on the students' initial perceptions regarding the importance of education (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Rather, these stressors manifest in inordinately high status dropout rates, psychosocial concerns related to the separation of their home and school experiences (Carasquillo, 1991) and lower rates of school success than non-Latina/o peers. The manifestation of each of these issues must be examined as a function of the specific stressors experienced by Mexican
immigrant families.

*Status Dropout Rates*

There is a clear discrepancy between Latino students and their peers evident in dropout rates. Status dropout rates refer to the rate of individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 without either a high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999; USDOE, 1995). Mexican immigrant students continue to persistently demonstrate higher status dropout rates than other student ethnic groups (Torres Campos, 2004). In recent years, status dropout rates for European American and African American students have declined, while rates for Latino students have not decreased, consistently remaining higher than, and in some cases more than double those of other ethnic/racial groups (National Center for Education Statistics; Davison Aviles et al.).

Dropout rates must be understood as a function of the immigrant status of these students; misunderstandings and difficulties related to communication may leave students and parents unclear about attendance requirements and policies (Davison Aviles, et al., 1999). Latino students interviewed by Davison Aviles et al. explained that a “lack of communication between home and school generated a discrepancy” in what school policies truly were and what students and parents understood those policies to be. When faced with difficulties in communication and culturally insensitive institutional policies, Mexican immigrant students choose to disengage from the educational process.

*Shift from Hopeful to Hopeless Attitudes*

This disengagement represents a much larger shift in attitude, from a hopeful, positive attitude to a hopeless one. This shift is noted in the literature, with Mexican immigrant students experiencing a drastic negative shift in attitudes toward education.
over the course of their time in the US (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). The Suarez-Orozcos noted that the longer immigrant children are involved in US school environments, the greater the deterioration of social skills and learning ability they experience. Furthermore, Portes and Rumbaut (1994) discovered in a survey of more than 5000 high school students in Florida and California that there exists a negative correlation between length of residence in US and both grade point average (GPA) and educational aspirations. Additionally, Suro (1998) supported the position that longer residence in US and second generation status are connected to declining academic achievement and aspirations. This dramatic decline is a direct paradox with the hopeful, optimistic attitudes with which Mexican immigrant children and families initially engage with US public education (Garcia, 2001). Unfortunately, when one considers the cultural discontinuity Mexican immigrant children experience between home and school and the isolation they face as a result of this discontinuity, the hopelessness and frustration are readily understandable.

**Psychosocial Issues Related to Acculturative Stress**

The cultural discontinuity and acculturative stress experienced by Mexican immigrant families often manifest in psychosocial concerns. Unfortunately, Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) noted that “surprisingly little systematic research has focused on the psychological experiences of immigrant children” (p. 66). However, it is noted in the literature that psychosocial issues that develop as a result of immigration often include sadness, depression and anxiety related to family separations and reunifications (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). The experience of family separation and reunification is quite common in
families who emigrate from Mexico to the US, with 85% of Mexican immigrant families experiencing family separation at some point during the immigration process (Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). The psychosocial impacts experienced as a result of family separation and reunification are affected or amplified by the length of separation, the joining with other caregivers that occurs as a result of the separation and by the effectiveness of the reunification process. Additionally, it must be noted that the separation and reunification process typically involves more than one separation, with children facing a second separation from a primary caregiver (whoever has been responsible for the child during the first separation) to reunify with their parents (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001)\(^1\). This process may prove painful and disruptive to family structure and hierarchy, as well as to the psychosocial health of individual family members (Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie). Consequently it is imperative that professionals working with Mexican immigrant families address transitional concerns and psychosocial issues related to separation and reunification.

*Addressing These Concerns: The Role of School-Family-Community Partnerships*

In light of the No Child Left Behind Act's (ESEA, 2001) performance goals for individual student sub-groups, including Hispanic students, the need for investigating and addressing the aforementioned stressors and subsequent barriers to this population's student achievement is clear for school counselors and educators. One way to begin this investigation is through an in-depth investigation of successful means of promoting and encouraging student achievement with Mexican immigrant students. There has been demonstrated a strong correlation between parental involvement and positive academic gains, particularly for Latina/o students (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001) and disadvantaged
students (Moles, 1993). There also exists strong literature support for the positive impact of family-school-community partnerships on the academic success of disadvantaged students. Thus, one may begin an investigation of the means for addressing barriers related to acculturative stress for Mexican immigrant students by first exploring the relationship of partnerships to student success and the involvement of Mexican immigrant parents in such partnerships.

The research has demonstrated that parental involvement correlates positively with school completion rates and school success (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Unfortunately, Mexican immigrant parents have markedly low rates of home-school involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). There also exists a correlation between poverty and family involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), lending more strength to the argument that home-school collaboration must the central focus for an examination of Mexican immigrant students’ school success. Thus, it seems imperative to examine Mexican immigrant students’ disengagement and subsequent school failure as a function of the lack of involvement by Latino immigrant parents.

**Partnerships: Positive Impact and Call to Profession**

Partnerships have been shown to meet the diverse needs of students, impacting student success through developing a connectedness among home, school and community. In a strong statement in support of school-family collaboration, Gerhke (1998) asserted that a school-only focus is inadequate for solving children’s problems. However, the isolation Mexican immigrant families face as a result of language barriers, fears related to immigration status and a lack of awareness of the means to navigate social and cultural norms, often limits the educational experience of Mexican immigrant
children to just what Gerhke claimed inadequate: a school-only focus. Epstein (1999) took Gerhke’s argument one step further, explaining that school personnel and researchers must examine the multiple contexts influencing the students in order to address the myriad of issues impeding their ability to function successfully academically. Through an examination as suggested by Epstein (1999), one develops an understanding of the importance of the connections among home, school and community to the success of all students. Anderson-Butcher and Ashton (2004) supported Epstein’s argument by stating that to truly develop comprehensive approaches to learning, professionals “must recognize the role of the school along with the home and community in addressing student problems and needs” (p. 40).

The connections between home and school are especially important to the academic success of low-income students (Jesse, Davis and Pokorny, 2004). Raffaele & Knoff (1999) explained that “home-school collaboration is particularly important for children whose backgrounds include risk factors such as economic impoverishment, limited parental education, stressful home situations, and/or cultural discontinuities between home and school” (p.448). These students are trying to balance two different lives and often feel unsupported in their challenge. Furthermore, the parents of these students may feel disconnected from their children’s lives and, as such, may feel animosity towards the education system, rendering home and school conflicting institutions (Carasquillo, 1999).

Through the work of these researchers and others (Bryan, 2003; Keys & Bemak, 1998), the connection between family-school-community collaborative efforts and student success has been confirmed. Their findings have concluded that partnerships
developed to ensure connectedness between family, school and community directly impact a student’s integration of learning and ability to be successful in school. These connections appear even more important to the success of Latino immigrant children, whose home country and culture highly value collectivism and familial involvement.

**Partnerships: Mexican Immigrant Family Involvement**

Family-school-community partnerships are particularly beneficial for Latino students. Diaz Salcedo (1996) determined themes related to Latino students’ educational and personal success in school. Three of the major themes she discerned included relating to family, communication, and the importance of connecting with the culture and ethnicity. Even children whose families were less ideally structured still connected the importance of parental support or lack thereof with their success in school. Diaz Salcedo (1996) made many powerful connections between the importance of parental support and communication for academic success. Trueba (in Suarez-Orozco, 2001) further supported the need to include Mexican immigrant families in family-school-community collaborative partnerships, stating that “school initiatives to prevent the isolation of Mexican families and facilitate their socialization into academic careers are indispensable” (p 269). In order to comprehensively examine the phenomenon of family-school-community partnerships with Mexican immigrant families, one must also examine contextual barriers to this population’s involvement in such partnerships.

*Mexican immigrant parents as disadvantaged parents.*

Disadvantaged parents, as defined by Moles (1993), are parents who face “social or economic limitations to full participation in American society” (p. 21). These parents may have English as their second language, be poverty-stricken, or face significant
cultural boundaries to full societal involvement. Many Latino parents who have recently immigrated to the United States experience these stressors, thus meeting Mole's criteria for classification as disadvantaged parents.

Disadvantaged parents and collaborative partnerships.

Raffaele and Knoff (1999) explained that partnerships with disadvantaged parents are unlikely to occur without intensive, intentional planning. Unfortunately, many barriers to the development of effective partnership plans exist, including preconceived notions and a lack of knowledge and skills needed for meaningful interactions between parties involved in the partnership (Moles, 1993). Oftentimes, school personnel view disadvantaged parents as unwilling or uninterested in being involved in their children's education (Raffaele & Knoff). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) reported a positive relationship between level of privilege and parental involvement, meaning that as parents are less privileged and thus more disadvantaged, their level of involvement decreases dramatically. This lack of involvement by disadvantaged parents fuels the perceptions of school personnel that these parents are unwilling or uninterested in being involved (Raffaele & Knoff).

Unfortunately, the perceptions perpetuated through this vicious cycle may be erroneous. Rather than being unwilling or uninterested, disadvantaged parents may instead simply be uninformed as to how to navigate the path to involvement. The status of these families as disadvantaged renders them unable to first discern and later negotiate the path to increased parental involvement. The social divide between parents who are disadvantaged and educators and school personnel leaves the parties perpetually separated with no clear path to connection. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001)
directly addressed the challenge of presuppositions of educational professionals concerning the involvement of Mexican immigrant parents with the following statement: Many teachers interpret the general “hands-off” approach to schooling among many immigrant parents as a lack of interest in the child’s school progress. Nothing could be further from the truth. As we have already suggested, for the vast majority of immigrant parents the opportunities afforded by schooling in the new country are a highly valued gift (p. 150).

Additionally, Latino students interviewed by Diza Salcedo (1996) shared personal beliefs about the power of relationships at home and the impact of such relationships on one’s success in school. Thus, it appears that although Mexican immigrant families desire to be involved in family-school-community partnerships for the academic success of their children, their involvement is impeded by institutional barriers. Therefore, school professionals in the US must seek more effective ways to engage this population.

*Partnerships: The Role of the School Counselor*

Unfortunately, it has remained unclear as to who should be responsible for developing and implementing these partnerships. It is my belief that school counselors are essential personnel in the development and facilitation of such partnerships. School counselors are professionals well-equipped to develop and facilitate family-school-community partnerships with the hope of positively impacting student success (Erford, House, & Martin, 2003). These education professionals, school counselors, are well-positioned to serve as liaisons, leaders, and participants in family-school-community partnership efforts (Stone, 1999).
In support of this position, Keys and Bemak (1997) have called for a redefinition of the role and responsibilities of school counselors, to include a focus on ending professional isolation and increasing involvement with families and the larger community. Traditionally, school counseling efforts have focused on increasing rates of school completion, prevention of risky behaviors by students, and promoting the academic and emotional health of the student population (Schmidt, 2003). With the adoption of the National Model and Standards by the American School Counseling Association (2002) and the development of the Education Trust: Transforming School Counseling Initiative (2000), the school counseling profession has experienced some fundamental changes, including a heightened focus on the importance of collaboration.

The Transforming School Counseling Initiative of the Education Trust (2004) called for the inclusion of a specific focus on developing and facilitating partnerships with families and communities. This focus is also reflected in the newly established American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model and Standards (2002) for school counselors. Recent initiatives for reconstructing the role of the school counselor specifically focus on the need for school counselors to direct attention and focus on students and families “for whom schools have been the least successful—poor students and students of color” (Education Trust).

However, it is important to note that the school counseling profession continues to remain culturally homogenous, with the majority of school counselors identifying as European American/Caucasian (Baker, 2003). Subsequently, one must explore the ramifications such cultural homogeneity holds for impacting interactions between these professionals and students and families of color (McCaleb, 1994). Cultural discontinuity
between the ethnicity of school personnel (i.e., the school counselor, teachers and administrators) and the families in the community served by the school may lead to family perceptions that their cultural values are not accepted or valued by the school (McCaleb). These perceptions may impede collaborative efforts, with families remaining disengaged from their children's educational process (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). Thus, to engage Latino/a parents in family-school-community partnerships, school counselors must accept the onus of responsibility for creating a school ecology that values the contributions of parents, family members and the overall community (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). The unique position of school counselors allows these professionals to serve as liaisons among administrators, teachers and community members to create this environment (Stone, 1999).

School counselors are essential personnel in the realm of family-school-community partnerships, but current research leading to new frameworks is necessary to develop and maintain these partnerships in such a way as to embrace the rainbow of cultural diversity that families and communities bring to these collaborative efforts (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). Unfortunately thus far, little has been done to help school counselors understand how to engage families culturally different from themselves in effective family-school-community partnerships.

Summarily, the positive impacts of family-school-community partnerships are noted in the literature, and there has been a strong call to the profession of school counseling to incorporate a greater focus on the role of the school counselor in developing and maintaining these partnerships. However, the school counseling profession continues to struggle to effectively engage minority families in family-school-
community collaborative partnerships. Hence, Mexican immigrant parents continue to remain disengaged from their children’s schools and educational experiences, exhibiting only minimal involvement in family-school-community partnerships.

**Partnerships: Through the Lens of Critical Race Theory**

In order to most fully understand the experiences of Mexican immigrant parents in family-school-community partnerships in the US, one must consider the impact of racism and oppression inherent in institutional structures on this population’s involvement in such partnerships. Culture is well-noted in the literature as impacting family involvement in partnership efforts. Bernal (2001) specifically emphasized the role of culture and race on partnership involvement, explaining that to best understand the extent to which the home and community impact the educational experience, it is critical that one focus on cultural knowledge. Also supporting the inclusion of a cultural focus within an exploration of minority children’s educational experiences is Giroux’s (1992) discussion of cultural politics. Cultural politics are presented by Giroux as being the ways in which racism, inequality, competitiveness and cultural ethnocentrism are perpetuated as barriers to minority students’ full participation in US schools. Furthermore, cultural politics persist as a method to perpetuate the status quo, supporting the maintenance of a “culture of silence.”

Critical race theory provides educators and researchers with a lens through which to analyze the educational experiences of Mexican immigrant students, giving voice to the students’ experiences with the intent to “break the silence” through social empowerment. Espinoza-Herold (2003) addressed the importance of voice, stating, “Voice is a concept vital to self-empowerment and emancipation. Having voice is an
expression of an impetus for healthy identity and an expression of strong culture” (p. 21).

Critical race theory and Latino Critical (LatCrit) theory challenge one to view the feelings and perceptions of marginalized populations as legitimate and important (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Consequently, to give voice to the Mexican immigrant population, a population facing severe marginalization within US society, one may draw from Critical race and Latina/o Critical (LatCrit) theories.

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory is an interdisciplinary perspective acknowledging the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism in the institutional structures of daily life (Solorzano, 1998). Furthermore, critical race theory challenges dominant ideologies perpetuating oppression through a commitment to social justice (Villalpando, 2003). One aspect of the theory’s challenge to dominant ideologies within the framework of education is the awareness of and respect for “pedagogies of the home, which offer culturally specific ways of teaching and learning” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 109).

Critical race theory seeks to promote the acknowledgement of home life as central to the learning of children.

Critical race theory engages in this critical examination of societal institutions by creating a space where marginalized voices can be heard. The theory relies heavily on the importance of knowledge gained through the experiences of participants, utilizing narratives, counterstories, testimonies and oral histories. Critical race theory views experiential knowledge as personally individual, but foundationally connected to the institutions and populations within society (Dillard, 2000).
Critical race theory provides a conceptual framework within which to explore the impact of culture and social identity on Mexican immigrant parents’ perceptions of family-school-community partnerships. Critical theories in education allow educators and researchers to address the impact of political, social and economic causes on educational outcomes (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). Critical race theory has been touted as a tool useful for explaining the continued inequality faced by minorities inherent in US education (Ladson-Billings, 1999). This tool proves particularly useful in developing a framework for “exploring how institutional policies perpetuate racial/ethnic subordination” (Villalpando, 2003, p. 622).

Kohl (1995) wrote,

If you look at a child through the filter of her or his environment or economic status, and make judgments through the filters of your own cultural, gender, and racial biases, you'll find the characteristics you expect. You'll also find yourself well placed to reproduce failure and to develop resistance in some children, a false sense of superiority in others. On the other hand, if you look for strengths and filter the world through the prism of hope, you will see and encourage the unexpected flowering of child life in the most unlikely places (p. 44).

This quotation is reflective of the position of critical race theory that the personal lens of any particular individual informs the expectations and perceptions of that individual. Specifically, when one’s lens is colored by interwoven and implicitly accepted societal racism, one’s internal views and understanding are projected upon the situation under scrutiny, further perpetuating the acceptance of racism, discrimination and oppression. Ladson-Billings (1998) wrote that “if we look at the way public education [in the US] is
currently configured, it is possible to see the ways that CRT [Critical Race Theory] can be a powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that people of color experience” (p. 18). Villenas and Dehyle (1999) further asserted that when one seeks to understand the experiences of Latina/o parents through the lens of critical race theory, it becomes clear that although US public education preaches the rhetoric of parental involvement, institutional barriers exist to the full and equal participation of Mexican immigrant parents.

Critical race theory holds the ideal that to examine comprehensively the experiences of minority groups in US education, one must do so with the understanding that “ostensibly race-neutral structures in education—knowledge, truth, merit, objectivity, and ‘good education’ are in fact ways of forming and policing the racial boundaries of white supremacy and racism” (Roithmayr, 1999, p. 4, in Villenas and Dehyle). Critical race theory in education further explores how teachings in US classrooms are valued as truth, “objective, historically accurate and universal,” while the cultural capital Mexican immigrant children bring to the classroom is devalued as “backward, deprived and deficient” (Roithmayr, 1999, p. 4, in Villenas and Dehyle, 1999).

These teachings covertly impede the development of collaborative partnerships with Mexican immigrant families and their communities through the overt devaluing of Mexican cultural capital. LatCrit theory, a sub-theory of critical race theory, seeks to remedy this situation by providing a lens through which one may “analyze Latinas/os’ multidimensional identities” (Villalpando, 2003, p. 622). LatCrit theory serves as the answer to the call to action initiated by critical race theory.
Latino Critical Theory: A Sub-theory of Critical Race Theory

While critical race theory begins the work of understanding the role of race in education, Latino critical theory seeks to empower stakeholders to work to remedy the inequalities perpetuated by such racist ideology. Latino critical theory provides the aforementioned lens and with it an impetus to action and empowerment. LatCrit, while adhering to the central tenets of critical race theory, attempts to engage in the transformation of knowledge, a linking of theory and praxis, for immediate social change (Valdes, 2002).

As does critical race theory, LatCrit begins with the production of knowledge, engaging in an interdisciplinary approach to exploring the experiences of individuals in relationship to the phenomena of focus. However, Valdes (2002) stated that the production of knowledge is strictly seen as the “point of departure for larger work & functions of theory” (p. 262) and not the sum-total goal. To truly engage in research founded in LatCrit theory, one must move from the production of knowledge into the transformation of knowledge, a stage involving direct engagement in social change (Hernandez-Truyol, 1997). Change occurs through the sharing of experiences, allowing participants to connect with others who have similarly struggled; forming a community of empowerment (Padilla, 1997). Through this community, Latinos are able to end their isolation and gain strength through interconnectedness Thus, critical race theory and LatCrit theory serve as vehicles for exploring the experiences of Latino parents with family-school-community partnerships, with the intent to empower these parents to play a more active role in addressing the barriers to Latino parent involvement in these partnerships.
Conclusion

In summary, the sheer size and rapidly changing demographics of the Mexican immigrant population in the US provides impetus for educational researchers to explore the ways and means to promote the academic success of Mexican immigrant children. This population continues to face particular academic, familial, and psychosocial concerns that manifest as a function of acculturative stress. These concerns often result in academic struggle and school failure, lending credibility to the need to explore options of more effectively meeting the needs of Mexican immigrant students.

Literature suggests that in the face of these stressors, effective family-school-community collaborative partnerships positively impact student success with successful school-family-community partnerships being linked to positive effects on student achievement (Epstein, 1995). Unfortunately, schools have proven unable to establish these partnerships with Mexican immigrant families and communities in a consistently effective manner, leaving families to struggle through the stresses of immigration alone and disconnected. As such, Mexican immigrant parents remain extremely underrepresented in family-school-community partnerships (Delagado-Gaitan, 2004). This lack of involvement must be closely examined with an intentional effort to understand the role of race, ethnicity and culture on the ability of the Mexican immigrant population to successfully engage in family-school-community partnerships.

At this time a lack of literature support leaves the education profession and school counselors, specifically, with little idea of how to effectively develop and implement family-school-community partnerships with Mexican immigrant families. Consequently, research is needed to better understand the role of culture and race on the development...
and implementation of such partnerships. Critical race theory is one way of examining the role of culture and race. Critical race theory holds that without addressing the cultural and racial barriers institutional policies perpetuate in our schools and without seeking to adapt school culture to embrace the diversity of cultural capital brought by our students, educational professionals will be unable to effectively establish family-school-community partnerships with Mexican immigrant families.

The foregoing discussion highlights a significant gap in the professional literature focused on family-school-community partnerships. This gap lies in the failure of the literature to engage in an intensive investigation of family-school-community partnerships from the perspective of representatives from each contributing partner: parents, school counselors and community agency specialists. This gap and the literature supporting the importance of experiential knowledge (Valdes, 2002) validates the need to conduct a study seeking to share the voices of Mexican immigrant parents, school professionals and community agency specialists as they speak to their perceptions of family-school-community partnerships.

By providing the marginalized population, Latino parents, with the opportunity to share their stories in a welcoming, open environment, a community of connection built upon similar struggles will emerge. Such a community will empower Latina/o parents to play a more active role in remedying the barriers to Latino parent involvement in family-school-community partnerships. The additional understanding gleaned from the experiences of professionals involved in these partnerships will provide a multifaceted understanding of partnerships and of the impact of race and racism on such partnerships.
This information will be used to engage in immediate efforts to enact change leading to the development of more effective partnership efforts.

By examining perceptions of family-school-community partnerships through the lens of critical race theory, researchers can engage in societal change leading to the empowerment of Mexican immigrants, a severely marginalized population. In light of the difficulties facing this population, the need for mechanisms of societal empowerment are readily apparent for education professionals serving Mexican immigrant children and families.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

Mexican immigrant families face distinctive stressors in conjunction with their children’s entrance into and participation in US schools. I assert that to meet the needs of these children and their families, we must seek to understand the impact of culture on this population’s educational experiences in the US. The education profession has begun this important endeavor by intensifying the research focused on the influence of school, family and community culture on one’s educational experience. This increased professional focus is evident through intensified research exploring school-family-community partnerships.

While recognizing that cultural assumptions underlie parental and community involvement, the research has neglected to address how collaborative efforts can seek to meet parents and the community “where they are.” Instead, it has focused on the importance of acknowledging differences in culture and helping the individuals learn to assimilate into the school culture. This approach has neglected to recognize and capitalize upon the strong social and cultural capital that Mexican immigrant families bring to their children’s educational experiences (Nunez, 1994), rendering these explorations of home-school-community partnerships incomplete.

As such, this research study explored and examined similarities and differences between the ways families, community agency specialists and school personnel engage in and experience family-school-community partnerships in rural Veracruz, MX and eastern
North Carolina, US, with particular attention to the influence of race and culture. The study emerged from four guiding questions:

1. What are the experiences of Mexican nationalist parents and Mexican immigrant parents with family-school-community partnerships?

2. How are these experiences informed and impacted by their socioeconomic and cultural position in society?

3. How do participants in family-school-community partnerships with Mexican nationalist and Mexican immigrant parents perceive their individual roles and the roles of others in the partnerships?

4. How are the experiences and responses reflective of societal practices?

This chapter describes the qualitative methodology utilized to explore similarities and differences in the experiences of individuals with family-school-community partnerships in a rural community in Veracruz, MX and the experiences of members of this population who immigrate to a rural community in eastern North Carolina, US. The chapter will begin with a comparison of qualitative and quantitative research and then will move into an in-depth examination of the critical humanist paradigm and Latina/o critical theory perspective framing the development of the research. Following the examination of paradigm and perspective, the discussion will progress into a description of the research strategy, critical ethnography, and methods employed to carry out the study, clarifying the structure of focus groups and interviews. A description of the participants, setting and data collection process will follow the discussion of methods. Additionally, the discussion will clarify the data analysis process, verification of authenticity approaches, the time line and the role of the researcher. The chapter will
conclude with an exploration of ethical dimensions, delimitations and limitations of the study.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative vs. Quantitative

Quantitative and qualitative approaches differ in three areas described by Lincoln and Guba (2003) as being the components of a paradigm: epistemological assumptions (nature of knowledge), ontological assumptions (nature of reality) and methodological assumptions. Furthermore, these paradigms differ on two other assumptions, rhetorical assumptions (use of language) and axiological assumptions (role of values) (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003). These fundamental differences in the two approaches must be closely examined before one can effectively determine which approach is most appropriate for a particular study.

The ontological assumption refers to the understanding of reality assumed by each research approach. Quantitative research assumes, as stated in the definition of positivism, that reality exists separately of those who observe it (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003). Essentially, quantitative research views reality as objective and measurable. These measurements of reality, if conducted in an unbiased manner, are viewed as constituting scientific truth that is generalizable to the larger population of the sample included in the measure. Qualitative research takes a much different approach to its view of reality, believing instead that reality is subjective and constructed by individuals involved in the research (researcher, participants & reader of research) (Patton, 1999). Furthermore, qualitative research posits that there are multiple realities for every situation, with social reality being continuously constructed by the individuals involved.
The two approaches also differ on the axiological assumption of the role of values in research. Quantitative researchers seek to remain neutral, not allowing their personal values impact the outcomes of their research. The focus for this research is on facts and numbers, with personal values being kept separate from the research process. This separateness is ensured through sampling procedures that allow for a representative sample to be selected in a systematic manner and through the choosing of instruments and assessments that are not influenced by context or researcher bias. On the other hand, qualitative researchers seek to reflect upon and utilize the influence personal values have on the research process, developing an audit trail that includes a personal statement of their familiarity and investment in the research focus and personal reflections of how their values are impacting their understanding/handling of the data throughout the process (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

The epistemological assumption concerns the nature of the relationship between the researcher and his or her research focus. In quantitative research, the researcher seeks again to remain neutral and separate from the research process. Quantitative researchers believe that this distance allows the researcher to be objective, enabling the researcher to discover the “truth” about the phenomenon. Qualitative researchers take a more collaborative role to the relationship between researcher and what is being researched. In qualitative research, the researcher interacts with those he or she is studying. Researchers develop a personal involvement with participants, to the point of sharing perspectives & assuming a caring attitude.

Language is also a distinguishing factor between the two approaches, as noted by the rhetorical assumption. Quantitative research assumes a very formal posture, using
 impersonal language based on established definitions. In qualitative studies more informal language is used, with information being presented in a literary manner. The language used attempts to capture the voice of the participants, allowing meanings to emerge as the study evolves.

The final assumption on which the approaches differ is the methodological assumption. Deductive logic is the foundation of quantitative research, in which researchers seek to test established hypotheses with the intent to extend understanding of an existing theory or principle (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). The intent of the research, generalizability and accuracy, is determined through an examination of validity and reliability. Qualitative research is grounded in inductive logic and, as such, hypotheses are not established prior to beginning the research. Rather, patterns and themes emerge throughout the process, providing rich understanding of the experience under investigation. The overarching goal of qualitative researchers is to expand the understanding of a particular experience. Accuracy is measured through triangulation, which involves comparing information gathered from different sources (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Suitability of qualitative approach to proposed study.

This research explored and examined the similarities and differences of community members’ experiences with family-school-community partnerships. The ontological assumption of qualitative research states that reality is constructed differently by different individuals, and this assumption is a foundational underpinning of the proposed study. The study thus, sought to understand how each participant’s position within his or her particular society and culture impacted his or her reality and experience.
with family-school-community partnerships. Further, the axiological assumption of qualitative research also matches the aims of this study, in that the study integrated the personal values of the researcher and participant into the development and implementation of the research in a transparent fashion (Patton, 2001). This incorporation of the personal values of the researcher and participant translates into the development of a caring relationship between researcher and participant. This relationship began with an in-depth reflection on my, as researcher, personal relationship with the focus of the research and then moved into the purposeful selection of participants who were able to contribute richly to the study’s focus.

The rhetorical assumption requires that research adopt a less formal posture towards the use of language, utilizing the language of the participants in order to provide an opportunity for the voices of the participants to be heard (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The study adhered to this assumption by recording and reporting the data, utilizing the specific descriptions reported in the participants’ own words. Furthermore the themes that emerged were coded using indigenous codes that honor the terms used by participants (indigenous coding will be explored further in the data analysis section). Consequently, this clear alignment of foundational assumptions led to the development of a research process congruent with the methodological assumptions of qualitative research.

Table 3.1 attempts to further clarify how the proposed study clearly aligned with the underlying assumptions of qualitative research.
Table 3.1

Foundational Research Assumptions of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Foundational Question</th>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Study’s Adherence to Assumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontological</td>
<td>What is the nature of reality?</td>
<td>Reality is constructed differently by different individuals and as such is subjective and multifaceted.</td>
<td>Study sought to explore each participant’s position within his/her particular society and the impact of position and culture on experiences with family-school-community partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological</td>
<td>What is the nature of the relationship between researcher and participant?</td>
<td>Collaborative relationship: deep personal involvement</td>
<td>The researcher spent extensive time living in the community and interacting with participants and this involvement shaped the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axiological</td>
<td>What role do the values of the researcher and participants play in the research?</td>
<td>Reflect upon impact of personal values, recognizing that research is value-laden.</td>
<td>Throughout the study, the researcher kept a reflexive journal exploring the impact of values on the research process. A statement of the researcher’s personal investment and experience with the study’s focus was developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical</td>
<td>How is language used in the research?</td>
<td>Literary, less formal style, brings personal voice into research.</td>
<td>The study analyzed data and presented themes using participants’ voices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological</td>
<td>What processes are utilized in the research?</td>
<td>Inductive logic, emerging design, studies focus within its particular context</td>
<td>The study was situated in the community of the participants and utilized inductive logic and emergent design.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Paradigm: Critical Humanism

The paradigm employed for a study serves to capture the particular assumptions informing research about the nature of society and social science research (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). The paradigm best suited to this ethnographic exploration of family-school-community partnerships is critical humanism. Critical humanism asserts that individual consciousness provides the vehicle for liberating groups from oppressive, dominant social processes through empowerment and transformation (Rossman and Rallis). Burrell and Morgan (1979) highlighted the concept of “false consciousness,” explaining that ideological superstructures serve to constrain human agency (Rossman & Rallis). This “false consciousness” can be overcome through transformations at the individual and local community levels. The researcher plays a critical role in initiating these transformations through his or her participation in the community under focus through the research process (Patton, 2002). Thus, a study operating within a critical paradigm "becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label political and unafraid to consummate a relationship with emancipatory consciousness (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000, p. 291).

Suitability of paradigm to proposed study.

Critical humanism proved an appropriate paradigm for this critical ethnography, as the study sought to engage the participants in an exploration of their involvement in school-family-community partnerships with an intentional focus on the impact of ideological superstructures, such as institutional policy and organization, on this involvement. Furthermore, adhering to a critical humanist paradigm requires that the participants be involved in the initiation, development, analysis and compilation of the
study. The involvement of the participants at all of the aforementioned levels, with an additional focus on learning by sharing at each of these levels, was an intentional goal of this critical ethnography. Critical humanism includes a stipulation that studies utilize individual consciousness as a vehicle for liberating social groups through awareness and empowerment (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Delgado-Gaitan (2001) asserted that the sharing of personal experience among participants increases feelings of connection and decreases the sense of personal isolation. Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) further asserted that these connections empower the group to actively engage in efforts to change the oppressive condition. In response to these assertions, this research utilized focus groups to intentionally develop opportunities for meaningful engagement between participants with the hope of facilitating the development of a community of empowerment. Lastly, the paradigm of critical humanism is founded in the theoretical framework of critical theory, further lending credence to the appropriateness of this paradigm for a study whose core conceptual framework is founded in critical race theory.

Perspective: The Lens of Latina/o Critical Race Theory

Latina/Latino (Latina/o) critical theory serves as a lens to critically examine the social positions of Latinas/Latinos, with the intent to affect societal change remedying the shortcomings of current social conditions (Valdes, 1998). Friere (1973) introduced the construct of “conscientizacao” explaining that the term “refers to learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 19). The principles underlying conscientizacao form the foundational structure for Latina/o critical theory, a theory of empowerment and action, rather than strictly one of insight. The utilization of a critical lens allows for the
examination of "asymmetrical relations of power that allow a dominant social group to control and maintain a social system which favors it, while it disempowers bicultural groups, holding them hostage in a subordinate position by virtue of their race, culture and language" (Nunez, 1994, p. 19).

Suitability of perspective for a critical exploration of partnerships.

By adopting Latina/o critical theory as the lens, I, as researcher, attempted to engage with participants in a manner that encouraged them to critically examine their experiences with family-school-community partnerships, recognizing the strength of cultural capital that the participants bring to such partnerships and the isolating impact of oppressive dominant ideologies structuring racial power within educational institutions (Roithmayr, 1999). Furthermore, the adoption of Latina/o critical perspective requires that I acknowledged and intentionally encouraged the empowerment of the Latino population through our (the participants and researcher as a collaborative team), exploration and interactions over the course of the study.

Research Strategy: Critical Ethnography

The methods for engaging in such an exploration are drawn from the research strategy of critical ethnography. Geertz (1973) stated that "culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described" (p. 14). Ethnography is a research strategy that attempts to describe culture or aspects of culture through an in-depth examination of a community through participation, observations and exploration of material culture (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003).
Wolcott (1975) described ethnography as being a “cultural description which conveys how it is to walk in someone else’s shoes” (p. 113). Furthermore, to engage in a comprehensive study of education and schools, Wolcott stated that one must attend to formal and informal learning, as well as to what is learned inside and outside the schools. This requires that educational ethnographers examine the interaction of home, school and community and the contributions of each to the educational experiences of children. An ethnographer engaging in a study of education attempts to share in the meanings surrounding educational practices and relationships that members of the culture take for granted, and then share the new, integrated understanding with others (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003). Ethnographies of education examine how people enter an educational community and learn the community’s culture and develop appropriate patterns of response to community expectations (Florio, 1978).

Additionally, Marvasti (2004) clearly emphasized the highly involved role of the researcher in ethnographic research, stating “ethnographies, more than any other method of data collection, require involvement and participation in the topic under investigation” (p. 37). This level of involvement is even further enhanced in critical ethnographic research. Thomas (1993) defined critical ethnography as being “a style of analysis and discourse embedded within conventional ethnography…with a political purpose to use knowledge for social change” (p. 3). Ethnography is well-suited for adopting a critical lens, in that the foundational principal of ethnography is the attempt to situate particular encounters, events and understandings into a meaningful context (Tedlock, 2000). This attention to context enables ethnographies to examine critically the role of social and racial power on the engagement of individuals and populations. Thomas clarified the
central separating factor between conventional ethnography and critical ethnography as being voice. He said that in conventional ethnography the researchers attempt to speak for their participants, while critical ethnographers “accept an added research task of raising their voice to speak to an audience on behalf of their subjects as a means of empowering them by giving more authority to the subjects’ voice” (italics in original) (p. 4). Delgado-Gaitain and Trueba’s (1991) ethnography of empowerment is one form of critical ethnography that empowers participants by giving them more authority and information.

*Ethnography of empowerment.*

Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba’s (1991) ethnography of empowerment is consistent with Freire’s critical theory premise. It sought to establish ethnography as a method and process with which researchers can engage with disenfranchised communities to address issues of marginalization. This research approach intensifies the focus on the insider-outsider perspective with a movement towards insider as collaborator. This approach is particularly appropriate for use with the participants included in this study, participants who were struggling to make sense of the insider-outsider perspective as a function of their marginalization in the public schools. A study utilizing strategies consistent with Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba’s ethnography of empowerment sought to subvert the sense of isolation faced by the population under study, facilitating the development of a sense of community and connection through focus group discussions of experiences, concerns and problems. Thus, focus groups encouraged the connection of participants, through the emergence of an awareness of common concerns and story.
“As parents share with one another their mutual problems, they also build a consciousness of their rights and responsibilities” (Delgado-Gaitain & Trueba, 1991, p. 7). This collective consciousness begins the process of empowerment to overcome marginalization. An inner sense of empowerment is imperative for parents and the ethnic community in order to interact effectively with the institution of public education (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba). Thus, Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba’s framework of an ethnography of empowerment provides the critical element of empowerment to this study, a study grounded in critical race theory and utilizing the research methods of a critical ethnography.

Relationship of critical ethnography to critical race and Latina/o critical theory.

The driving force behind critical ethnography is to explore and join the chorus of participants’ voices as they seek to make-meaning of social problems, with the intent to affect societal change. This central purpose directly aligns with the foundational principles of Latina/o critical theory and the subsuming theoretical framework of this study, critical race theory. Each of these methods and approaches holds central the importance of affecting change, agreeing that insight is necessary, but not sufficient in and of itself, as the purpose of a study focused on marginalized populations (Fernandez, 2002; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Nunez, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Research Methods

In order to join the chorus of participants’ voices, one must first clarify the choir currently contributing to the chorus, how to gain access to the setting in which the chorus is taking place and how to participate once one joins. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983)
outlined a framework for developing and implementing an ethnographic study along the following parameters:

a. formulating research questions
b. choosing a research site
c. deciding whom, when and where to observe
d. gaining entry or access into the community
e. establishing rapport with community members
f. choosing a field role
g. dealing with informants
h. recording observations
i. conducting ethnographic interviews

Since a study’s paradigm, perspective and strategy are derived from the research questions driving the investigation, after determining these aspects of the study, the next steps are to clarify setting and participant parameters, researcher’s role and methods appropriate for exploring the topic, including a description of data collection and analysis procedures. Following the framework developed by Hammersley and Atkinson and employed by numerous other ethnographers, I will elucidate upon the research methods utilized for conducting this study critically exploring family-school-community partnerships.

Site and Sample Selection

Setting.

The initial step in data collection is purposefully determining setting. Creswell (1994) suggested that for ethnographies, the researcher must select a site in which an
“intact culture-sharing group has developed shared values, beliefs, and assumptions” (p. 114) around the focus of the study. This research was site specific. In recent years, a large contingent of families and individuals has been emigrating from small, rural towns in the state of Veracruz, Mexico to small, rural towns in eastern North Carolina in the US. Often the families who immigrate to North Carolina have relatives remaining in the towns in Veracruz. Both settings in Jonestown, NC and Tenaco, VER are similar in their rural, agrarian environment. As such, there exists a unique opportunity to explore differences in these individuals’ experiences with family-school-community partnerships in North Carolina, as compared with the experiences of their relatives in Veracruz. Thus, this critical ethnography focused on exploring family-school-community partnership experiences in these two settings.

**Participants.**

Purposeful sampling enabled the researcher to identify information-rich cases for inclusion in the study. Purposeful sampling may take many forms (i.e. typical case, critical case, snowball, etc.). However, for the purpose of this study, snowball or chain sampling was used to identify the initial participants for inclusion in the study. Snowball or chain sampling is defined by Patton (2002) as an approach that begins by locating key informants and having these informants refer the researcher to additional informants. This process allows the researcher to establish a group of information-rich cases from which to explore the study’s focus (Patton, 2002). This approach is particularly appropriate for research conducted with Mexican immigrants, as this population relies heavily on networks of community to transfer information and cultural traditions (Espinoza-Herald, 2003).
Site access.

As a function of the study's adherence to the principles of Latina/o critical theory and its adherence to a critical ethnography strategy, both of which require the researcher to adopt a unique role as participant-observer (Nunez, 1994), my entrance into the community as a researcher played a crucial role in the research process. I gained access to this community through an individual who has leadership status within the community. My previous career as a school counselor and my role as a family friend prompted the community leader to introduce me to other community members with a vested interest in the educational success of the community's children. My interactions and the subsequent relationships I formed with these community leaders encouraged me to further explore the professional literature surrounding the experiences of Mexican immigrants with family-school-community partnerships. These relationships afforded me with a level of acceptance and credibility with the participants, facilitating my entrance into their community.

Researcher's Role

The Researcher as Instrument Statement attempts to shed light on the researcher's personal investment in a study focused on the role of school counselors in school-family-community partnerships. This statement makes transparent the researcher's level of engagement with the information and personal history involving the topic.

Researcher as Instrument Statement

In order to truly make transparent my engagement with the information under focus, it is necessary to begin at the beginning, a beginning rooted firmly in my childhood. Following family meals at my paternal grandmother's house, my father and
his brothers would engage in rousing conversations concerning social justice, philosophy and human rights (with sprinkles of salt-water fishing tidbits thrown in for levity). During these conversations, I, as a child, was always allowed to enter the conversation with my contributions being received and valued by my family. These early conversations began the process of my considering issues of social justice and equal access to resources. My understanding of these issues was further aided through follow-up conversations with my father, my mother and my paternal grandmother. These conversations guided my learning about the importance of engaging in an intentional critique of established social structures, institutions and interactions and examining such structures, institutions and interactions for the impact and influence of race and socioeconomic status. My parents' actions at home further cemented this early learning, providing for me a model of "humanity in action."

My parents held the importance of respect, compassion and empathy for others central to the characteristics they attempted to instill in my sister and me. My father owned a construction company, and many of the men he employed struggled bitterly in the face of socioeconomic stress and minimal education. These men were welcomed to our family dinner table, not as guests, but as respected members of our family. My mother could work wonders with four pork-chops, and her welcoming, generous attitude provided a model for us that now pervades the very essence of who we are. Outside in the community, the men and their families would often approach me and speak of their respect for my father, and I always equated this respect with the respect he and my mother so readily bestowed. My parents’ example helped me engage with participants...
con respeto (with respect), a value central to the interconnectedness of the Mexican culture.

My understanding of our link to the global community was influenced by the work of my maternal grandfather and grandmother and by the work of my maternal grandfather's sister. My grandfather was invited to Venezuela to teach government-sponsored farmers to erect grain bins. He and my grandmother were guests of the leader of Venezuela and his wife many times during their stay. This connection was a thread linking my family's everyday work to the global community, and the conversation surrounding this link clarified for me the importance and accessibility of global connections. Additionally, my grandfather's sister has lived her entire life as an activist for peace and human rights. She has traveled around the world helping others and learning from different cultures. As a small child, I was in awe of the life she lived, a life translated to me through stories by my mother. As I grew and was able to spend more time with her, I was struck by my great-aunt's sense of purpose and dedication to helping others. I truly wanted to embody those characteristics myself. The understanding of global impact and connections, instilled in me through the work of my grandparents and great-aunt, pushed me to consider the work of education from a global perspective. This consideration greatly impacted my decision to approach this research study from the standpoint of comparing partnership practices across national borders.

Initially, I chose the career track of a teacher in public education because I thought it would be enjoyable and that I would be able to help others. In my early work as a special education teacher, I realized quickly that the only way I was going to be able to truly help the children was by helping their families, specifically by helping families
more successfully to access resources. So, I gained further education and moved into the role of school counselor, a role I believed would allow me to work with all of the groups involved in the daily lives of children: teachers, parents, administrators and the students. However, my experience as a teacher first demonstrated to me the importance of family-school-community partnerships as a vehicle to student academic success and healthy societies.

During my career as a school counselor, I was often approached by Mexican immigrant families who were seeking access to community services, including medical, dental and mental health services. Unfortunately, I did not have an established referral network of community agencies providing bilingual services. As such, every request required that I engage in an extensive process of locating resources, communicating information about these resources to the family, typically through the use of a student serving as translator and follow-up with the family about additional questions or needs. This process left me feeling isolated, inadequate at serving my students and their families and angry that our public schools did not work harder to meet the needs of these students.

Shortly after entering into my doctoral program, I was introduced to a young man who had begun working with my father. This man and his family had immigrated to North Carolina from Veracruz and were quite active in their local community, advocating for more effective immigration policy and engaging in other community events. However, he and his family struggled to be involved in the educational experiences of their children, and their involvement was often impeded by institutional rules or patterns of engagement. This inability to be involved prompted the young man to send his
daughter to live with his parents in Veracruz, with the hope that his parents would be better able to positively impact her educational experience.

I personally felt that the US educational system had failed this man and his family, and hearkening back to my childhood learning, I felt that at the root of this failure were oppressive practices institutionalized within societal structures. I turned to the professional arena (counseling, educational, sociological, and anthropological) to better understand better the experiences of Mexican immigrants as they seek to enter US society. The literature further solidified my belief that racism and oppression institutionalized in American society pervade every aspect of our lives and the interactions of Mexican immigrant children and families with US education. As such, I feel it is critically important to investigate the role of race and racism on how individuals perceive family-school-community partnerships with Mexican immigrant families. Since I have a personal history rooted in critically analyzing the function of social justice and oppression within society, it is doubly important that I reflect upon my personal impact on the collection and analysis of data. It would be remiss not to explore intentionally how my history continually impacts and shapes the study. It was crucial that I consider the role of my personal philosophy on the direction of the research process. This reflection took place over the course of the project through the development of reflexive journals.

_**Reflexive Journal**_

Reflexivity is an important aspect of the work of any qualitative study. Patton (2002) stated

"The qualitative analyst owns and is reflective about her or his own voice and perspective; a credible voice conveys authenticity and trustworthiness; complete
objectivity being impossible and pure subjectivity undermining credibility, the researcher’s focus becomes balance—understanding and depicting the world authentically in all its complexity while being self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness (p. 41).

Reflexive journals are one way to achieve this balance, requiring that the researcher reflect on her personal role and reactions to information gathered. These journals form a trail of information describing decisions made and the reasons for those decisions. Furthermore, reflexive journals capture actions taken and questions that arose following actions. This trail begins the emergence of patterns of analysis, and, as such, reflexive journals are crucial for developing a comprehensive qualitative study.

Reciprocity

Qualitative researchers ask their participants to share intensely of themselves. By adopting a critical approach and critical ethnographic strategies, this study also requires that the researcher give something of herself. In response to this imperative, I sought to engage in the research process in a transparent manner providing the participants with opportunities to engage with me to shape and develop the study. Additionally, as this study utilized strategies drawn from Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba’s (1991) ethnography of empowerment, I attempted to encourage further development of community and understanding through presentations of my final product to the stakeholders in the study, families, school professionals and community agency specialists. This process required a series of presentations made in schools within the community in Tenaco, VER and in Jonesville, NC. I am continuing to attempt to increase public and professional awareness of the importance of family-school-community partnerships with Mexican immigrant
communities by presenting the research at regional and national conferences and through in-service workshops and seminars for education professionals in NC.

Data Collection

To explore comprehensively the experiences of Mexican immigrant and Mexican nationalist parents with family-school-community partnerships, information was drawn from four sources: 1) the data gathered from the research process itself, 2) independent audits, 3) material culture, and 3) my own personal and professional experience. My personal experience is important from a qualitative standpoint in that the researcher indelibly impacts the data through his or her meaning-making of the material throughout the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Focus groups, interviews and observation include intense face-to-face interaction, allowing the human voice to bring the community and concern under focus to life for the researcher. Observations and material culture provide the researcher with a glimpse into the participants’ lives and environment outside of their interactions with the researcher. Rossman and Rallis stated that given the “interpretive nature of qualitative research, the researcher’s personal biography shapes the project in important ways.” For this reason, it is essential that qualitative researchers reflect on the impact of their personal worldview on the research throughout the process, beginning with the Researcher as Instrument statement and in the reflexive journal over the course of the process. These personal reflections are information-rich data that are included in the analysis (Patton, 2002).

Focus Groups

Focus groups provide an opportunity to observe participants in their process of coming together as a community in a structured setting. This opportunity is consistent
with the research paradigm of critical humanism and strategy of critical ethnography, both of which posit that by collectively exploring experiences, individuals are empowered to engage as a group to affect social change (Delgado-Gaitan, 1996; Nunez, 1994). The first parental focus group included 5 parents in Tenaco, VER, and the second parental focus group included 4 parents drawn from the Jonesville community in NC. In the US Educators' focus group, there were three teachers and one school counselor. Unfortunately, orientadores, the MX professionals comparable to school counselors, are not provided for elementary and tele-secondary schools in Mexico. The MX educators’ explained that as a result, all school professionals in small communities must assume the duties and responsibilities of an orientadore, including attending to the psychological and emotional needs of children. Thus, the MX Educators focus group consisted of three teachers and the director (principal) of the school. Patton (2002) suggested that focus groups consist of 5-8 people coming together to participate in an open-ended interview. The individuals involved are usually of “similar backgrounds and experiences” (Patton, 2003, p. 236), thus forming a homogeneous group. The number of parents included in the focus groups in NC and MX were impacted by work schedules, community connections and physical proximity. An interview guide (Appendix C) was utilized to keep the interaction focused, while allowing individual perspectives, voices and experiences to emerge. Three rounds of focus groups (i.e., three in Veracruz and three in North Carolina) were conducted with individual interviews in between to check for accuracy and trustworthiness of data. Focus groups were conducted in the home of one of the participants or in a community building all participants utilize, to ensure that participants were comfortable and relaxed.
I chose to use the focus group method because I believe that it is most appropriate for bringing together the participants in a supportive community to share their experiences, critically examining these experiences and subsequently empowering the group to address their concerns. Waterton and Wynne (1999) supported the use of focus groups for critically reviewing concerns, stating that “potentially, therefore, focus groups offer a more critical or reflexive framework for research on the very nature of attitudes, on the construction of the issue at hand, as well as on the constructive role of the social scientist as interpreter or part-constructor of such views” (p. 129). However, the use of focus groups was supplemented through the inclusion of individual interviews.

*Individual Interviews*

Individual interviews were conducted in the week following each focus group interview. The individuals interviewed separately were selected by members of the focus group following the completion of the first focus group. By allowing the members to select the group informant, I, as researcher, was attempting to begin the empowerment process by sharing power with the group to collaboratively develop the research study (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). The group informant engaged in an interview that also served as an oral member-check. Due to prevalent illiteracy in the settings selected, it was important that participants be able to engage in oral member checks to ensure the accuracy of data collected. During this individual interview, the group informant was also able to add any additional information that the group felt was important to include. After each focus group, time was allowed for the participants to discuss other information they wished they had been able to share. The group informant was then responsible for reporting this information during the individual interview.
Additionally, individual interviews were conducted with one community agency specialist involved with the families at each site. These interviews were organized using a semi-structured format, consisting of open-ended and close-ended questions (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Creswell, 2002) and also utilized an interview guide for structure (See Appendices). Kvale (1996) described the semi-structured interview format as having “a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions. Yet at the same time there is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects” (p. 124). This format allowed participants to express their feelings and perceptions freely in a structured manner that extended beyond daily conversation. As interviewer, I facilitated the emergent nature of the interviews by active/empathetic listening and by giving the participants freedom and control to discuss their perceptions of and experiences with family-school-community partnerships.

*Interview guide development.*

The questions were developed by delving into the professional literature and drawing from the researcher’s practical experience. I began by determining which aspects of family-school-community partnerships I was interested in exploring, based upon my prior review of the literature. From these interests, I developed questions focused on capturing the participants’ personal perceptions of roles within such collaborative efforts and experiences participating or seeking to participate in partnerships. I also developed initial, introductory questions intended to establish rapport and relax the participants prior to moving into the partnership focus of the interview. The interview guides were reviewed, amended and modified and then again reviewed by individuals with expertise.
in the field of counseling and in the involvement of Mexican immigrant families in education.

Observations

I was able to observe many interactions occurring among members of the parent focus group, the school professionals and the community agency specialists. The interactions I observed were typically identified through interactions with participants, who participated as collaborative partners in developing the study. During these observations, I watched and recorded activities and interactions. I also recorded my personal reflections and reactions separately from direct observation of participants' actions. This process provided me with two differing sources of information. Data were collected primarily by using standard ethnographic techniques, including, maintenance of field notes of observations, videotaping and audio recording (Wolcott, 1996).

Field Notes

Field notes played a crucial role during the data analysis process. Field notes were recorded daily and were formatted and organized into three central components, observations of content, reflections about process and names and notes about participants (Beckim Mendez, 2005). Creswell (1998) supported the dual inclusion of both descriptive and reflexive notes as a means of recording information in the field. These notes were utilized as additional sources of information during data analysis. However, it was important to determine the credibility of field notes. To determine credibility, a parallel analysis of field notes, interview transcriptions and focus group transcriptions proceeded over the course of data analysis. This parallel process allowed me to identify outlying information that did not contribute to the overall understanding of the focus of
the study and to make inferences and interpretations about the significance of such information. Outlying data provided significant insight into the differences in partnership experiences of participants in the US and MX.

**Material Culture**

Material culture, objects produced in the course of everyday events, was used to supplement interviews and observations. These objects included documents, training manuals, photographs and other objects determined important over the course of the study. Rossman and Rallis (2003) supported the use of material culture as a valuable form of data collection, stating that “gathering documents and other aspects of material culture is relatively unobtrusive and potentially rich in portraying the values and beliefs in a setting or social domain” (p. 198). These artifacts were analyzed using content analysis, a strategy described more in depth in the data analysis section.

**Verification of Trustworthiness**

Creswell (1998) presented eight procedures useful for verifying a study’s trustworthiness, including:

- **Prolonged engagement and persistent observation** – includes building rapport and trust with participants, developing understanding of culture and clarifying information to avoid distortions due to misinformation between researcher and participants. I lived in the MX community and engaged with participants over the course of eight weeks. Throughout this process I attempted to understand culture and its role in the information shared with me by participants. Misinformation and distortions were addressed through the use of member checking on three levels, which will be described in more depth in a later section of the dissertation.
**Triangulation** – uses multiple and diverse methods, sources, theories and investigators to corroborate evidence and findings. Triangulation occurred through the use of multiple sources of information, including material culture, interviews and observations. Furthermore, interviewing family members, school professionals and community agency specialists provided different information, and, as such, also served as a valuable source of triangulation. Drawing similar information from different sources provides critical insight into discrepancies and misunderstandings resulting from interactions in which there is unequal power. While this information is new and different, it also provided an opportunity to clarify information using different viewpoints.

**Peer review or debriefing** – involves engaging in an external check of the research process. For this dissertation research, external reviewers were utilized to review interview guides to ensure accuracy and readability.

**Rich, thick description** – involves detailed description enabling consumers to make logical generalizations and transference of information to other similar situations and settings. This study includes thick description of sites, participants and process in order to allow for logical generalizations.

**External audits** – includes the examination of process and product by external auditors with no connection to the study. The researcher chose to use a peer reviewer knowledgeable about the process and requirements of qualitative research as an appropriate external auditor for this study.

**Negative case analysis** – uses negative or disconfirming information to refine working hypotheses. This study’s emergent nature allowed me, as researcher, to make changes based upon negative case analysis throughout the research process.
Clarifying researcher bias – is important for consumer of research to understand the role researcher bias played in shaping the research and the interpretation of findings. My initial researcher as instrument statement serves as the first step in clarifying researcher bias. Furthermore, the reflexive journal entries prompted me to reflect upon my role and perceptions throughout the process informing readers and external auditors about the role of researcher bias over the course of developing and implementing the study.

Member checks – involve having participants to assess each transcription and interpretation for validity and accuracy. The use of member checks throughout this study is described in more detail in the following section.

Member checking.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified member checking as the “most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Due to prevalent illiteracy, member checking for this study occurred orally. Additionally, there were three levels of member checks to ensure credibility over the course of the process. The first level occurred during the interviews, with the researcher asking participants to check for clarity in understanding. The researcher simply restated and summarized information shared by participants at different points in the interview, asking the participants to correct any information the researcher had incorrectly understood or to add any information they felt needed to be included. The second member check occurred in the week following the interviews. In the second member check, participants were presented with a summary (orally) of the previous interview and were then asked again to correct anything it appeared that the researcher had misunderstood. The final member check is referred to as
the grand member check (Lincoln & Guba). The grand member check occurred during the process of writing the report and entailed discussing with participants information presented in report and again having the participants to clarify any misunderstandings.

Data Analysis

Translation and Transcription

The focus groups and interviews were each transcribed by an individual fluent in Spanish. Following this transcription, the data were translated by an individual fluent in Spanish and English. Both individuals signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix B) and were given pseudonyms for each of the participants to ensure participant anonymity. Seidman (1998) suggested that tape-recording interviews and the subsequent transcription of the tapes are the primary method of creating text from interviews conducted. Thus, I chose to record each of the focus groups and individual interviews and have each transcribed and subsequently translated from Spanish to English. Retaining a recorded copy of the original interview ensured accuracy and will continue to serve as part of the audit trail, establishing trustworthiness for the study.

Analysis Process

The transcribed interviews created copious amounts of text, out of which was selected useful and interesting information that best contributed to the focus of the study (Wolcott, 1990). For the purpose of this study, the data were analyzed inductively, without the assistance of specifically prescribed hypotheses and with an openness and genuine desire to understand the topic through the voices and experiences of the participants. Inductive analysis involves a continual and consistent interaction between the researcher and the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). This constant interaction
allows for the emergence of themes through the parallel analysis of focus group, individual interviews, field notes, and material culture.

Miles and Huberman (1994) advocated for a three part data analysis process consisting of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. Creswell (1998) outlined a multilevel process in which data analysis and themes occur and are presented in stages, progressively moving through the combination of singular themes into larger themes and perspectives. These two approaches were utilized concurrently in this ethnographic exploration of partnerships.

The data reduction aspect of Miles and Huberman’s (1994) approach refers to the process of organizing, sorting, simplifying and transforming context while maintaining the original context. In this study, data reduction took the form of transcription, translation and coding. Coding utilized a categorical approach using indigenous codes. Using a categorical approach, I segmented the data into chunks, with a chunk being a complete idea or segment of information. Following this separation, each of the chunks was coded using an indigenous code or a specific word used by participants within the chunk of information. Following this coding, the data analysis moved into Miles and Huberman’s data display stage, in which data are organized into charts, graphs or other informational presentations. This stage is concurrent with Creswell’s approach, in that these presentations allow for the connection of singular themes into larger, overarching themes and perspectives.

The final stage of verification occurred as themes were presented and tested for their confirmability through cross-case analysis of information presented by parents, school professionals and community agency specialists. Following this analysis, findings
were examined for linkages to the professional literature, situating this study firmly into current professional discourse concerning family-school-community partnerships involving Mexican immigrant families.

**Ethical Considerations**

The American Counseling Association developed a code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (1997) focused on ethical behavior in research and publication. An aspect of this code is the mandate that “in obtaining informed consent for research, counselors use language that ... accurately explains the purposes and procedures to be followed” (p. 9). This informed consent includes describing any associated risk or discomfort and inviting questions about procedures and process. Additionally, counselors engaging in research must elucidate any limitations to confidentiality and inform participants of their right to withdraw their participation and consent from the study at any time. In developing this study, I included an informed consent form to be signed by each participant prior to engaging in interviews or observations. The written agreement, signed by the researcher and participant, described the parameters of the participant’s involvement in the study and permitted future use of interviews and artifacts. Also included in the consent was the researcher’s right to publish the interview transcriptions in their entirety or in part and the participant’s access to transcripts and final product. Finally, the informed consent described in detail parameters of confidentiality and who will have access to interview and field note information. In response to issues of confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout the process to protect the anonymity of the participants (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).
As a final way to assure adherence to ethical considerations, this dissertation research was evaluated by the School of Education Human Subjects Review Board. This board is endowed with the responsibility of ensuring that a proposed study is in compliance with state and federal regulations for the protection of human subjects participating in the study. This process requires submitting the informed consent form described earlier and a description of the purpose, duration, risks and benefits of the proposed study. Approval of the study by the Human Subjects Review Board provides an added check for ethical appropriateness.

*Distribution of Results and Implications*

Results of this study will be presented and shared with the community in many forms. These forms are included in, but not limited to, the dissertation publication, professional presentations and seminar presentations to community members. Articles drawing from and extending this research will be submitted in manuscript form to professional publications.

Though the scope of this initial study is limited to two communities, the hope is that this research will significantly contribute to the awareness of the raced experience of Mexican immigrants in our society and foster a commitment in readers to the importance of eradicating oppressive institutional practices embedded in public education in the US.
CHAPTER FOUR

Findings and Within-Case Analysis

The analyses of within-case themes are presented in chapter four. The two cases, the United States and Mexico, are organized and shared in separate sections. Textual descriptions drawn directly from the words of the participants are used to identify themes and sub-themes. Themes and sub-themes are explored and expounded upon, utilizing quotations from participants. Each case analysis concludes with researcher interpretation.

Overview of Analytical Procedure

In both cases, participants were a focus group of educators, a focus group of parents, and one community service professional. Together these elements compose one case with their individual roles, values and personalities contributing significantly to the themes that emerged for their case. The purpose of this study was to examine and compare the themes that emerged from the United States (US) and from Mexico (MX). The individual contributions of participants were analyzed solely through their contribution to the overall case and not as individual entities.

Participants were interviewed three times over a two-month period. The data were analyzed inductively without utilizing specific expectations or hypotheses (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). This method was chosen in an effort to maintain a genuine focus on understanding family-school-community partnerships through the experiences of the participants. A three-part data analysis procedure (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used, the first two parts of which, data analysis and data display, are presented in this chapter. Across the three stages, data analysis moved progressively through the emergence of singular themes into larger themes and perspectives (Creswell, 1998). In the first level of
analysis, participant responses were examined to discern the commonality and diversity within responses (Miles & Huberman). Following this initial stage of analysis, these themes were studied to discern themes that emerged across responses (Miles & Huberman). The final level of analysis included reducing the themes into overarching categories (Miles & Huberman). These categories were examined with an intentional focus on linkages to the professional literature. In this chapter, the themes discerned through the second level of analysis are presented.

Transcripts of focus group sessions, interviews, observations and field notes were read and re-read in an effort to become familiar with the data and to allow patterns and connections within the data to emerge. Utilizing a categorical approach, data were segmented into chunks, with each chunk signifying a complete idea or segment of information. Data chunks were coded using indigenous codes pulled directly from the quotations of the participants. These codes were examined for relationships and connections and subsequently collapsed into themes. Sub-themes were developed from smaller chunks of related information occurring within themes. While some themes manifested sub-themes, other themes stood singularly with all information within the theme being equally and comparably related. The themes that occurred with the greatest frequency and intensity were selected for inclusion in the discussion.

**Case One: United States**

The participants for case one included four teachers and a school counselor in the professional educators' focus group, two mothers and two fathers from three families in the parents' focus group and a community service professional who has worked for six years with two of the families represented in the parents' focus group. When asked about
their previous experience with Mexican immigrant families, the educators responded that all were currently (and some previously) were working with Mexican immigrant students and that they sometimes worked with the parents of these students. The community service professional began to work with Latino immigrant families six years ago through a church ministry, and her work has focused heavily on helping the families access resources in the community and serving as a liaison between the families and the school. The families all immigrated to North Carolina from rural parts of Veracruz in Mexico, and all have lived in rural, eastern North Carolina for six years or more. The significant themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of the US case were:

Table 4.1
US Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allies in the Education of Children: Defining Partnerships</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He Didn’t Know Cheeseburger from Pizza: Language Barrier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embarrassing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
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<td>Overcoming</td>
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<tr>
<td>They Just Trust Us with Their Children: The Role of Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involved in Their Children’s Lives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kids Get More Involved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access in the Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness and the Fear Factor: Entities Impacting Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income: Socioeconomic Status and Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because We are Here Illegally</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toilets to Mexico: Race and Racismo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction and Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Bean in the Middle of a Plate of White Rice: Separation and Isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They Never Really Formed a Bond: Isolation and Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Felt a Little Scared: The Power of Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aren’t Out There All Alone: The Need for Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Have to Start with One Spark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please Help Me God: Barriers to Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Contact: Efforts to Positively Connect</td>
</tr>
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Sub-themes in italics
"I would say the school family, the home family and the larger community family together, connecting together to act as allies in the education of the children."

Educator One

This theme emerged as respondents described and defined family-school-community partnerships. Over the course of the interviews at different times, participants would clarify what they believed was meant by the term family-school-community partnership. The defining terms for the theme emerged from Educator One’s assertion, “I would say the school family, the home family and the larger community family together, connecting together to act as allies in the education of the children.” This perception was supported by Educator Two, who clarified the purpose of a partnership, stating, “But in defining it, it should be the family, the school and the community working together to help the child. I mean that would be the definition of a partnership right?” Educator Three met her quest for clarification:

I look as it as being an investment. It is an investment with parents, school personnel, as well as the community. It is an investment of all of us, as we have all said, coming together for the welfare of the children. But it is an investment. We are all putting something into it, but it is for the benefit of the children. So that is the way I would define family-school-community partnerships. Everyone has a piece in it, but it is all for the benefit of the children.

The response of Parent (mother) One supported the need for family and school to work together as allies in the education of the children.
It's good because the families can go to the school and participate with the teachers. It's better for the child, because when the teachers have questions, they can ask the parents, or when the parents have questions about the school, they can ask the teachers. Because the kids are in school for six or seven hours, so the communication between the parents and the teachers is very important.

Another parent (father), Parent Two, described an example of how participation, as allies and equals, in family-school-community partnerships helps children.

For example, that they go to the streets and that they could see a sidewalk. A beautiful sidewalk made by some Mexican guys. A sidewalk that the community wanted for the children and the families, so they can travel safely around the community. This is the participation of the partnership. Everyone working together equally to help the kids.

The Community Professional also expressed the importance of working together as allies, describing her perception that the school has become more aware of the need for family-school-community partnerships and tries to communicate this to the parents.

I think, um, and especially now, I don't remember it being as much talked about as my kids when they were going to school, but with grandkids and nieces and nephews, I think they really are and try to do a good job of communicating, that they do want families involved, that it is important that the family, school and community work together. You know, what takes place at school, that parents are a part of that, be it that it is extracurricular activities, what goes on at school, their lessons, their teachers, so I think that they do a better job of trying to communicate that partnerships involve everyone working together.
From the responses of the participants, it is clear that all believe families, the school and the community must work together for the benefit of the children.

*He Didn’t Know Cheeseburger from Pizza: The Language Barrier*

“Well, Eli (a Mexican immigrant student) would point to it, because he didn’t know cheeseburger from pizza.” Educator One

Unfortunately, there exists a significant barrier to this partnership effort, the barrier of language. This theme focuses on participants’ perceptions of the language barrier and the role of the language barrier in family-school-community partnerships. Over the course of discussions with participants, educators’ and parents’ perceptions that language is the predominant barrier to successful partnerships and that the onus of responsibility for overcoming this barrier is predominantly left on the shoulders of the parents emerged. The Community Professional’s assertion that language can be overcome through relationship and respect stands in stark contrast to the discussion of role of language as put forth by the educators. The sub-themes included in this section are: Embarrassing, Responsibility and Overcoming.

In the first interview, the educators had spent a great deal of time discussing the language barrier and had moved on to another aspect of partnerships when Educator Two, breaking in, exclaimed, “I was even thinking, how about a school menu. I guess the kids don’t know what we are eating everyday. We don’t even have a....” Educator One picked up her line of thinking and responded quickly, “Well, Eli (a Mexican immigrant student) would point to it, because he didn’t know cheeseburger from pizza.” The group’s discussion proceeded for a bit more, with the conversation turning to the lack of formal school information that is also shared in Spanish.
Educator Two: But I mean, we don’t even send out a Hispanic menu? A menu in Spanish for them to read.

Educator Three: It is not done in the county office. I’ve asked for documents that we get at the beginning of the year to hand out, because you notice that we get nothing that is in Spanish.

Educator Two: for the information

Educator Three: Right! And I’ve called and asked for it and it doesn’t exist.

The lack of school information that is translated for Spanish-speaking parents is also a point of concern for parents, with Parent (mother) One stating, “No. Sometimes they send a few notes in Spanish, I understand it but they are not well translated.” Parent (mother) Three mirrored this concern with, “Well… the language barrier is a big problem.” This concern was also shared by the Community Professional, “They don’t have anything in Spanish, and that’s the thing that’s difficult too. Now it helps like when we go to doctors offices and places I say now do you have an interpreter or this information in Spanish, but at school they do not.”

The impact of the language barrier on family involvement was discussed in depth and with great distress by the parents.

“Something very important is that someone would be there to help us, because if there is an event, we usually don’t show up. We don’t go because we are afraid that they are not going to understand us or afraid that they would put us aside. But if we knew English, we would get more involved Yes, the American people or Hispanic people that speak more English have more participation. (Parent (mother) One).
The impact on family involvement was also highlighted by the community professional, who stated, "I saw other Hispanic children that my heart would hurt, because the parents weren't there, and I knew a lot of that was because they didn't understand what was being said. So why go to something you don't understand?"

Parent One further described the impact of the language barrier on her personal involvement at her children's school and in her children's education.

It is the same, because in school's dances and events in which the parents participate, I can't because I cannot express myself because I cannot speak good English. For example, if my son has to learn a poem, I will try to help him, but I don't know if he is saying it right or not. For example: my kid brings words every week, and I help him to study them, but if he wrote them wrong I would not be able to correct it, and if I knew English, it would be easier.

Parent (mother) Three elucidated further the role the language barrier plays in her family's life, stating when asked by another parent if she felt she was aware of services offered by the school or community, "No, because we don't speak English we are not informed." To which another Parent (father), Four replied, "What are the services that the school offers?" This prompted the previous parent (mother two) to share that most information is sent in English and that she must rely on her sons or her friend to help her understand. This, she shared, is not an effective way. Parent (mother) One supported the school's work, but shared her frustration in the following statement:

I think that the school works fine. But is hard when we, the Hispanics, have to talk and we need more help. For example, if in a meeting they speak for one hour, we only understand 30 minutes, and then we put them (the information) in
practice here at home. If we have to make the kids read, help them to do their
homework, or when they have tests every week, we help them a little.

In support of the parent’s assertion, the educators discussed various ways the school reaches out to parents and families and the fact that Spanish-speaking parents are unable to access these options. Educator Four discussed the phone system, stating, “And also if we could have the phone system in English or Spanish, that would help; that would be a better PR thing than just a piece of paper, too.” Educator Three further clarified this position, “We do have the phone system but it is only in the English language.”

The educators also discussed the role of the language barrier on family involvement. Educator Four shared the parents’ feelings that often it is unclear how to be involved, due to the lack of information shared between the groups. She stated,

And it could be, too, that the ones who, that are the nicer ones or whatever, they might not have a way of knowing that there’s a way of trying to communicate or there might not be a way, like community involvement, they may just be sitting over there thinking that there is no way to communicate with them. They might just think, “Well, we’re here; we’re stuck here this way, and there might not be a door open to them.

Embarrassing.

In the theme focused on language, the parents focused on the discomfort and embarrassment related to attempts to communicate in the face of the language barrier. The educators also pondered the impact of discomfort, embarrassment and feelings of inferiority, while also sharing examples of times they, themselves, have felt discomfort due to the language barrier. The community professional discussed embarrassment and
discomfort within the context of factors that impede efforts to overcome the language barrier.

Parent (mother) One shared her discomfort by succinctly stating, “It is embarrassing for me when I say something wrong.” Educator Two related this embarrassment to feelings of inferiority, sharing, “A lot of them just feel inferior, and I would, too, when you have three hundred kids here that speak English and five that don’t. And I’m a parent going in there; I mean I wouldn’t want to walk into one of their schools, and there are only five people that speak my language.” This sharing of feelings is important in that it indicated a shift in the conversation of the educators to focus on the impact they have personally experienced as a result of language and how that impact was similar to and different from the impact experienced by the parents. Educator Four shared an example of her personal discomfort,

One thing that concerned me, though, is if we have a parent-teacher conference, and both parents would come in, or the child would, and they would speak their language, their Mexican, or whatever, and then they would talk together and then talk with me. It’s like if there wouldn’t be an interpreter there or something, then I couldn’t interact with them and didn’t know what they were saying, and I wasn’t comfortable with that situation.

The discomfort described by Educator Four is an ever-present aspect of the lives of the parents, as indicated by the following assertions.

Parent (mother) Three: Well… I don’t speak English, and she has to translate for me in school meetings.

Parent (father) Four: How do you feel when she translates for you?
Parent (mother) Three: It feels bad, but she (indicating parent One) always helps me.

Parent (mother) One: And as parents, some people are ashamed to say “Can you help me? And I don’t like talking too much when there is more than one person.

The parents also indicated that their ability to be involved at their children’s school was impacted by discomfort and embarrassment related to language. Parent (mother) One explained,

I can participate, sometimes, but not all of the time. Like when the school sends home papers that say, something is going on in the cafeteria or in the classroom, and I look at the back of the paper and see that they need people to bring sodas or snacks or whatever I bring it and it is good, but maybe I don’t speak a lot of English and in the cafeteria, where other parents help, the boys tell me stuff that is no good or not true and I will not understand so I don’t help there, but it is possible for me to bring in the snack or soda, but I’m not there in the school.

Parent (mother) Three followed this same line of discussion, sharing her decision regarding school parties and events. “They cannot understand me and I cannot communicate with them, so I do not go, but I send food and items when they send a note home.”

The community professional did not spend a great deal of time discussing feelings, including embarrassment and discomfort, related to the language barrier. She did explain however, the people try to mask their discomfort or lack of understanding and
that it is important to intentionally and in a sensitive way confirm that everyone involved in an interchange is clear about the information shared.

And I got to the place too, because these are the smilingest people, and sometimes, I'm realizing that at first when they were smiling, I was thinking they were understanding. So finally I was able to figure that out, and I was able to say, "Okay Maria, do you understand what I just said, or do you understand what Mrs. Jefferson just said?" And if not, I always try to make them feel comfortable, and if not, I always say it's okay. And if not, we would work at this until they could understand. So that really helped out.

The parents indicated that at times their inability to communicate effortlessly in English was not received with caring and compassion. Instead, they had been subjected to reprimands and derision by teachers and members of the community. Parent (mother) One shared two of her experiences.

Sometimes. Not only in the school but also in the clinic, there was an old woman that said. "I don't know why you come to this country if you don't know how to speak English. Here! We speak English!" ...I said this because the teacher that my kids had last year, the one that we were having problems with, was always complaining. Because in meeting she always asked if we knew how to speak English, because she didn't like the fact that we don't participate and she would ask us why we didn't study English?

Responsibility.

The final quote of the previous discussion indicates, on the part of the parents, a failure to adequately prepare themselves, in the area of language, for positive
involvement in the educational lives of their children. This quote alludes to the position that responsibility for overcoming the barrier of language lies squarely in the hands of the parents. The community professional stated her feelings about responsibility most directly, remarking, "I know what that teacher’s thinking was, and she told me, ‘If they are going to come here it is their responsibility to learn English’, and not her responsibility at all that she try to work through this and that really bothered me.”

This perception, while often not stated directly, clearly was communicated to the parents and to the community professional through interactions with the school. One example of an indirect way in which the responsibility is left to the parents emerged through discussions of the “first day of school” experience. The community professional said.

Right, especially when they had somebody that was going with them to help them understand what was being said or what was being expected. Especially like the first day of school, that was a big thing for the Hispanic families. Because so much information is given the first day, I was overwhelmed. It had been such a long time since I had children in the school, and I sat there thinking. “You know, you had to sign this paper and that paper and before my going with them they were signing papers, they didn’t know why they were signing papers…” Because part of the time in the schools I would say to the teachers, “You have to stop just a minute, and let me make sure they understand what you were saying.” And they, for the most part, sometimes it was difficult for the teachers because they had an agenda, and they had things they were trying to get done, but for the most part they were kind enough to wait and make sure they understood. But that was the
worst part, the first day of school when you would go, and so much information was given and they had to sign all these papers and you know.

The educators had previously discussed the language barrier, and one aspect of this discussion was the initial enrollment and engagement with Mexican immigrant families. During this discussion, it was explained that no formal school forms are released in Spanish. Educator Three further described enrollment and the first day of school, explaining that the families must ascertain means of overcoming the barrier and understand the information that is given only in English. “Sometimes they will bring in a parent that has already been living here for awhile that comes in and does some translation. We have had some that came in and had an affiliation with a church already, and then that representative will come with them into the school to help with enrollment” (educator Four). “It would be better if someone could translate for us at the schools” shared Parent (mother) Three. Parent (father) Two described work with the school as being “fine” and explained that the teachers will “listen to you.” However, he further stated, “But the Spanish community needs interpreters. We always have to try to find someone to go with us who can help us to understand and can help the school to understand us,” again indicating that the responsibility remains the parents’. This assertion was supported by a personal example shared by Educator One, “At parent-conference I have had Roxanne, Lisa’s mother, at first she didn’t understand English and would bring a neighbor to decipher for her.” A description of partnerships with Latino families given by Educator Two also supports parent two’s statement, “About the only partnership that we have, I feel, with the Latino community, is with those that are English speaking that come in to interpret for their Mexican friends.” The lack of available
interpreters in the school manifested as frustration for parents and community professionals assisting families. "When we were having to meet with the principal and the counselor with the trouble Luis got in, we were the ones that found an interpreter. They (the school) didn’t even offer!" exclaimed the Community Professional.

The previously shared statements of the educators, while indicating that the onus of responsibility belongs to the parents, may also reflect an overarching lack of investment or sense of control concerning partnerships with non-English speaking parents. This position was supported by the community professional who stated, "And she was more blunt with it than others, though I never really sensed that it was an issue with them. If the kids get it, they get it; if they don’t, they don’t. If the parents show up, they do; if they don’t, they don’t." Delving further into the same possibility, she voiced her concern and frustration with the lack of control and caring as she perceived it.

Right, it wasn’t something they saw as a priority to work through. And I don’t understand that, and maybe if you saw it as they are here just for a season, but these children are here all the time and are always going to be here. And that is where I had an issue, that is why I keep saying, "We have a problem; we have a problem. Let’s work through it and find an answer because these children, most of them, will probably continue to be here. Some of them may move, but most will be here, and if it is not this group, it is going to be another group of children to deal with, so wouldn’t it be easier to find a solution to deal with instead of battling all the time?" And that is just how it felt to me, always a battle of trying to see if we could work through this.
Frustration was not experienced solely by parents and liaisons, but also by educators who sometimes felt as if the parents were not making a strong enough effort to communicate and be involved. “And I think if they had that desire for the partnership, it would be there. I really do, because I know like with the ESL teacher, they’ve offered free courses to teach English to Spanish speaking parents, and they had like one person show up. So I don’t know that they really want to speak our language and know that much about our culture, or it seems that way anyway” (educator Two). While the community professional agreed that it is the responsibility of the parents to do their part and to learn English, as they live in an English-speaking country, she also believed that it is important not to punish the children and also to provide support to the parents.

If you know you have these children, and I understand that it is their responsibility to learn, but that takes time, but if they don’t for whatever reason, you are going to punish this child because of something the parent is not going to do? That is not right, because if I were a teacher, somehow or another I would find the resources that if I had to have a conference, then I would find me an interpreter, and if I wasn’t, because it was just for the sake of it being on paper and saying I had a conference, no, no! I would not do that. So I have difficulty with that because if we are going to have these children in our system, then maybe countywide the school needs access to someone that they can use as a resource person to work through this.

However, it is also important to recognize that the community professional was not suggesting that the responsibility lies solely with the school, either. It must be addressed jointly, with all members of the partnership working together for a solution.
It wasn’t their job to do it alone; it was something for us to work at together. You know these children are in your system, so wouldn’t it be smart to learn or figure out how we are going to work this out and communicate, and as I said, instead of always saying we have a problem, we have a problem to find a solution no matter how small it may be. At least it is an end road, and these parents feel like you care about their children, too.

Presently, as the responsibility continues to remain with the parents, one way of overcoming the barrier is through the use of community liaisons and resources, as illustrated through an example shared by Parent One.

I think it is good, because sometimes we cannot understand or cannot make the teacher understand. And I have asked Mrs. Helen, “Please ask the teacher” I can’t remember the question at the time, but she asked the teacher and talked to the principal. And Mrs. Helen would explain to the teacher what happened, or the teacher would explain to Mrs. Helen, and Mrs. Helen would call me and explain that “this is the problem, and you need to go to the school or do something.” It’s good, and I don’t know if she has told you, but she is my mother, my American mother.

*Overcoming.*

“But she is my mother, my American mother” (Parent One). This quote highlights an important awareness that emerged through discussion of the language barrier, the strength of the relationship as a tool for overcoming the barrier. This sub-theme is especially significant when one considers the previous sub-theme of responsibility. The present situation places the responsibility for overcoming the language barrier with the
parents. It is this perception that makes the sub-theme of overcoming so significant in contrast to the sub-theme of responsibility. The US Case is unique in that the community professional assisting the families was not fluent in Spanish. In the words of the Community Professional, “the thing that is funny about this, when I first started at the school, most of those teachers thought I could speak Spanish, and I cannot.” Thus, the perceptions and frustrations of the Community Professional hold a special significance for the discussion in that she was on a level playing field with the educators. Her ability to work with the families was similarly impacted by language. As such, the theme for overcoming is significant not for its commonality across participants, but instead for its intensity with one participant and complete exclusion by other participants.

In describing her relationship with the families, the Community Professional explained her personal misgivings about working with non-English speaking families.

I tell people I would have never dreamed, cause I have been working with these children five or six years now. If anybody had ever said, “You’re going to be working with Mexican children,” I would have said there’s no way because, see, I can’t speak any Spanish, because I base it on that was the only way I would be able to do that was if I could speak it. How unaware I was of the need and that there was still a way you could work with people and help people, even speaking a different language.

When asked about how she and the families were able to understand one another and communicate effectively, she gave the credit in part to the ability one of the mothers, “Well, it helps, especially with Maria, because she has learned to master the English language, so it helps with that” and to the help of other community professionals, “And
one of the other ladies that works with me in this ministry, she has just left from here; her name is Marty, and Marty had also got into this because she worked with the moms trying to help them learn English, trying to learn it better. So while I was working with the children, she would be working with the moms.” She also described the various methods she and the families used to communicate, “But we laughed because we say we do a lot of sign language, and when we had to draw pictures, we would try to draw pictures.” Finally, she credited her faith, “But somehow or another, and I give the Lord credit in this, He just helps us to get through. And when I’m working with Angelica, we make faces, you know, and figure it out.”

When asked about the barriers of discomfort, fear and anxiety that often impede communication and efforts to communicate, she again highlighted the importance of relationship and caring. She stated there was one common denominator solidifying all the efforts previously described, “I think it was just the contact of that continual contact.” She continued clarifying what she meant by contact, saying, “A relationship does it. In any of the time before I would have said there is no way; I can’t speak Spanish, and I still can’t speak Spanish, even though those little girls tell me, and this is the way you say it. I still cannot roll my “r’s,” but we have fun.” One of the parents (father, Parent Two) expressed surprise over his ability to communicate successfully and easily with non-Spanish speaking friends.

I don’t know how I communicate with my friends that do not speak Spanish. My English is not good, and when I try to talk with other people that do not speak Spanish, they do not understand my English. Like when I worked with Jerry, I could tell something to him in Spanish and English, and he could understand me.
We work together all the time, and we have a relationship, and we can understand each other even though we do not speak each other’s language. We have a relationship and we have a lot of contact with each other.

Caring and relationship emerged as central to the sub-theme of overcoming the language barrier. The Community Professional shared her history and how she came to develop this caring,

I tried. I’m so visual that I always tried to visualize myself in Mexico, and I could not speak Spanish, and somebody would help me, and somebody would love me and care enough to make sure I understand. And that is a relationship thing that happened to us, that not only was I the after-school tutor, but now I was a friend. And Maria and Angelica will tell you that I’m their American mama and they are my Spanish daughters. So we ended up not only doing this as a ministry or as a help, but we fell in love with one another.

_They Just Trust Us with Their Children: The Role of Parents_

_Sometimes I feel like they don’t really know what is going on. They trust us with their children; they don’t speak our language; they’re not communicating with us. They just trust us with their children. With stronger partnerships they could give more to their children; they could help the school out more. The bond would just be stronger. Sometimes I just feel like they don’t have any clue._ (Educator Two)

The relationship between members of family-school-community partnerships also emerged as a significant aspect of another distinct theme in the US Case, a theme focused on perceptions of the role of parents and caregivers in partnerships. Early in the discussions it became clear that each group and participant had very distinct ideas about
the role of parents in partnerships and the ways in which partnerships impact the involvement of parents. This theme ultimately emerged as “They just trust us with their children” (Educator Two).

Educator One described how important it is that parents support the school, saying, “Knowing that young children depend on their families, their parents’ affirmation of the school staff and the program is important.” However, the educators also observed that Spanish-speaking parents often struggle to be involved, due to the language barrier, as illustrated by Educator Two’s statement, “Sometimes I feel like they don’t really know what is going on. They trust us with their children; they don’t speak our language; they’re not communicating with us, they just trust us with their children.” This trust is perceived by the educators to be a blind trust that perpetuates the continued distance between parents and educators.

To allow parents to fulfill their role in the educational lives of their children, stronger partnerships must be established. Educator Two illuminated this need by sharing, “With stronger partnerships they could give more to their children; they could help the school out more. The bond would just be stronger. Sometimes I just feel like they don’t have any clue.” Educator Three responded, also asserting her belief that as partnerships strengthen, parents grow more invested and more involved, “So maybe if the partnership was stronger, then they will see more that our investment is with their children, and maybe they will become more invested so they will know how to communicate with us more.”

The parents supported this perception, sharing that they feel that when all parents are able to participate, it is better for the child and better for the parents who want to play
a significant role in their children’s education. Communication and collaboration are imperative because the educators are an important part of the child’s life. Parent One shared her views about the need for families and the school to work together equally.

Mmm, It’s good because the families can go to the school and participate with the teachers. It’s better for the child, because when the teachers have questions, they can ask the parents, or when the parents have questions about the school, they can ask the teachers. Because the kids are in school for six or seven hours, so the communication between the parents and the teachers is very important.

The Community Professional also supported the need for parents to serve as equal partners with teachers in family-school-partnerships and the assertion by the educators that partnerships help to build a sense of investment in parents.

That you would take a special interest in their child and do that little thing and that just always, you know, just reminds me, in the word the Lord says you’ll give that cup of cold water to the thirsty man, then you’ve done it to me. When you will be kind to a child, you have done everything for that parent, and that has meant something to them, especially when I think about these parents that their plate is already full, and they are so overwhelmed with everything, be it finances or their own stupid mistakes they have made. It means something that you care so much about their child. Even if it’s a small step, you know, I believe in you. And that could have helped, like if I were a parent too, that if I knew that someone cared about my child and gave their time, then maybe I could give a little bit.

This idea of empowering parents through connections and relationships is reflected in Educator Three’s perception that through a strong connection with the school, parents...
and families may develop a deeper awareness of the need for and desire to connect with the community.

And in turn, that may motivate some who have not taken that step to get on board more with our culture, in the language barrier, to go and seek out ways to go and learn more about the English language. Because a lot of them...I can look at some families that have been here for years, and they still don’t speak the language.

By having parents aware of and invested in the work of the school, the school is also able to transfer this awareness and investment in the school over to the community. “They have a good, uhm..(thinking). They look at our school, and they know what is going on, and they can speak in a positive way about our school when they know what is going on” (Educator Two). The community is able to be more involved and more active in the events and programs organized by the school. Educator One also supported this assertion, stating, “They get affirmation that what we are doing here is important, and they know and are aware and are around and help us.” The educators perceived that increased awareness will lead to greater positive regard by the community for the school. Thus, through strong partnerships, parents are better able to play an active role in the education of their children, and the community is more greatly involved and invested in the success of the school.

*Involved in their children’s lives.*

They wanted so desperately to be involved in their children’s lives and they would come away from meetings not knowing what had gone on and what was being said. Community Professional
Considering the previous discussion of the role of parents in partnerships, one might consider the parents’ perceptions of involvement. Do they feel involvement is important? How do parents define involvement? One might even ponder the idea that parents truly do not wish to be more actively involved and, instead, view their children’s educational life as separate from the daily family life. However, the desire of Mexican immigrant parents for active involvement emerged as a strong and distinct theme in the US Case. It is important to note, there are two sides to the coin that is perceptions of parent involvement; the desire for involvement and the sense of futility brought on by the language barrier.

The Community Professional described her personal experience with Mexican immigrant families:

Through the church I was in we worked with the children, Monday through Thursday in the afternoons. She would bring her children from Jonesville to Parkerton every afternoon, her and Angelica both. And see I admire them for that, their finances are so meager, but they want their children to get a good education...And I think it was partly that, and it was because these people are determined to go through whatever they have to, to make it better for their children to have the best education they can have.

She further described how once the parents had made the trip, they always chose not to leave for shopping or some other thing, but instead stayed to learn what they could and to be involved in the work with their children. She contrasted the level of involvement of the Mexican immigrant parents with the involvement, as she had perceived it, of parents of other nationalities and ethnicities.
Now, how well that (the effort to encourage partnerships by the school system) comes across as how well parents are doing a good job of grabbing hold of that and running with it, I don’t know. Now, I have seen at the after-school program at the church I was at, we worked with other children, other than the Hispanic children. I definitely saw the Hispanic families more wanting to be a part; they wouldn’t just drop their children off; they would stay there. If they could help with something or understand something, they were there. A lot of the other parents would just send their children; they either got dropped off from the bus, or they dropped them off, and rarely would those parents call and say, you know, “How are my kids doing?” I would call them and say, “Your child needs help with this,” or “You need to encourage them in this,” and so, sadly so with the kids I came in contact with, I did not see that much interaction.

When questioned as to whether she believed her perceptions were indicative of other Mexican immigrants or solely the families she has worked with, she explained her feeling that barriers, more than lack of caring, kept these parents from being involved.

I think for the most part most of them do. I often think about when I would go into Jonesville School, some of the other Hispanic children that I would see, and I would think “I wonder what the heart of those parents is,” they probably wanted to be involved but didn’t know, or because of a language barrier, not understanding that there was something that could help them.

The parents shared personal stories, illustrating their desire for involvement and their efforts to be involved. Parent (mother) One explained that while she understands the
educator’s frustrations with parents who will not be involved, she does her best to be active in her children’s education.

I don’t know because sometimes what the teachers say about the parents are right. They come in school only if the child is bad, and all the rest of the days they don’t see the parents. The teachers say, “Come in for a conference,” and I don’t understand too much, but I am there. Maybe I don’t understand too much, but I am there, and I participate and if I don’t understand the teacher I tell Mrs. Helen, “Please tell the teacher I don’t understand what happened.” And she would call the school, maybe other parents cannot, and I think some have some problems, maybe personal problems.

Another parent shared his experience with his daughter and his attempts to be involved at her school.

I went down there to see the teacher and to talk about the problem with my daughter, and she did not seem to understand me. She said there is no problem, but my daughter said there is, that the boys are being mean to her. In the end, because we could not work together, and I could not help my daughter here, I had to send her back to Mexico for the school. There my family can work with the school to make sure she is safe and happy.

His perception of the importance of parental involvement and his inability to be involved in his daughter’s education in the US prompted him to return her to Mexico, where he was assured that the family would be able to communicate and collaborate with the school.
In both of the above experiences, language served as a barrier to full and complete involvement. The futility and frustration that manifests from this barrier was evident in the responses of both educators and parents alike. “I think the educational system is expecting us, as Americans, to try and meet their needs as best we can, and I would just like to see them fight as hard to get what their children deserve. Does that make any sense?” (Educator Two). While the educators were frustrated at the parents’ apparent complacency and lack of drive to overcome impediments, parents were finding personal ways to solve the problems they encounter due to language with quiet frustration.

Well... For example: my kids used to take the bus out there, but in the bus they had problems. I went to talk to the teacher, and she told me that she couldn’t do anything because the video cameras in the bus were not working. And I decided to take them and also to pick them up. But there is something missing because with our poor English we try to communicate, and we cannot be successful.

(Parent (mother) One)

Parent One further explained her attempts to be involved, “And in my case, at least I go to support my kids even though I don’t understand anything, and we help when there is something to do for school, even though we don’t understand anything, and sometimes we send stuff to help the school.” Her desire to help her children is solidly demonstrated through her final assertion that, “I would put my hand on fire for my children, with or without English. And I will speak to whomever I need to.” Parent One’s statement asserted her desire to be involved in her children’s education, and her desire was echoed by the statements of other parents and the community professionals. Through partnerships, the participants suggested that desire can grow into
involvement. The community professional shared her understanding of the parents’
efforts to play an active role in partnerships.

And the unique thing that I saw with those two families, and as I said I’m not an
expert in any of this, but just in my dealings with going to Jonesville school, these
two families did their best to go to parent-teacher conferences, to go to anything.
Even at times I know not understanding, they would still come away from
meetings, especially before I became involved in their lives, coming away from
meetings not knowing what was being said. They wanted so desperately to be
involved in their children’s lives, and they would come away from meetings not
knowing what had gone on and what was being said.

The educators, building on the perception of a desire for involvement, stated,

Well, I was just thinking of the partnership with the parents. They have to respect
our way of educating their children. So having a good partnership, a strong
partnership with them would help to establish that. I mean, in talking with this
parent, she had respect for both I think...They would see that we can respect them
for who they are.

Respect for the process and structure of US education, the educators believed, is
important for building strong partnerships.

*Kids will get more involved.*

*Well... A lot because the Hispanic kids would get more involved, and they would
get better grades. Parent Three*

From a discussion of the benefits of increased involvement in family-school-
community partnerships emerged two sub-themes, the first being *Kids Will Get More*
Involved. All participants remarked upon the outcome of the children becoming more involved and invested in their education and their community as a result of family-school-community partnerships.

Parent (mother) One described the difference she has observed in her son this year, difference she attributes to her son’s teacher and the teacher’s good way of working with parents and students.

No, this year it is okay, but last time, we had some teachers that did not like the parents in the school. This year, Rojelio has a good teacher, and for me it is very good. And I saw something different, because Mrs. Way is a lovely teacher and says, “Good job Rojelio” and it has given Rojelio a more positive impression. Maybe it is because the teacher (last year’s) had worked a long time or something that she said, “Your boy is no good” and she wouldn’t explain what happened, or I don’t know. But this year there is more participation from the parents and the students, and she says to Rojelio that he is doing good, and he works hard, and I think it is good. She gives him good motivation to try hard and not give up.

The Community Professional also shared her perceptions of the difference in the child’s involvement and the teacher’s attempts to encourage involvement.

I don’t know; all I can speak for is like some experiences that I have had at Jonesville with some of the teachers, and I was really talking about this to Maria and how she thought things were going with Rojelio because last year was a wreck. And this year I know the teacher, and I asked how she liked the teacher, and she said she was great and that she had said that Rojelio really likes to read,
and she shares him and celebrates him and is more caring. She said she sees the
teacher doing that for the whole class.

Both the community professional and the parent perceived this teacher’s efforts to
involve parents and children as positively impacting the child’s desire and efforts to be
involved.

The educators also shared the belief that the parent’s involvement impacts the
child’s involvement in education and the community. Children, shared the educators, are
more able to be involved when their parents are active and engaged in their children’s
education. Educator Three explained,

In a way I think children are better able to be involved when their parents are
involved because for the most part those children are going to have parents who
will make sure the child is going to be here. And they are going to provide a
means for them being here. When you look on the other spectrum parents who are
not necessarily involved here, the children may want to participate but may not be
able to participate because they don’t have the support, and it may be because of
work or anything.

Educator Two continued this line of discussion, sharing,

Those families are probably not involved in civic groups; they are not involved in
community sports; most of them probably drop their kids off at the ballpark and
say, “Catch a ride and make sure you get home.” And so I think in a round about
way it does affect the community because some of those kids too, like I remember
when the ballpark got broken into and candy and snacks got stolen, you know,
I’m just wondering are those the kids whose parents just say go and come as you 
please? Those are the parents whose presence we never saw grace our doors.

In considering the lack of involvement by some parents and the discussion 
concerning the barriers to involvement for some parents, Educator One felt encouraged to 
reach out to parents in an effort to motivate the children. She described her decision to try 
to encourage Mexican immigrant parents to become involved in their children’s 
education by inviting them to be involved in specific ways in the classroom.

And I think after talking here that I am going to ask Ebber’s mother to come in 
and talk about her country, and I just have never done it, but that would be an 
important history lesson for my little kids, and, boy, wouldn’t make him feel 
important? He would probably beam from ear to ear.

Educator Four shared a similar experience. “I did that with Rojelio, and his mom came, 
and they cooked stuff, and it was nice.” The parents also supported the idea of motivating 
children through partnerships. “Well... A lot because the Hispanic kids would get more 
involved, and they would get better grades,” (Parent Three) and “The kids will get more 
involved” (Parent One). All of the participants agreed that when parents are involved in 
family-school-community partnerships, children feel more important and more motivated 
to be involved in their school and community.

*Access in the community.*

*I don’t know; indirectly it might because if there is something going on in the 
community, we send things home through the school. Educator Two*

Another impact of family-school-community partnerships emerged as being 
Access in the Community. While some participants felt this was a more indirect impact,
others felt strongly that family access to resources in the community was directly impacted by their involvement with the school. One educator explained that much of the information concerning community activities goes home through the school, so, indirectly, parents who do not receive that information are less likely to be aware of these resources.

I don’t know indirectly; it might because if there is something going on in the community, we send things home through the school, and if a parent is not really going through that book bag and getting stuff, they might not know that we have a baseball and softball tryouts or that we are trying to get every child in the county to do a survey because we are trying to get a recreation building or that there is going to be a Fall Bazaar or something like that. A lot of this stuff does go home through the school because they know if it goes home through the kids, it’s going to get to the parents. So I mean anything going on in the community is just about going to go through the school, advertising the festivals, parades or the Christmas festival, something like that. So indirectly, but I wouldn’t say just because a parent is not involved in the school they don’t have access to the resources in the community. Educator Two

Other educators chimed in about the propensity of materials advertising community resources that are distributed to parents by way of the school. “Sometimes four or five items a day go home about community events, opportunities” (Educator One). “And the school makes announcements” (Educator Three). “Yes, communication, a lot of things wouldn’t get out if it weren’t for the schools; we pass out three and four fliers a day, soccer, karate” (Educator One). The parents also acknowledged the
materials concerning community resources that are distributed through the school. "They send us many things home from the school about the boy scouts, the baseball, the other stuff. But my boys do not do that because it takes much money, and we do not know the people" (Parent One). "I do not read English, so I do not know what it says unless Lydiana or my boy reads it to me." (Parent Three). Consequently, though there is concurrence about the fact that access to community resources is often facilitated through involvement with the school, non-English speaking families are often still isolated, due to the language barrier, separation and socioeconomic status.

Marginal involvement with the school, simply checking a child's book bag can expose parents to opportunities to be involved in the community. However, a greater intensity of involvement with the school is needed to overcome the barriers, including social isolation, that continue to impede access to these resources.

_Awareness and the Fear Factor: Entities Impacting Partnerships_

*I think a lot of the thing for parents is the fear factor, and the discouraging thing is when they don't think they can help, they don't know how to find help.*

_Community Professional_

Along with the barrier of language previously discussed as impacting partnerships, other entities were introduced by participants as having an impact on family-school-community partnerships. Across participants within the US Case emerged a consistent and intense discussion of factors impacting partnerships, including, most intensely, the coupling of fear and awareness. While stressing the need for parents to engage in family-school-community partnerships, Educator Two sighed, "But I just don't know if they even know how to pursue that." To which Educator Four responded, "That's
what I’m saying. I don’t think they do. That’s what I’m saying. I don’t think they are
aware of their, any options.” In another focus group session, Educator Four returned to
this discussion, stating,

If they don’t already have the interaction, it may not be something they feel
involved in, just not having that interaction already can keep them from getting in
there and doing it. Like with Hispanic families, they may not have enough
knowledge to be involved.

The importance of awareness arose in the community professional interviews, too,
with the community professional stressing that parents can’t be involved if they are not
even aware of an opportunity to be involved.

Yeah, I think that makes such a difference, being aware. Because just like
Lydiana, she did not know, because of the language thing and because of
finances, people can’t have a lot of things, unless there are things written in
English and Spanish, and so until she met Sherry, she was not aware that they had
a program that could help her children. And, as I said, I admired them because
they went for whatever measure, I mean crossing language barriers, racial
barriers.

Awareness played a different role in the discussion of the parents. Parents focused
on their lack of awareness as a function of the social isolation they experience. Parent
(father) Two compared the way information is shared in his hometown in Mexico with
his experience in North Carolina.

In my town there is a big field, and everybody sees each other in the community
field, playing ball or talking. We even see the donkeys and the goats. Here we do
not see what is going on because everyone stays in their houses, so we do not know when the children should be involved.

Fear was also discussed by all the participants as a barrier to seeking out and gaining awareness. The community professional described her perception of how fear serves as a barrier and the difference she has seen with some families.

I think a lot of the thing for parents is the fear factor, and the discouraging thing is when they don't think they can help, they don't know how to find help. And their children just fall through the cracks, and it just doesn't get done, and that was what was sad. And, see, that was what worked out very well for these Hispanic people was as they realized theirabilities and what they couldn't do, but instead of letting their fears destroy them, they tried to figure out how, who can help my child in this?

The participants pondered the reasons for fear, including education and personal struggles with schools and academics. One educator shared a personal experience in which parents appeared fearful due to a lack of education.

I do something at the beginning of every year that we do their hand print, and when the parents come to parent-conference night, it takes a while to get everybody to make a comment to their child about the handprint, "Dear Josh, please be patient, sit still, please learn" things that they would like to tell them as to how to handle that grade (this year). And you would be surprised at the parents who refuse to write. I had three or four this year that I felt like couldn't make a sentence, punctuation. And the very first one I had encountered I thought, "Oh my, what have I asked this person to do?" because they looked at me like, fear.
And I said, “I tell you what; I’ll write it, and you tell me what you want to tell your child.” Well, they were perfectly okay with that.

The other educators responded to this with feelings of regret that parents do not feel comfortable and often cannot assist their child with schoolwork and reading. “But you know that’s not the parent reading at home twenty minutes every night with their child; they can’t. So in time children are failing tests, parents are reaching out for resources like martin magic. I don’t know; it is a vicious cycle” (Educator Two). The parents also reflected on the impact of fear in their involvement, with Parent (mother) Three sharing, “I do not go because I am scared that they will ask me to do something or talk to me, and I will not be able to understand, and I will feel stupid.” Through the interviews, the link between fear and awareness solidified and emerged as the factor subsuming all other entities impacting involvement.

Income: Resources and socioeconomic status

It has something to do with income. You know we’re talking mainly about Alicia and her mother, that is a nice family that makes money and they are neatly dressed. But I think about the other side of the crack sometimes, the lower income that might not have a car. They might not have a telephone. Educator One

Four sub-themes emerged under the umbrella of Fear and Awareness: Entities Impacting Partnerships, Income, Resources and Socioeconomic Status. Income and people’s perceptions of status as related to income and wealth were linked by participants with feelings of inferiority and fear of rejection. Educator One first introduced the role of wealth and status saying,
It has something to do with income. You know we’re talking mainly about Alicia and her mother, that is a nice family that makes money, and they are neatly dressed. But I think about the other side of the crack sometimes, the lower income that might not have a car. They might not have a telephone.

Educator Four continued the discussion by contrasting the role of socioeconomic status positively impacts some parents’ ability to be involved, while impeding the ability of others. “Like yesterday Matt and Calliope might be able to afford to take a day off of work and be at the blood drive, whereas the other parents might like to, but they can’t afford to take a day off of work” (Educator Four).

The educators also linked socioeconomic status with self-esteem, agreeing with Educator One, who asserted,

Self esteem, the whole nine yards, we, you talk about socioeconomic status, but you know there are different levels. Sometimes, I mean sometimes I feel like people don’t feel like they are as valued, even though we at Jonesville make them feel, I can understand how they feel sometimes when they walk in the door.

Educator Two supported Educator One’s assertion, sharing her belief that students and families are often multi-stressed, and poverty amplifies other issues.

When you look at the children in Carter’s Stars, not only are they failing, a lot of the are struggling in other ways you may not get school fees from; they may lack health care or they may be constantly going home sick, or their family lives are just horrible.

Educator Three responded, “They are at risk all around.” Educator One tied this line of thought back into the impact on partnerships with, “And how many of those parents are
volunteering and doing things and out in the community? Very few, I mean a very low percentage of them."

The community professional discussed the impact of socioeconomic status on the Mexican immigrant families with whom she has worked.

You know, when we were in the church, all of these families had to pay like a dollar a day because we did snacks and that kind of thing and to pay for the electricity of the building. But they were willing to do that. After these families were traveling from Jonesville to Parkerton every day, their finances were very limited. But the focus was what’s best for my kids, what can I do? And knowing that the need was precedent, that it wasn’t something they could put off to another time, a week or another year. It was what was needed right now. It was whatever they could do to help their children better themselves in school and learning, you know, and being able to complete school, you know.

The parents similarly discussed socioeconomic status, but without inferences of shame or fear. Instead, the parents asserted that while there are large differences among options and resources at differing ends of the financial strata, they do not expect these differences to impact their children in the school. Parent (father) Four shared his understanding of income, “Some have more resources than others, because some are poorer or richer than others, but school should be equal for all.” However, it remained clear that resources and wealth impact the opportunities available for involvement for children, through Parent (mother) One’s explanation that though much information comes home from school advertising opportunities for the children to be involved in extracurricular activities, including boy scouts, baseball, etc., her children are not
involved in such activities. "It is impossible, because the uniforms are expensive, and I don’t have money for the uniforms" (Parent One). She further explained that access to resources also impacts and impedes a family’s ability to allow a child to be involved. “Sometimes transportation, because for baseball or soccer you need a vehicle, because the school provides only for school.”

It is clear from the discussion of the participants that income and socioeconomic status impact the involvement of families in partnerships with the school and the community. The influence of socioeconomic status on self-esteem and the fear that results are also relevant to this study of family-school-community partnerships.

Because we are here illegally.

(in response to “Why do you think the teacher is not too friendly with your daughter?”) “Because we are here illegally.” Parent Four

Citizenship also emerged as a factor contributing significantly to the fear that impedes parents’ awareness of opportunities for involvement in partnerships. While discussing the inability of Mexican immigrants to seek out opportunities for involvement, Educator One reasoned, “Also, so many are not citizens, so they try to stay kind of low key.” After a brief discussion of the disagreement among American citizens about the most effective ways of handling illegal immigration, the educators did not revisit this topic again. In contrast, the parents spent a large part of each interview discussing the impact of citizenship status.

The topic was initially introduced by Parent (mother) Three in response to an inquiry about her perceptions of a teacher’s interactions with her daughter. Earlier in the discussion, the parent had shared that one teacher was not friendly with her daughter and,
for the most part, ignored her daughter in the classroom. When asked why she felt the
teacher responded this way, she stated resignedly, “Because we are here illegally.” Parent
(father) Four explained that the most prominent barrier to partnerships in his community
and with his children’s school was “the language, but especially the legal status.” This
prompted Parent (mother) One to share a series of stories related to negative personal
experiences with the school, which she attributed to negative perceptions and lack of
rights of undocumented immigrants.

I go because I’m his mother, and I worry for them! Even though I don’t speak
English. Sometimes my poor English doesn’t allow me to understand the teachers.
I go if the teachers call me, because my son is badly behaved, but there is a small
detail. When my kids would come scraped and struck, I showed them the bruises,
and they Suspended MY kid for 3 days! And they wouldn’t say anything about
the cameras because they were not working. He had many other problems. Like
when they go to lunch, some kids would throw his food. The other day an
American kid spit on his food, and I had to go to the school. For me it is the
same, with English or not, I go and talk to the principal, and I tell her that my son
did not eat because someone spitted on his food. Mexican or not, everybody needs
food. So I found a solution for it. I take my kids to the school, and I solved the bus
problem. Now, to find the solution for the lunch incident, my son doesn’t buy
food at the school anymore. I find solutions for my children because I want them
to study and to show my kids that they can do better. The principal said she was
sorry. It wasn’t going to happen again. Later it happened with another boy. He
was playing with the kid, and he told my son to go back where he was from, and
he broke my son’s hat. They were going to pay for the hat, but they never did. When those problems happened, I always go to school, and when my son does something in the school they suspend my child for 2 or 3 days, like the time that the other boy hit my child. The hits were showing on his body, you could see it purple and we didn’t make up anything because you could see it. There was no solution because the kid that hit my son wasn’t suspended and it was something that I didn’t understand. We cannot defend ourselves because of the fear of us being illegal, and my complaints are worthless.

The parents also discussed the barriers their kids encounter with education because of their undocumented status. The fact that they are illegal means that high school is the last option for the children’s educational career. This leaves parents and children alike frustrated and disillusioned. Parent (father) Four shared his frustration, saying, “The kids in the schools have those resources, but, like the Peruvian guy, he can’t go further. Education is a resource that he needs, but because of immigration laws and our problems with citizenship, everything you learn in school is worthless because he wants to keep going, and he can’t, sometimes that is frustrating.” Parent (mother) One has experienced a similar sense of despair that, ironically, she chose to discuss when asked about her hopes for the future.

For my kids, perfect would be no problem coming here and no problem going there. Kids go to school and then High School and then the University, but that is not possible for Rojelio because he isn’t legal, and this is a little bit scary and I would like to tell the president that maybe it can’t be that way for everyone, but for the students because maybe the times are changing.
While indicating that she did not feel immigration policy should be waived for everyone, she did feel it needs to be changed so that it doesn't limit the children.

The community professional indicated that she struggled internally with the concept of undocumented status, sharing a personal experience with a close friend making a trip to Mexico and returning to the US illegally.

Community Professional: When she had told me she was thinking about making the trip, I really didn’t say a lot; I had such mixed emotions on the whole trip.

Researcher: The legality of it?

Community Professional: Yeah, because I love being an American, and I love what we stand for, and when I look at these two families that I know, and I love, and I care so much about, my heart hurts when I think about them being illegal. And there are so many people that feel so strongly about the Mexican people being here. And when I focus not on the broad spectrum, but on the families that I know and love, I really want to defend them. And I am torn about them being illegal here. You understand?

She further explained the external struggle of convincing people to help and work with the families. “That’s right, and that’s where it has been a struggle, and as much as you communicate this, other people just can’t grasp the vision. And different people look at, too, how they feel about Hispanic people being here.” This understanding was also communicated by the parents, with Parent (mother) One explaining, “In this world some people are good, and some people are bad. And in this country, some people don’t like those of us that are illegal.” In the experiences of the community professional and
parents, citizenship status has played a significant role in how people interact with Mexican immigrants, often leading to fear, anxiety and frustration.

*Toilets to Mexico: Race and racismo.*

*Sometime Americans and African-Americans draw a line to the toilet and write that it is the tunnel to Mexico. They do that in the bathrooms. Parent Four*

The issues of race and racism contribute to the fear and anxiety that inhibit the interaction of Mexican immigrant families in partnerships. Through the interviews it became clear that race and racism are viewed very differently among participants. For the educators, race and racism were discussed, but only in terms of their being non-issues in partnerships in the Jonesville Community. Educator Four stated succinctly, “As far as the classroom, I don’t think it impacts,” to which Educator Two firmly agreed, “No, they are either interested in what is going on with their child, or they are not. I don’t think it really matters what the race might be.” The fact that there are no Latina/o teachers in the school was introduced by Educator One, who felt that this also was not an impediment to the participation of Mexican immigrant families.

We don’t have any adults or teachers that are from that population that teach or do anything. I think every teacher out here is so willing, though, to communicate with those people.

Asking the educators to reflect on the impact of race in family-school-community partnerships was troubling to them, prompting disequilibrium among members of the group. Reflecting this disequilibrium, Educator Two exclaimed, “That question has got me baffled because I don’t think race, the language barrier more than ethnicity.” She further explained that in consideration of race, “We don’t care, but if you can’t speak
English, then there is the barrier.” The group fell silent for a moment, and then the conversation moved on. Later, in another interview, Educator One reflected on this earlier discussion and stated, “We think we know it all, but we will never know it all, not even in a lifetime. And you know that is so true; never judge. But we do; it’s human nature.”

The parents felt much differently about the role of race and racism. Parent (mother) Three shared a personal experience she had at the school with her daughter. Another example is when my daughter lost her book because while switching classes they called them for lunch and she left her book there. Now it disappeared, and she tells me to write her a note for the teacher so all the kids will help her to find the book. We are into it but I don’t have much time and she told me that her teacher told her that why she had to leave the book there and she tells me that her teacher is not too friendly with her.

When questioned as to why she believed the teacher was unfriendly, she offered two reasons, the first being her undocumented status and the second being, “Because she is Hispanic.” Parent (father) Four shared that this happens sometimes in this country, “it has happened, being ignored or treated differently, either because of the race, color or for not having papers.” He went on to share an experience he had with a friend at a hospital emergency room.

Like a racism act. I have a friend that got into an accident, and he went to the hospital at 3 p.m. and they wouldn’t take care of him quickly. He wasn’t really bad and he got out at 3 a.m. He said he was really bad, and they wouldn’t take
him quickly, that is a racism act. I think that is because we are from a different race.

The group shared his frustration, and he went on to say, “Sometime Americans and African-Americans draw a line to the toilet and write that it is the tunnel to Mexico. They do that in the bathrooms.”

Parent (mother) Three tied these community incidents to incidents in the school. “Sometimes similar things happen at schools.” Considering incidents of racism at school encouraged Parent (mother) One to share her experiences with her son.

Especially the children, sometimes I tell Rojelio that these people are no good, I think sometimes it comes from the parents talking about people being black or white, and the children listen and say I don’t like these people because they are black or white...Sometimes little boys or little girls tell my son that he is no good, or his skin color is no good, but it is just sometimes. They may say to him that he looks like dirt.

When questioned about her hopes for family-school-community partnerships, Parent (mother) Three asserted, “I think we all should be equal, and there should not be any problem (in partnerships) if someone speaks English.”

Unfortunately, in the experience of the community professional, Mexican immigrants are not treated equally at this time. She explained that race separates people, and there is little interaction between the groups as a result. Consequently, people are not aware of needs and don’t feel a sense of responsibility for meeting the needs of other groups. Her personal experience illustrates this separation as a result of race.
Right, and that makes such a difference, you know; we live in the south, and there's some predominate things. There's some good things and negative and how we feel about groups of people and six years ago, if you said I would be working with the Hispanic families, I would have said, and back it up fifteen years with children's ministries, I would have said, you know, and I never saw the aspect of ministering to African American children; I always ministered to white children. And how that opened up, I was aware of a need for African American children to hear about Jesus.

Ultimately, the theme of race emerged from the participants' discussion, though it carried a different significance for each group. From the explanations of the participants, it emerged that race significantly impacts people's perceptions of immigrants and subsequently immigrants' involvement in family-school-community partnerships.

Interaction and caring.

Right, right. And as I say, it worked out from the very beginning for Maria because of meeting Sherylinda at the Head Start, and that still could have been a whole different story if she met a lady that hadn't cared. And because she cared, that could have been two more families that fell through the cracks like so many others. It's a matter of information and interaction, like I said earlier, and because I believe so much in the Lord, doing this and directing our paths like her walking through that door at just the right time, with just the right person there, you know. The right person that cared, because Sherylinda just cared, you know.

Community Professional
The importance of interaction, as introduced in the previous section, emerged as an intensely important theme pervading all of the discussions with participants. However, it is important to note that educators typically discussed the importance of interaction as a function of separation and isolation, two issues that evolved into themes appreciably unique and separate from the theme of interaction and caring.

The community professional highlighted the importance of personal interaction early in the interview process, contrasting the impact of direct personal interaction with indirect (i.e. notes sent home) interaction.

I think, you know, there is one thing to be said about the notes and things being sent home from school, but I think it's more the real interaction of person to person that can make a difference, but I know that that is not always easy for teachers to make sure they are seeing the children that are struggling and suggesting programs. And I think the school does a wonderful job sending home notes about programs available, but especially for the Hispanic families, not being able to read it or understand it, then it doesn't mean anything to them. I know through personal interaction it makes a bigger difference.

Moreover, she firmly linked personal interaction with caring.

And I think the thing that can make a difference is if someone else shows an interest in your child. In Jonesville I think things began to happen for these two families because someone began to care. Because I was a step-in person or Marianna was a step in person, someone began to show interest.

Parent (mother) One also linked caring with interaction, sharing her story of how she came to know the community professional.
Yes, but when I worked, it was hard for me, because people all the time say, “I need people that speak English,” and Rojelio was in daycare, a long time ago, when the Lighthouse was still there and the lady, you know, Mrs. Sherylinda and other ladies, and I said, “can you please help Rojelio and I will pay extra money, not only for daycare, but for reading,” and they helped Rojelio in reading and I was speaking no English at that time. McDonald’s was my school. But, you know, these nice ladies helped me, helped Rojelio.

Her story clearly illustrates the power of caring and connection. Through her interactions with individuals in her community, she was able to secure services for her son and participate in her son’s education. Parent One’s experience was also discussed by the Community Professional.

And, as I say, it worked out from the very beginning for Maria because of meeting Sherylinda at the Head Start, and that still could have been a whole different story if she met a lady that hadn’t cared. And because she cared, that could have been two more families that fell through the cracks like so many others. It’s a matter of information and interaction, like I said earlier, and because I believe so much in the Lord, doing this and directing our paths, like her walking through that door at just the right time, with just the right person there, you know. The right person that cared, because Sherylinda just cared, you know.

The importance of interactions between members of the community on partnerships is also demonstrated by the explanation of Educator Four, “Well, almost just like if they see other parents, or the involvement of other parents, they will feel more
open and welcome to become involved.” Throughout the discussions of the participants, the importance of caring and interaction emerged as notably important.

*Open in the Middle of a Plate of White Rice: Separation and Isolation*

*When there are trips or events, when the kids go to the beach, there are few Hispanic parents that go. The majority of parents are Americans, and my kids tell me that almost every parent goes and will I go too. I go, but I am a little afraid. I go not with fear but also not with the security that I would like to have.*

*Sometimes when I go to the trips with my child, the youngest one, when I go I ride the bus, and the other Hispanic children go by themselves, so sometimes I feel like a bean in the middle of a plate of white rice. Parent One*

The importance of interaction contrasts dramatically with the reality experienced by Mexican immigrant families in the Jonestown community. Over the course of the interviews, a picture of separation and isolation, poignantly illustrated through one parent’s description of feeling “like a bean in the middle of a plate of white rice” (Parent One), began to emerge and solidify into a distinct theme. It became clear that Mexican immigrants experience distinct separation and isolation, which impacts their perceptions of self-worth and ability to be involved in partnerships.

Educator Two expounded upon her personal experience of feeling separate and out-of-place in response to an invitation to a celebration for her housekeeper’s son, providing the first glimmer of the stark separation that exists between these families and the rest of the community, “I didn’t want to show up and have everyone go, (Gasping), “What is SHE doing here?” if that wasn’t the point of the invitation. I didn’t know where my place was.” The other educators shared Educator Two’s uncertainty, remarking that
they, too, would have felt uncomfortable attending an event hosted by a Mexican immigrant family. In response to Educator Two’s sharing of her personal experience, Educator One shared an experience she had with her mother.

When my mother was living, she owned a trailer park, and she had several Hispanic people who would come to pay the rent, and I would be there, and she would say, “Come on in,” and they would shake their head no. They would not come in the front door... You could see it on their face, “We will not cross that boundary. Educator One

Educator Two continued to discuss her experiences with social boundary and separation between groups, explaining that although she has invited her housekeeper to have lunch with her family, the woman is uncomfortable with the interaction, and, at times, the educator has felt somewhat uncomfortable, too. “And, like, I even asked one time, she’ll bring uhmm, she brought one time some kind of authentic Mexican food, and it was wrapped in corn husks and baked and tied up with string, and I was a little apprehensive to eat that stuff, and I’m sure that she’d be a little apprehensive to eat our stuff too.” Even through this small example of the difference in foods eaten by different cultures, it is evident that great distance exists between the groups.

This distance translates into discomfort and feelings of loneliness and isolation for the parents. Feeling isolated and separate from others increases the fear and anxiety with which parents approach involvement in family-school-community partnerships, as evidenced by the following experience shared by Parent (mother) One.

When there are trips or events, when the kids go to the beach, there are few Hispanic parents that go. The majority of parents are Americans, and my kids tell
me that almost every parent goes, and will I go, too. I go, but I am a little afraid. I go not with fear but also not with the security that I would like to have.

Sometimes when I go to the trips with my child, the youngest one, when I go, I ride the bus, and the other Hispanic children go by themselves, so sometimes I feel like a bean in the middle of a plate of white rice.

The parents also discussed how doubly difficult it is to feel isolated in a community after having been closely embraced by others in the communities in which they lived in Mexico. “In Mexico we see many families walking in the streets. They say, “Hi” or ask about our day and our kids; here there is none of that” (Parent (father) Two). Parent (mother) Three shared this feeling, “It is different because in Mexico you are with your family; they speak your language, and many people talk to you. You have many friends.” This separation manifested as loneliness in the experience of Parent (father) Four, “We feel lonely and sad. It is no good to ride down the road or walk in a store and never anyone speaks to you.” Educator One described trying to reach out to a Mexican immigrant mother and her perception that there is not enough of an effort made to reach out and interact, and, as such, parents feel as they are not accepted by the majority population.

I had talked to her by the high school, and, of course, all the people were lined up. Well, she comes up with her three children and stands over by a house, you know, by herself with the four children and commences to watch the parade. Well I got out of my car and marched right over and threw back the blanket and said “Let me see this pretty thing, but, you know, it looked like she would come and stand with the whole line of people; you know what I am saying? I looked at
the baby and just came back over. But it is like they don’t know if we accept them. Educator One

This perception seems supported by Parent (father) Two who interjected, “In Mexico most of the neighbors talk to you, but here it is different,” and Parent (father) Four, who shared, “It would be better. In Mexico people are friendlier; here you know only a few people, or if you have American friends, they can’t even see you or don’t see you.” Parent (mother) Three disputed that this was always the case, “Not everyone, because there are good and friendly people here, too.” The community professional stated that she feels the parents have made efforts to be involved.

They have really tried to be a part of the community, as much as they are allowed to be. You know we have a racial thing in this area. Whether you’re African American or Hispanic, there is a racial thing in this area that we deal with. And that, I have a difficult time with that, you know I really do.

Unfortunately, it appears that separation between the races strongly impacts family-school-community partnerships, as reflected by the experience of Parent One.

I think it is just people that speak English, for the people that speak Spanish it is not much participation. For me it is easy; I go on trips where you talk to your child and a little bit to the teachers, like I go to the beach; I go to little Washington to see the movies, and I participate a little, but I didn’t see any Spanish people.

Feeling isolated and alone limits efforts by other parents to get involved. Parent (mother) Three explained that she does not go because “sometimes I am a little bit scared.” The
community professional also shared her observations of children feeling isolated and separated from their classmates at school.

And I know one particular afternoon when I was there, I was watching one Hispanic child sitting by herself, and she looked so sad, and I never saw anyone, not another student, not another teacher, walk over and say “Do you need some help?” That may have been a unique day, but it made me wonder just how much help she was getting.

The educators observed that this separation and isolation are less prevalent at the earlier grades, but become more pervasive and debilitating as children get older.

Educator One: They are all together there (in first grade); now they don’t really; girls, guys, blacks, white, Hispanic, they are all together.

Researcher: Now what do you think influences that change? You taught third grade for years, what encourages that shift in the children?

Educator One: I think it is imposed on them from home.

Educator Four: I think it is an awareness, they mature enough, and I think it is just an awareness.

Educator One: I think once they get in school, birthday parties, and they start picking and choosing, and it’s sort of just imposed on them.

The feeling that the separation among children is related to the beliefs of the parents was reflected in Educator Two’s concern:

Well that is the way Ani is, but I know some of them, you know, the girls; when they have a birthday party, they invite everyone over, and I don’t know if when
they have a birthday party, are they inviting Ani over? And with the boys, are they inviting Hector and Rojelio?

The separation and isolation at school and in the community are also troubling for the parents, in part, due to their belief that through interaction with others in the community, children develop the basic knowledge they need for life.

The parents must show the kids. The family and the community teach the kids the values and the basic knowledge. And the history and the math, they get from the school. The basic knowledge is respect, communication, all for being a good person. In the community they learn the communication and how to be social and work with other people. They learn the values at home, and then they put it into practice in the community, and at school they learn the books and the knowledge. But not here, here they stay in the house all the day long and do not visit or talk with anyone. Parent Two

This is a stark difference from the experience of the families when they lived in Mexico. In the little towns in Mexico everybody knows each other, and they talk, and they play. And every afternoon, the guys go and play together. Over here it is a little different. For us on the weekends, we stay in, or we go out, and it is only us and our friends. There is not much communication. The people just think different. People just stay separate. In Mexico, we have the game field right in the middle of the town, and all the peoples go and play there and see each other there. We’ve even got the dogs and the donkeys there. The game field is something that ties everybody together, but in Jonesville it is over there by the cemetery. Only the dead people!
The disparity between the experiences in Mexico and the experiences in the US is sharply apparent through this father’s perception that even the dead know more about what is going on in the community than do Mexican immigrant families.

*They never really formed a bond: Isolation and anxiety.*

*They never really formed a bond. Educator One*

Feeling separated and isolated manifests as anxiety and stunted academic achievement for the children. Consequently, within the US Case emerged a sub-theme within the theme of *A Bean in the Middle of a Plate of White Rice: They never really formed a bond.* Within this sub-theme are encompassed experiences of students as expressed by teachers, observations by the community professional and worries shared by parents.

In the initial focus group interview with the educators, Educator Two shared that one of her former students had severe anxiety at the beginning of the year.

And the lady explained to me that Roberto, it was due to anxiety, and that’s why his stomach was hurting and that every year it was a repeating thing. But I was worried about him, that he was really sick. And he was nervous about coming to school. She said he goes through it every year.

While discussing this student’s experience, the group came to the conclusion that it is very difficult for the students to feel separate and isolated from their home culture while in school, and that this often manifests as anxiety. The following conversation illustrates this process.
Educator Two: Well, for number one, there aren’t many of them! I wonder if they’re feeling?... And his English is good, too. How long has Roberto been here?

Educator Three: He’s been here for awhile.

Educator Two: Yeah and maybe…it was a long summer too. Maybe being with his culture all summer and talking their language because his mother doesn’t speak English.

Educator Three: Well, maybe that’s the problem with that fourth grader. There’s a fourth grader who has been in years past, he has had no problems. I mean a top-of-the-line student and this year it is stomach problems all the time.

Educator Two: But three months of living in your culture and then having to come back to school to a new grade level.

Educator Three: And being attached to family…

Educator Two: Yeah, because their families are very close!

Educator One: And a peer group that accepted them.

Educator Two: He kept getting sick on his stomach, and I had to call the Smith woman, and then I talked to another lady, and she said he had this every year, that it was his nerves, and he was nervous about coming back to school, but I know with the ones that I have, the Hispanic children, they tend to isolate themselves. They group together.

The perception that the children group together and isolate themselves appeared to be consistent across the group of educators, with Educator Two explaining that two of the boys she currently had in her classroom, “You don’t really see them mingling with
other people.” Educator One agreed with this, interjecting, “They never really formed a bond.” Educator Two described the boys’ typical daily interactions.

And they are both sweet boys; they really are, and it is more that Hector is really quiet, and Rojelio is really outspoken. I know when we line up for the bathrooms, Hector is always at the back and Rojelio hangs back to be with him and when we go to lunch, Hector goes to his book bag to get his money, and Rojelio follows him and they get in the back of the line.

Educator Three described her belief that the boys felt comfortable with each other because it feels good to find someone like oneself, stating, “That gives him somebody to hang with, to click into that is more like him.”

The community professional shared her concerns over the isolation and anxiety the children experience, due to interactions or a lack thereof with their peer group.

A big issue we talked about was the children not making friends. They had their Mexican friends, but not here, you know; that was a big concern of mine, and I felt like some of these other things that were manifesting themselves and showing up we would at least began to handle, not eliminate, and that was one of the biggest things we were trying to work with, because you know friends are important. And, you know, they (the teachers) said they have this person as a friend and I said, “No, you know what I am talking about; as a friend you come home with me and I come home with you,” and I knew that was not happening with those Mexican children.

She further described the impact this separation of their children from other children had on the parents.
It is, it is, and, as I said, she wants her children to be a part and fit in, and you always want your children to be a part and fit in and not be the ones that never fit in and are never a part. And it's bad to be in a circumstance or an event when you have never been a part or fit in.

The parents discussed the impact the separation had on their children by emphasizing that since they were isolated from others in the community, they, as parents, did not know how to get their children involved with others or when their children should have been involved, as discussed earlier under the overarching theme of separation and isolation.

Respect.

*Having a real respect for these people who are in our country trying to make a better life for themselves and their children, I respect them for that, you know. That has got to be very hard to step into a whole different culture, a whole different language, everything, you know. The only thing we have in common is that we are men, women, boys or girls, and that's it, you know. So that has been interesting to me.*  

Community Professional

Intertwined with discussions of separation and isolation was the sometimes overt and sometimes implied role of respect. Respect and the lack of respect for some populations is at once pervasive in society and difficult to discuss openly. Educator Two exhibited this inner conflict when she shared the following information:

We’re going to have to respect each other, and I don’t think, though, that it’s that we don’t...I don’t know, (emphatically) I shouldn’t say that because I was going to say that it’s not that we don’t respect them, but I have heard it come out of people of my own race that they have no respect for Mexicans. You know, and I
HATE THAT. And even with students in my class, they’ll say, “Well, that’s a job for Mexicans; they’re the ones working in the field.” And that bugs me to no end, and I wonder if they’re so used to hearing that type of stuff at home and even Mexican families—if they’re so used to hearing, it that they’re not reaching out and trying to attain more.

While she felt uncomfortable and struggled initially stating it directly, she also felt strongly that the lack of respect afforded to Mexican families impacted their perceptions of their own self-worth.

The notion that disrespect impacts sense of self was supported by other educators. “And I know a lot of people, I talk for myself, but I know a lot of people probably treat them cruel... So you have to be open minded about this culture of people; it’s no telling about the people they encounter and the people that snub them. It affects their self worth,” stated Educator One. When asked about his hopes for the future, Parent (father) Four focused on respect, “Have others to respect my job, my work, with that all is good.” Another parent admonished him saying, “That is too little!” “No,” stressed Parent Four, “that is enough for me, that they respect me and my job. Because sometimes in my job there is not equality.” It is not only at work that these families have experienced disrespect. Parent (mother) One described feeling disrespect in her interchange with her son’s teacher at the school. Her son was struggling at school, and she had attended many meetings with the teacher. Though the mother professed spending each afternoon helping her sons with their homework and reading, the teacher “would call the parents and ask us why we didn’t show up. She would also tell us that the kids were doing their homework by themselves, and she was not right. We were helping!!” The community professional...
who also attended the meetings described the experience as “degrading and frustrating” for the parents who were “very concerned about their child.”

The educators also addressed the role played by respect in family-school-community partnerships.

Well, I was just thinking of the partnership with the parents. They have to respect our way of educating their children. So having a good partnership, a strong partnership with them, would help to establish that. I mean, in talking with this parent, she had respect for both, I think…They would see that we can respect them for who they are. Educator Two

Educator Two’s understanding of respect as a facilitative condition for partnerships was solidly supported by the parents, who professed that when shown respect, they are able to more successfully interact with the school. “And we, the parents, would go with more confidence and in that way we could support the school, and we will not be afraid of them seeing us as inferior,” explained Parent (mother) One. Feelings of inferiority stemming from experiencing disrespect and feeling devalued also played a prominent role in discussions of respect. “They are taking the lower jobs, and they feel somehow inferior, I think, sometimes. So, I think a stronger partnership would help them to feel better and not as inferior” (Educator Two). “I think it is not right because a lot of us can’t speak English or read it, and when we have a problem at school, we don’t have the confianza—confidence?—to go over there and ask for something. We feel like we are less important, like our points of view are less important,” shared Parent (father) Two.

Demonstrating respect helped parents to feel more comfortable and more supported as they sought to join and engage in partnerships. Parent (mother) One shared
an example of a small effort made by a teacher that helped her to feel important and involved. “One day I took some tamales out to the school, and a little boy said something and the teacher said, “No it is Mrs. Castillo,” and it is a little thing, but it made me feel good” (Parent One). Just addressing her formally and prompting the child to be respectful helped this parent to feel as if the teacher valued her contribution. The community professional explained with great intensity why she feels respect for the Mexican immigrant population is so necessary.

Having a real respect for these people who are in our country trying to make a better life for themselves and their children, I respect them for that, you know. That has got to be very hard to step into a whole different culture, a whole different language, everything, you know. The only thing we have in common is that we are men, women, boys or girls, and that’s it, you know. So that has been interesting to me.

From the discussion of all the participants, respect emerged as playing a critical role in ending the separation isolation experienced by Mexican immigrants.

*I felt a little scared: The power of fear*

*Oh the first time I felt a little scared trying to read the books or the notes, and I think Angelica was the same. Parent One*

Another factor that emerged as contributing to the persistence of isolation and separation was fear. The sub-theme of fear permeated each interview with participants in the US, though it often took different forms, highlighting at times difference and discrimination as being the roots of fear. In discussing her introduction to education in the US through her children’s entrance into the public school system, Parent (mother)
One expressed her feelings, “Oh, the first time I felt a little scared trying to read the books or the notes, and I think Angelica was the same.” Parent (mother) Three whole-heartedly agreed, professing continued fear about her abilities to help and support her children.

The community professional further elaborated upon all aspects of the unknown as being an inducer of fear, “And I was so scared the first time they (the immigrant families) were coming to the church, but the unknown is always scary.” She continued this discussion.

I remember how afraid I was when they first were coming to the church; I told Sherylinda, “I just don’t know how you think this is going to work,” and she said “don’t worry about it; it will work.” And she had already been in a place where she had started making relationships, and it is very scary. But the unknown is always that way. And I always tell the kids it’s easy to do, and I say, “Everything is easy once you know how to do it.”

The educators also discussed the fear of the unknown. Their discussion began with a focus on societal perceptions of the Mexican immigrant population. They described encountering groups of men, whom they perceived to be Mexican immigrants, in the grocery store.

Educator Two: Yeah, and so I think maybe it is due to work schedules, lack of transportation or whatever, and sometimes when you don’t know that culture, I know as a White woman, I do feel uncomfortable when there is a whole bunch of maybe people that have been working in the field or out in the log woods.
Educator One: When they’re a walking and a grinning and a talking, and you can’t understand it.

Educator Two: I know!

Agreement from the group

Educator One: Body language (Raising Eyebrows)

Educator Four: Sometimes its scary.

Upon being questioned as to whether they felt this way when encountering groups of young European American or African American men, the group responded quickly and emphatically. “I think we are used to it, like Rita said” (Educator Two). “I don’t notice it; I don’t notice it” (Educator Four). “Yeah, it’s different” (Educator Three).

Educator One asserted, “But the reason that we don’t notice it is because we know what they are saying. The language is not... We don’t know what these...” Agreement was unanimous from the group about this assertion. They felt strongly that not knowing and not being able to understand, as in the words of Educator Two, “What are they saying? What are they thinking? And what does that look mean? Oh, that’s a joke against me!”

The group sat quietly for a minute and then the discussion continued.

Educator Three: You just don’t know; you just don’t know.

Educator Two: And to me that’s scary!

Educator One: And they might not be saying a thing about us.

Educator Three: They might not be! We don’t know! (Laughing.)

Educator One: That’s it, we just don’t know!

A powerful fear of the unknown and difference clearly manifested as mistrust and distance, as shared by the educators and the parents. The community professional shared
her personal experience with overcoming her fear of the unknown in an effort to help others.

But it’s one of the things that concerns me, and I think that a lot of people that are where we are at, a lot of it comes out of fear, the not knowing, and not knowing how to cross that. As I said, I’ve kind of been put into places, like when I started working with African American children, my pastor said, “I believe this is what we are meant to do,” and I believed (we) meant (me), and I was the one that stepped off that bus, and I was the one that interacted with those kids. My grandkids and I always talk about this, like it’s no big deal, it’s easy to do, and I always say to them, “Anything you know how to do, it’s always easy. It’s when you don’t that comes the fear.” Even raised in the south, raised with African American people, my dad brought me up understanding that they have their place and you have your place, and it is not here together; it is here and here, you know. And then my dad didn’t teach me this, but society itself when the Mexican people came here it was here and here, and because of the language barrier, and no one I knew was willing to step into that to see how we can help each other and benefit each other and get to know each other. Until I was put into this place again, mine have always come out of ministry because that is just my life and who I am, but I’m so glad that it has because after I walked into this, then I got past that fear.

According to the participants, as long as individuals within society do not attempt to overcome the fear of difference, fear will continue to serve as a barrier to involvement and interactions between groups, perpetuating the present separation and isolation experienced by Mexican immigrants.
Aren't Out There All Alone: The Need for Support

It does you know, when they aren't feeling like they are out there all alone, like
doing the thing of the after school program of parents feeling like they are not
fighting the battle alone, that there is someone doing what they can do and saying
we care. So I think it is the awareness, communication and caring, because
everyone needs to know someone cares about them. Past your own mom and dad,
that there are people that do care. Community Professional

The necessity of challenging the fear that arises from difference is accompanied
by the need to provide consistent, caring support to families who are seeking to engage in
partnerships. Support and the utility of support in engaging those who are isolated and
separate were first introduced by the educators in a discussion of the isolation children
sometimes experience in a classroom in which they are the only Latino students. “You
know, I think we ought to look at in the future, when we put children in classes to have
them a partner” (Educator One). Her idea was firmly supported by Educator Two, who
lauded the positive impact of students having paired, reflecting upon two boys in her
classroom:

We would do that with other races. And I know that Rojelio and Hector are like
that in my classroom. They are two peas in a pod; they go to the bathroom
together. They can’t line up…They sit with each other everyday at lunchtime.
They’ll both bring lunchboxes so they can be the first ones to sit down. That kind
of thing.

Educator Three also connected strongly with this idea.
You are absolutely right, though (to Rita). Instead of looking to see that you have a Hispanic child in every grade, you know, so you can say that that teacher—if we have three first grades and three Hispanic students, make sure that each teacher gets one. Instead of looking at it that way, look at the fact that they are trying to acclimate to society, and they need each other.

Following Educator Three's suggestion of pairing students, Educator Four exclaimed, “That’s a good thought!”

The Community Professional observed that parents and children both experience fears and loneliness, feelings that can be abated through connections and caring.

When they aren’t feeling like they are out there all alone, like doing the thing of the after-school program, of parents feeling like they are not fighting the battle alone, that there is someone doing what they can do and saying we care. So I think it is the awareness, communication and caring, because everyone needs to know someone cares about them. Past your own mom and dad, that there are people that do care.

Parent (mother) One poignantly expressed how it felt to have no support. “It is terrible when you have a problem, and you have no help, so you have to have some people that will help you.”

Educator Four insisted that providing support to isolated families would result in an overall increased unity for the community.

There would be more of a unitedness, I would think. I would guess everybody would be able to intermingle more or whatever and that type of thing and be able to share the cultures together, and, you know, their culture has some good aspects,
and ours does, too, and just intermingle more together. As far as if we are going to be put together, we might as well get along together and be more united.

Efforts to become more united through support for isolated families must be focused and intentional. The participants uniformly supported the need for increased exposure to culture and education for all parties involved in family-school-community partnerships. Educator Four stated matter-of-factly that the present situation was due to the fact that “neither of the cultures have had enough exposure to be able to interact.” Agreement from Educator Three was swift and intense. “It’s that WE need education into their culture because we don’t understand all the little things about them, just like they don’t understand all the little things about us.” The community professional professed a strong belief that exposure to culture and education could serve as an effective method of breaking down the barriers that led to the separation and isolation of Mexican immigrant students in school.

So that was a big concern of mine, and so I thought if you could do something like this to break down a barrier with the children, if you could do something to help them understand a little bit of culture of the Mexican children, you know, but they never took my ideas.

Educator Two also felt that education through a sharing of cultures could result in stronger connections.

I would think that other children, it’s always interesting to get to know another culture, and I would think that our American students to know what it is like, you know when you read a Social Studies book or watch a movie and they see someone from another culture, the way they celebrate Christmas or the way they
do this, they are always like, “What do they do for the tooth fairy?” or “What do they do for the Easter bunny?” You know, they all want to know about that kind of stuff. So I would think if we did have stronger partnerships and community involvement, I think people would really jump on board, just out of curiosity. Educator One concurred that curiosity could be used to spur interaction. “Well, I just think it would be interesting to study, to hear, like you say, about their way of life.”

All of the suggestions for support require that individuals step out of their comfort zone to learn about and share with others. According to the participants, through sharing and interacting come trust, knowledge and relationships. The Community Professional illustrated this process by sharing her personal experience.

And I think that is what makes a difference, that you can go outside of Jerusalem, you know, outside of your little scope, your little family, and you can start interacting with other people, I think it can change your perspective and your outlook on a lot of things, cause I said, it has me. I was raised by a father that said, “Black people have their place and you have your place,” and now, if I had only stayed in the scope of my dad saying that and his perspective, I wonder what my life would be today. Totally different I’m sure, but once I stepped outside of that, having respect for what my father taught me, opportunity began to open for me to put me in a place to interact with these different nationalities, changed my outlook because I didn’t just hear about these people, I began to know these people. The same as when you have a relationship with God, you can know and hear about Him, but then to know Him. And that’s the way it is with different people and different groups, knowing about them and then knowing them.
Through the perceptions of the participants, there emerged a clear and present need to support the Mexican immigrant population as they began to engage in family-school-community partnerships.

*You have to start with one spark.*

*It's like lighting the candle thing again; you have to start with one little spark to get the fire going. Community Professional*

The participants spent a great deal of time discussing the importance of interacting with and caring for one another. However, early in the interviews the educators explained that the “Hispanic population is small coming in here” (Educator Three). The size of the Mexican immigrant population seemed to warrant less of a focus on coordinating efforts to embrace the Latino community and more on addressing the needs in individual, specific situations, as evidenced by the following quote from Educator One: “Because our rates are sort of low, we can address each issue as it sort of arises.” The Community Professional explained that she felt this approach to partnerships is a good start, but must be built upon with plans for the future.

But if you have one child, then it is an issue because you have that one child that cannot understand and that the parents cannot understand. Because, Kylie, I work with children; I do little classes all the time, and they say, “Gosh, Mrs. Helen, we only have two kids today,” and I say, “I’m so glad we have two kids here today.” And that is one thing the Lord has helped me to do I can be excited if it is one child or two children or one hundred.

This positive approach to valuing her stakeholders allows the Community Professional to collaborate with families and children intentionally and respectfully. She is ever-aware of
the impact of collaboration and interaction for her community and world, as indicated by the following statement.

And so I can see that there is a need, whether it is one child or ten children in need. It's like lighting the candle thing again. You have to start with one little spark to get the fire going. I think it would benefit the community if we could all look at it like this: one child needs help, and we need to do something. Then when there are other children and other things that come along, I think you have done great things because you have made a start in saying that one is so important, that I will fight the fight and do whatever I need to do to help the child... I would fight the fight for one child.

Furthermore, the Community Professional shared her personal belief that respectful, intentional collaboration can begin with one small step, one small spark.

If you have no way to communicate, and there is a problem, and you still have one child, and finding the answer may not be easy, but if there is a problem then there is a problem and you still have a problem. And we need to find an answer, and we need to begin somewhere there has to be a solution somewhere. One person, one person can truly make a difference.

In every interview, she stressed powerfully the impact one person can have on relationships and change, sharing that she feels one person can set off a “revelation of knowledge.”

Yeah, well, that’s just basically it, and part of my thing about that is just not knowing what to do to fix it, other than to do my small part that I can do. And it’s
like lighting a candle, and I can be this one candle, and I can touch you, and you can touch, it can become revelation knowledge to them.

The educators and parents also concurred that one candle could provide energy to others, offering suggestions about the need for a liaison to facilitate interactions among families, the school and the community. “A transition person that can be between them and other working parents. Because a lot of it we may not be able to provide, or we may not be able to make a connection for families outside of the school” (Educator One).

Educator Two shared her experience with having worked with such an individual.

And I’ve been at schools before, like at Crestwood with Mary Lou, where they had a community partnership, and there was a person at the central office that was their job; they were always out taking pictures and keeping the community involved in the schools and to find somebody. Educator Two

Finally, the parents also felt a liaison would be helpful for getting parents involved and helping them to stay aware of school functions and information.

A lot of the kids know what they have, but they don’t say anything. I don’t know what happens in the schools; we are in the house and what we do is ask them what they did at school today. If they have homework, if the school has a message, they call us, and if we are not home, they leave a message, and they let us know what is going on. Something important that they could have is someone that could be in charge of that, someone that is bilingual who could explain us what are the plans of the school so we can help them more. Parent One
Across the board participant believed that every individual has the right to be included, and each person can make some small difference that helps others to be involved. One small spark can truly start a powerful flame.

*Please help me God: Barriers to partnerships*

*Each night I check their book bags, and sometimes I find little notes, written in Spanish, that say, “God, help me because my teacher says I’m no good. Please help me, God.” Parent One*

Just the same as one spark can start a flame, there are barriers that can snuff out the spark before it has a chance to flare. One person can serve to strengthen family-school-community partnerships, but one person can also serve to block the establishment of partnerships. Thus, in contrast to the sub-theme of one person serving positively, stands the sub-theme of one person debilitating partnership efforts. Parent One described efforts to work collaboratively with one of her children’s teachers. She explained that although she wanted to help and wanted to work with the teacher to discern solutions for the problems, the teacher was only negative, pointing out repeatedly the failures of her child.

I don’t know; you go to the school, and she told me what happened, and I asked, “What does Rojelio need?” and she said, “He needs to pay more attention and participate more.” And I say, “Please, Mrs. Helen, help us because I don’t speak enough English,” and the teacher would say, “He needs, he needs, he needs,” there’s just no solution. They say “your clothes are no good, your shoes are no good,” and it’s always the same. And for Rojelio, he gave up. He didn’t try, but this year it is okay, it is better. The teacher would say, “Rojelio is not reading”, all
the time “Rojelio is not reading”, but Rojelio IS reading and I’m right here and he reads for thirty minutes, I look at the time. And she said “uh uh (NO), Rojelio is not reading”, and I said “what happened? Rojelio has been reading at my house.” And she said “NO” and looking at the computer there is zero, zero, zero. And I am saying, “what happened?” And I say to Mrs. Helen, “PLEASE, I don’t know what happened with the books, or with the teacher but I know Rojelio is reading.”

Parent One

In this experience, the teacher’s approach to criticism and collaboration impeded the work of the partnership, leaving the parent feeling powerless and frustrated. When asked how this could have happened, Parent (mother) One replied, “I think maybe she didn’t believe me but I said, Mrs. Helen speaks English, for the parent teacher conference Mrs. Helen is there, if they call us in for homework Mrs. Helen is there.” She further expressed how this sense of powerlessness impacted her child.

Bad, It is no good. The boys spend all day in school and they feel like they are no good, and I feel like I’m no good for anybody. Rojelio feels like he is no good. Each night I check their bookbags and sometimes I find little notes, written in Spanish, that say “God help me because my teacher says I’m no good. Please help me God.” And this makes me feel bad and I told Mrs. Helen, “Mrs. Helen Rojelio needs help and I don’t know what to do, but he hides these little notes where no one but mama can find them. I don’t know what happened, I don’t know.”

The community professional also shared this experience from her standpoint.

I won’t call the teacher’s name but I was so exasperated when I went in for a conference and she was just tearing Rojelio down, “he had done this and he had
done this and he had done this” and all these things were wrong and I finally said
to her, and I called her by her precious name and I said “you little precious
blessing of the Lord I have listened to everything you have had to say and I just
have one question, is there anything good that you have to say about Rojelio, isn’t
there one thing good before we walk out of here?” And I said “he has the sweetest
smile, don’t you love his smile” and she said “his smile?” And I said “I believe in
discipline but I believe in keeping a balance” and I said “we can’t go out of here
when you can’t say one good thing about him.” And I said “if you sit here and
think all these meetings that I have been to that you sit here and say all these
negative things about him and its going to make a difference, you’re wrong,
you’re wrong, you’re wrong.” I don’t care how right you are, it’s the theology I
heard of someone a minister one time, you can be 90% right and still be wrong.
And I said that is you, “you’re 90% right but still wrong. Because you are not
helping him. And I am sitting here watching him cry because he sees no hope.
You have to give him some hope.”

The impact of hope and solutions also shown through clearly in the mother’s statement
that, “You know, I say about looking for solutions, the teacher found no solution but I
think maybe Mrs. Helen can and Mrs. Helen came and did” (Parent One). As evidenced
by the experience of the mother, if one person crushes out hope, partnership efforts stall
and falter.

Making Contact: Efforts to Positively Connect

And even the principal at the beginning of school she gave us the task of making
phone contact with every parent within the first two weeks of school, so I mean
even she has created opportunities for us to make contact and it had to be positive and I guess her thinking was it you make contact and its positive you might get them more involved in school. Educator Two

The school began this academic year with an intentional focus on increasing parental involvement. One of the first efforts in this initiative was an assignment by the principal that each teacher reach out through phone contact to positively connect with the parents.

And even Mrs. Barber at the beginning of school she gave us the task of making phone contact with every parent within the first two weeks of school, so I mean even she has created opportunities for us to make contact and it had to be positive and I guess her thinking was it you make contact and its positive you might get them more involved in school. Educator Two

The parents were pleasantly surprised by this effort. “I think we shocked all of Jonesville, but we have a big reaction about the calls, because we called and said something nice about their child” (Educator One). Educator One further explained, “I had some tell me ‘well you know I have never been called before’ and I said well I don’t reckon you have because your child is so good.” The continued constructive repercussions from making positive contact with parents was highlighted by the community professional.

Right if they could have some social events the parents could be invited to. Just by listening to Maria talk they are already intimidated because most of the time if they are called it is because something is wrong or if they need a conference.

That’s not good, it is not a good feeling. Community Professional

Educator Three supported the assertion by the community professional, stating
when the tables are turned and you have to make a not so positive call they have heard from you and know that you genuinely care about their children, so when you call and say well little Johnny is having a little bit of a problem you get more response from that parent. Educator Three

Other efforts to connect with parents, specifically with non-English speaking parents, are made more informally by individual teachers. Educator Two shared her personal efforts to connect with parents.

I made the mistake one time of getting a transcription dictionary and then trying to write something by trying to write something word for word. (Laughter) That doesn’t work. I mean I wasn’t aware of that, And this has been years ago. But I mean that even as teachers we are not aware of, other than getting someone that speaks fluent Spanish, of how they really even communicate really…

Educator Four also shared an example of an individual effort she was making to help her students connect with each other.

I’ve got one girl in my classroom that is Hispanic and from the Book Fair I got this little booklet thing that has crossword puzzles and it’s got English and Spanish words and teaching those and I’ve been doing that with them and they have been so excited, I teach Math but still it is something I felt like it would be good for them to have and they have been so excited about that and Rina (the girl) has been telling some things and sharing some thoughts and ideas on that.

Educator Four

Thus, it became apparent that teachers formulate ways both formally and informally to connect with parents and students.
Interpretation and Summary of US Case

Across the spectrum of participant discussions emerged seven themes, five of which were accompanied by sub-themes. The themes began with an effort by participants to define and clarify the meaning of family-school-community partnerships and was coded as Allies in the Education of Children. Participants all expressed similar beliefs concerning the importance of connections and relationships, as well as similar discouragement concerning the current lack of such relationships. The participants demonstrated strong commitment and agreement to the importance of every member of the partnership working together for the benefit of the children. This commitment is tempered by participants’ perceptions of the language barrier as an impediment to partnership efforts. The language barrier appears to be intricately related to the current status of relationships. The discomfort and feelings of inferiority experienced by participants in relation to the language barrier are expressed in the sub-theme of Embarrassing. The sub-theme of Responsibility focuses on the perceptions of educators that parents and families must be responsible for traversing the distance between languages. The parents echoed this sense of responsibility. Of note is the singular assertion by the community specialist that the language barrier is simply a barrier, not a stop-point, and as such can be overcome by the power of the relationship, emphasizing that the relationship is the responsibility of all parties involved.

The participants felt strongly about the role of parents in partnerships, reflected by the theme: They Just Trust Us With Their Children. Within this theme, the educators’ perceptions of the parents as willing partners who are unaware of how to be involved rose to the forefront of the conversation. Parents echoed the educators’ belief that they, as
parents, are unaware of how to be involved and as such, there needs to be increased communication between the school and the home. All participants concurred that all parties must be involved for partnerships to be successful.

A sub-theme falling under the umbrella of the role of parents was introduced as: Involved in Their Children’s Lives. Parents are unwavering in their commitment to be involved in their children’s lives, no matter the barrier. Educators recognized and commended this commitment, as did the Community Professional. Furthermore as a benefit of strong partnerships, educators felt respect between the parents and the school would develop, serving to support the parents’ continued involvement in their children’s lives. Reflective of parental involvement is increased involvement by the children according to the participants, as noted in the sub-theme: Kids Get More Involved. Access in the Community, another sub-theme, emerged as linked with a parent’s role in family-school-community partnerships, with access in the community increasing with involvement.

With so many benefits directly linked to family-school-community partnerships, why are partnerships with Latino families rare in this community? Through the discussion it emerged that there are many factors impacting partnerships, as indicated by the theme of Awareness and the Fear Factor: Entities Impacting Partnerships. Fear of change and fear of difference surfaced as the main deterrent to partnership efforts. All participants discussed the impact of fear. Furthermore, the participants linked the lack of strong relationships solidly with other factors, including socioeconomic status, citizenship and racism. They focused on the role of socioeconomic status and its role in
dividing the community in the sub-theme of Income: Socioeconomic Status and Resources.

Citizenship status and racism were significant topics of focus in every discussion with the parents and the community professional, but were much less prominent in the discussions of the educators. This difference is significant in light of the marginalization of the Latino population by US society. Because We are Here Illegally is a sub-theme focused on the role of citizenship status on partnerships. The educators expressed the belief that undocumented status generates fear that impedes parents’ efforts to get involved. The parents and the community professional eloquently described the effect citizenship status has on people’s relationships with Mexican immigrants. In the sub-theme labeled Toilets to Mexico: Race and Racismo, parents powerfully expressed the impact of racism on their lives and their participation in the community.

The failure of the educators to include a specific focus on the impact of racism as a focus for educators stands in devastatingly stark contrast with the experiences shared by the parents. The final sub-theme related to factors impacting partnerships is Interaction and Caring. In this sub-theme, participants described the magnitude of caring in determining the strength of family-school-community partnerships.

Caring and interaction emerged as ultimate necessities. Unfortunately, the theme of A Bean in the Middle of a Plate of White Rice reflects the separation and isolation experienced by Mexican immigrants in the small community under study. Parents expressed loneliness and the community professional and educators expressed their perceptions of the need for increased involvement between parties to end the isolation.
For students, this isolation manifests as anxiety, as discussed in the sub-theme, They Never Really Formed a Bond. Latina/o students are perceived by educators as keeping themselves separate from the group, while parents and the community professional perceived the children as been excluded from the group by others, which manifests in loneliness and anxiety. This is very troubling for the participants and all turned to the power of respect (sub-theme) in battling this separation and isolation. Personal efforts to breakdown the separation are often scary for people according to participants. This perception emerges as the sub-theme, I Felt a Little Scared: The Power of Fear.

The participants discussed ways to overcome the fear that separates groups in society. From this discussion, it became clear that all participants feel there is a significant need for support. Aren’t Out There All Alone is the theme addressing the need for support. Subsumed by this overarching theme, the sub-theme of You Have to Start With One Spark, came from the explanation of the difference that can be made from one person who cares. The community professional felt especially strongly that even one person can make a difference through his or her personal efforts.

The parents and the community professional also shared an experience demonstrating the damage one person can do to partnership efforts, an experience from which emerged the sub-theme labeled Please Help Me God: Barriers to Partnerships. Finally, the concluding theme was Making Contact: Efforts to Positively Connect. Participants shared formal and informal efforts to build and strengthen connections between family, school and community, rooted in and reflective of beliefs espoused in earlier themes.
Case Two: Mexico

The participants for Case Two included three teachers and the director (principal) in the professional educators' focus group, four mothers and one father from four families in the parents' focus group and a community service professional who works with a governmental program, DIF. The families all have family members who have immigrated to North Carolina from their small town in the state of Veracruz in Mexico. The interviews were all held in the home of a prominent community leader in the town, with most participants walking to the interview from their homes. The educators arrived by walking from the school.

The structure and process of the interviews in Mexico were much different than the interviews that occurred in the US, with the exception of the focus group sessions with Mexican immigrant parents. Much more time was spent discussing current community business and family affairs. In general there was a stronger focus on the relationships among group participants, manifesting a greater quantity of what would be deemed 'small talk' in the US. Consequently, much of this information was not related to the specific foci of the research and will not be included in this chapter's presentation of themes. Paradoxically, this difference in process holds great significance for family-school-community partnerships with Mexican immigrant families in the US. This difference will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. It is also important to note that themes emerged much more cohesively within this case, leading to a strong relationship and even some overlap between themes and sub-themes. This relationship will also be discussed more in-depth in chapter five.
The significant themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of the MX case were:

Table 4.2
MX Themes

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Sub-themes in italics

*Every Person in the Community Must Help: The Structure of Partnerships*

*Every person in the community must help!* Educator One

As the participants discussed family-school-community partnerships, it became clear that all of the participants felt that the total participation of the community is necessary for the children to get the best education and for the community to be most successful. Educator One introduced the imperative need for all groups to work together, stating, “In the schools the association of the parents has to meet to see how they can work together and it will reflect on the kids.” Parent One conceded, “It takes everybody in the community.” Educator One stated, “It works to benefit our children.” The parents

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defined family-school-community partnerships, stressing the importance of unity and investment. “The community supports the institutions, the families. We support the education so all of the children have a better education that’s why always the institutions and the families work together. Everybody! Always!” (Parent Five). Parent Four heartily agreed, “Yes as Viktor said we must work together so our children will have a better education.” Educator Two Affirming Parent Four’s belief, Educator One exclaimed, “Every person in the community must help!” However, the onus of responsibility for initiating and facilitating this collaboration lies on the shoulders of the educators according to Educator One.

Therefore goals for short and long term are presented, but we have to begin with a culture of inviting and involving the parents with us as the teachers. For us to change the parents’ mind we have to find a sensible spot and start getting along with family problems. Us knowing the familiar problems makes it easier to think and plan how we can help to reach the result that we want. If the parent doesn’t express their problems we can’t help. So we can understand why the kid behaves in that way and the parent also needs to have some cultural involvement. Educator One

Educator Three also agreed with the assertion that teachers and educators must take the lead.

My view point is that I have to support the association to obtain good results, because there are teachers that don’t like to be involved in the community and they don’t work too hard. They work for a change but don’t work with the
community nor with the associations. We all have to be clear about what we have
to do in the school and we have to work together with our community.

While everyone is responsible for working together and being involved in the
partnership, Educator One again asserts the leadership position required of the school.

For example, now that we are talking about education, the impact should be
strong, talking about relations, the relationship should have the members of the
community, family and schools involved. The school takes charge of uniting the
parents and developing the associations to impact the work of the school, the
family and all the community.

The community professional expounded upon one aspect of her work that provides
services for community families through the school.

The one which is called “PROGRESA”, it is the one about addictions and alcohol
for adolescents. For them there are only 7 meetings, they talk about sexuality,
sexual diseases, and family violence; that clinic is for this community’s help, but
if we go to other communities then we’ll go to the community school and those
are the same informal lectures that we have in the local community. The programs
are typically held in the school. Community Professional

This example illustrates the leadership role of the school in partnerships in that the school
serves as a central host for community health programs, parent education seminars and
adolescent issues workshops. Though the school must lead and facilitate the partnership,
educators unwaveringly supported the importance of families in partnerships. “It is a
fundamental part of them!” exclaimed Educator One.
The participants delved further into the intricate relationship between families, the school and the community, focusing on the interplay between the three. "The education comes from the family and in the school is where the children continue the learning. Isn’t that right?" questioned Parent (mother) Four. Support came swiftly from Parent (father) Two, "The school is the institution to sustain the education and the family is the primary education formation." Parent (mother) One sought to clarify the interplay more completely, "I define the school as an institution to improve the education, the family as a beginning of the education and the community as an element where the communication and education develops." After considering this response, Parent (two) concurred that Parent (mother) One was on the right track. "And the community, I say that the community as Maddy said is the element where the education develops further from the education that is given by the parents in the home." Yes, agreed Parent (mother) Four, "because in the community the children put the learning into practice as they are wandering about." The parents reached agreement on this point, with Parent Three closing the discussion, "It is like the school and the home teach the theory and the community is where it is put into practice." Parent (mother) One elucidated the reason for the work, "To help it (education) be built better, right?" finding swift agreement from the group.

The participants linked the success of projects developed by the government, such as the one in which the community professional is involved, with the total contribution of all members of the community. This link is exemplified in Educator One’s discussion of presidential education initiatives.
In Mexico we have a culture in which we see the leader as a great person, so through 2005, he establishes the course of education and when he is active we have to change plans, projects and ideas. We, as teachers are the generators of change and we have to communicate with the families and it is complicated because the parents sometimes don’t communicate well with the teachers, so we think that they don’t want a change and that they want the past culture.

The community professional also addressed this link, saying that it is the responsibility of parents and community members to support the efforts of the program and without this support, the program will not be successful.

Yes, in fact, those informal lectures or chats are given in high school. A new lady just arrived for all the clients; she is giving these chats to all young people from 15 to 19 years old every week. The parents must make sure they attend the chats. There are 40 sections which have to be given in six months, my son attends. These are given to older adolescents because the doctor says that the informal lectures touch on strong content that might be too strong for younger ones. Even though we give the chats, they will mean nothing to the adolescents if the parents do not feel they are important. This is why for participation in the program, parents must be responsible and involved. Community Professional Educator One discussed his belief that it is the responsibility of the government to create programs that are considerate of the needs of the parents to foster the family and community involvement that is necessary for the success of the programs.

I think that to try, we as teachers or people, or even as parents, all they (children) see in the streets, and the video games also impact much the mentality of the
children, and we have to try to stop it. Like the project that the Secretary has and also the associations, they have to play an important role. First of all they have to consider the parents to have support from them. I see it this way, of 1000 kids, let's say that 100% won't go out, but I think that a 99% of kids with good parents involved in those associations and mostly with the support of teachers in those classes and the Principal we could have good results, but this could only be a dream. Educator One

Parent (mother) Three agreed that successful partnerships involving all parents and community members are possible, “Here they always agree whenever the kids benefit. And most of the kids are.” As apparent from this statement and from the discussion of the rest of the participants, family-school-community partnerships are viewed as a vital part of children’s educational experiences and the participants feel that it is imperative that everyone be involved.

*We each work in a different way: Different roles, same goal.*

*We each work in a different way, but we each must take care of our children so they can develop better here in Mexico. Parent Two*

Though, the participants all felt strongly that successful partnerships require the involvement of all participants (families, the school and the community), they also recognized that these participants must play different roles. As introduced earlier, the school is viewed as serving as a leader in developing and facilitating the partnership, but that in no way means that the rest are silent partners. Through participants discussions of roles and responsibilities emerged the sub-theme of *We Each Work in a Different Way.*
"It is an association (family-school-community) where our interests are different, where we think different to all come to one point and see our interests and have good results" (Educator One). Coming to one point signifies having common goals and hopes for partnerships, as indicated by Educator Four, who links the different roles assumed by members of a family with the different roles required by members of a partnership.

The family is an agency based on traditional patriarchal principles of organization. Where the father has the responsibility of maintenance of all the members of the family, the mother is responsible for education and to administer everything and to maintain the family equilibrium. About the Community Associations, they are groups destined to specific things, mainly to obtain good results for citizens. The school is the structure responsible for developing in the children, the comfort, know-how and dexterity and knowledge of universal values. (Interlacing fingers to show that each part works together.)...It is important that everything (each piece) work together. Educator Four

Parent (mother) Three illustrated the different roles of partnership participants in education, "The school can be an institution of learning. The education, I think, we always give it to the parents, the teachers educate the parents and the parents are the ones that educate the children." The family as a result is also educated as stated by Parent (mother) Four, "The family then as well." The community professional also discussed how her role is different than that of other members of family-school-community partnerships, expounding upon her work with the school.

I do everything, because if there is any problem in the clinic I have to talk to the clinic’s people, and if one of the ladies gets sick, we have doctors that can help
her. We can ask for permission to be absent and I have to go if one of the Health
assistants cannot go, and I explain to the doctor that the lady cannot come. The
same thing in the school, if there is any little problem with one of the students, the
teacher tells me and I have to be in touch with the clinic’s people and the people
of school. I have to be in touch with the person in charge of the Education and
with the person in charge of Health, with everyone.

However, even as roles are different, the goal is the same. “Easy... To better the
associations we have to have a goal, if we don’t have a goal we can’t get better”
(Educator One). Supporting the idea of a common goal, Parent (father) Two stated,
“Everybody wants the same thing (for the children’s education).” He continued to clarify
that roles are different, but the goal is the same. “We each work in a different way, but
we each must take care of our children so they can develop better here in Mexico. Thus,
emerged a sub-theme confirming that participants in family-school-community
partnerships have different roles and responsibilities, but a common goal: the education
of the children.

Development Depends on Associations: The Impact of Partnerships

The capacity of the school and the development within the community and the
families of the society and the institutions depends on associations. That is it more
or less. Parent Two

Following the significance of structure as an apparent theme of discussion was the
impact of partnerships. This theme manifested as Development Depends on Partnerships,
indicating the considerable role partnerships play in the development of families, the
community and the school. Parent (father) Two stated this in a matter-of-fact manner,
“The capacity of the school and the development within the community of the families of
the society and the institutions depends on associations. That is it more or less.” His
acceptance of this belief as an undeniable truth came through strongly in his presentation.
The perception that the development of the community depends upon the strength of
family-school-community partnerships was echoed by other participants.

Educator One emphasized the difference between family-school-community
partnerships and other professional associations.

I think that everyone sees it differently, the community for example, there are
plumber associations and not everyone receives the same benefits. At the schools
we look for something to benefit all. That’s why that association even has
meetings with the office staff, because the office staff is there to serve and better
the school, so it would benefit us as families. Educator One

Educator Three elaborated upon the fact that family-school-community partnerships
serve to identify problems within the community and offer solutions.

Also not all the associations encounter or find the same problem in the society,
but when they do identify a problem, the association is how we show to the school
and community that there is a united way to solve it. Educator Three

Parent (father) Two emphatically stated, “When the community does not work
together then another committee comes along to help the community, which is called the
Social Counsel, but sometimes the community doesn’t want to work together.” One of
the educators concurred that some parents will not participate, hindering the work of the
community.
Usually we have the entire whole load and it is not best like that but the whole community has difficulties involving some parents because they have a heredity family concept and we cannot change the way they thinking and cannot interfere any more. With others when we all work together it is the best for everyone, principally for the children! Educator Four

The community professional also vented her frustrations with parents and community members who do not appreciate the positive impact partnerships hold for their community.

What bothers me about women, who come, is that they don’t understand that the guys (community professionals who travel to the community to facilitate workshops) are giving a social service, because these women are not educated. Now, I am in charge of all of them (the workers) and I can’t give service to all of them. They are 100 to feed and we are only 8 people, it costs a lot to attend to everybody. So, I need a lot of help, the benefit is not for me, is for them. They see only themselves, they do not see everybody and the benefit for all. Community Professional

A parent visiting the professional echoed her frustration, “The benefit is for us because they are educating the kids” (Parent Two). This assertion is particularly meaningful when one considers the perception of the parents that

Everything has an origin and a beginning, which is a kid, then, the teachers and parents. The problems that the school has are shown in the community. Parent Two
An overarching belief that the positive development of children, families and ultimately the community depends upon the strength of family-school-community partnerships was pervasive in all of the discussions by educators, parents and the community professional.

*Strong pillars for the education of the children.*

*I think that the associations that are here in the community should be more active in support, like strong pillars that are there for the education of the children. I think that this support should be the goal of the associations in this community.*

*Educator Two*

Falling under the umbrella of the theme of the impact of partnerships is a sub-theme focused on the participant's perceptions of the goal of partnerships. Previously a discussion of a common goal for participants in partnerships was introduced. However, over the course of the interviews, the understanding of the purpose of partnerships as being to support the education of children emerged as significant across participants. This sub-theme was not discussed singularly but as a factor contributing to the overarching theme of partnerships positively impacting the development of communities and families.

Educator Two eloquently stated, “I think that the associations that are here in the community should be more active in support, like strong pillars that are there for the education of the children. I think that this support should be the goal of the associations in this community.” The perception of partnerships as supporting and strengthening the education of children, like strong pillars, is supported by the Mexican government, as evidenced by the implementation of the program of the community professional.

The Secretaria de Desarrollo Social (federally funded social services program) has a program called Progresa. Progresa is a program focused on education, health
and nutrition. Within Progresa, there is DIF-Desarrollo Integral de la Familia—focused on the fundamental or integral development of the family. There are DIF professionals in the communities or they go to the communities at certain intervals and they help the family and keep the records. Community Professional She further elaborated,

Families get paid $170 per month, $340 every two months, alimentary supplement (for health and food), and they give opportunities to women that nurse their children, pregnant women get the money too, and even the kids younger than 5 years old get the amount of money if they show certain grade of malnutrition. The money is for food, health requirements and educational supplies. Community Professional

In the context of the importance of family-school-community partnerships supporting the education of the children, the parent focus group also discussed the program. “DIF will check behind the reasons for the child’s problems to see if the family needs more help” explained Parent (father) Two. Parent (mother) Four also wanted to stress the psychological support offered by the program for children in school. “Also, if the children are shy, anxious and irresponsible” (Parent Four). To clarify it for the researcher, Parent (mother) One stated, “DIF is for everything, doctors, food, if the parent are not able to be responsible.” The program finds strong support in the community, due to the perception that it improves the lives and educational experiences of the children and the families. In discussion governmental programs and community involvement, Educator One shared “I think that all of them are very important for the formation/development of a person.” Partnerships are perceived by participants as
providing the support needed for the children to have a good education and subsequently, strong development.

*To Serve the Community for a Good Cause: Partnerships and Citizenship*

*If is the school my hope is that they should continue with the school and to have a professional degree, for him to be a good role model and to serve the community for a good cause, in the family to continue teaching the most essential values, for them to have a good life style with the community.* Educator One

The participants powerfully emphasized that the successful development of the children held great significance for the positive future of the community. As stated earlier, participants stressed that partnerships that positively impacted the children benefited everyone. Educator Two described the intricate connection between families, the school and the community with the goal of the connection being the development of quality, contributing citizens.

*I think that the family is the base of the Society and it should form principles (in the children) that have to be supported by the school and integrated into the community and to reach the good goal of developing good citizens for our society.* Educator Two

The parents firmly supported the important role education plays in developing good citizens for the community and consequently the focus of family-school-community partnerships on citizenship. This support was first expressed through a discussion of the different opinions parents express about Kindergarten.

*Well I didn’t have any problems in kindergarten with the teacher. I don’t know what Olivia thinks. Now I can see that the learning experience was very good.*
Mothers that don’t know about kindergarten, tend to expect a lot of work and
don’t know what point the children need to learn, the school is where the children
develop for the community is it not? Parent Four

Parent (mother) Three pondered Parent Four’s comment and added, “and the
truth, you know it, it was very staged, games, painting, and some mothers claim they are
just wasting time.” To which Parent (mother) Five asserted strongly, “They aren’t
though, this is a first stage of development.” Kindergarten is where children first learn to
participate in society according to Parent (mother) Four, “because they get dance lessons,
they participate in a parade and are no longer afraid of society.” Parent (father) Two
addressed the group, “you all understand that but be honest, unfortunately there are some
who think differently. They still don’t know how a child develops correctly. The most
important thing is to learn to play with others.” The ultimate goal of helping children
learn to coexist and function as productive citizens was emphasized by Parent (mother)
Four.

Learning how to co-exist and collaborate with teachers, children, and the
community. My daughter had to accept the change from kindergarten to the stage
that she is in right now and I see her interest for learning because she traces letters
that she doesn’t know and just look in first grade she wrote her name. In
kindergarten they collaborate much better with teachers and community. Parent
Four

Even in Kindergarten, the participants felt a focus on becoming good citizens was
important for children and family-school-community partnerships.
This focus only intensifies as children get older and become more involved in their communities. Educator Two elaborated upon partnerships as a means for fostering the development of strong values and citizenship in children.

The impact comes from the interaction between the parents and the teachers. We understand that the 2 persons (parents and teachers) form a strong image and both have a strong impact on the kid because the father forms the character if the kid is a boy and if it is a girl the mother will teach her more values and the teachers will teach them values and we form a citizen for service (a good citizen for the community). Educator Two

Educator One concurred that partnerships must focus on helping children develop into good citizens with strong values, stating, “like why we are involved in all of that is easy, the result is to form better people.” The positive impact children have on the community is a benefit of successful partnerships according to Parent (father) Two.

It really produces a lot of help for families and the community because the children are good for the community. When the people work together, they are helping the children develop into people who can help our community in the future. Parent Two

The community professional also shared her belief that education is critical for developing a stronger society, stating, “I think with education. People are not really educated. I understand a little bit about this, because I attended school.” She also expounded upon the role her program’s involvement in family-school-community partnerships plays in the development of good citizens, focusing on the importance of health and education.
All participants expressed hope that partnerships can positively enhance the future of their community. Parents shared hopes that their children would develop into productive citizens. “As a mother I wish, that’s why I send him to school, my hope is to help him to study” (Parent Four) and “I feel the same, I want him to be a good student and a good citizen” (Parent Three). Educator One shared similar hopes for the children he teaches.

If it is the school my hope is that they should continue with the school and to have a professional degree, for him to be a good role model and to serve the community for a good cause, in the family to continue teaching the most essential values, for them to have a good lifestyle with the community. Educator One

The idea that children should take the knowledge they gain through education and return to promote positive change in their community was strongly professed by participants. Educator Three discussed the process of fostering the values of citizenship and investment in the future of one’s community through family-school-community partnerships.

One of the principal functions of the school is to teach, not necessarily common math but to prepare them like all children so that they could see their future life, and understand that they could solve the problems of the community that are coming, and that they could develop by themselves, with what they can use, and that they could involve us in their daily life and their reality as children is our reality. Educator Three

The expectation that children will return to share their expertise and knowledge with others involved in partnership efforts was also supported by Parent (mother) Three, “they
go to the school, the school, the school, so they come back to their town they are professional people. Then they can help with the work of the association.” The focus of educators in fostering this sense of responsibility to one’s community was most directly expressed by Educator Four, who interjected, “we think that we should make professionals and that they should return, to help the community and to form alliances or affiliations to look for the improvement of the community this is the service from us.” The students of today are expected to help the community of tomorrow. “Like my friend said, we wait for them to come back to help the new generation that will be coming, so the community could grow up” (Educator One).

Parent (father) Two also provided eloquent support for the educator’s assertion.

As I said before, the hope is that what we teach them can be used the rest of their lives, and no one can take it away and it will be useful in solving problems. The ritual of education for our children is training for solving the future and ethical problems of our community.

Developing productive citizens is a major focus of education and partnership efforts and as such, emerged as a unique and distinct theme.

*My Family Will Work: The Role of Parents*

*My family will work, either together or separate from the school and community, but we will work for the children. Parent One*

Over the course of the discussions it became apparent that all participants felt that parents play a vital role in the education of children and as such, must play an active role in partnerships. This perception emerged as a theme distinct and unique from that of the structure of partnerships, which also highlighted the roles of partnership participants.
Educator Three stated directly, "The students are the reflections of their family life at their homes." Parent (father) Two adamantly agreed with this understanding. "The most important thing in education is the parents helping their children" (Parent Two). Parent (mother) Five clarified the role of parents in partnerships, "The parents are the ones who must take care of the children so they can develop. But if the parents don't do their part the children aren't going to develop well." In support of this belief, Parent (mother) One professed her commitment to aiding and assisting her children, "My family will work, either together or separate from the school and community, but we will work for the children."

In describing the necessary work of a parent, Parent (mother) Four shared, "Like in school we must help to encourage them to improve, and study. This will make us happy because we know they have a better education, and like Viktor said we must teach them right from wrong. And we must tell them to study and not leave all the work on the teachers." After reflecting for a minute on her words, she continued, "So the education starts at home. Parents must talk with children and open their books and ask them about school." For children to develop responsibility, the parents must demonstrate a commitment to responsibility themselves according to Parent (father) Two. "To make them responsible with homework we had to demand like responsible parents, that way the children are reliable with school from the beginning."

Encouraging responsibility among parents is one of the aims of Progresa, the community professional explained.

Families are monitored by DIF professionals to accomplish the goals proposed on their health and medical plans. For example they have to go two times per year to
the health department, it includes the whole family, to measure up and to be weighed so they can control or monitor the program, then they tell you everything related to your health like if you are overweight or you might need gain weight or if you have hypertension or if you are inclined to get diabetes and even if a family member gets a sickness they attend the person. Then if you are sick you have to go to medical visits, if you don’t do it, they will reduce your economic support.

The financial support is related to the family’s choices and work to stay healthy. The holders have to attend meetings once a month. This is where DIF information is given out and people are made aware of new programs. Community Professional

Families work with community professionals at the beginning of the fiscal year to develop comprehensive plans, including goals, for health and wellness. Then, over the course of the year, all family members are monitored for progress toward these goals. To continue to receive funding, parents are responsible for making sure that all family members are well taken care of and healthy. In the beginning the parents receive support from community professionals as scaffolding for developing their commitment to responsibility, but ultimately it is the parents’ decision to make healthy, responsible choices. The goal of the program is to aid and assist parents in fostering this sense of responsibility in their children. The community professional describes the programs process for aiding parents in this transference.

She is the assistant too, she does informal chats (for parents and children) every month here but those are in group. Everybody has to go, if someone does not show up, that person is not going to get half of the economic support. For
instance, if a parent doesn’t but they accomplished everything else, they won’t get any more money, only half of the allocated support. Community Professional

The parents continued to stress the importance of developing responsibility in one’s children throughout the focus group sessions. “And it’s a parent’s job to encourage the child to obey the rules in the classroom, and to be responsible, because an independent child has obligations, such as with teachers and the classroom” exclaimed Parent Four. Agreeing, Parent (father) Two stated that, “the majority of the pressure lies on the parents to teach and help development.” Parent (mother) Four continued this discussion, sharing a personal experience.

The responsibility as parents is also important. We should know what the kids are doing. Only a few parents ask how the kids behave in the school, I read the notes and talk to the teacher, because my kid would lay on the chair and he wouldn’t do anything. So… My kid sits in the front now. Parent Four

Supporting her level of involvement, Parent (father) Two interjected, “the discipline of the school is not to take the place of the parents’ work definitively. No, the discipline of home is where the children learn to be responsible.”

The parents moved on to discuss the other responsibilities of a parent in family-school-community partnerships. Parent (mother) Five shared that parents must meet the needs of their children. Parent (father) Two concurred, “well as participation, bring the child to school and cover his needs.” Another parent questioned, “What are those needs?” (Parent One). “We have to go to the meetings and it’s obvious that you have to bring your kids materials, even if you have it or not that’s the responsibility of the parents”
responded Parent (mother) Three. Parent (father) Two returned to the impact parental participation has on children.

If there are parents that are focused on studying with their children like for example “Martin” the youth will compete in the first places because his father demands that he works hard all the time and the mother supports him also. Parent Two

As children grow older, the parents insisted that a parent’s responsibility does not lessen, though it does adjust to meet the need for increased independence by the children. Parent (mother) Five shared her understanding of this shift.

It is in kindergarten when they are still young when they take him with pleasure to school and spend time with him, and teach him and help him. When they go from kindergarten to elementary the kid goes by himself and has some skills and the teachers’ job is to help him. The kid then feels more independent and can do it by himself. Parent Five

Parent (mother) Three emphasized that the parents cannot disengage from their child’s education at this point, but must be involved in different ways. “Yet in elementary we still help with homework that they get from school manuals. Exactly, we help them at home, check notebooks, see if they have more work, and help them” (Parent Three).

However, she asserted that it is also equally important that “also they can learn to be independent on their own, right.”

Parent (mother) Three shared her hope that through her involvement and responsibility to her child, he will “succeed and for the community to be reflected in him.” Educator Three also linked the impact of parental responsibility with the success of
the community and the partnership, stating, “it’s very important because is about responsibility and service, members of the family will carry out chores in the association.”

*If the parents do not participate in the school it doesn’t work.*

*If the parents do not participate in the school it doesn’t work as well. Like “Dos Carrillos,” “Paso Hermanos” and “Amarillo” they had competitors (students who received awards from the government) but not like the quality school we have here, besides we stick with the education plan. Parent Two*

The idea that parents and family members are responsible for carrying out the work of the partnership, as evident in the final quotation of the previous section, leads into the understanding that participants feel schools are not effective without parents. Parent (father) Two stated this belief directly.

*If the parents do not participate in the school it doesn’t work as well. Like “Dos Carrillos,” “Paso Hermanos” and “Amarillo” they had competitors (students who received awards from the government) but not like the quality school we have here, besides we stick with the education plan. Parent Two*

Educator One also concurred with the perception that schools need parental involvement to function, metaphorically comparing the school to a family.

*And the schools are the same, if it is a family with no base established then this family does not have a part in the community. For example, a project or something simple if they send the parents to sweep and one of them doesn’t want to because he is a macho man, and the mama wants to participate, but the father does not permit it, then we have problems in the school. Educator One*
By encouraging parental involvement, the school is able to generate, "new ideas!" according to Parent Three. The school in the community of the participants has been "recognized on a regional level for the communication between principals, teachers, students, and parents, everyone recognized on a state level" pointed out Parent (father) Two. As a result of the awards, the school "is recognized as one of the most quality schools, that is why we get help with materials and supplies, because it is a quality school and not all Veracruz schools get help with this" (Parent Four). The recognition is a direct result of the positive interactions between the parents and the school, asserted Parent (father) Two.

If you pay closer attention at the state level they have awards and this school received first and second place. I mean that is one of the best, because of the good disposition between the school and parents. Parent Two

Most schools in the state have not received this recognition and as awareness of the positive results of the school has grown, so have the number of parents choosing to find alternative means of transportation so their children can attend the school as explained by Parent (mother) Five, "And it has to be like that because even if parents have schools in their community they still send their children to us." Even the president of another town chooses to send his sons to the participants' school. "It is viewed as much better, kids from there came to this school. For example: Julio the president's sons in 5th and 6th grade were here" shared Parent (father) Two. This, according to Parent (father) Two, serves to illustrate the problems a school can encounter when parents aren't involved. "Not all of the schools do that. But this one does because it is a quality school" (Parent Two).
Fiesta funds.

Then the improvement plan for the school is put in place using the funds from the fiestas noted for the school...Parent Three

One way in which the parents are involved in the school is through the securing of funds for school programs. The schools in Mexico receive some funding, but not nearly enough to operate the school, from the government. The parents assured the researcher, “The government helps the school” (Parent Two). This help, in part, takes the form of programs introduced to assist families and students with personal needs related to education. The program of the community professional is one such program.

Yes, the scholarships are educational, and the government gives money two times a year to buy some educational material. If the students go to third grade they receive certain amount of money, this changes for middle school people and it is another amount. The money is for educational materials but there is a saving fund for students who graduate, so we have to make sure the kids go to school. (The money increases with each year the kids go to school and at the end when they graduate they get the money to help with the university.) There are three people, one is in charge of the clinic, another one is in charge to make sure the kids got to school, and the last one make sure the first two are doing their job. A week ago the program decided to add another person; she will be controlling the nutrition of little kids. In fact when she calls us everybody has opportunity to get services because when the government sent units for help everybody got service, even me.

Community Professional
These governmental programs are aimed at developing strong partnerships with the parents by providing assistance to the family. The partnerships are instrumental, as alluded to by the community professional’s explanation of the ‘saving fund’ in increasing the level of investment parents feel in their children’s education.

It’s good, we really need it because as you see the cane’s (sugar cane) price is not what it used to be and that counts a lot. Now, the money is not enough, some people say that I have a big house, but with the program they help me with some money, and with that money I buy shoes, clothing for my kids. And, because my kid attends High School they help you with the books and money for his transportation, the money is not enough but is a valuable help. And that’s good because many people didn’t use to send their children to the school, but now that they give some money for the children, they send their kids to school because of the money. Community Professional

Furthermore, the government provides additional assistance through scholarships for children who attend educational seminars in their community. “Yeah that’s right; those chats are only for young people because there are scholarships available for people from the third grade to high school” (Community Professional).

Along with providing scholarships for the children, the government pays the salaries of the core-subject teachers, as clarified through this interchange between two of the parents. “Who pays the teachers?” asked Parent (father) Two. Parent (mother) Four responded simply, “The government.” The government also provides some support in maintaining the school facility. Nonetheless, though the government provides some financial support, the parents must contribute their time and labor to maintain the
physical facility. “Just to paint the school they offered $7000 pesos and that amount is only for the paint, and all the parents do the work” (Parent Four). However, their support of the government is evident in their efforts to support educational initiatives developed by the government, initiatives that often require funding (secured through the community) to implement. To ensure that the school has the necessary operating capital, the community has developed a structured system of providing financial assistance. “A public action group does that” (Parent Four).

The town council holds fiestas monthly to raise money, fiesta funds, for community organizations, including the school.

The improvement group makes a calendar each year and they designate days for events to hold in the community. Each month they plan fiestas and the money raised from the tickets and from the vendors to give to the school, churches and different organizations in the community. Parent Two

At these fiestas, vendors pay a little money to have a booth to sell food, beer, candy, toys, and other items. There is also a cover charge for attending the fiesta. When the event is designated as supporting the school, the parents are responsible for facilitating the fiesta. “Somebody told me that the parents are the ones that are in charge of doing the dance so the school can get some money” (Parent One). This is a good way of organizing the fiestas agreed the parents. “That helps a lot” (Parent Three). Yes, agreed Parent (mother) Four, “They are the ones that sell some things and we as groups help the school.” All of the profit goes to the designated organization. Money is not given to just be used in an unstructured manner by the school. There must be an improvement plan put in place, designating where and how the money will be spent. “In the
improvement meetings they have a planning group; when there is a festival, that is the
group that is in charge of finding the dates for the events” (Parent Three). Parent (father)
Two also discussed the process of utilizing the funds, “Then the improvement plan for
the school is put in place using the funds from the fiestas noted for the school…” In years
past, there have fewer community fiestas designated for the school. “It’s just one time a
year, no, this year was different, in December was the turn of the elementary, in January
the middle school, and it was each month so they can get some money” mused Parent
(mother) Three. However, “that’s not enough for all the year,” (Parent Five) these events
are not enough to fully support the school, so the community and families must be
involved in other ways.

Another way the families and community support through school is through the
“scholar plot.” The scholar plot is a farm on which sugar-cane and vegetables are grown
to be sold to support the school. “The landowners are in charge of work in the fields and
give all that’s necessary and all the schools received a certain amount” explained Parent
(mother) Three. The person who farms the plot changes each year, “yes, each year”
(Parent Three) because the farmer does not get any profits and the people the work must
be shared equally across the community.” It’s hard because where are those who are the
ones that want to work, without getting anything back?” shared Parent (mother) Five.
Agreeing, Parent (mother) One clarified the gravity of this for the researcher, “He doesn’t
get anything back.” Parent (father) Two described the process.

We have a support that is called ‘the scholar plot’ and we have a lot of scholar
plots that produce economic profits and that money each year is divided between
the kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high schools.
Parent (mother) Three clarified the economic breakdown of the profits, “it is divided between the kindergarten, elementary, middle and high schools.” “And it’s divided by the same amounts right?” questioned Parent (mother) Four. Parent (mother) Five interjected, “The kindergarten receives 10,000 pesos.” Again the parents stressed that the money is not blindly turned over to the school, insisting that “It is for the school, if any school needs money for any project they have to present their project so the community can get together the money; that resource is the plot” (Parent Two).

The day-to-day needs of the school are not typically paid for through the use of fiesta funds or funds gained through the scholar plot, funds earmarked for specific improvement projects. Instead, the day-to-day needs are met through an annual fee paid by parents and by individual contributions of the parents themselves. When the researcher sought clarification about the annual fee, Parent (father) Two provided explanation.

Yes and we do that when we start a new year, all the parents give a certain amount, it is like a project for example, like scholar materials or the maintenance of the school. Parent Two

As the researcher gauged the parents’ reactions to this fee, Parent (father) Two responded matter-of-factly, “It is a cost that we, the parents pay here in the community.” Also, while discussing the breakdown of funds raised through the scholar plot, parents shared that they donate supplies for the school, including toilet paper, chalk, etc. “No, because we buy that, the money is for notebooks, chalk, pencils and lamps” (Parent Four), “because the principal said that he doesn’t receive any help for that” (Parent One). The parents also provide money, through fees, to pay for teachers to teach specific courses, including
English and Computer. “We have to pay the computer teacher and we pay for the maintenance. That’s why the fees are so high” (Parent Four). Though the government bought the computers and provides some support to the teachers, it is not enough and the parents must supplement the government’s payment to be able to pay the salary of the computer teacher. “The government helps them but it is not much. The class cost 20 pesos. That’s why it is not required to take the computer class” (Parent Three). Though paying the fee is difficult in the financially strapped community, the parents continue to try to make the payment, believing that “now it is very important for them to take the computer and English classes” (Parent One). Sometimes, even after the fiesta funds and scholar plot funds are contributed there is still not enough money for an important project. Parent (mother) Four describes this experience.

When they made the library there was not enough money, so we had to give 100 pesos more. We gave a dance, we gave that annual payment and it wasn’t still enough but what I know is that we worried a lot to do it, but now it is not in service. Parent Four

However, the community and families continue to persevere, contributing financially for the success of the school. In the words of Parent (mother) Four, “all parents want to do it, not all of us have a lot money as some people have, but if it has to do with something about the school then that’s ok.”

A hot breakfast.

It has a cold breakfast and a hot breakfast because with the cold ones it’s like milk and cookies and hot ones are like what we cook in the kitchen and the family
parents association is the organization that organizes parents at enrollment time.

**Parent Four**

This sub-theme and the previous sub-theme, while not discussed by all of the participants, emerged as extremely significant to one group of participants, the parents. The parents shared their experiences with partnerships with such expression and intensity that these sub-themes charged out of the data. In the previous section, the community’s financial support of the school through partnership efforts was presented. In this section, a different sub-theme of parental involvement is the focus.

During focus group sessions, parents expressed great pride over the breakfast program administered at their school. At first the researcher missed the significance of this program, believing it to be a governmental program much like the school breakfast program in the US. In actuality, this breakfast program is much different and much more indicative of the strength of family-school-community partnerships in this community.

Initially in describing partnership efforts in the community, Parent (mother) Four explained, “The support for children it’s like the feeding hands.” Parent (father) Two described the development of this particular partnership effort, elucidating the role of the Involvement Council, which designed the project.

And all thanks to the council... The involvement counsel. Especially the Principal and other parents, that want their child to be better, that was their own initiative. The kitchen was donated by the D. I. F. (Integral Family Development). They donated the kitchen, refrigerator, pantries and the counsel charges 5.00 pesos for the breakfast and they give them a fruit, cereal, a little of everything, and the money they use it for the maintenance of the kitchen.
Parent (mother) Three clarified that there are two options for breakfast, hot or cold.

It has a cold breakfast and a hot breakfast because with the cold ones its like milk and cookies and hot ones are like what we cook in the kitchen and the family parents association is the organization that organizes parents at enrollment time.

Parent Three

The hot breakfast is cooked by parents organized into groups, “Because if we have many parents we should work together and equally” explained Parent (father) Two. He further described the groups, “at least to have 10 groups of 5 people each and they take turns.” The five peso fee is used to buy the food and then the parents assigned to cook go into the DIF donated kitchen during their week and cook breakfast for close to two hundred children. “More than 200. That’s only the elementary” (Parent Two).

The breakfast program is completely administered by parents and the community is very committed to its success. In informal conversations in the community, the breakfast program came up many times. One woman explained to the researcher that although she makes sure that her children have a hot breakfast at home, there are many “junk” parents who do not and their children suffer at school. Another community member interjected, “this is one way WE can help those children.” The work is difficult and when the women return from cooking they are tired and weary. However, after a brief rest they re-enter their personal kitchens to cook lunch for their families, confident and content with their commitment to help the children.

When asked to reflect upon the strongest example of a successful program borne of family-school-community partnerships, Parent (mother) One quickly responded, “: I think the breakfasts.” The breakfast program is one example of the parents’ commitment
to the importance of involvement in family-school-community partnerships, even when it requires much physical involvement.

_Helps the Young People’s Education: The Holistic Impact of Partnerships_

_The program helps the young people’s education! Parent Two_

All of the participants devoted time to a discussion of the impact family-school-community partnerships play on broadening the education, understanding and thinking of the children. One aspect of this discussion was a focus on Progresa, the government-directed family-school-community partnership effort that employees the community professional. Another facet of the discussion was the ability of partnerships to reduce the isolation experienced by families living in rural communities, broadening the parents and children’s perspectives. From this discussion emerged a theme significantly unique from the role of parents or structure of partnerships. This theme paid homage to the holistic impact of the programs administered through locally-driven family-school-community partnerships and Progresa and as such was delineated as, _Helps the Young People’s Education._

The parents discussed how the educational seminars of Progresa, “helps to get a good education for the adolescents” (Parent Two). The community professional explained that the government is attempting to strengthen the community by providing education about sexuality and health to teenagers to reduce the numbers of unwanted pregnancies among teens, “Yes, because we want to prevent pregnancy of those who are too young or not ready or no desirable pregnancy. The government tries to avoid it with the informal lectures.” The families receive additional funds if the children attend and the community benefits from education that would not otherwise be offered. These seminars
are offered through use of the school’s facilities, completing the final leg of the partnership. Parent (father) Two linked these seminars and other efforts of the partnership with the well-rounded, multi-faceted development of the children.

I feel like if we each (member of the association) work then the children will become self-sufficient, and self-confident. The school and community work together and in this manner the child receives some basic elements so they can understand education. Parent Two

Educator One shared the impact a strong partnership can play on broadening the experiences of children in rural communities.

We have pretty much established what our job is. What we should do in the elementary school. And about the older people, we have to talk to them so the kid could later understand. There are some kids that never went out not even to Cordova, Tampico or Veracruz, not even mention Mexico. Something like the other day we when we had the festival celebrating the cultures of other states in our country. And when we went on excursion to Totonaca exploring culture here in Veracruz. Educator One

The festival to which he refers was a celebration of the culture of different states in Mexico. During the researcher’s observation of this festival, parents and community members shared their feelings of the importance of the program, explaining that culture is very important and through culture children are connected to the past and the future.

In reference to the festival, Parent (mother) One also supports the role of partnerships in expanding rural children’s knowledge and exposure to culture and traditions, “It is for culture. Different cultures, of Mexico. The kids never see the ocean.
They only know their own town!” Parent (father) Two insisted that all of this focus is, “to increase the intellectual capacity of the child.” “Yes” agreed a parent who had stopped to listen to the group’s discussion, “This helps the boys learn quickly.” The community professional highlighted the children’s reaction to this aspect of education, “After they talk to my children, they have been grateful and very happy.” Educator One also focused on the impact for children.

Well.. Like we were talking before about how this association impacts the kids at the schools because we, as teachers have to impact the kids, because if there is not a formation of home, from our family, this kid will feel smaller (less important) than the others, or he would not enter into the system of education.

Parent (mother) One closed the discussion of partnerships as a way to transfer culture and tradition, insisting to the researcher, “so it is very, very important the association of the school and the community.”

*Kids reflect the adults they live with.*

* Kids in the family reflect the adults they live with. They do what they see the older people do, do what the people who live with them do. And they do the same because they imitate everything they see, it is like a Boss they have. Educator One

A sub-theme that emerged within the overarching theme of Helps the Young People’s Education was Kids Reflect the Adults They Live With. Educators and parents alike were adamant that adults in a child’s life serve as role models. This perception is significant to partnerships, according to the participants, because for a community to be successful everyone must be involved and if a child sees that her parent or teacher is not
involved in partnerships, she will be less likely to respect the need for involvement herself. Educator One described this relationship.

Kids in the family reflect the adults they live with. They do what they see the older people do, do what the people who live with them do. And they do the same because they imitate everything they see, it is like a Boss they have. Educator One

The parents further explained, "someone told me that the parents don't go to the open houses and the children start losing interest, but if the parents go and talk with the teachers the children will care more" (Parent One). Agreeing, Parent (mother) Four exclaimed, "the children think if my parents don't participate then I don't have to either!"

Nodding in agreement, Parent (mother) One responded, "they don't care." Seeking agreement from the group, Parent (father) Two elaborated, "the relationship between the reflection by the children of what they learn from their parents and their teachers. This is what impacts the children?" The group quickly indicated their agreement.

Educator Three shared the school's efforts intentionally capitalize upon the teachers' status as role models.

What we try to do here in the school and what every adult should do is talk with the children. For example, if we want the kids to be good people we should do that (model it) to teach them. Let's say that the kid see that the teacher teach and he does what the teacher does. Educator Three

"The Teacher is an example for the kids... The teacher is the person for the kid to imagine to be like" explained Parent (mother) One. Plainly stated, "He is a role model for the kids" (Educator One). Good or bad, according to Educator Three, "Like an example to follow, if we are bad and rob inside the school, they'll do the same." Educator Two
emphasized that within partnerships, individual participants must link their status as role models with the work of the partnership.

And the most important is the responsibility, like right now that we have an interview and we have to attempt and not say "I don't have time" we have to aspire to change. The first example is the teacher and the associations in general, we shouldn't be separated. Educator Two

The community professional offered an example of how her program attempts to encourage parents to serve as positive role models, requiring of parents a high degree of self-discipline and responsibility. She explained that parents must attend meetings and follow-through on recommendations to continue to participate in the program. By requiring children to also be active participants, the children have an opportunity to develop an awareness of their parents as responsible, active citizens.

If that month you got a family appointment and the husband did not show up the family is penalized. That is why a lot of women attend the appointments, and also why others do not care. Everyone must be accountable. There are young people who attend and help at the meetings too, from 11 to 19 years old.

Educator Four supported this effort stating,

About the child's experience in the school, if I get involve in an association and if I'm doing good in it, my son will listen to me and if I continue, it is great... but if I don't or if I break his goals and if there are results either positive or negative, he can't be stuck in the middle, it is either yes or no. Not every one can enter into an association, but we have to understand that we could do it to form in our kids an understanding of culture. Educator Four
Furthermore, the community professional and the educators described how partnership efforts provide good role models for children strengthening endeavors to motivate children to become more invested in their own education.

There is stuff, for example, there are teachers that work with them, with the kindergarten, and we work with the 5th to 10th graders. If we see that a kid has a 6, we try to help him, motivate him. The motivation is an important part and is also necessary that the kid come motivated by the family, friends or brothers and it is easier for us as teachers when the kid receives motivation from home. It impacts us, as teachers, because the kids are free of complexes and the results in stronger qualifications that we are going to see in short time, and for us this is easier to work with, and the kid has good development. To serve...Educator One

The community professional explained that through partnerships, educators and community professionals can support parents, helping them develop into positive role models for their children.

The teacher realizes when the student has learning problems. And the Kindergarten teachers help the young students with those problems and they encourage them. They try to detect what’s the problem, if the kid doesn’t listen very well, if the kid doesn’t pay attention, or any other learning problem that the kid may have, and they report everything to the DIF, and then DIF supports them. Community Professional

Parents agreed that this support is very important. “The motivación is very very important!” (Parent One). “It’s hard, isn’t it?” stated one of the educators to his group. “Yes, It is really hard!” replied his colleague.
The parent group concurred that although the process is sometimes difficult, the results are very important. Through these efforts the children, “can see at least we support them, like my parent supports me” shared Parent (mother) Four. Agreeing Parent (father) Two linked this positive impact with the success of the community, clarifying the importance of “The impact of them implying children should do the right things instead of the wrong things.” “And they work hard” added Parent (mother) Three.

When Values are Present: Factors Impacting Partnerships

When in a family Values are present, there is responsibility and there is education.

Educator Four

Building upon the understanding of adults serving as role models for children, the participants discussed the significant roles values play in the involvement of families and community members in partnerships. Values emerged as a factor significantly impacting involvement in partnerships and the success of partnerships.

The participants discussed intensely the problems that can occur if in a family there is not a strong system of positive values.

In fact the society is changing radically the kids are almost free. That is because the parents give them too much liberty, today there are lots of young parents and the values they are being lost and the kids have a lot of liberty they want to do what ever they want, and there is where us the teachers fight for the discipline and we want to teach them good manners. Here in the schools sometimes we can’t because it’s hard to change the values they learn at home. Educator Three

Educator Three’s assertion that the values taught by parents impact the work of the school is echoed by the parents.
We’ve got a lot of junk fathers and they don’t care what the boys do and that’s the problem. They don’t go to the school or they don’t interact with the teachers, the boys go to school and try to do the same thing, and they don’t care about what the teachers say. This is the worst problem that they’ve got now in the school. Parent Five

The community professional joins the chorus, sharing her efforts to help parents understand the importance of values.

Well, they taught us values classes, they are very important. In kindergarten, elementary school, and middle school they teach values classes, such as humility and kindness. And we have to explain to the mothers that they have to apply human values, let’s say that one of us is sick, we cannot demand that person to attend to the meetings. In fact, I have a friend who has cancer, and she cannot be exposed to the sun, and we show our solidarity. They ask us to explain about the rules, because we have rules in the clinic and the school. For example, I can not be late just because I am in charge of this, or they can not attend to me after I get to the clinic, I have to respect the rules as any one else, and like any one else I have to be here before eight o’clock. Community Professional Educator Three shared his belief that though some positive values are communicated through popular culture, the core beliefs must grow through interactions and nuturance within the home.

Well… repeating that, what we are looking for are the values for a better life style, but there are many TV programs which are very good, for example how to respect the parents, Father’s day, or the mother’s or the grandparents, but also
cultural values like religion. It is also a value that we have and generally those values are lost, many people won’t follow them especially this comes from home, and if us, the parents, don’t teach all of this especially to our kids, they would lost it and they will no longer exist, everything comes from the family. Educator Three

Agreeing, Educator One interjected, “the values that they should always carry.”

The parents similarly affirmed that the values espoused and portrayed by the educators impacts the children’s engagement with education.

It really all depends on the teacher, some are different and some do it because they love their jobs and some do it because of a feeling of obligation. Those that love it do the work better, but those that are just doing a job don’t care if the child learns or not. Parent Three

Parent (mother) Three’s statement suggests that through a teacher’s personal investment in the education of the children models for the children the importance of valuing education. “The children can feel it’ agreed Parent (mother) Five. “But most of the teachers do it because they like it” asserted Parent (father) Two. “I haven’t been working with just the happy teachers” exclaimed Parent (mother) Three. Her experience led her to believe, with the other parents indicating their agreement, that the values of the teachers impact the children’s education and the partnership. If negative, this can mean “the learning experience is not worthwhile” (Parent Four).

The participants explained that although the lack of values negatively impacts partnerships they are not standing idly by and letting the partnership disentigrate without any effort to make a change. Parent (mother) Three shared that the teachers try to help

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parents to teach values, saying, "what the teachers have told us is that that we should

teach them values, to be friendly and for them to help each other." Educator Two stressed
the importance of all members of the partnership working together for positive change.

if you want changes it is important to revive the values, to focus on values like

responsibility, respect, tolerance, etc. Unless we revive those values that a long
time ago were very important for our parents and us, the young parents, we don’t
use them for more change that could happened, and if there are not values nothing
will work, and know what the school needs is to have those values back and we
have the antivalues, the young parents. And there is a hope that we could revive
those values. Educator Two

The change, according to Educator One must start “with the parents. But the affected
ones are the kids.”

Educator Two supports the need for change to start with the parents, stressing that
"when in a family Values are present, there is responsibility and there is education."

Agreeing, Educator One added, “and also hope.” “Commitment and respect. Equity and
equality. Everything, everything” finished Educator Two. The parents also felt strongly
that to positively engage in family-school-community partnerships, families must develop
a strong system of values for the children. “The values of the children help to have
respect between teachers and students” insisted Parent (mother) Four. Hope and harmony
are two of the most important aspects of life that parents can pass on to children
according to one of the educators. “The fact is that what is fundamental is that this must
be based on the values of human beings and for affective coexistence for life there must
be hope” (Educator Four). Values clearly emerged as strongly impacting partnerships.
It is because of the economy: The impact of resources.

It is because of the economy. Parent Four

The economic situation of families emerged as a factor impacting values and through values, involvement in family-school-community partnerships. The impact of immigration to the US on the community and the children’s education was a central focus of discussion with all participants. At times it was discussed in casual conversation, as with the community professional, and at other times it was brought into the formal interviews as a factor influencing values and partnerships.

What happens is that people that go to the United States to work, to eat, for the family. For this they take many risks. From crossing the frontier, to take the family to settle, to finding where to live, to look for work all that is adventures that the Mexicans take. The one that is intelligent lives and makes it what he or she intended and the one that cannot has little or nothing. Parent Two

These necessary adventures leave families separated and isolated, as in the case of Parent Three. Parent (mother) Three lives alone with her two children. Her husband is in the US working to make money for the family. When the prices of the sugar cane dropped in Mexico, his crop would no longer support them and he had to search for more gainful employment. He turned to the US and is now much better able to provide for the family. Unfortunately, this separates him from his wife and children, rendering him isolated from the education of his children. Parent (mother) Three explains, “though he cannot be there, I go for him to support him.” This is a hardship many families in the small town face.

“The truth is that people always plan to improve their economic situation, but they don’t
think of all the details. As in this case the school” shared Parent (mother) Four, who has many relatives living in North Carolina.

The reason for immigration is most often related to finances. Parents who choose to remain in Mexico (in this town) often have to discontinue the education of their children prematurely due to the need to have the children seek employment to assist the family, though many parents feel this is more rare in current times. Parent Five linked socioeconomic status with values, explaining that “It has to be how the parents think, because when they see that the kid is big enough they send him to work at the fields.”

Parent (father) Two believes parents place greater emphasis on education in modern times, comparing current rates of premature termination with instances from times past.

When I was in school, 60% of people thought the same way but later it changed, there started to be more capacity and a lot people studying just until the middle school or high school and then they forget about school and travel to the UNITED STATES because they said there they can get more money, now like 400 people of this county are in USA and the people are young from 15 to 35 years old. Parent Two

This relationship of socioeconomic status, values and investment in family-school-community partnerships was resonated through the dialogues of the educators.

The associations can help the community a lot in the form of involvement and support, but if the association is formed of parents and the parents don’t look for the better of their children, they don’t support a necessary project and it is problematic, and when there is a program, it weakens because the parents won’t support it. Educator Four
Educator Four’s assertion that parents must be able to look past their personal financial difficulties to consider the good of the children and community was echoed by the parents. “The people are not thinking because before the problem is the English for the kids and they paid for a class, it’s not a lot of money and it went for 7 years, but now no” shared Parent (mother) One. Parent (father) Two stressed that it might be that the parent is intentionally de-valuing education, but instead the parent’s lack of support for the school may be borne of that parent’s personal history. For example, it might be possible that the parent’s family of origin also experienced financial stress and as a result the parent did not complete his or her education and does not know how to support his or her child. “In fact because of the economy problems a parent may not have gone to school themselves, and then will not understand how to help their own child, and what is going on with the child” (Parent Two).

The parents agreed that this could be true and further discussed the role that shame related to socioeconomic status plays in parental involvement. The parents continued discussing the parent who was not involved. “Maybe the problem was that he (the parent) was poor” stated Parent Two. “Maybe he was having some shame” (Parent Four). “I believe its everyone’s view that it’s when the parent doesn’t understand the program, doesn’t have the capacity for the job, or is just lazy that the understanding is not there, but here the communication is direct” (Parent Two). Through his statement, Parent Two indicated that he believes that many factors impact involvement by families. Parent (mother) Three conceded, sharing that even she at times feels insecure about her abilities to help her children.
I worry that I can be wrong when educating my children because I could have been taught things wrong. And when your child doesn’t listen to you, it crosses your mind that you may be wrong. Parent Three

The parents shared that stark differences exist in the individual wealth and socioeconomic status of citizens within the community. When asked about variation in socioeconomic strata, Parent (father) Two quickly asserted, “in the resources—lots!” However, the parents wanted to clarify that children are not treated differently in the school, the same programs and quality of education is offered to all children regardless of socioeconomic status. “But not for the children like the program of milk and cookies” insisted Parent (mother) Three, referring to a snack program put in place for the children in the Kindergarten. Paradoxically, all children at times suffer from the distinct financial difficulties faced by the school. Educator One describes an English program that was not able to be funded completely and a technology program that parents and educators implemented even in the face of limited funding.

Here are people that took away many programs, For example an English teacher was charging 5,000 pesos and they took away the program because people were negative. That program was build 7 years ago and in that time they started to give computer classes without having a computer in the school, focusing on “theory.” Educator One

The school’s struggle for funding often leaves parents frustrated. “I’m saying, to teach them computer applications. And they will draw them a keyboard.” “Sometimes there is a lot of work but there is no money to pay with” explained Parent (mother) Four. “It is because of the economy” she continued.
For some parents, this frustration when amplified by mounting responsibilities leads to disengagement from family-school-community partnerships. This shift in values is described by Parent (father) Two.

It’s really like when you get married and have the first baby or the second baby, always happiness, and then the third? You get more responsibilities, and less time and less attention...Look Liza, the problem about parents participating with children is that in the beginning the parents are young, and they get the first child and take it with love to school and spend time and the second child it’s a little more work and more responsibilities, and the situation is more delicate in Mexico because of the economy. Parent Two

Parent (mother) Three agreed, “it’s no more time for others.”

The government has recognized this frustration and is attempting to improve the quality of life for families, with an intentional focus on improving parental involvement in family-school-community partnerships through Progresa. The community professional described efforts to reduce the financial strain on families, emphasizing that the values of parents impact the success of the program.

Yes, because I had meeting with the ladies, and I talked to them about this and explained. The poorer ladies are the ones who support you more, and I really don’t like that because they just receive $340 each two months, and some of them have children that are too old. And some others persons who receive a better amount of money, they don’t even say thank you. Community Professional

Parents supported the link between family values and the success of Progresa, offering the following example.
One time a principal had problems because he had some papers of some kids and he was supposed to send it to PROGRESA but the parent did not go to the school to sign the papers and that was the problem. Parent Four

The community professional further explained that although many families in the community face financial troubles, unfortunately only the most needy families are able to receive services. “No, because a lot of people came, almost 40 persons. She only attends to the needs of the marginalized people” (Community Professional). At one point a parent in discussing the assistance offered by Progresa, quipped that “so, Viktor can’t get the service because he is millionaire.” The table full of parents facing certain and troubling financial hardship erupted into raucous laughter. Finally, all participants stressed the impact of socioeconomic status on family-school-community partnerships stating adamantly that work in the community could be improved “with better resources!” (Parent Three).

*Communication.*

*We do have a lot of communication, and a parent that doesn’t check is irresponsible.* Parent Three

Also related to values are an individuals perceptions of and engagement in communication with others. This theme emerged most strongly with the parents, though it was interwoven into discussions with many different primary foci for educators and the community professional. Following the initial parent focus group session, Parent (father) Two clarified directly that it was most important that the researcher recognize the importance of communication.
There is not any specific question about today’s section. We all know that the communication is good between the parents, teachers and kids. More than anything else, I want you (the researcher) to know that the most important thing is the respect and the communication between the school and the families. Parent Two

Communication is vital for partnerships to be successful according to participants. Participants explained that positive communication facilitates the comfortable, active involvement of parents and community members in family-school-community partnerships.

We will go to the school more often if the communication is good with the principal, teachers and everyone. The child has more experiences and is more independent and can go over there feeling free so the father can work to make a better life. Parent Two

All participants insisted that communication was a great strength of partnerships in their community. Sometimes communication occurs through written correspondence. “Sometimes they send you notes and then you will know if your child has not completed something” (Parent Three). A personal experience with communication by written note was shared by Parent (mother) Four.

In school they will call you when your child is in trouble, also they will send you notes if your child doesn’t do their work, like with my kid I got a note saying he didn’t work because he didn’t have a pencil. He actually had three so I asked him why didn’t you work? He said he was lazy. Parent Four
Parent (mother) Three was not troubled by the teacher reporting the inappropriate behavior of her child. “We, as parents, must help and work with the child as much as the teachers, and the teachers will tell you how your child behaves and we have a lot of communication” she explained. Parent (mother) Three affirmed this position, “we do have a lot of communication, and a parent that doesn’t check is irresponsible.” The parents asserted firmly that the responsibility for initiating and maintaining communication must be shared by families and educators.

When a parent checks the backpacks and asks the teachers the next day he or she knows what’s going on. The teacher told me the other day to buy a notebook because my son doesn’t have any. Parent Four

The positive impacts of good communication are diverse and far-reaching. Parent (mother) Three feels joy when her son’s teacher calls with positive reports. “At least Vladimir sends me notes. And the teacher, Rosario, sends me notes that my son is doing well and that makes me feel good” (Parent Three). “Solidarity” according to the community professional is one important benefit of open communication within a partnership. Educator One emphasized trust and credibility as by-products of positive communication.

I think that to develop the credibility and trust is even more a part of it, but I also think that to develop the professionalism, to know where it will go, to know what are your goals, or professional hopes with other ways of thinking about how to look for different goals. Educator One

Open communication helps parents to understand the developmental stages of their children by providing them with a resource and source of support in the journey, the
educator. Parent (mother) Four shared that she has experienced the benefits of such support when struggling with an instance of bullying.

For example in each classroom there is a boy that is the leader of the group, he is always believed and is the one that hits others, but blames boys that passed him. There is one of these boys in the class of my son. He hit him and I told him that he should defend himself but my son told me that he was already his friend because my son says that he hugged him from behind strong and I told him that he would hit him with his elbow but my son he said that they will take it to the director. I asked him if he didn't care, if the boy didn't scare him. After this the director called me on the telephone and I attended because he already told me that he (the bully) always hits and in fact that boy is a very restless the boy. He was already removed (held back) a year, he should have been in the 5th grade. I can already imagine my son stepping into that room. Because if the other boy hits him and then one of them gives him a kick, but my son said, "he is already my friend and we already talk together." Because you know that the first year that my son was in the school my son had like 10 or 15 reports and I went and asked the teacher if that was a normal thing and the he told me that it was normal for the age of the children that it was very normal behavior involving that one.

It became clear through the stories of the participants that there are many benefits of communication between families and educators.

In discussing how communication is structured and facilitated in the partnership, it became apparent that communication occurs regularly between participants. Parents are comfortable meeting and conversing with the director and the educators in the school.
One example demonstrating the level of comfort parents feel with educators was presented by Parent (mother) Four.

Parent Four: The teachers send a note home with the child and then the parents go to the school because the note does not say why the parents are needed. The last time I received a note was because my son ate Victoria’s lunch! Can you believe it?

Parent Five: Do you not send him lunch Sasha!?!?

Parent Four: I always send him a sandwich or a quesadilla and some crackers or cookies, a water and a flan!

Parent (mother) Five also shared that if there is a problem in the school, parents seek out the advice and guidance of the Director (principal). “We have a meeting to talk about the problem” (Parent Five).

Communication is clearly viewed by participants as being a factor strongly impacting partnerships, with the values of individuals defining their approaches to communication. Parent (father) Two clarified the importance of communication for partnerships.

I understand that that’s a question right? Just like a comment, I think that the things work better if the parents, teachers and students when they have communication between each other. Between parents and teachers because they can understand the problems that the kids have in the school. I think without communication the education does not work 100% right, as it will work if they have communication. I know that the communication is the best thing to help education work, I understand that this is the reality.
Not Only is he a Director, He Cares: The Role of Administration

Well I think that the best benefit we have was that, not only is he a director, he cares about the school, he cares about bringing good resources to the school.

Parent Four

Emerging as a strong theme within this case was the involved role of the administration at the school. Over and over parents and community members sang the praises of the Director, who they explained was not only a director, he was a leader, a father, a friend, someone who cares. Parent (mother) Four expressed her pride in the school, attributing its success to the efforts of the director.

At least I’m proud that the school has lots that succeed and a lot of people call it a rural school but it’s much better that San Juan and I’m proud and it’s thanks to the community and the director in his first look forward to progress.

Other parents also felt similar pride, as expressed by Parent (mother) Three.

It is the principal’s responsibility and I feel proud that in this high quality school that many call a rural school we have a principal that helps. In my opinion we are well informed and just as in my case the teacher said it will be a big surprise for the children. Parent Three

The parents recognize that not all parents are positive, but they attributed any negativity to the personalities of the ‘negative people.’

Because he said that because he had some, he didn’t do a lot things because there are parents that do help them but there are others that don’t, because some people have said things that they didn’t have to say. Parent One
Agreeing, Parent (mother) Four stated, "because there are people that said bad things about the director, but I have never had any problem with him." The parents agreed that there "are always going to be some negative comments" (Parent One). Within this group, however, not enough good could be said about the director.

"Well I think that the best benefit we have was that, not only is he a principal, he cares about the school, he cares about bringing good resources to the school" insisted Parent (mother) Four. The efforts of the director to bring resources to the school was perceived by all of the parents as a major benefit for the school and the community. Parent (mother) Four explained that to receive many governmental benefits, the director must complete paperwork and be responsible. "Because if the principal doesn’t work with the current education programs, and we don’t work towards them, then the government doesn’t offer us help" (Parent Four). Other directors have not exhibited the same level of caring and commitment. "In San Jose they could get help for the computers, and the principal did not even sign the paperwork and didn’t even try" exclaimed Parent (mother) Four. Parent (father) Two also acknowledged the director’s role in positive developments within the school, sharing some of the difficulties the director has faced including political and interpersonal disagreements.

The developments that the teachers have made in the school are because he gets the help from the government, they have been get a big help which is the progress and he manages it directly, like in the school there are other programs that give things like books for the library or computers, the director uses these programs a lot and plus he knows how to use them, the director always wants to work and has a lot communication with parents, sometimes the changes have been positives or
sometimes negatives, when we have negative changes is when we have little
conflicts in the school, but most of the time the changes have been positive.

The parents expressed their belief that the director must be a strong leader both in
the school and for the community. “It is like in a company, the manager is the most
important person of the company and if he is not there the things would not work very
well, is the same thing at school” stated Parent (father) Two. Agreeing, Parent (mother)
Four explained, “If the director is not responsible that means that the teachers are not
responsible either.” Parent (mother) Four concluded by again stressing that the director is
a strong asset for the school and for family-school-community partnerships. “Well I think
that the best profit we have made was that, not only is he a director, he cares about the
school, he cares about bringing good resources to the school” (Parent Four).

_The Government Helps You: The Role of Government_

_In Mexico it is different from kindergarten until high school, the government helps
you. Parent Two_

The final theme that emerged within the MX case was: _The Government Helps
You._ It became apparent through the discussions of the participants that the government’s
role in education is quite diverse. Primarily, the government is responsible for developing
educational initiatives and the standard course of study for education in each system in
Mexico. The government also contributes some money to fund the work of the schools, to
pay the teacher’s salaries, etc. Programs like the one the community professional
represents, Progresa, provide money allocated for helping families meet the nutritional,
health and educational needs of the children and parents. Though the community must
organize fundraising efforts to provide financial assistance for the school, the government is intensely involved in many other aspects of education in Mexico.

In considering the programs offered by the government, Parent (father) Two shared, "There are a lot programs." Conversely, Parent (mother) Four said, "There are a lot of teachers that don't take advantage of it." The parents linked this with the earlier theme of the role of the director. "The directors of other schools just work and don't take advantage of the programs" (Parent Two). "But if they don't take the government progress then the parents have to contribute more money" interjected Parent Five. Yes, agreed Parent Two, "we have to participate, the government gives us a percent to complete the amount that they need." This equal sharing of the responsibility is indicative of the deeply ingrained commitment to family-school-community partnerships within this community.

One program offered through the government to encourage family involvement in family-school-community partnerships is Progresa. The resources for this program are limited and as such, a lottery system is used to determine which families receive assistance.

First it was general for two kids per family, later per grades but the resources are not enough, that's why they do them like raffles, for example if there are 20 kids and the resources are just for 10, then they just do it like raffles and I think that's better and who does all that work is the principal. If the principal sees that the parent doesn't participate or the parent doesn't try to cover all the needs of progress then the child can't get the help. Parent Two
This program appears to be highly valued among citizens across Mexico. The Community Professional linked support for the program to the outcome of the last presidential election. "I don't think so, this president won elections because he promised that the PROGRESA would continue, that's why many people voted for him, and he won" (Community Professional). She also explained that the program's fate is dependent upon the upcoming election and the priorities of the new president.

No, that's a school program, but they changed the name of it when Vicente Fox won elections, because when Ernesto Zedillo was in office it has a different name, and I don't know if this will change again with the next president, they don't tell us anything, this program will be kept until the government decides to discontinue providing it. Community Professional

The educators explained that the government devotes much effort to these programs, because "also the government has to do a lot because one of principal objectives is the education" (Educator One). The government's focus on education manifests as curriculum development. The parents explained that the government defines the program of study to which schools and teacher must adhere. "The Government makes the plans for the teachers and if the teacher doesn't follow the same, the same plans, then the teacher is gone" (Parent Five). It is imperative that the school follow the plans in order to continue to receive governmental funding. The educators and the parents express support for the government's curriculum.

For some who are in the schools it amplifies the physical abilities but mostly Science and technology. In 1992, there was a project that Mexico changed, they
took the traditional education and they got more focus in Science and technology.

Educator One

The director and teachers in the school under study have been recognized for their successful efforts to integrate the curriculum designed by the government with the needs of the community. The parents all lauded the director for his efforts to secure government funding through the adoption and implementation of government programs.

The two problems with governmental involvement noted by participants were the need for increased financial support and corruption. "They have good programs, but there is much corruption" (Parent Five). Yes, agreed Parent One, "This is the problem, corruption." Educator Two described how corruption manifests.

I think there are excellent programs and jobs here in the Community, unfortunately the radio and the TV says that those programs are finished and the 95% doesn’t appears, there is much corruption with the authorities and associations, they sign that they received it but nothing came here because of the corruption. (Educator Two)

Corruption is also present in the way in which resources are divided up, with cronyism corrupting the distribution of resources. "Here we also have what is called Family Problems, like companionship between parents and officials..." shared Educator Four. Agreeing, Educator Two expounded upon the problem of cronyism, "Another problem is the friendship between the associations, last names, so that friendship is to sign and say that the project is done." In spite of these difficulties, participants still expressed great support for the programs and curriculum developed by the government.

Comparing the government's involvement in the US and Mexico, Parent (father) Two
exclaimed, “In Mexico it is different from kindergarten until high school, the government helps you!”

*Interpretation and Summary of MX Case*

Within the MX Case (Case Two) emerged eight themes, five with sub-themes. The first theme highlighted in the presentation of themes is Every Person in the Community Must Help: The Structure of Partnerships. This theme focused on the perceptions of the participants that partnerships are an imperative for the success of not only the education of the children, but also the continued functioning of the community. Under the umbrella of this theme emerged a sub-theme, We Each Work in a Different Way: Different Roles, Same Goal. This sub-theme highlights participants' recognition that each member of a partnership plays a unique and different role, with all working towards a common goal. This sub-theme was supported by all participants and all shared examples of the different roles members play. This complementarity of roles was reflected through the emergence of cohesive themes across participants and across discussions.

The participants also all strongly agreed that the development of the community and the school depends on partnerships, as signified by the theme Development Depends on Associations: The Impact of Partnerships. This theme appears indicative of the collective worldview inherent in Mexican culture. Under this theme emerged the sub-theme of Strong Pillars for the Education of Children. One educator expressed that associations/partnerships should serve as “strong pillars for the education of children.” This perception was echoed by all participants. The theme that emerged most strongly over the course of discussions was related to citizenship and as such, was titled To Serve
the Community for a Good Cause: Partnerships and Citizenship. The participants consistently related all work of partnerships and education to the development of productive, contributing citizens. This relationship was intricately linked with many other themes and sub-themes and also emerged as a strong theme in and of itself. The participants all expressed avid devotion and commitment to efforts to promote the development of strong, loyal citizens. Devotion, again, indicative of a collectivist worldview.

My Family Will Work: The Role of Parents highlighted, as suggested by the title, the participants' perceptions of the responsibilities of parents. Participants agreed that parents must be involved and parents play a critical role in the efforts of the school, community and partnership. The responsibilities of parents emerged as highly varied and involved. The first sub-theme under the theme of parents' role was If the Parents Do Not Participate in the School it Doesn't Work. On this point, participants were unrelenting. Without the active involvement of parents, the school cannot be successful. The school depends upon parents for support, both financially and physically. The next sub-theme, Fiesta Funds, described the role of parents in fundraising, including planning community-hosted fiestas to raise funds for the school. A Hot Breakfast outlines a partnership efforts that require a more intense level of active involvement by parents. In this sub-theme a program facilitated by the parents to provide a hot breakfast to every student is used to illustrate the communities commitment to active involvement. Parents are intensely involved in the school at many different levels and in many different ways. Unequivocally, all participants agreed that this involvement is necessary for effective partnerships.
The theme titled Helps the Young People’s Education: The Holistic Impact of Partnerships focused mainly on the tangential efforts of partnerships to educate the children outside of school. Participants discussed the role interactions in society play in education and the importance of the many educational seminars offered by the community professional’s program within this theme. Encompassed by this theme is the sub-theme of Kids Reflect the Adults They Live With. All participants expressed the belief that adults serve as role models for children, so these adults must model good values including responsibility and caring.

Values were also the focus of the theme, When Values are Present: Factors Impacting Partnerships. Values were referred to by participants as the “educación básica” or basic education. The importance of values was stressed by participants, but also by members of the community during informal conversations with the researcher. A person with good values is viewed as a good citizen and this is central to development according to participants. Under this theme was the sub-theme, It is Because of the Economy: Impact of Resources. The economy drives much of the work of partnerships, explained participants, but partnerships are also hindered by the economy. Immigration and involvement were both linked by participants with the economy and resources. Communication was the final sub-theme presented under factors impacting partnerships. All participants indisputably stressed the importance of communication between members of the partnership effort. Open communication was presented as central to the success of the partnership effort.

The parent group highly praised the work of the administration. While this theme was less of a focus with the community professional and educators, it was presented with
such intensity by the parents that it emerged as a unique theme. The director is given credit for many of the projects undertaken by the association and somewhat for the success of the partnership. The director was lauded for his efforts to promote the school and secure funding for the school’s work. His work was linked to support and programs offered by the government. The government was also a focus of the final theme, The Government Helps You: The Role of Government. Within this theme participants described the government’s involvement in education in Mexico, demonstrating support for the government’s programs, while emphasizing the need for greater financial support to implement the programs.

Across the themes, participants demonstrated cohesive beliefs about the role of participants in partnerships and about the importance of partnerships for education and for the community. This cohesion is indicative of the intricate and elaborate ways partnerships are interwoven throughout the culture of the community.
CHAPTER FIVE

Cross-Case Analyses

To synthesize abstractions into a cohesive portrait depicting the connections and differences that together ascribe meaning to the findings of this qualitative study a cross-case analysis was conducted. In the previous chapter, within-case themes for the US case and the MX case were presented, including related sub-themes and researcher interpretation. Through the next step of data analysis and reduction, the cross-case analysis of themes, many important connections and differences became apparent. As a function of this final level of analysis, themes were subsumed by overarching categories, meta-themes, which then were intentionally examined for apparent links to professional literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The portrait of meaning that emerged from the cross-case analysis is presented in this chapter.

Overview of Analytic Procedure

The cross-case analysis began with an examination of all themes and sub-themes that emerged from the within-case analysis. These themes were analyzed for similarities and differences. These findings were then studied and reflected upon, allowing a comprehensive understanding of meaning to emerge. It became clear that culture plays a subsuming role in interpreting and understanding the findings, and, as such, provides the lens through which the cross-case findings become apparent.

Initially, in planning and writing this chapter, I chose to present the cross-case themes with a primary focus on the within-case themes that emerged. However, upon struggling to write the chapter, it became clear that culture and race could not and should not be relegated to a secondary focus as an aspect of the theme, but must be understood
as defining the theme. Dillard (2000) provided the theoretical support for engaging in this method of cross-case analysis, stating that critical race theory views experiential knowledge as "uniquely individual while at the same time both collective and connected" (p. 676). Dillard's assertion lends support to an analysis approach that honors the individual knowledge derived from a particular case, while at the same time connecting this individual knowledge to a broader, collective understanding founded in culture. Thus, for the purpose of presenting the cross-case findings of this study, referents of culture and race are used to identify and characterize the themes.

The cross-case analysis of the within-case themes distilled the data to three central themes, Collectivist Worldview vs. Individualism and Autonomy, The Institutionalized Ideology of Racism and A Portrait of Hope: Values as Resources for Empowerment. Under the umbrella of these central themes emerged eight sub-themes. Interwoven throughout the presentation of cross-case themes is the examination of the "raced representation" (Tate, 1997) of norms, values, expectations and perceptions shared by participants.

This research was conducted with an intentional focus on exploring similarities and differences in the structure of family-school-community partnerships in the US and Mexico. As a function of this focus, the themes and sub-themes for the cross-case analysis are arranged in such a way as to illustrate these similarities and differences in a manner congruent with the presentation of themes in Chapter Four. However, as this research was conducted from the perspective of Latina/o Critical Theory, these themes are subsumed by the understanding of each as a function of overarching cultural variables. Both groups of participants discussed partnerships in similar ways, focusing on
structure, role of participants and factors that impact involvement. Conversely, within these sections there emerged significant differences in importance and intensity of focus for specific elements. It also became apparent that significant themes emerged across specific participants. For example, both educators in the US and in MX focused on the role of parental values, and all participant groups, except the US educators group, focused on resources and contributing as culturally-bound aspects of partnerships. The themes presented in the cross-case analysis are listed below.

Table 5.1
Cross-Case Themes

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Collective Worldview vs. Individualism & Autonomy

In analyzing the within-case findings, it was imperative to maintain an understanding of fundamental differences in culture that exist between the societies in which the two cases are situated, most notably the difference between a collectivist culture and a culture founded in roots of autonomy and individuation. Efforts by participants to clarify the construct of family-school-community partnerships further clarify the role of worldview. Consequently, this theme emerged through endeavors by participants to describe and define the structure and function of family-school-community partnerships. The first research question guiding this study was: What are the experiences
of Mexican nationalist parents and Mexican immigrant parents with family-school-
community partnerships? Necessary to exploring this question is the fundamental
understanding of how participants conceptualize and, thus, define partnerships. This
understanding serves as a window of insight through which the experience of participants
can begin to crystallize and emerge. Through a synthesis of the data, this insight
developed into a cohesive portrait of the necessity of total involvement by all
stakeholders for successful partnerships. At the same time, striking nuances of difference
in perceptions of the structure and function of partnerships emerged through the cross-
analysis of the two cases.

In the Mexican culture, interdependence, cooperation, cohesiveness and
affiliation (Santiago-Rivera, 2003) are highly valued. These values manifest in a strong
commitment to one’s community and in a rich, shared cultural foundation.
Interconnectedness ensures a family’s and community’s survival. Thus, one would expect
these values to be integrated into all aspects of society. Fittingly, Gracia and De Greiff
(2000) noted that within the Mexican culture a collective worldview is exemplified
through interdependence and cohesiveness within one’s community. This collective
worldview manifests through the sharing of responsibilities for childrearing and
emotional connectedness, demonstrated by the participants’ discussion of the structure
and function of partnerships in Mexico. Parents in Mexico explained that partnerships in
their community are highly collaborative, with all members sharing equal responsibility
for the facilitation of the partnership with an ultimate goal of creating a stronger
community. This description of partnership supports Gracia and De Greiff’s description
of community.
Espinoza-Herold (2003) shared that Mexican schools seek to build upon the cultural values related to the collective worldview permeating Mexican culture. She described schools’ efforts to develop activities that promote cooperation, collaboration and interdependence. In a discussion about the Kinder (kindergarten) in the Mexican community, parents supported Espinoza-Herold’s (2003) depiction of education, explaining that this first entry point into school is important because the children “learn to play with others” (MX Parent Two). Other parents agreed that this is the first stage of development,” and that this is how children learn “to co-exist and collaborate with teachers, children, and the community” (MX Parent Four). Kindergarten in Mexico provides the first example of the school’s role in developing productive members of a collectivist society.

Cultural traditions are also an important component of maintaining a cohesive, collaborative society. The observation conducted in Mexico and discussions with participants highlight the importance of this component. The observation took place during the school’s end-of-year graduation and celebration. The experience was referred to as a programma cultura by parents and educators, which one parent explained to me to be Program Socio-Cultural, or Cultural Program. Each grade level demonstrated the traditional cultural dance from a particular state in Mexico, with children wearing the appropriate garb. Parents were responsible for assembling the costumes, and members of the community came into the school to teach the children the different dances. The parents and later the educators explained to me that it is very important to “form in our kids an understanding of culture” (MX Educator Four).
In the US, schools promote the values of independence and autonomy (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). Much of the work in which students engage is completed individually, and little group work is promoted. Education is viewed as being of central importance, and schools are established as institutions separate and unique from the larger community. Hall (1984) described the US as a low context (LC) culture. A low context population demonstrates less intense involvement with other people and is more individualistic in nature (Ibarra, 2004). A Low Context population contrasts with a high context (HC) population, in that the HC population more strongly values interpersonal connections and group cohesiveness. A low context orientation is epitomized in the structure of US public schools and is apparent in the US perception of the function of education, specifically as a means to individual development. The impact of a LC orientation is intricately intertwined throughout the portrait of family-school-community partnerships that emerged from the US case.

Highlighting this relationship, US Educator One clarified the purpose of partnerships as being to impact positively the education of the students, with an inward (towards the school) focus of efforts. “When parents can understand what the teacher is doing and seeking to accomplish, then they can complement, enrich and extend school-based learning” (US Educator One). Cultural values of individualism and autonomy define and drive expectations and manifestation of the structure and function of family-school-community partnerships in the US. Exploring the differences between cultural expectations of partnerships allows one to understand more fully the impact of culture on the experiences of Mexican immigrant families with partnerships in the US. Thus, a
parallel examination of the within-case findings for both cases renders the influence of
culture and worldview readily apparent.

*Defining Partnerships: The Structure and Function*

The initial focus of participants’ conceptualization of family-school-community
partnerships was the necessity of active involvement by all stakeholders in the
partnership. Across the two cases emerged the expectation that a successful partnership
requires the total involvement of families, the community and the school. In the initial US
educator focus group, US Educator Two asked, “But in defining it, it should be the
family, the school and the community working together to help the child. I mean, that
would be the definition of a partnership, right?” There was swift agreement from the US
educators’ group that, yes, a partnership means that everyone works together: the school,
the family and the community. The US Community Professional shared that she believed
there is greater emphasis currently placed on partnerships and involvement in US schools
than there has been in the past.

I think, um, and especially now, I don’t remember it being as much talked about
as my kids when they were going to school, but with grandkids and nieces and
nephews, I think they really are and try to do a good job of communicating, that
they do want families involved, that it is important that the family, school and
community work together, you know, what takes place at school, that parents are
a part of that, be it that it is extracurricular activities, what goes on at school, their
lessons, their teachers. So I think that they do a better job of trying to
communicate that partnerships involve everyone working together.
The parents in Mexico also stressed the importance of total involvement by the families, the community and the school. "The community supports the institutions, the families. We support the education so all of the children, have a better education; that's why always the institutions and the families work together. Everybody! Always!" (MX Parent Five). MX Educator Three further clarified, "We all have to be clear about what we have to do in the school, and we have to work together with our community." MX Parent One agreed succinctly, "It takes everybody in the community."

In both cases, participants clearly affirmed that everyone (the school, the family and the community) must work together for a partnership to be successful. Participants further explained that within this collaboration participants have different roles and responsibilities, but a common goal. "It is an association (family-school-community) where our interests are different, where we think different to all come to one point and see our interests and have good results" (MX Educator One)." The US educators also talked about the different roles filled by members of the partnership, describing how community members "serve as resources," and how parents must read with their children at home and must come into the school to help with events and school functions.

Elucidating the interconnectedness of the different roles, MX Educator Four shared,

The school is the structure responsible for developing in the children, the comfort, know-how and dexterity and knowledge of universal values. (Interlacing fingers to show that each part works together.)...It is important that everything (each piece) work together.

In agreement, MX Parent Two said, "We each work in a different way, but we each must take care of our children so they can develop better here in Mexico."
Everything Has an Origin and a Beginning, Which is a Kid

The common goal begins with the children, according to all participants. A partnership serves as "strong pillars" for the education of the children, explained MX Educator Two, and to "benefit" the children in the US shared US Educator Three. US Educator One also focused on the importance of family-school-community partnerships for the children’s education, defining partnerships as the "connecting together" of family, school and community, "to act as allies in the education of the children." US Educator Three further described the connection as an "investment" on the part of the family, the school and the community "for the welfare of the children." She explained that the intent of one’s investment is "all for the benefit of the children." US Parent One concurred, "it’s better for the child, because when the teachers have questions, they can ask the parents, or when the parents have questions about the school, they can ask the teachers."

While the participants in Mexico agreed that family-school-community partnerships "benefit the children," they also intensified this explanation, linking benefits for the children to benefits for the overarching society. "Everything has an origin and a beginning, which is a kid, then, the teachers and parents. The problems that the school has are shown in the community" (MX Parent Two). This parent also stated, "The capacity of the school and the development within the community of the families of the society and the institutions depends on associations. That is it more or less." At the point that he made this statement, it struck me, as the researcher, as something he believed to be the unalienable truth. This truth resounded through the discussions of the educators, parents and community professional in Mexico and has continued to echo in my thoughts as I analyzed the data. Partnerships/associations are a necessary and valued facet of life in
the Mexican community. Everyone depends on one another and everyone must contribute. "The benefit is for us because they are educating the kids!" exclaimed MX Parent Two. The idea of the function of partnerships as necessary for everyone, for the "total development of the community" stood in contrast to the linear portrait of the function of partnerships in the US solely as a means for providing better educational experiences to the children.

Through an interchange shared in chapter four, we get a clear picture of how the parent focus group in Mexico views the structure and function of family-school-community partnerships. "The education comes from the family, and in the school is where the children continue the learning. Isn’t that right?" questioned Parent (mother) Four. Support came swiftly from Parent (father) Two, "The school is the institution to sustain the education, and the family is the primary education formation." Parent (mother) One sought to clarify the interplay more completely, "I define the school as an institution to improve the education, the family as a beginning of the education and the community as an element where the communication and education develops." After considering this response, Parent (two) concurred that Parent (mother) One was on the right track. "And the community, I say that the community as Maddy said, is the element where the education develops further from the education that is given by the parents in the home." Yes, agreed Parent (mother) Four, "Because in the community the children put the learning into practice as they are wandering about." The parents reached agreement on this point, with Parent Three closing the discussion, "It is like the school and the home teach the theory and the community is where it is put into practice." Parent
One elucidated the reason for the work, "To help it (education) be built better, right?" finding swift agreement from the group.

Through this interchange and other discussions with parents and educators, it became clear that the participants in Mexico view partnerships as fluid and seamlessly interwoven throughout the fabric of their society. Parents teach children basic values; at school children learn about subjects (math, history, etc) and culture, and in the community children integrate all of this information together into practice to become good, productive members of society.

Figure 5.1: Partnership Structure in MX Case

This understanding of the structure and function of partnerships stands out starkly against the understanding gleaned through interviews with the US participants. When asked to share about family-school-community partnerships, the US educators typically
shared examples of parents and community members coming into the school to help with events or the school helping with events in the community. “We have scheduled parent conferences on our school calendar and parents are invited in. And those letters go home, and we do ask that every parent come in, to meet with the teachers” explained US Educator Two. “And volunteers, we have parent volunteers,” shared US Educator Three. Also mentioned were events like an American Red Cross Blood Drive organized annually by students in the school and a Relay for Life Team that the kids participate in to help the community. Parents are involved as chaperones and assistants during each of these events, with their level of involvement dictated by the school.

Within these and the many other examples of partnership involvement that were shared, all focused on the school as the central player and better educational experiences for the students as the intended result. US Educator One explained this most clearly, stating, “They (parents and community) get affirmation that what we are doing here is important. And they (parents and community) know and are aware and are around and help us.” Thus, even though the school gives back to the community and works to help families by providing access to services, there is a more insular focus on the function of partnerships as being to help the school provide a good education for the children.

Figure 5.2: Partnership Structure in the US Case

![Diagram showing the structure of relationships between Family, Community, and School]

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Citizenship

In the previous section, the idea of family-school-community partnerships in Mexico, as means to develop productive members of society was introduced. In this section, this introduction solidifies into a cohesive sub-theme typified as Citizenship. A striking difference that became apparent through the cross-case analysis was the importance developing good citizens as an intentional purpose of partnerships.

In the US Case, developing citizenship in students was never a focus of discussion. In the MX Case, the purpose of promoting the development of qualities of good citizenship in children was a focus of practically every discussion. The participants in the MX Case strongly accentuated the significance of children in the future of the community. They explained that it is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that children develop into productive citizens for the community to continue to grow and prosper. MX Educator Two eloquently elucidated the connection between partnerships and citizenship.

I think that the family is the base of the Society, and it should form principles (in the children) that have to be supported by the school and integrated into the community and to reach the good goal of developing good citizens for our society.

The MX parents supported this connection, stating, “The school is where the children develop for the community, is it not?” (MX Parent Four). The parents stressed that through partnerships, children learn how to coexist and function as productive citizens within society. The parents are responsible for teaching values and the educators build upon the values to “form a citizen for service (a good citizen for the community)” according to MX Educator Four. MX Parent Two also highlighted the benefit this holds
for the community, "It really produces a lot of help for families and the community because the children are good for the community. When the people work together, they are helping the children develop into people who can help our community in the future."

Participants in the MX Case linked current partnership efforts to the future of the community. MX Educator One stated, "Like my friend said, we wait for them to come back to help the new generation that will be coming, so the community could grow up."

MX Parent Two supported this notion, sharing,

As I said before, the hope is that what we teach them can be used the rest of their lives, and no one can take it away, and it will be useful in solving problems. The ritual of education for our children is training for solving the future and ethical problems of our community.

The strong focus of participants in the MX case on the importance of partnerships in developing productive citizens is rooted in the cultural understanding of role of the individual. In a collectivist culture, individuals are viewed as parts of the whole, with the whole being society and community. The lack of a focus on developing strong citizens in the US Case is characteristic of the individuated, autonomous nature of US culture.

Through a cross-case analysis of the participants' perceptions of the structure and function of family-school-community partnerships, both similarities and differences emerged. The portrait of these similarities and differences is more richly and clearly understood when one engages in an examination of the glass through which one views the portrait, culture. Partnerships are intensely woven into the fabric of Mexican culture and society, as expressed by the participants.
In the US family-school-community partnerships serve as collaborative efforts to promote the educational endeavors of the school. The structure of partnerships is culturally embossed in both Mexico and the US and, as such, one is unable to examine and understand the structure and function of partnerships without a parallel examination of culture. In both cases, participants espoused the belief that everyone (the families, the community and the school) must be involved in partnerships.

All participants also upheld the understanding of children as the focus and the beginning. In the MX Case, however, this perception intensified with an exploration of the function of partnerships in the development of children as productive members of the community. The far-reaching impact of this development leads to the equal responsibility for partnership participants to facilitate and support the work of the partnership. The focus of the partnership is outward and cyclical. A sense of connectedness subsumes the importance of individual gain, and everyone shoulders the responsibility because the community and, thus, every person, reaps the benefit.

*The Institutionalized Ideology of Racism*

Though everyone reaps the benefit, institutional limitations exist to the equal access of all participants to family-school-community partnerships. Racism serves as a significant pervasive societal limitor. These limitations are most intensely portrayed in the US Case and, as such, limitations within US society will retain a level of prominence throughout this discussion.

The cycle of institutionalized racism emerged as strongly linked with the information supporting the guiding questions of this study. This study was driven by four
research questions, including two questions strongly linked with this theme and its sub-themes.

1. How are these experiences (the experiences of Mexican nationalist parents and Mexican immigrant parents) informed and impacted by their socioeconomic and cultural position in society?

2. How do participants in family-school-community partnerships with Mexican nationalist and Mexican immigrant parents perceive their individual roles and the roles of others in the partnerships?

Historically, examinations and discussions of race and racism have focused on the black-white dichotomy within the US. As a result, concerns of the Latino population have remained on the fringes of society, with minimal discourse addressing the role of racism in the lives of Latinos. Nunez (1999) asserted that, thus, the role of Anglo-Latino relations in developing and maintaining a racist ideology in the US has not been adequately addressed.

Racism is maintained through institutional structures and practices that embody a racist ideology (Citron, 1970). A racist ideology persists in US society as a function of racial discrimination that is intricately woven throughout the structures and institutions that maintain our society. Without attending to these structures and practices, this oppressive racist ideology will persist. The absence of discourse addressing the Latino experience with education in the US through the lens of racism, suggests that the marginalization of Latinos continues to be legitimized in society. Children develop a worldview in which inequality is legitimized, and racist views are internalized through interactions in institutions of education. This process is epitomized through Darder’s
Institutional racism, as defined by Darder (1991) is “a form of racial discrimination that is woven into the fabric of power relations, social arrangements and practice through which collective actions result in the use of race as a criterion to determine who is rewarded in society” (p. 41). Embedded racism develops and is perpetuated in schooling practices in which inequality is legitimized and racism, oppression and discrimination manifest as necessary facets of everyday life (Nunez, 1999). Embedded racism becomes integrated into the worldview of children, who carry out the practice of a racist ideology in society.

As a function of this racist ideology, “the burden of the child’s failure [academically] is placed upon the child and her home environment” (Nunez, 1995, p. 45). Mexican immigrant parents, facing accusations and blame, disengage from their children’s education and are left guilt-ridden, frustrated and marginalized in interactions with educators (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001). This experience was evident in the discussions of the US Parents, who shared feelings of being “put aside” and made to feel “inferior.” One parent discussed an interaction with a teacher who refused to believe the parent was working with her child at home, even though the parent stressed to the educator that she worked everyday “on my couch, in my living room” with her child. The US parents also shared other examples of feeling blamed and accused. Consequently, racism as an institutionalized ideology must be considered a significant theme impacting and influencing the involvement of Mexican immigrant parents in family-school-community partnerships in the US. This is important, as the role of parents emerged as a strong theme
across both cases. A parallel examination of the role of parents in the MX Case and the
US Case starkly emphasizes the impact of embedded racism on the experiences of
Mexican immigrant families in the US.

Understanding the role of parents as a function of culture hearkens back to the
aforementioned discussion of perceptions of the structure and function of partnerships.
While societal perceptions of the structure and function of partnerships define the role of
members of the partnership, this provides a limited picture of the impact of culture on the
role of Mexican immigrant parents in partnerships in the US. To fully understand the role
of the Mexican immigrant parent as a function of culture, one must critically examine the
role of race. Critical Race Theory posits that we must seek to identify institutionalized
norms and values that perpetuate the subordination of minority groups. In this case, we
must examine the ways in which values and expectations of parental involvement are
founded in the “raced” experience of Mexican immigrants in US public education.

W. E. B. DuBois (1903) introduced the concept of “double consciousness.” This
concept illuminated the internal struggle faced by people of color that ultimately leads to
a “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s
soul by the tape of a world that looks on in.. .contempt and pity” (p. 364-365). The
experience of Mexican immigrants with the concept of “double consciousness” emerged
through the discussion of the US participants. US Educator Two explained, “I think
people from Mexico feel that whole word of inferior, and maybe I’m wrong.” The
subsequent discussion provides a glimpse into the concept of “double consciousness”
described by DuBois through the eyes of the US educators. US Educator Three
responded, “No you’re not.” To which US Educator Two continued, “I mean a lot of
them are young; they don’t know about our education system, and they want their children to be successful. I mean you can tell that.” Agreeing, US Educator One explained, “Which is their main reason for coming here. It makes them feel inferior in their own culture, their own values; they are coming here to better themselves. And that alone would cause self-worth to not be as high.” “Exactly! They see Americans as already being here, and they are coming in not being there yet, and I haven’t reached that status yet. Intimidation, that’s the big thing,” interjected US Educator Three. In a previous interview, US Educator Two had introduced the idea that Mexican immigrants feel inferior, stating, “They are taking the lower jobs and they feel somehow inferior, I think, sometimes. So, I think a stronger partnership would help them to feel better and not as inferior.” She further shared her perception that these feelings of inferiority impact parents’ involvement in partnerships, “And, you know, trying to get a parent to come in and share, they feel so inferior to us that they don’t even do that kind of stuff.” The perception of Mexican immigrants as feeling inferior “in their own culture” because of their social position is founded in society’s perceptions of class, race and social status. The discussion of the US educators directly reflects DuBois’ (1903) assertion that as a function of race, people of color evaluate themselves and their culture through the perceptions of others who look on in “contempt and pity” (p. 365).

This “double consciousness” (DuBois, 1903) is evident not only in the perceptions and expectations of US educators concerning the role of Mexican immigrant parents, but also in the perceptions and expectations of the parents themselves. US Parent Two shared, “I think it is not right because a lot of us can’t speak English or read it, and when we have a problem at school, we don’t have the confianza—confidence?—to go
over there and ask for something. We feel like we are less important, like our points of view are less important.” Agreeing, US Parent One explained that with equal partnerships, “We, the parents, would go with more confidence, and in that way we could support the school, and we will not be afraid of them seeing us as inferior.”

The failure of the US school system under study to provide translators or Spanish-language information for parents reinforces perceptions of Mexican immigrants as inferior and insignificant. By not providing access to important school information and programs to non-English speaking parents and families, the school prominently demonstrates a devaluing of this population. Nunez (1999) clarified embedded racism as being perpetuated through institutional interactions, from which manifest discriminatory and oppressive structures and practices. The institutional explanation that the low numbers of Spanish-speaking students and limited funding legitimize the inequality of access for all stakeholders in the school community, leads to the marginalization of Mexican immigrant community members and the conceptualization of the population as inferior. As a function of this marginalization, Mexican immigrant parents are less readily able to initiate involvement in family-school-community partnerships. Thus, the understanding of the role of parents in US family-school-community partnerships stands as a function of culture and race.

Culture also directly impacts perceptions of the role of parents in the MX Case. Mexican culture embraces a strong tradition of familismo, a cultural identification with, and respect for, extended family. This tradition means that family and loyalty to family are interwoven throughout all aspects of Mexican society, including family-school-community partnerships. Families must rely on networks of support as the means for
upward mobility within the economy and as social capital (Valdes, 1996). Success
depends not on individualism, but on family networks of connection (Valdes). The family
is central to culture, as evidenced by the metaphorical comparison of a school to a family
shared by the MX educators. Everyone is responsible and accountable to everyone else,
and this accountability is indicative of the intensely involved role of parents in family-
school-community partnerships that emerged from the MX Case. Simpatia is another
cultural characteristic reflected in the role of parents in partnerships in Mexico. Simpatia
deems that people demonstrate a pleasant demeanor to facilitate the interconnectedness
that resonates throughout a collectivist worldview. Cooperation and cohesiveness are
highly valued, and these characteristics create the facilitative conditions necessary to the
collaborative structure and function of partnerships in this community. In both the MX
Case and the US Case, the role of parents in family-school-community partnerships
emerged as a significant theme, and through a concurrent examination of the within-case
themes from both cases, an understanding of the role of race and culture prominently
emerges.

*The Role of Parents: Isolated vs. Active*

In clarifying perceptions of partnership structure and function, participants in both
cases focused heavily on the role of the parents. From this focus emerged the cross-case
theme of The Role of Parents. Within the US Case emerged the theme of They Just Trust
Us With Their Children, a theme indicative of parents' inability to be actively involved in
their children's education. In this theme, school and home were clearly portrayed as
isolated entities functioning separately of one another. When describing their hopes for
partnerships, educators focused on increasing family and community involvement within
the school. It is important to note that the participants in the US group devoted particular focus to Mexican immigrant parents as a multi-stressed population and, as such, linked factors impacting Mexican immigrants with the manifestation of limited parental involvement. This link excuses the role of institutional structures and practices in maintaining a racist ideology, contributing to the “inferiority paradigm” (Tate, 1997, Carter & Goodwin, 1994, Gould, 1981, Selden, 1994) and perpetuating the social hegemony that presently defines the Latino population as less important and inferior to other populations within society. From the MX Case emerged the theme of My Family Will Work, a theme indicative of the high level of family involvement in family-school-community partnerships. Participants in the MX Case described partnerships as being multifaceted, fluid endeavors of a cohesive group, whose intent is to strengthen their community. Within this depiction emerged the role of the parent as being intensely active and involved. To better understand the stark contrast between these two requires further examination of each case as it relates to the other.

From the US Case emerged a bleak portrait of the Mexican Immigrant parent as a frustrated, marginalized player in her child’s education. US educators explained, “Sometimes I feel like they don’t really know what is going on. They trust us with their children; they don’t speak our language; they’re not communicating with us; they just trust us with their children” (US Educator Two). Parents described feeling “embarrassed” or afraid that school professionals may “put us aside.” They further shared their experience stating, “For example, if in a meeting they speak for one hour, we only understand 30 minutes.” As a result, parents often feel frustrated after meetings. “They wanted so desperately to be involved in their children’s lives and they would come away
from meetings not knowing what had gone on and what was being said,” explained the
Community Professional. Parents shared examples of rebuffed efforts to become
involved in their children’s educational endeavors.

No, this year it is okay, but last time, we had some teachers that did not like the
parents in the school… Maybe it is because the teacher (last year’s) had worked a
long time or something that she said “your boy is no good,” and she wouldn’t
explain what happened or, I don’t know (US Parent One).

I went down there to see the teacher and to talk about the problem with my
daughter, and she did not seem to understand me. She said there is no problem,
but my daughter said there is, that the boys are being mean to her. In the end,
because we could not work together, and I could not help my daughter here, I had
to send her back to Mexico for the school. There my family can work with the
school to make sure she is safe and happy (US Parent Two).

The educators described similar frustrations concerning family involvement,
emphasizing the language barrier as the most significant impediment to parental
involvement and explaining that language creates “distance” between the school and the
parents. Participants further elucidated this point, explaining that language hinders
parents from developing the awareness they need to play a more active role in their
children’s education.

And it could be, too, that the ones who, that are the nicer ones or whatever, they
might not have a way of knowing that there’s a way of trying to communicate, or
there might not be a way, like community involvement; they may just be sitting
over there thinking that there is no way to communicate with them. They might
just think, “Well we’re here; we’re stuck here this way and there might not be a door open to them (US Educator Four).

When parents do make an effort to become involved, language still serves to divide and separate groups. This division results in discomfort for both parents and educators.

One thing that concerned me, though, is if we have a parent-teacher conference and both parents would come in, or the child would, and they would speak their language, their Mexican, or whatever, and then they would talk together and then talk with me. It’s like if there wouldn’t be an interpreter there or something, then I couldn’t interact with them and didn’t know what they were saying, and I wasn’t comfortable with that situation (US Educator Four).

However, parents continue to make efforts to be involved, no matter how difficult and how limited their success. “And in my case, at least I go to support my kids, even though I don’t understand anything, and we help when there is something to do for school, even though we don’t understand anything, and sometimes we send stuff to help the school” (US Parent One). Unfortunately, their success is often minimal, in the face of barriers perpetuated by practices of overarching societal institutions, leaving parents and educators frustrated and separated from one another.

From the MX Case emerged a strikingly different picture, a portrait of unity and cohesion. Participants’ perceptions of the importance of the role of all members in a partnership is reflected in one educator’s statement, “It’s very important because it is about responsibility and service; members of the family will carry out chores in the association” (MX Educator Three). MX Educator Three’s statement reflects the belief that all participants: the family, the school and the community, must be actively involved
in partnerships. The participants work equally and actively in family-school-community partnerships in the participants' town. This involvement takes the form of fundraising, providing services, sharing cultural traditions with children and other various contributions. Notably, the involvement physically occurs in the community, in the school and in the home. The community holds events to raise funds for the school; the school holds cultural events to perpetuate the cultural traditions of the community, and the families invite the educators into their homes to celebrate their (the educators') work.

Following the observation of the cultural program held at the school, the educators proceeded to the house of a prominent community leader for a celebration of the successful school year. This was the initial fiesta in a string of celebrations that continued throughout the community in honor of the educators. The group of educators traveled to every celebration together and feasted and danced in the homes of many different community members. When I asked about these celebrations, I was told that often parents and community members invited the educators into their homes, and if the educators had questions or information, they were all comfortable going to the homes of the families. During the cultural program at the school, leaders within the community were seated in places of honor on the stage. The educators expressed their gratitude for the work of the community and highlighted the importance of the involvement of the families. Educators shared that parents and community members were responsible for teaching the children the cultural dances.

The band was another major focus of the program and the expressions of gratitude. A mother in the audience explained to me, “Everyone is so proud of the band because the school did not have money for a band teacher, and the community raised the
money to pay the teacher and get the instruments.” This example is similar to the
previously presented “hot breakfast program.” The school was unable to provide a hot
breakfast for every child, and the members of the partnership believed it was important
for children to have breakfast. As a result, DIF (an agency in the community) provided
the funding for a kitchen to be built; the community provided the funds for food items,
and the families organized committees to come into the school and cook breakfast for all
of the students everyday. Everyone works together in a complementary, cyclical fashion.
The boundaries between home, school and community are diffuse, with all members
functioning equally and collaboratively in complementary roles.

These complementary roles are important because, fundamentally, participants
espoused the belief that “if the parents do not participate in the school, it doesn’t work as
well” (MX Parent Two). The educators supported this assertion, comparing the school to
a family and stating that the school must have a foundation in the community.

And the schools are the same; if it is a family with no base established, then this
family does not have a part in the community. For example, a project or
something simple, if they send the parents to sweep, and one of them doesn’t want
to because he is a macho man, and the mama wants to participate, but the father
does not permit it, then we have problems in the school (Educator One).

For the success of the community, the family and the school, everyone must work
together. The community under study has done a remarkably good job of developing
strong partnerships, leading to recognition and awards for the school within the state of
Veracruz. MX Parent Two explained that the community school has been “recognized on
a regional level for the communication between principals, teachers, students, and
parents, everyone recognized on a state level." This success is best understood through a lens of culture, with the cultural characteristics of familismo and simpatia creating the facilitative conditions necessary for the strong relationship, which serves as the foundation for a successful partnership.

The role of race and culture becomes starkly apparent through a cross-case analysis of the participants' perceptions of the role of parents in family-school-community partnerships. In the US Case, embedded racism serves to structure the educators' perceptions of the ability of Mexican immigrant parents to contribute positively to their children's education. Furthermore, Mexican immigrant parents exhibit a "double consciousness" that leads to an internal devaluing of their personal worth within their community. In the MX Case, cohesion and cooperation are emphasized, as is the value of familismo, which promotes the valuing of family and extended networks of support. This understanding of the parent's role as active and involved in partnerships stands in stark contrast to the US Case's perception of the Mexican immigrant parent as hobbled by barriers rooted in the culture of their population (language, citizenship status, etc.) and unable to contribute effectively to her child's education. The expectations of parental role and actual involvement of parents must be understood as founded in culture and any examination of perceptions of parental role must embrace culture and race as defining variables.

Even the Dead Know More Than Us: Isolation vs. Connection

People just stay separate. In Mexico, we have the game field right in the middle of the town, and all the peoples go and play there and see each other there. We've even got the dogs and the donkeys there. The game field is something that ties
everybody together, but in Jamesville it is over there by the cemetery. Only the dead people! They know more than us! US Parent Two

The role of parents cannot be viewed in isolation. It is inexorably linked with societal perceptions of the role of Latinos in the community. From the US Case emerged a portrait of the Mexican immigrant parent as isolated and separated from the rest of the school community. This isolation mirrors the isolation Mexican immigrant children experience in the US school under study and is reflected in the isolation and separation the Mexican immigrant population experiences in the community of focus. From the discussions of the participants, striking similarities emerged between the strong connections exhibited in the two small communities under study. However, a severe contrast was apparent between the close connections enjoyed by non-Latino members of the US community and the austere isolation experienced by Mexican immigrants in the US community. Just as the role of Mexican immigrant parents in US schools must be understood to be a function of embedded and institutionalized racism, the role of the Mexican immigrant family in the US community under study must also be understood to be a function of this same racist ideology. This becomes glaringly apparent when the two cases are examined concurrently.

Each morning in the community in Mexico, I would wake to the sound of talking. Women were sweeping the porches and chatting with neighbors; men were making arrangements to travel to other towns together, and children were meeting friends in the community field as they walked to school. This pattern of visiting and conversation continued throughout the day, wrapping up with jovial talks on porches facing the community field as a local teen walked his cow and calf home, and a group of
community children played soccer until it was too dark to see the ball. Connections are important in the town, and people make time to speak to and visit with each other. Parents in the US Case spoke often of their communities in Mexico, reminiscing about life in a community where people “speak to you” and contrasting this life with their current situation, sharing, “It would be better. In Mexico people are friendlier; here you know only a few people or if you have American friends, they can’t even see you or don’t see you” (US Parent Four). Across the cases, participants’ commitment to the importance of interaction and involvement by all members of a partnership was consistent. However, this belief exhibits marked incongruence with the lived experience of Mexican immigrant families in the US community of study.

When participants in the MX Parents’ focus group were asked to describe their community, they focused on the connections within the community. “We talk with everyone and we know them,” explained MX Parent Four. MX Parent Three further described families in the community, sharing, “But the people that stay are just a few, but the families are still increasing. The people are calm, good workers and talk to everyone.” Agreeing, MX Parent Four stressed the importance of being agreeable and cooperative when asked to share what makes her community special, “That things here are calm, the life here is so calm.” The importance of being good to others and getting along is passed from adults to children in the community, with MX Parent Three sharing, “What the teachers have told us is that that we should teach them values, to be friendly and for them to help each other.” From my experience in the community, these values are readily apparent in community members’ willingness to help one another and in the time devoted to sharing in one another’s lives through discourse and involvement.
The strong focus on connections in Mexico clearly differs from the disconnected experiences shared by Mexican immigrants in the US Case. Through these experiences, a portrait of intense separation and isolation, which ultimately impacts participants' perceptions of self-worth, emerged. US Parent Two contrasted his experience in Mexico with his experience in the US. “In Mexico we see many families walking in the streets; they say, “Hi,” or ask about our day and our kids, here there is none of that” (US Parent Two). US Parent Three also shared that her experience “is different because in Mexico you are with your family, they speak your language, and many people talk to you. You have many friends.” US Parent Four further explained that this disconnect leads to loneliness and isolation, “We feel lonely and sad. It is no good to ride down the road or walk in a store, and never anyone speaks to you.” This isolation is pervasive throughout community and school interactions. US Parent Two asserted that even “the dead” know more that Mexican immigrants in his town.

In the little towns in Mexico everybody knows each other, and they talk, and they play. And every afternoon, the guys go and play together. Over here it is a little different. For us on the weekends, we stay in or we go out, and it is only us and our friends. There is not much communication. The people just think different. People just stay separate. In Mexico, we have the game field right in the middle of the town, and all the peoples go and play there and see each other there. We’ve even got the dogs and the donkeys there. The game field is something that ties everybody together, but in Jonesville it is over there by the cemetery. Only the dead people! They know more than us! (US Parent Two)

The community professional linked this isolation with race.
They (Mexican immigrants) have really tried to be a part of the community, as much as they are allowed to be. You know we have a racial thing in this area; whether you’re African American or Hispanic there is a racial thing in this area that we deal with. And that, I have a difficult time with that, you know I really do. Feelings of separation and isolation are not experienced only by parents in the community, but also by children in the school. US Educator Two shared that two Mexican immigrant children in her classroom typically connect only with each other, “you don’t really see them mingling with other people.” Agreeing, US Educator One stated, “They never really formed a bond.” The children try to stay together during breaks and lunch, explained the educator.

And they are both sweet boys, they really are, and it is more that Hector is really quiet and Rojelio is really outspoken. I know when we line up for the bathrooms Hector is always at the back and Rojelio hangs back to be with him, and when we go to lunch Hector goes to his book bag to get his money and Rojelio follows him and they get in the back of the line (US Educator Two).

This creates a concern for the Community Professional, who believed the children are disconnected from their non-Latino peers.

A big issue we talked about was the children not making friends. They had their Mexican friends, but not here, you know; that was a big concern of mine, and I felt like some of these other things that were manifesting themselves and showing up we would at least began to handle, not eliminate, and that was one of the biggest things we were trying to work with, because you know friends are important. And you know they (the teachers) said they have this person as a friend.
and I said, "No, you know what I am talking about, as a friend you come home with me, and I come home with you," and I knew that was not happening with those Mexican children.

The parents discussed the impact their isolation within the community and in school interactions has on their children, by emphasizing the link between this isolation and their involvement in their children’s education. As a result of being isolated from others in the community, parents remain unaware of how and when to get their children involved with others and in activities. The relationship between the close-knit nature of the US community and institutionalized and embedded racism forms a barrier to involvement in family-school-community partnerships for Mexican immigrant families.

The US community, much like the MX community, is very close-knit with much informal family involvement in schools and activities. When discussing how an outsider feels coming into the school, the US Educators shared that it is difficult to come in as an outsider.

In Jonesville, it’s kinda hard because a lot of you grew up together, and outsiders are automatically going to feel different in a small school, whereas, if it were a larger school where people were moving in and out constantly from lots of different schools. But these people live here; their mothers went to school here; their grandmothers went to school here (US Educator Four).

The US educators further shared that there is an underlying awareness of “which parents will do what” for different partnership efforts.

When, you know, you need help like with the blood drive, you know Mrs. Day is going to help; you know Mrs. Irene is going to help; you know all these people
are going to do this, and so it's not like you say, "We don't need you this year we have these new people;" you know who is going to help, and you call the same old people that do the same old thing and do a great job at it. They are going to come and ask you when it is, like, "When is the blood drive this year? I want to put it on my calendar" (US Educator Two).

For new members of the community, "They don't understand; it's almost like these jobs are already taken and an outsider coming in," shared US Educator Two. Agreeing, US Educator Four asserted, "You're right on that' it's not that it's real well accepted, but I guess their philosophy is, if it's not broke don't fix it; kinda everything is going okay." This, according to US Educator One is "what is accepted and expected." The group agreed and reflected, "We know what works here and what doesn't" (US Educator One). These informal connections and established partnerships are difficult to join as an outsider, regardless of "nationality" (US Educator Two). However, in examining the concept of embedded racism, the amplification of this difficulty for a marginalized Latino population is readily apparent.

Language, along with informal connections, is used to define who is "in" and who is "out" in a community. In the US educators' focus group, there were no Latina/o educators represented, for the simple reason that there were no Latina/o educators in the school. This leads to an "us" versus "them" perspective epitomized in the language used to describe the Latino population in the community. "Those people," "new kids on the block," "different" were all used to typify the Latino population. US Educator One explained, "We don't have any adults or teachers that are from that population that teach or do anything. I think every teacher out here is so willing, though, to communicate with
those people,” when asked to reflect on the impact of race on family-school-community partnerships. Apparent in the language used in this statement, “that population,” “those people,” is the status of immigrants as outsiders, not fully integrated into the community, the “us” implied by the educator’s statement. Reflecting on the role of race created a sense of disequilibrium and frustration for US Educator Two, who responded strongly, “That question has got me baffled, because I don’t think race, the language barrier more than ethnicity!...We don’t care, but if you can’t speak English, then there is the barrier.” By focusing on issues of difference and ascribing power to these issues, participants neglected to reflect sufficiently upon the role of a racist ideology that perpetuates societal perceptions of minority inferiority. This neglect serves to relegate the Latino population in this community to a persistent status as outsiders.

Furthermore, the onus of responsibility for discovering ways to successfully join the partnership is left to the parents. “Well, I’ve just been here a few years, and I was comfortable when I came in. I made myself be comfortable, though, it was, you all are going to like me whether you want to or not” shared US Educator Two, alluding to her belief that parents must make an effort to become comfortable in the community. This perception contributes to the perpetuation of the cycle of embedded racism, by placing the “burden of failure” (Nunez, 1999) on the parents, people who have little power due to their marginalized status.

The process of isolation and separation described by US participants is not a result of mean-spiritedness, a lack of caring or cruelty on the part of the participants. US Educator One’s assertion that “we know what works here and what doesn’t” and that it is “what is accepted and expected” is indicative of the power of embedded racism. Through
schooling practices that legitimize inequalities, children come to develop a racist ideology that permeates their perceptions of others and perceptions of self. These core beliefs are reflected in societal practices, practices that leave communities divided and groups marginalized. The only way to eradicate the legitimization of inequality is through the building of connections and the fostering of cohesive, collaborative partnerships, partnerships in which every member is valued as an equal and a person of worth. The US participants indicated great willingness to build these necessary connections, creating a portrait of hope for the future.

*A Portrait of Hope: Values as Resources for Empowerment*

The participants in the MX Case asserted, “Everything begins with a kid” (MX Parent Two). However, while I honor this belief, from the cross-case analysis there emerged the understanding that it all begins with the adults, who impact the kids; the parents, the educators, the community professionals and the school administration. The participants in the MX Case asserted,

Kids in the family reflect the adults they live with. They do what they see the older people do, do what the people who live with them do. And they do the same because they imitate everything they see, it is like a boss they have (MX Educator One).

The US educators reflected a similar perception of the family and parents as role models. “That’s just like with children who are bad, and we talk about how bad they are and then you look at their home situation and see why they are that way” (US Educator Four). MX Parent One further explained that all adults who interact with children serve as role models. “The Teacher is an example for the kids… The teacher is the person for
the kid to imagine to be like” (MX Parent One). In agreement, MX Educator One stated, "He is a role model for the kids.” What is learned from adults manifests through interactions in the school, often serving to separate and isolate groups of students from each other. US Educator Four explained, “It’s just like in the classroom; the cliquey children are the ones whose parents have some money or are in the same social group.”

The US educators also discussed the values they have observed Mexican immigrant parents modeling for their children. “The parents are really cordial. They are really nice when they come into enroll their children...They are very cordial, smiling and all.” These values manifest as good manners in their children, according to US Educator Two, “And their children are well-behaved and have good manners.”

This assertion emphasizes that parents must model for children good values and behaviors. The concept of embedded racism proposes that through interactions with adults, children internalize a racist ideology. Thus, the values that adults model can be used to positively affect change in the current social hegemony. MX Parent Two provided support for this link, stating, “The relationship between the reflection by the children of what they learn from their parents and their teachers, this is what impacts the children?” The group of parents quickly provided affirmation for Parent Two’s quest for clarification. The educators also agreed that adults must attempt to model good values for the children.

What we try to do here in the school and what every adult should do is talk with the children. For example, if we want the kids to be good people, we should do that (model it) to teach them. Let’s say that the kid sees that the teacher teaches, and he does what the teacher does (MX Educator Three).
The MX educators further linked the successful, positive change that can occur as a result of partnerships with the responsibility of adults to serve as good role models.

And the most important is the responsibility, like right now that we have an interview, and we have to attempt and not say, “I don’t have time,” we have to aspire to change. The first example is the teacher and the associations in general; we shouldn’t be separated (MX Educator Two).

This link provides the impetus for children to do the “right things instead of the wrong things,” according to MX Parent Three. In exploring the concept of embedded and institutionalized racism, we come to understand that not only does the involvement of adults in partnerships encourage children to do the “right things,” it also defines what these “right things” are, and through intentional reflection and effort, it can lead to the confronting of previously legitimized inequalities. The adults must make the first move; the disempowered must become empowered, and the privileged must be encouraged to reflect on their role in maintaining an oppressive, racist ideology.

*Power of Reflection*

The participants across both cases reflected on the impact of engaging in the focus group discussions and individual interviews. In Mexico, one parent explained that “these sessions have been good for me because it is helping me to better understand what goes on in my community, what programs are offered, and why we work.” In the US an educator shared, “It’s just like until we came in here today, I’ve not really stopped and thought so much about it as far as there is a boundary, but I just figured...” Later this same educator called her experience in the focus group discussions “an eye opener.” Agreeing, another educator stated, “It has been a delight; sometimes you don’t stop to
think." Through these assertions and my personal experience, the power of personal reflection became starkly apparent. Simply asking participants to reflect on their personal experiences and perceptions proved empowering and consciousness-raising.

Discussions with the US educators promoted perspective-taking within the group, leading to an increased awareness of the marginalized position of Mexican immigrants and fostering a desire to affect positive change in their community. "I would like to see something put in place to help this community," shared US Educator One. In subsequent discussions, the group of US educators shared personal efforts to involve Latino students and families in their classrooms. One educator had purchased a bilingual crossword puzzle book that she was using with her class; another shared that she had attempted to translate notes she sent home, and another described her desire to invite a mother from the Mexican immigrant community to come in and share cultural traditions with her class. However, all expressed extreme frustration with the lack of institutional and "higher level" support. This frustration starkly contrasts with the obvious pleasure expressed by participants in the MX Case regarding the administration and institutional support in their community.

Role of Administration

In the MX Case, participants expressed gratitude to the director of their community's school, calling him "the best benefit" and explaining, "Well, I think that the best benefit we have was that, not only is he a director, he cares about the school, he cares about bringing good resources to the school" (MX Parent Four). The parents shared that their director is to be admired for his "look towards progress." MX participants shared that the government "defines educational programs" and curriculum and that the
director is “responsible” for making sure that these programs are implemented in the
school. Though all participants in the partnership mutually shared responsibility, a great
deal of respect and honor were ascribed to the administration by the parents and
community members, who stressed that a “strong leader” is key to successful partnership
efforts. “If the director is not responsible, that means that the teachers are not responsible
either,” explained MX Parent Two.

In contrast to the support expressed by the MX Case participants, the US Case
participants expressed discouragement and frustration. US Educator Two expressed her
feelings that creating and facilitating partnerships is too much for individual teachers to
handle on their own.

Yes! If they could get one person started in the county, in the schools so the
teachers didn’t have to invent and they had something for those parents, I think
teachers would be more willing to get on board with it. But it just its going to be a
lot more effort if it is left to the classroom teacher.

The positive impact of partnerships is hindered by this lack of support according to US
Educator One.

I think they are supposed to impact it in a big way. Supposed (emphasis added) to.
I feel like they do with what we have available, We don’t have, I think sometimes
enough support. I have gotten students out of other classrooms, parents come with
other parents, I mean we just do the best we can here in little old Jonesville, is the
way I feel… Yeah, because I went on the internet and looked all of this up here,
Honey Boo, before you got here and there are a lot more supports for bigger city
schools.
The US educators expressed their discouragement, asserting that change starts at a much higher level within the institution of public education than individual classrooms. They stressed that their school struggles because it doesn’t ever get started at this higher level.

The US educators were not satisfied with solely discussing the fallacies of the institution; they also spent time brainstorming ways to address these weaknesses. US Educator One initially focused on the importance of structure. “That’s where something structured, volunteer-wise would be beneficial for our school...To utilize all the capabilities we have around us.”

Structure was also a focus for US Educator Four, who shared, “I think the key word we said earlier was structure. And having a way to organize so we can reach these people, someone trained on how to do that so it would be possible.” From her assertion, the group discussed the possibility of establishing a committee responsible for developing concepts and forming a structure to implement these concepts in partnership form. The educators agreed that present efforts put in place by the administration would be fortified by establishing a committee intentionally focused on developing comprehensive family-school-community partnerships with equal involvement by all community members. According to the US educators, this would help groups to become more integrated by providing opportunities for a “sharing of culture.” This, espoused the US educators, would in turn help to eradicate the feelings of inferiority experienced by Mexican immigrants.

Well, would it not put more of a value on their culture? I mean, I don’t know, but wouldn’t it make them seem more important? They are not totally living in an American world if their culture begins to emerge (US Educator One).
Resources and Contributing: Valuing Diversity

The US community professional, US parents and the participants in the MX Case asserted that part of becoming more connected is the recognition and valuing of diverse ways of contributing. This sub-theme began to emerge as I conducted the final interviews and discussions. As I struggled with my feelings that I was asking too much from the participants, I shared this struggle with one of my friends who had helped to facilitate my entry into the community of focus in Mexico. He assured me that “it is okay, we all want to help.” We disconnected our phone conversation, and a few moments later, he called me back to excitedly exclaim that he “had the answer!” We could, he shared, prepare a special meal for the participants to show my gratitude. This was the “best” answer he exclaimed, stressing that “this way they will really know you are thankful.” I agreed that it sounded good and proceeded to my final interview with the community professional.

While we were having our session, she reflected on something she had shared in the first interview, that often the families with whom she works cook special dishes for her to express their appreciation. She had previously explained that even though she has “never cared for Mexican food,” she eats these meals with joy because the meals are shared with “a good pride” in gratitude of the services she gives to the families. Laughing, she explained, “And I have learned to acquire a taste for this. And so there has been a lot of things that we have done and shared, and I think they have learned a lot from us, and we have learned a lot from them.” As she talked again about sharing meals with the families, my friend’s idea from earlier in the day echoed in my head. The next week, while I was conducting a focus group session with the US parents, one of the parents shared that often she prepares food for people to express her gratitude.
Some people say they won’t accept money, or maybe the people don’t have money to pay, but Angelica and I could cook Mexican food, like for Mrs. Helen. I will cook Mexican food for you if you will help my child. You may say, “No payment,” and I may say, “Okay.” But I don’t like people that think everything is for them, and everything is free. I do not want to get something for nothing; I want to give something back…something special to say thank you (US Parent One).

Her words triggered my thoughts of the community professional and my friend, encouraging me to return to the transcripts to see if this relationship would stand as significant across participants.

In Mexico, the community professional also discussed the importance of preparing meals for people providing services for the community. She explained that since there is not a lot of money to pay these people, food is one way to show the community’s appreciation. The MX educators shared that often families invite educators into their homes for a meal to express gratitude, an occurrence I witnessed on a couple of occasions while staying in the community, once in the house of one of the parents included in the parents’ focus group. The parents also shared that when community service professionals, including doctors, provide services in the community, community members provide housing, office space and meals for the professionals to support their work.

The idea of sharing food as a way of paying homage and expressing gratitude is especially significant, since it emerged across all participants, except for the US educators’ group. This sharing is significant in that this information demonstrates the
value this culture places on diverse ways of contributing. People in the community in Mexico do not expect to solely contribute to partnerships financially, or even just through time and finances; they expect to be involved on many different levels and in many different ways in family-school-community partnerships. As this population immigrates to the US, they bring these expectations for involvement with them, as demonstrated in the discourse of the US community professional and US parents. Thus, it is necessary that US schools develop the awareness of these diverse ways of contributing and harness this power for partnership efforts. In the professional literature, Delgado Bernal (2002) elucidated upon the importance of respecting ways of learning, teaching and contributing that are specific to culture, termed "pedagogies of the home" (p. 109). While an in-depth exploration of the means for identifying and incorporating diverse ways of contributing to partnerships is beyond the scope of this study, the awareness of this diversity emerged as a significant cross-case theme.

Hopes

The participants all expressed hopes for more successful partnerships and communities in the future. US Educator Four explained that if people had more opportunities to interact with each other, they could learn more about each other and there would be a greater sense of unity.

There would be more of a unitedness, I would think. I would guess everybody would be able to intermingle more, or whatever, and that type of thing and be able to share the cultures together, and you know, their culture has some good aspects, and ours does, too, and just intermingled more together. As far as if we are going to be put together, we might as well get along together and be more united.
This unity would create an environment that would allow all members of the partnership to be involved and active in partnership efforts without the fear of discrimination and without being marginalized, a hope expressed by US Educator One.

And I would hope that each parent would have a comfort zone within this building when they walked in. That would be my hope, that they would feel comfortable about volunteering, asking, communicating, whatever, that no one would ever make them feel inferior because sometimes with our culture and upbringing we feel inferior anyway, and when others emphasize that, it just makes it worse. But to have something structured like she said...

MX Educator Three supported the hope that all people will be able to participate “without conditions.”

I think that the biggest hope that we have or should have for the people of this community is that of changing the mentality, so it could be a help without conditions and a benefit for everyone. We have an encouraging hope for the kids.

The conditions and boundaries that serve to marginalize groups of people will perpetually exist if society continues to fail to attend to the structures that maintain such barriers. US Educator Four shared, “I’ve not really stopped and thought about trying to have a solution for the boundary; I’ve just thought that it was there.” She, like many others in society, had never reflected upon how this perceived social boundary is maintained and what role she could play in eradicating this barrier. Through conversation with her peers she became more aware of the pervasive nature of this “boundary” and more empowered to engage in efforts to address inequalities in access to partnerships.
This was one of the hopes of the educators from the MX Case. He explained, “An important hope from this interview, this knowledge as a professional, as a parent and as a friend, is for the children and the community to take advantage of it, because we are talking about serious stuff.” He further asserted, “I know it is in good hands,” indicating his support of the researcher’s efforts to strengthen partnerships in the US. MX Parent One also emphasized her hopes that as a result of the study’s focus immigrants to the US will be able to engage more effectively in the educational lives of their children, stating, “The question here for hopes is very, very important because it is for you, for immigrants, for the help.”

The US educators reflected on their personal feelings that all members of the community would benefit from strengthened connections in the community. Just think about the Utopia concept of world peace if everybody gets together, and with the cultural differences, if we could try to come up in the world and help each other, and, you know, that would be possible to do instead of trying to be so segmented (US Educator Four).

US Educator Three explained that everyone is harmed when inequality is legitimized, and certain groups are marginalized.

The thing about it hurts the victim, but the sad part about it is the person causing the difference or seeing the difference is just as much the victim. They don’t know what they are missing by not allowing that culture into their lives, so they are both the victims.
To combat this isolation, US Educator Four shared that those with privilege must “reach out” to those who are oppressed. She explained that one of her hopes is that the work she just begun in the focus groups will continue.

To me, it would be what we are doing right now, trying to reach out to those that are underprivileged, you know, what we’re doing in different categories, in different ways.

US Educator One espoused her belief that everyone is the same in wanting the best for the children, sharing, “God made us all, and we all want to be happy and have a roof over our heads and buy things for our children, you know.” She emphasized her belief that this is common ground for the work that must be done, solidifying her commitment to the importance of family-school-community partnerships with the statement:

We are for Jonesville Elementary School; we are none better than any class, anybody else, we are all here for the main purpose of teaching them and parents have to feel valued as part of their child’s education.

A portrait of hope for greater unity and stronger partnerships and willingness to engage in the work required emerged across the two cases.

**Summary of the Chapter**

Through the cross-case analysis, many important connections and exceptions emerged. Through reflection and continued analysis, these themes were distilled into three overarching meta-themes, Collectivist Worldview vs. Individualism and Autonomy, The Institutionalized Ideology of Racism and A Portrait of Hope: Values as Resources for Empowerment. These meta-themes are indicative of pervasive, subsuming nature of culture and race. Culture and race cannot be separated from our daily interactions or from
our interpretation of these experiences. Instead, culture and race provide the lens through which we make meaning of our experiences and integrate this meaning into our views of our self and of others. Culture and race form the foundation of worldview and, thus, drive our interactions. This reality became starkly apparent through the cross-case analysis and, as such, is represented in the presentation and interpretation of themes.

The themes in this chapter were presented in a manner congruent with the presentation of within-case themes in Chapter Four, beginning with perceptions of the structure and function of partnerships and progressing through descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of participants, to end ultimately with an understanding of the role of institutional forces on partnerships. To complete this progression, one must also include a presentation of the participants' hopes for the future. Participants in this study expressed significant hopes concerning unity and connection. Thus, these hopes served to provide the frame of the portrait that emerged. I term the hopes the "frame," because by building upon these hopes, members of society can be empowered to examine the impact of embedded and institutionalized racism on their personal interactions with others and on interactions among groups in their larger community.

When one looks at a portrait, one does not first notice the glass. However, it is also impossible to view the portrait without looking through the glass. The frame gives the portrait its stability, holding glass and picture solidly together. From the cross-case analysis emerged the understanding that we each choose our frame, and by choosing the frame of hope, we can begin to recognize the importance of the glass of culture and race and more closely reflect upon the forces holding it in place. Through this reflection, one becomes more aware of one's own role and empowered to make positive change. This is
the beginning of the conversation and in the words of US Educator Four, “a real eye-opener.”

This chapter attempted to honor the “uniquely individual” (Dillard, 2000, p. 676) and “collective and connected” (Dillard, 2000, p. 676) experiences and perceptions of the participants, through a parallel focus on within-case themes and the influence of culture and race. While referents of culture and race were used to define the meta-themes, the sub-themes chosen were indicative of within-case themes presented in Chapter Four. Researcher interpretation was interwoven throughout the presentation of findings. This interpretation was founded in understanding gleaned from the professional literature with these linkages interspersed throughout the presentation of the cross-case analysis.
CHAPTER SIX

Summary and Recommendations

Chapter Four presented the within-case analysis of participant responses, including the themes and sub-themes that emerged. In Chapter Five the cross-case analysis, the next stage of data reduction, was presented, including linkages to the professional literature. This chapter synthesizes the preceding research analysis and interpretation, distilling the information into a central focus on the research questions that guided the study. This analysis is further linked to the literature, situating the comprehensive understanding gleaned through the study into the current professional discourse. A focus on the implications of the research findings for future research, for counselor education and for the field of professional school counseling is included in an effort to address needs in the field. The chapter closes with personal reflections by the researcher concerning researcher reciprocity, the process and outcomes of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to engage in an exploration of the similarities and differences among family-school-community partnerships in Veracruz, MX and North Carolina, US. The research included an intentional focus on encouraging the empowerment of families involved in such partnerships, by creating a space for the sharing of participant stories in efforts to develop a collective consciousness leading to a community of empowerment. The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of Mexican nationalist parents and Mexican immigrant parents with family-school-community partnerships?
2. How are these experiences informed and impacted by their socioeconomic and cultural position in society?

3. How do participants in family-school-community partnerships with Mexican nationalist and Mexican immigrant parents perceive their individual roles and the roles of others in the partnerships?

4. How are the experiences and responses reflective of societal practices?

These questions were answered through an analysis of specific responses from participants, including the examination of the responses with an intentional focus on the role and impact of culture and race.

**Question One**

*What are the experiences of Mexican nationalist parents and Mexican immigrant parents with family-school-community partnerships?*

The experience of Mexican nationalist and Mexican immigrant parents emerged as a multifaceted construct. Three central components: *Defining Partnerships, Role of Participants* and *Function of Partnerships*, together formed the comprehensive portrait of the experience of Mexican nationalist and Mexican immigrant parents with family-school-community partnerships that emerged through the data analysis process.

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The Experiences of Mexican Nationalists and Mexican Immigrants

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Defining Partnerships

During the within-case analysis of the data, it became increasingly apparent that participants had particular ways of defining and describing partnerships. These definitions provide significant insight into the experiences of the participants, as each participant formulated his or her personal perception of the definition of partnerships from personal experiences. Within the US Case emerged the theme of *Allies in the Education of Children: Defining Partnerships*. This theme highlighted the perceptions of family-school-community partnerships as a “connecting together” (US Educator One) of family, school and community with the intent to interact as “allies in the education of the children” (US Educator One). From the case, it became clear that participants viewed partnerships as an “investment” (US Educator Three) intended to benefit children. On the most foundational level, partnerships were defined as “the family, the school and the community working together to help the children” (US Educator Two). Participants in the US Case stressed the importance of everyone “working together equally” (US Parent Two) in efforts to help and benefit children. This definition of partnerships held a common acknowledgement with the definition that emerged from the MX Case of the importance of total involvement of the family, school and the community.

In the MX Case, participants initially defined partnerships as the coming together of the community, the family and the school, as shared in the theme, *Every Person in the Community Must Help: The Structure of Partnerships*. However, within this theme it became clear that the importance of partnerships was not to be confined solely to an educational focus; instead, partnerships were portrayed as being intricately woven throughout all aspects of the participants’ lives. MX Parent Two explained this most
succinctly, "The capacity of the school and the development within the community of the families of the society and the institutions depend on associations. That is it, more or less." Furthermore, the MX Case participants asserted, "The problems that the school has are shown in the community" (MX Parent Two). This perception that all facets of society are intertwined and interrelated is founded in the collective worldview of this population and as such starkly contrasts with the individualistic, autonomous worldview evident in the US Case.

The parallel relationship between the insular focus on the school in partnerships in the US and the collective focus on the community in partnerships in MX is best understood though the construct of context in culture. Hall (1984) explained that within high context (HC) cultures, the population intensely values connections and group cohesiveness. In a low context (LC) culture (Hall, 1984), a greater level of individualism is demonstrated with less intense involvement between members of the population. In the US Case, Hall’s (1984) description of a LC culture is readily apparent, as is Espinoza-Herold’s (2003) explanation that schools in the US promote the values of independence and autonomy. The strong emphasis on individualism and competition contributes to the devaluing of principles important to a collectivist culture, including cohesiveness, collaboration and connections (Giroux, 1992). This insular focus on the school, rather than a collective focus on the community, shapes the Mexican immigrant parent’s experience with partnerships in the US.

From the MX Case, it became clear that the Mexican nationalist parents view partnerships as the means to strengthen the community. Loyalty to one’s community and the subsequent sense of responsibility one develops concerning the success of one’s
community is a culturally constructed phenomenon (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Through socialization in their culture of origin, the Mexican immigrant parents, all of whom emigrated to NC from Veracruz, developed an understanding of partnerships as a means to promote the success of the community. The stark difference in the focus and purpose of partnerships they encounter in the US creates within the immigrant parents a sense of disequilibrium. This disequilibrium leads to frustration and confusion about how to be involved, as evident in the next component of participants’ experiences, which explores the role of parents and other participants.

Role of Participants

Through analysis of the data, it emerged that participants perceived their experience to be in part defined by their perceptions of the role of participants in partnerships. As such, research question three is subsumed by question one’s overarching focus on the experiences of parents with partnerships.

Question three.

How do participants in family-school-community partnerships with Mexican nationalist and Mexican immigrant parents perceive their individual roles and the roles of others in the partnerships?

The Mexican immigrant parents in the US Case expressed a sense of disequilibrium concerning their role in partnerships. They shared their desire to be involved, while also sharing their uncertainty of how this involvement should be structured. Delgado-Gaitan (2001) explained that often immigrant families for whom English serves as their second language suffer acute isolation from the educational...
experiences of their children due to a lack of knowledge about expectations and operations of the school. The US educators echoed Delgado-Gaitain’s assertion, sharing, “Sometimes I feel like they don’t really know what is going on. They trust us with their children; they don’t speak our language; they’re not communicating with us; they just trust us with their children. With stronger partnerships they could give more to their children; they could help the school out more. The bond would just be stronger. Sometimes I just feel like they don’t have any clue (US Educator Two).

This disequilibrium is best understood through an examination of the process that occurs as Mexican immigrant parents engage in partnerships in the US.

These parents enter the US community, bringing certain expectations of partnerships, expectations they have developed through their previous experiences with partnerships in Mexico. Upon encountering partnerships structured much differently and encountering racism and marginalization in interactions with school professionals, these parents begin to feel disconnected from their children’s education (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001). The US Community Professional described the efforts of Mexican immigrant parents to be involved and the institutional barriers that ultimately create the sense of disequilibrium for parents.

And the unique thing that I saw with those two families, and, as I said, I’m not an expert in any of this, but just in my dealings with going to Jonesville school, these two families did their best to go to parent-teacher conferences, to go to anything. Even at times, I know, not understanding, they would still come away from meetings, especially before I became involved in their lives, coming away from
meetings not knowing what was being said. They wanted so desperately to be involved in their children’s lives, and they would come away from meetings not knowing what had gone on and what was being said.

Parents are left “desperately” wanting to be involved and unaware of how to initiate that involvement. From their marginalized position in society, this initiation proves even more difficult.

The problems the children experience academically and behaviorally at school are often ascribed to the lack of involvement by the parents (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999), as shared by US Parent One, who explained that her child’s teacher accused her of not helping her child with his homework and not providing consequences for his behavior at school. This placing the blame upon the parents and the home, asserted Nunez (1995), is a function of the racist ideology that persists as a result of embedded racism, an assertion that will be further explored later in this chapter. In the US Case, it was clear that parents and educators were on two different sides of the fence, with the community professional serving as a bridge facilitating interactions between the two. Unfortunately while this bridge creates the link necessary for the two groups to work together at particular times, it is unable to completely draw the two groups together completely, and parents are still marginalized within the community and isolated from the education of their children.

The role of parents was portrayed much differently in the MX Case, signified by the theme *My Family Will Work: The Role of Parents*. In the MX Case, parents are actively involved on many levels in their children’s education. Participants explained, “It’s very important because it is about responsibility and service; members of the family will carry out chores in the association” (MX Educator Three). The belief that all
participants, family members, school professionals and community members must participate equally and actively in partnerships was pervasive across participants in the MX Case. This participation occurs as fundraising, providing services and sharing cultural traditions with children. The partnership carries out these activities in the community, in the homes of families and in the school. There is a high level of cohesion and interconnectedness among members of the partnership. Through the descriptions of parents, educators and the community professional in the MX Case, a portrait of unity and connection emerged. According to Valdes (1996), this portrait is congruent with the strong networks of cultural support necessary for upward mobility within Mexican society. Success depends on networks of connection (Valdes, 1996), and, as such, these connections are interwoven into the fabric of society, with all members of a community being viewed as necessary and valuable to partnership efforts. Cohesion and collaboration are central components of Mexican culture, manifesting as strong commitment to family and community (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). Participants in the MX Case reflected this commitment in their explanation that all families and other community members must be actively involved in family-school-community partnerships, stating, “Always the institutions and the families work together. Everybody! Always!” (MX Parent Five).

Function of Partnerships

The parent’s role is ultimately defined by the purpose of the partnership. In the US Case, partnerships are viewed solely as a means to provide a better educational experience to the children. Thus, the role of parents is defined by the school, which serves as the planner and determinant of all partnership efforts. In the MX Case,
partnerships are viewed as a necessary component of strengthening the community. As such, all participants are involved, equally and parents are valued as active, worthy members of partnerships. In the US Case, Mexican immigrants are marginalized in the community and presently are not viewed as providing strong contributions to their children’s education. Educators focused on language as a barrier serving to impede the positive involvement of parents in partnerships, and along with language, embedded racism serves to devalue the cultural contributions of Mexican immigrant families, including familismo and simpatia. By devaluing the parents’ contribution and focusing on the barrier created by language, Mexican immigrant parents are effectively barred from active participation in family-school-community partnerships. Furthermore, the definitive difference in the purpose of partnerships in MX and the US creates a sense of disequilibrium and, ultimately, frustration within parents.

Though initially participants from both cases focused on the importance of partnerships helping children, participants within the MX Case broadened this focus, stating, “Everything has an origin and a beginning, which is a kid, then the teachers and parents. The problems that the school has are shown in the community” (MX Parent Two). At first, participants in the MX Case focus on the children, but quickly these participants linked the development of the children with the success of the community. The link between partnerships and the success of the community was prominent across participants within the MX Case. In every instance that I expressed gratitude to community members, I was told that people were happy to help because children are the future of the community. The collective focus that emerged from the MX Case stands out as significantly different from the insular focus on partnerships as a means for improving
education expressed in the US Case. This difference in focus manifests as differences in the perceptions of participants’ roles. Participants in the US were expected to be involved through the school. Partnership endeavors were carried out in the school or are designed by the school and carried out in the community. This is quite different in Mexico, where partnership endeavors were organized by parents, educators and community members and were physically conducted in the school, in family homes and in the community. Through the analysis it became clear that partnerships in Mexico are developed with an intentional focus on promoting good citizenship qualities in children, in order to ensure the continued success of the community. Thus, the function of partnerships formed the final component constructing the experience of parents with family-school-community partnerships.

Question Two & Question Four

How are these experiences informed and impacted by their socioeconomic and cultural position in society?

How are the experiences and responses reflective of societal practices?

Through analysis, it became increasingly apparent that research questions two and four are inexorably linked. Critical race theory posits that “racism is ordinary, not aberrational—“normal science,” the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). As such, the weak construction of these two research questions as separate entities is startlingly and tragically, this beginning researcher might add, apparent. The impact of the participants’ cultural and socioeconomic position in society on their experiences with partnerships cannot be separated and studied in isolation of societal
practices. No, quite the contrary, the socioeconomic and cultural positions of participants must be understood to be established, maintained and eternally intertwined with societal practices. Critical race theory views race as socially constructed and variable throughout history (Lopez, 2004). The very nature of this social construction binds the experiences of individuals and groups with their racial and cultural position within society. Furthermore, critical race theory asserts that intersections of race and poverty are complex and multifaceted (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Supporting the intricate connections of race and class, Haney Lopez (1995) defined race as a construct that constitutes "an integral part of a whole social fabric that includes gender and class relations (p. 196). One simply cannot explore the experience of people of color as a function of class or socioeconomic status without also examining the role of race.

Consequently, the two research questions are most appropriately examined simultaneously.

In seeking to understand the impact of one's societal position on one's experiences, it is first necessary to understand the institutions within society that define societal position. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) postulated that within the racialized society of the US, societal position must be evaluated and explored through the lens of race and racism. The centrality of race within our society as a force that divides groups and ascribes power and rewards continues to remain as pertinent and prominent today as it was in 1903, when W.E.B. DuBois avowed that the defining issue of the 20th century would prove to be the color line (DuBois, 1903). Furthermore, as long as discourse concerning the impact of racism on the experiences of Mexican immigrant families continues to be marginalized and muted in favor of discussions of cultural deficits,
inequality of access to such partnerships will persist. Through the reflections of participants in the US Case, it is clear that a discourse of deficits significantly impacts the experience of Mexican immigrant parents in interactions with the educational system that serves their children.

A Discourse of Deficits

Deficiency theories have been used throughout history to situate the causality of the marginalization of minority populations within the populations themselves (Barrera, 1997). These theories posit that minority populations occupy inferior strata within society, due to particular deficiencies found in the biological make-up, culture or social structure of the minority group (Barrera, 1997). Cultural deficiency theories have been used widely to explain the academic struggles of Latino students. According to deficiency theories, culturally bound characteristics, including interdependency rather than autonomy, language, and an internal present-focus rather than future-focus are deficiencies that manifest as academic failure (Barrera, 1997). These deficiencies are amplified by poverty, ultimately leading to an internalization of feelings of inferiority that further limit and marginalize minority groups. Out of these deficiency theories has grown the deficit hypothesis (Deyhle, 1995), which espouses that students are evaluated in public education by the characteristics that they do not have, rather than by the strengths that they possess. Thus, Mexican immigrant students are penalized for the characteristics they lack, English language proficiency, middle-class European American values and financial stability. Strengths dominant in Mexican culture, including interdependency, familismo and simpatia, are not valued in the US classroom. The disconnect between the culture regarded as appropriate in the classroom and the home
culture of the children results in cultural conflicts (Cummins, 1986) that further serve to isolate and marginalize the Mexican immigrant students.

In the US Case, the pervasive nature of deficiency theories in the structure and practice of education in the US is quite apparent. Initially, in the interviews with parents and educators in the US, the language barrier superseded all other aspects of discussion concerning the involvement of Mexican immigrant parents in family-school-community partnerships. Every question I asked was met with assertions of the difficulty of overcoming the language barrier. This initial response is significant, in that by placing the blame for disconnects among home, school and community on the force of language, “the burden of failure” (Nunez, 1995) is situated squarely in the deficiency of the Mexican immigrant culture. The Mexican immigrant population is accused of not making greater efforts to be able to work successfully with the schools of their children, and the school is excused from working to develop connections with these families.

This process is evident in the data gleaned from the US Case. The US educators focused strongly on the language barrier as an impediment to parents’ ability to participate effectively in their children’s education. Moreover, US Educator Two shared her belief that Mexican immigrant parents do not truly want to learn English.

And I think if they had that desire for the partnership, it would be there. I really do, because I know, like with the ESL teacher, they’ve offered free courses to teach English to Spanish speaking parents, and they had, like, one person show up. So I don’t know that they really want to speak our language and know that much about our culture, or it seems that way anyway.
The US community professional further explained that the personal opinion of US Educator Two that parents aren’t doing enough, is pervasive at Jonesville School and evident in the practices in place. She shared a previous personal encounter with an educator at the school.

I know what that teacher’s thinking was, and she told me, “If they are going to come here, it is their responsibility to learn English,” and not her responsibility at all that she try to work through this, and that really bothered me.

Later in the conversation, she disclosed her feeling that the school as an institution assumes little responsibility for working to overcome the language barrier and involve non-English speaking families. She linked the experience she had shared earlier with this overarching sense of apathy, stating, “And she was more blunt with it than others, though I never really sensed that it was an issue with them; if the kids get it they get it; if they don’t, they don’t; if the parents show up, they do; if they don’t, they don’t.” She continued to express her frustrations with the institution’s “not our problem” policy.

Right, it wasn’t something they saw as a priority to work through. And I don’t understand that, and maybe if you saw it as they are here just for a season, but these children are here all the time and are always going to be here. And that is where I had an issue.; that is why I keep saying, “We have a problem; we have a problem. Let’s work through it and find an answer because these children, most of them, will probably continue to be here. Some of them may move but most will be here, and if it is not this group, it is going to be another group of children to deal with, so wouldn’t it be easier to find a solution to deal with, instead of
battling all the time?” and that is just how it felt to me, always a battle of trying to see if we could work through this.

The experience shared by the community professional elucidates the perceived power of the language barrier and the ubiquitous perception that it is the responsibility of the Mexican immigrant population to make efforts to overcome this barrier. By ascribing total power to the barrier of language, the school perpetuates the deficiency theory, thus divesting itself of the burden of recognizing these parents, Mexican immigrant parents, as individuals of worth and value who deserve to be allowed an opportunity to be involved in their children’s formal education. This marginalization results in frustration and feelings of fear, isolation and inferiority for Mexican immigrant parents, expressed most eloquently by the personal experience of US Parent One.

When there are trips or events, when the kids go to the beach, there are few Hispanic parents that go. The majority of parents are Americans, and my kids tell me that almost every parent goes, and will I go, too. I go, but I am a little afraid. I go not with fear, but also not with the security that I would like to have.

Sometimes when I go to the trips with my child, the youngest one, when I go, I ride the bus, and the other Hispanic children go by themselves; so sometimes, I feel like a bean in the middle of a plate of white rice.

Lopez (2001) definitively stated that “as long as the problems of Latino education are framed in terms of the hegemonic commonsense explanations that blame individual Latino students and their families for their educational plight, the structural problems that plague the Latino community…” will persist. We must recognize the role we play in perpetuating institutional practices that firmly embed racism in the fabric of our society.
In no arena is this process more powerful or more harmful than in the arena of public education.

**The Impact of Embedded Racism on Experiences in Partnerships**

Institutionalized racism serves to maintain a societal hegemony that empowers European Americans, while simultaneously ensuring the subordination of racial minorities. This process is carried out through institutional structures and practices, which favor one social group and provide rewards based on an individual’s adherence to dominant class norms. Through institutionalized racism, race is embedded in social interactions, establishing power and serving as a standard against which to judge who in a society is rewarded (Darder, 1991). Educational practices serve to fully embed a racist ideology into children’s ways of making meaning. Children witness daily acts of racism judged fair and even appropriate, based upon the deficit hypothesis. This truth is never more apparent than in the small, scribbled note written in Spanish found by one US participant hidden away in her child’s book bag. In a heart wrenching plea, her child had written, “God, help me because my teacher says I’m no good. Please help me, God.” Over time, as children grow and develop, the racist ideology persists and becomes incorporated into these individuals’ ways of functioning in society. Inequality is legitimized as a function of racism embedded in the interactions between educators and students (Nunez, 1999). The cycle of embedded racism, oppressive practices and the institutionalization of racism ultimately develops in children an understanding of racism, oppression and discrimination as inevitable, inescapable facets of normal life.
Engagement in a culture of schooling in which a racist ideology is a fundamental aspect promotes the internalization of racist views that children carry with them for the rest of their lives. This process is depicted in Figure 2.1 from Chapter Two.

Figure 2.1: Role of Embedded Racism in Cycle of Institutionalization of Racism

From the data analysis it became evident that this process was in action in the US Case. The cyclical process recognizes that each stage feeds into the next and cannot be separated from the stage before or the stage after. However, through data analysis it became evident that for US participants in this study, the process originates with institutionalized racism. This process is clearly illustrated in the description of the
language barrier in the US Case. The US school system in this study provides little formal information in Spanish, as reported by US Educator Three, who stated, "It is not done in the county office. I've asked for documents that we get at the beginning of the year to hand out, because you notice that we get nothing that is in Spanish...I've called and asked for it and it doesn't exist." Even as no written information is provided in Spanish, the school also does not make meetings or other forms of verbal information accessible to people who are proficient in languages other than English. The US educators shared that the "phone system," a service to relay information to parents, is provided only in English, and the US community professional exclaimed, "When we were having to meet with the principal and the counselor with the trouble Rojelio got in, we were the ones that found an interpreter. They (the school) didn't even offer!" This lack of accessibility serves to isolate Mexican immigrant parents and powerfully demonstrates the perceived insignificance of the Mexican immigrant population in this school.

The practice of not providing translators or other means for accessing information serves to marginalize parents and families who are not proficient in English. Furthermore, in light of the close ties between the school and community, this practice sends a clear message to the community, situating the Mexican immigrant population firmly as outsiders separate, different and inferior to "us." The institution justifies these practices through explanations that the numbers of Mexican immigrant students are too small to warrant the funding required to translate materials and secure translators. Individual educators indoctrinated through years of involvement in a society in which a racist ideology is the norm do little to combat institutionalized racism. Instead, teachers accept
discriminatory practices and structures as evident in the assertions of US educators that parents must make efforts to learn English on their own, a perception illustrated by the personal experience of US Parent One.

I said this because the teacher that my kids had last year, the one that we were having problems with, was always complaining. Because in meeting she always asked if we knew how to speak English, because she didn’t like the fact that we don’t participate, and she would ask us why we didn’t study English.

Children internalize the lessons they learn by observing the actions and behaviors of adults. In the MX Case, participants stated unequivocally that children learn from the models set by the adults in their lives.

Kids in the family reflect the adults they live with. They do what they see the older people do, do what the people who live with them do. And they do the same because they imitate everything they see, it is like a boss they have (Educator One).

Family members are not the only models for children, as shared by MX Parent One, who stated, “The Teacher is an example for the kids... The teacher is the person for the kid to imagine to be like.” MX Educator One also supported this statement, “He is a role model for the kids.” We must ask ourselves what is being modeled for children in the US, children who spend seven or more hours daily in a school environment that legitimizes inequality and devalues populations on the basis of culture and race. This, according to Nunez (1999), is the manifestation of embedded racism. As a function of embedded racism, students internalize a racist ideology. W.E.B. DuBois (1903) asserted that for minority students, this develops as an internalization of inferiority and “double
consciousness.” The cycle persists as these children grow and carry this racist ideology into their interactions as an adult in society. As with any cycle, to initiate change within the cycle, one must determine the best position from which to enter the cycle to affect change. Consequently, the final stage of this research, empowerment, lies in encouraging participants to recognize their role in perpetuating the cycle and make changes in their individual behaviors and actions.

Creating a Language of Possibility: The Role of Empowerment in Research

Giroux (1986) stressed the need to develop a “language of possibility” in order to combat the oppression and resistance inherent in current practices of education. By focusing on possibility and hope, a movement into action is allowed to develop. This movement enables those who are oppressed to initiate and engage in positive action to transform their society, thus restructuring the current oppressive societal hegemony. Freire (1973) also introduced the concept of creating a “language of possibility” as a means for empowering oppressed groups. By encouraging oppressed populations to share their stories and reflect upon their experiences, the door is opened for developing a community in which all participants are viewed as people of worth, and all people are free to enjoy the benefits and opportunities available in the community, while attempting to “improve their human condition” (Delgado Gaitan & Trueba, 1991, p. 154).

As I began this research, I had certain expectations about the role of empowerment in the work. I identified the Mexican immigrant parents as the “oppressed population” in my study, and I believed that all empowerment work would occur with this group. I was focused on the research as a means for promoting the development of a collective voice among parents in the Mexican immigrant focus group. While this did
prove an important component of the work, it became apparent that this was not going to be the only aspect of the empowerment process. During the first interview with the US educators, the understanding of true empowerment as a multifaceted process began to dawn in my mind. I began to consider the possibility that good, caring people who desire to help others were imprisoned inside the oppressive grip of society’s pervasive racist ideology. I am certainly not neglecting the role oppression plays in maintaining the current balance of power or the fact that the current balance of power benefits the US educators while marginalizing the Mexican immigrant parents. I am, however, asserting that it is important to recognize and capitalize upon strengths presented by all members of society. The group of US educators emerged as women who care deeply about others and who truly want the best for every child. Through the focus group discussions, they were prompted to consider for the first time the marginalization of certain populations in their community and their role in perpetuating that marginalization. This process resulted in the US Educators feeling empowered to engage in evaluating and changing the structures in their school that maintain the oppression of Mexican immigrant families and firmly embed a racist ideology in the belief systems of students. As the researcher, I developed significant respect for the complexities of the multifaceted process that is empowerment.

In the US community under study, people have had little opportunity to interact with people different from themselves. The community consists of families who have lived in the area for many generations, and the majority of community members are of similar socioeconomic status. The long-term family presence has consequently resulted in the development of strong networks of support, similar to the networks of support evident
in the community in Mexico. The US educators discussed the networks of connection, sharing that since most people in Jonesville have grown up together and have close family ties to one another, it is often difficult for outsiders to join the community.

Especially non-English speaking, and in Jonesville its kinda hard because a lot of you grew up together, and outsiders are automatically going to feel different in a small school, whereas if it where were a larger school where people were moving in and out constantly from lots of different schools. But these people live here; their mothers went to school here; their grandmothers went to school here. (US Educator Four)

As stated by US Educator Four, families have attended and graduated from Jonesville school for many generations. These close connections manifest as a strong sense of community and firmly solidify the school’s position as a significantly important community institution. People in the community are comfortable entering the school, and volunteering their services as needed to positively impact the work of the school and any event organized by the school finds strong support in the community. Unfortunately, this same close system serves as a closed system, creating a barrier for new individuals who enter the community. US Educators Two and Four, who grew up in a small town adjacent to Jonesville, shared their personal experiences with entering the Jonesville community, stating that as “outsiders” it was difficult to feel truly a part of the community. US Educator One, who grew up in Jonesville, shared her feeling that it would be difficult for her to actively enter a local school a town away, “I know I was raised here, born here. Would I feel comfortable going into Warrenton high school? No.” This difficulty is amplified for Mexican immigrants as a function of an institutionalized racist ideology.
While there may be openly racist individuals in the community, there are also many people who never “really stopped and thought so much about it” (US Educator Four). These people, the people who try to do everything right and be good to everyone, continue to be oppressed by the racist ideology pervasive in our everyday activities and lives. Their oppression takes the form of a life limited in its connections with others, a life isolated from the richness of diversity and eternally confined to a minimal awareness of one’s impact on others. These people hold the power in the community, and in every community, especially a small, rural community like the ones in this study, they must be involved in the facilitation of change. This was an aspect of empowerment that I had neglected to consider as I embarked upon the study. For the true development of community, change must happen among all participants, and a collective voice, a voice in which one hears the tenors of all participants, must be given space to emerge.

An illustration of the impact of reflection in empowerment materialized over the course of the initial focus group with the US educators. For the US educators, empowerment took the form of exploring the role of societal institutions in maintaining the marginalization and oppression of Mexican immigrants and developing a committed desire to affect positive change in these oppressive structures. During the initial focus group of the US educators, one of the participants explained that Mexican immigrant families are different and have values different from “a pack of men that get out at the grocery store.” The group agreed and moved on to other points of discussion, but later returned to the “pack of men.” US Educator Four explained that she feels most people “think about the ones hanging out at the grocery store, or whatever, and that’s just what’s in our minds.” After listening to the discussion quietly, US Educator One stated,
And we’re more aware of that because they’ve come to our culture; we have it in the whites; we have it in the Blacks; we have it in what’s already here, but since they are different and coming in (US Educator Three: The new kids on the block) all of a sudden, “hey,” we’re focusing on this. It’s not any different from what we’ve already seen in all the cultures, but I think we just sort of put the negative on the Hispanic culture because of them.

The group continued to discuss the topic, expressing their fear when encountering a group of Latino men.

I know as a White woman, I do feel uncomfortable when there is a whole bunch of maybe people that have been working in the field or out in the log woods (US Educator Two).

When they’re a walking and a grinning and a talking and you can’t understand it (US Educator One).

Sometimes its scary (US Educator Four).

After listening to this discussion, I asked the group to reflect on their feelings when encountering a group of young European American men or young African American men. The response was instantaneous. “I think we are used to it, like Rita said!” exclaimed US Educator Two. “I don’t notice it; I don’t notice it” asserted US Educator Four. US Educator Three explained, “It’s different!” “I know what they’re saying!” came the adamant reply of US Educator Two. These responses were intended to clarify for the researcher the difference and were shared in kind of a “don’t you get it?” manner. In the silence that followed these quick responses, the group appeared to contemplate what they had just shared. US Educator One stated softly, “But the reason that we don’t
notice it is because we know what they are saying. The language is not... We don’t know what these...” This element of the unknown leaves the women wondering, “What are they saying? What are they thinking? And what does that look mean?” explained US Educator Two. These questions all occur as the women wonder, “Are they talking about me?” “And to me that’s scary!” asserted US Educator Two. After a heartbeat, US Educator One exclaimed, “And they might not be saying a thing about us.” Laughing, US Educator Three said, “They might not be! We don’t know!” The group continued to reflect on how the lack of opportunities to interact with one another creates great distance between groups of people, resulting in negative stereotypes and perceptions.

Though from the outside this seems like such a simple discussion and shallow exploration, this discussion held significant meaning for the participants. During the conversation it was as if a faucet previously dry had been turned on and allowed to flow. The women discussed their fears and how their fears are founded in a deeper, more pervasive fear of difference and the unknown. As US Educator Four explained, “It’s just like until we came in here today, I’ve not really stopped and thought so much about it...” Over the course of this one topic of conversation, the importance of reflecting upon one’s fears, practices and behaviors and the interconnection of these three rose to the surface. In the weeks between the first and second interview, the women reflected to me and to other community members about their sense of increased awareness of how societal institutions that separate people perpetuate this fear. Fear and separation manifest in the marginalization of the Mexican immigrant population, the “new kids on the block” (US Educator Three). By reflecting on this process, the US educators explained that they felt empowered to make efforts to connect with Mexican immigrant parents and families to
learn more about the population’s culture and to share this connection and learning with their students, by inviting Mexican immigrant parents and students to share information about their culture with the educators’ classes. The shift in views of Mexican immigrants as different and separate to engagement in efforts to involve and accept this population as valued members of one’s community illustrates the power of reflection and discourse as components of empowerment.

To neglect to include a focus on the strengths present in the US community of study would be to choose to impair the valuable work already begun. The strengths in the community closely resemble the strengths highlighted in the community in Mexico, close connections, strong networks of support, and communication. However, at present, Mexican immigrants are excluded from participating in the community and enjoying its benefits. For the Mexican immigrant population to began to be welcomed and valued in the community, change must happen on many levels. I believe that participants in the US educators’ focus group can serve as valuable contributors to this work. Empowerment emerged as multifaceted and complex, and this process opened my eyes to the importance of involving and including all stakeholders in empowerment efforts focused on eradicating the oppressive practices that prohibit the equal involvement of all participants, allowing for the development of a cohesive, collaborative community. In this study, the collective consciousness I had hoped to develop in Mexican immigrant families also began to emerge in the US Educators group. The educators demonstrated the power of developing a collective consciousness and awareness of the role of privilege and racism in maintaining the marginalization of Mexican immigrants. As a function of this consciousness, the Mexican immigrant parents were more readily able to be involved
in family-school-community partnerships, because the US educators recognized the impact of current practices in impeding the involvement of these parents and began to actively work to remove these barriers in their individual classrooms. For continued empowerment of Mexican immigrant families, further, stronger connections will need to be developed between Mexican immigrants and school professionals. There must be an intensification of opportunities to interact and learn from one another. Empowerment occurs along a continuum and, as such, is an on-going process. Hopefully, the work will continue in this community.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted in an effort to explore the similarities and differences among family-school-community partnerships in Veracruz, MX and North Carolina, US. The intent of the research was to encourage the empowerment of Mexican immigrant families involved in such partnerships, by developing a collective consciousness through the creation of a space for the families to share their stories. My hope, as the researcher, was to through this process facilitate through this process the creation of a community of empowerment. The research was conducted in two small, rural towns, one in North Carolina and one in Veracruz. The participants were all drawn from the two communities. The focus group of US Parents was composed of two women and two men from three families. In the MX Case, the focus group of parents was formed of four women and one man. The focus groups of parents were unique, in that two of the parents in the MX Case were the immediate family members of two of the participants in the US Case, and two of the participants in the MX Case were members of the extended family (cousins) of two of the members of the US Case. The focus groups of educators were
unique, in that all of the US educators were female and all of the MX educators were male. In both cases, the community professional was female. The intersection of the many diverse identities of each participant renders each a unique, multifaceted being. Thus, there is no intention on the part of the researcher to suggest that the results of this study should in any way be generalizable to any other sample. Each reader must reflect on the appropriateness of all information shared in this study and determine to what extent, if any, the information can be generalized or applied to other communities.

Implications for Research

An Ethnography of Empowerment is ongoing and requires that the researcher actively contribute to the process of initiating change in society. This study provided significant insight into the role of racism in separating groups of people, resulting in the marginalization of Mexican immigrants. Thus, the next logical step is to begin to foster connections among groups in the community, including Mexican immigrants, while continuing to encourage individuals to reflect upon their personal role in perpetuating the institutionalization of racism. This process forms the scaffolding of the research implications emerging from this study.

While providing an initial understanding of the similarities, disparities and connections among family-school-community partnerships in the US and MX, this study continues to leave many stones yet unturned. Studies are needed to examine each group of participants and the connections between each group more comprehensively. An intensified examination of the similarities and contrasts between educators in the US and MX will further elucidate the expectations of Mexican immigrant parents, as their children enter US schools. Developing a survey of expectations of engagement for
administration to immigrant parents and educators in a particular school would also 
provide valuable information that could be utilized to develop more effective means of 
engaging this population of parents in family-school-community partnerships. After 
administering a survey of this sort, the findings could then be used to develop a 
comprehensive, collaborative intervention with educators to implement changes intended 
to strengthen family-school collaboration.

A deliberate psychological education intervention with an intentional focus on 
increasing cognitive complexity (Hunt, 1975) and moral development (Kohlberg & 
Mayer, 1972) could serve as the vehicle for implementing this change. This intervention 
will promote increased awareness of oppressive practices and active involvement in 
efforts to change these practices. Gielen (1991) proposed that the development of moral 
thinking progresses from a level of less complexity, with the individual being concerned 
primarily with issues central to self and the perception of self by others, to greater 
complexity, demonstrated through understanding of one’s personal moral principles and 
the interrelation of such in a global environment.

Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) asserted that development occurs when one interacts 
with one’s environment through discourse, conversation and reflection in a manner that 
encourages a modification of one’s methods of thinking. As an individual moves towards 
higher levels, she is alternately trying to separate from her environment and develop a 
sense of self, while remaining connected or integrated as she develops an understanding 
of her self as part of the system (Hunt, 1975). From these assertions, it can be inferred 
that increased moral development and conceptual complexity would also increase the 
ability of participants in family-school-community partnerships to relate to one another
with respect and caring. Thus, a deliberate psychological education intervention, including planned activities designed to stimulate the exchange of ideas and promote reflection, will result in growth and development positively impacting family-school-community partnerships involving Mexican immigrant families. With the DPE, not only does the counselor commit to promoting development with the clients he or she sees, but the counselor also agrees to play an active role through planned experience in the promotion of this development, rendering this an appropriate extension of an ethnography of empowerment.

Case studies provide the means for the comprehensive exploration of particular participants (Creswell, 1998) and specific partnership efforts introduced earlier in this discussion of the implications of research. By intensively examining all aspects of partnerships, participation, racism and oppression for a particular group or case, a holistic understanding of the group’s contribution to the overarching society can emerge. Developing a case study to explore specific participants or partnership efforts will provide rich contextual information and deep understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). A study of each case separately from the others will deepen the understanding of participants’ individual experiences with family-school-community partnerships, work that was initially begun by this study. Espinoza-Herold (2003) supported the use of case studies with Latino students and families, sharing her belief that through the use of case study research, the Latino voice is allowed to truly emerge.

From this study emerged a wealth of information concerning the need for additional research. Studies and professional articles on the need for stronger partnerships with families and communities by schools abound (Moles, 1993, Bryan, 2003). However,
little information exists about the role of partnerships in the eradication of oppressive practices and beliefs in societies. Partnerships are, in essence, the development of community; often partnerships efforts develop a specific community for a specific limited purpose, and the reciprocal effects of developing small, intense partnerships/communities in which all participants are valued and involved could hold great possibilities for institutional and societal change. Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba (1991), Cummins (1986) and Giroux (1992) have all begun this important research, but much more engagement with research as a component of praxis is needed to promote a “language of possibility” within the institution of public education in the US. Partnerships provide researchers with the doorway to this work.

This study was unique in the exploration of the experiences of a population (i.e. family members in the US group and family members in the MX group who grew up together and had children at the same time), who in one setting experienced privilege and power and in the other setting experienced marginalization. The picture that emerged provided a stark realization of the sense of loss and frustration Mexican immigrant parents must feel as they leave their positions of privilege and encounter racism and marginalization in the US community. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) examined the impact of initially encountering racism and prejudice for Mexican immigrant individuals. However, further research is needed to better understand the impact of this resulting sense of loss on the involvement of Mexican immigrant families in family-school-community partnerships in the US. The use of surveys and individual interviews provided suitable methods for collecting the data needed to build this understanding.
Currently, minimal professional literature addresses the need for investigating the perceptions, expectations and involvement of Mexican immigrant families, community professionals and educators concerning family-school-community partnerships. Research examining the impact of partnerships in eradicating oppression is also minimal. This research builds upon forays by Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba (1991), and the Suarez-Orozcos (1995) into this area. However, much work remains to be done and the findings of this study provide strong scaffolding for needed research efforts focused on partnerships as critical pedagogical tools.

*Implications for Professional School Counseling*

Professional school counselors face increasingly diverse student populations, and school counseling practice requires a high level of multicultural competence. Currently, the black-white dichotomy is of central focus in discourse concerning multicultural competency. Consequently, school counselors are often unsure and unaware of how to address concerns of their Latino students and families. Limited resources and institutionalized racism further marginalize Latino issues in US public education. Family-school-community partnerships provide the means for overcoming these barriers and developing connections between stakeholders.

This study consequently holds important ramifications for the practice of school counseling. Embedded racism emerged as significantly impacting the experiences of Mexican immigrant families with family-school-community partnerships. As such, school counselors must begin to examine the role of practices and policies in their schools that perpetuate the marginalization and oppression of Mexican immigrant students and families.
Bordering the ASCA National Model are the terms “leadership,” “collaboration,” “systemic change” and “advocacy” (ASCA, 1999). These concepts provide the foundation upon which professional school counseling is built. School counselors must develop effective collaborative relationships with families and the community. The work of the school counselor must also be constructed with an intentional focus on initiating systemic change in efforts to break the cycle of institutionalized racism in our public schools. Partnerships provide the means for structuring this work and the resources for facilitating this process. With increasing case loads and responsibilities, school counselors struggle to meet the needs of all students and partnerships can be used to complement the school counselor’s work and alleviate some of the struggle by sharing the load among capable, qualified partnership participants. The Mexican immigrant families in this study felt “separated” and “isolated” in their community and disconnected from the educational experiences of their children. This is a common occurrence, according to Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991). This study demonstrated the positive impact of structuring educational and community programs to induce interaction between groups in a community. School counselors can apply this understanding in their efforts to involve Latino families in family-school-community partnerships, strengthening their schools and communities.

Implications for Counselor Education

One of the most important pieces of information to emerge from this study is the need for institutional support. Pre-service training provides the most effective venue for mounting a comprehensive effort to affect institutional change. One may extrapolate from the need for institutional support that awareness of this need must start in the institutions.
which train the future leaders of the institutions providing the support. At present, pre-service training programs are not sufficiently preparing students for this work.

A national survey of 161 schools, colleges and departments of education (SCDE) revealed that administrators, teachers and counselors are not prepared by colleges and universities to collaborate effectively with families or communities (Epstein, Sanders & Clark, 1999). Bemak (2000) unequivocally supported the need for pre-service attention to developing collaborative partnerships, stating that it is of critical importance that pre-service counseling professionals develop an awareness of the importance and application of collaboration in training programs prior to entering the professional arena.

Counselor education programs must identify opportunities to infuse knowledge and research concerning collaboration and family-school-community partnership into programs of study. Developing and implementing pre-service workshops and training seminars involving other pre-service professionals from the fields of social work, family counseling, child development and family relations, teacher education and educational administration, counselor educations model for their students collaboration in action. Joint lectures and cross-disciplinary projects broaden pre-service counselors’ awareness of the importance of connections and collaboration, while at the same time increasing their understanding of their impact on others. Counselor education programs must not wait for serendipitous occurrences of opportunities to collaborate, but must structure collaboration firmly into the fabric of program curricula.

The powerful emergence of the impact of embedded and institutionalized racism also holds significant importance for the field of counselor education. Including opportunities for students to examine the role of race, racism and societal oppression is
imperative for the development of truly multiculturally competent professionals. Counselor education programs have the responsibility to infuse the opportunities throughout curricula, providing support for students in the face of the disequilibrium and frustration that are sure to arise. As a counselor educator, I will certainly infuse the knowledge and awareness gleaned from this study into my work with students.

**Personal Reflections**

I initially engaged in this study with strong expectations about race, oppression and partnerships. The research supported some of my expectations and provided many unexpected moments of clarity. I entered this process with the characteristic idealistic zeal of a beginning researcher, and fortunately, I believed I have emerged a stronger, more effective, yet still optimistic, hopeful and very enthusiastic, researcher. The families, educators and community professionals who shared in this journey powerfully touched my life and left me changed. I am forever indebted to the beautiful people who opened their homes and their hearts to me and to others who will engage with this research. I say “engage” because it is impossible to share in the stories of these participants and not find oneself reflecting on one’s personal position within the societal hierarchy and one’s impact on others. This, I believe, is the most significant aspect to emerge from this study, the importance of engaging in discourse and reflection about issues of race and racism.

Reciprocity is of utmost importance in conducting a study of this sort. Participants share the most personal sides of themselves in hope of positively impacting others. In Mexico and the US, participants shared their hopes that this research will improve the lives of immigrants in the US and will help to build connections among people. As the
director in MX stated, “I know it’s in good hands,” I felt a sense of certainty that this cannot be simply a dissertation for me; it must become part of who I am and how I live. I am firmly committed to continuing to advocate for social justice and to engage in efforts to eradicate oppression. Do I think that I will see a unified world in which all people are valued as beings of equal worth in my lifetime? Probably not. I do, however, believe in what the US community professional taught me through her words and most powerfully through her actions. One person can serve as a candle from which to light the candle of many others. “It all begins with one spark” (US community professional). I pray that God will give me the faith and the strength not only to be “one spark,” but also to foster in others the awareness of the significance of their spark. The people, families and communities who supported this research deserve as much.
References


Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. Teachers College Record, 97, 47-68.


Torres Campos, C. M. (2004). *Creating a normative model of Latino academic success.* Presentation at the National Latino Psychological Association Conference, Scottsdale, AZ.


APPENDICES
INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

PO Box 1086
Washington, NC 27889
Date

Dear ______________,

I am a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education and Supervision at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. As part of the requirements for my degree, I am undertaking a research study to explore and compare family-school-community partnerships in Jamesville, North Carolina, US and in Mata Tenatito, Veracruz, MX. I am specifically interested in how families, school professionals, and community agency specialists engage in these partnerships and the differences in how partnerships are structured and function in Mexico as opposed to the US.

To gather information for this study, I am hoping to conduct focus groups with six parents or guardians in Mexico and with six parents or guardians in the US. Additionally, I hope to conduct three focus group sessions with school professionals and three individual interviews with a community agency specialist in each setting. If you decide to participate, I will need your commitment to meet with me three times at ____________________ in your community for interviews. We will meet in a private setting and all participants will sign an agreement concerning confidentiality. I will audiotape the interviews for later transcription. Your identity will remain completely anonymous and your name will never be used to identify your responses. Your participation will remain confidential and I will provide you with open access to your transcribed interviews. Upon conclusion of the study, I will mail you a summary of my findings and will conduct presentations concerning the findings (ensuring full anonymity for the participants) in your community. Each interview will last 1 \frac{1}{2} to 2 hours and will be scheduled at the convenience of the participants.

Thank you for considering participating in this research study. Many members of your community are immigrating or have family members who have immigrated to the US and many have children in US schools. At present, there is little research investigating how to establish successful family-school-community partnerships with Mexican immigrant families and your participation in this study will contribute to the education profession’s understanding of how to best meet the needs of immigrant families. I realize that your time is very valuable, so I deeply appreciate your willingness to help others through your participation in this study. I also hope your participation will prove to be a positive personal experience for you. Please remember that your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point in the experience.

If you think you would be interested or if you have further questions, please feel free to call me at 252-945-0271 or email me at kjlieblake@mac.com. Thank you again for considering to participate in this study. I hope we will have the opportunity to work together.

Sincerely,

Kylie P. Dotson-Blake
Appendix B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, ________________________________________________, agree to participate in an ethnographic study involving Mexican nationalists and Mexican immigrant parents, school professionals, and community agency specialists. The purpose of this study is to explore similarities and differences in family-school-community partnerships in Veracruz and in North Carolina with an intentional focus on the role of culture, race and ethnicity in the experiences of individuals with such partnerships. The researcher, Kylie P. Dotson-Blake, is conducting this study in partial requirements for a doctoral degree in Counselor Education and Supervision at the College of William and Mary.

As a participant, I understand that my involvement in the study is purposeful in that participants were chosen with the intention of providing a representation of a variety of experiences with family-school-community partnerships in both North Carolina in the United States and in Veracruz in Mexico. Participants were chosen for their ability to provide rich information about family-school-community partnerships.

I understand that I will be expected to participate in 3 interviews related to my thoughts, perceptions and feelings about my experiences with family-school-community partnerships through involvement in public education in my community. These interviews will last between one and one-half hours to two hours. I am aware that I have the option of sharing documents or objects important to my experiences with family-school-community partnerships with the researcher. I will also allow observations of events or interactions that are part of family-school-community partnerships in which I am a participant. I understand that the study seeks to improve and increase the base of knowledge regarding family-school-community partnerships with Mexican immigrant families in the United States.

I have been informed that any information obtained in this study will be recorded with a pseudonym of my choosing that will allow only the researcher to determine my identity. At the conclusion of this study, the key linking me with my pseudonym will be destroyed. All efforts will be made to conceal my identity in the study's report of the results. My personal information will remain confidential. I understand that I will be audio-taped in my interview and these tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet for the duration of the study. At the conclusion of the study, these tapes will be destroyed.

I understand that there is no personal risk or discomfort directly involved with this research and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time. Additionally, I understand that I am under no obligation to answer any questions that I do not wish to respond to. I understand that I may keep a copy of this consent form.

If I have any questions or problems that arise in connection with my participating in this study, I should contact Dr. Charles Gressard, dissertation chair and project director at 757 221-2352 or cfgress@wm.edu, or Dr. Stanton F. Hoeneman, the chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee at the College of William and Mary at 757 221-2240 or sfhoeg@wm.edu. My signature below signifies that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have received a copy of this consent form, and that I consent to participating in this study.

Date ___________________________ Signature of Participant ___________________________
Date ___________________________ Investigator ___________________________

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (PHONE: 757 221-3901) ON June 3, 2005 AND EXPIRES ON June 3, 2006.
Appendix C
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FIRST PARENT FOCUS GROUP

A. Begin interview by obtaining demographic information from each participant:
   1. Name
   2. Age
   3. Marital Status
   4. Number of children
      a. Age of children
   5. Information concerning immigrant status
      a. Currently living in the US
      b. Have lived in US
      c. Have had interactions with public schools in the US
      d. Have family members currently living in US
         1. Relationship
         2. Do these family members have children in school in the US?
      e. Plan to live in the US at some point

B. Questions

1. How do you define and describe family-school-community partnerships?

2. To what extent, if any, do school-family-community partnerships impact your child’s education?

3. How would you describe the role of (parents, community professionals, school counselors, orientadores) in school-family-community partnerships?

4. How are family-school-community partnerships structured in your community?

5. What, if anything, do family-school-community partnerships contribute to your community?

6. How could these partnerships be improved?

7. Have there been changes in your (community, family, school) as a result of these partnerships?

8. How, if at all, is your involvement in your child’s educational experience impacted by your involvement in family-school-community partnerships?

9. Please describe your personal hopes or expectations for your involvement in family-school-community partnerships.

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Appendix D
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SECOND PARENT FOCUS GROUP

A. Begin by revisiting information covered in previous interview. Start with a short summary to reorient participants to focus of study.

B. Questions

1. I would like to begin by asking if anyone would like to share anything they have thought of since our first interview? Personal reflections, questions, concerns about involvement with this study?

2. In the last week, how, if any, has your involvement with school professionals or community specialists been different than it was prior to our first interview? Have you experienced any changes in your involvement and experiences with family-school-community partnerships? If so, please describe these changes.

3. To what extent, if any, are family-school-community partnerships part of your daily life?

4. How, if any, is your access to resources (community and educational) impacted by your involvement with family-school-community partnerships?

5. How, if any, is your children’s access to resources impacted by your involvement?

6. How has, if at all, your race or ethnicity impacted your involvement in family-school-community partnerships?

7. How does your social position or socioeconomic status impact your involvement in family-school-community partnerships?

8. To what extent does your ethnicity impact other members’ (family, school professionals, or community specialists) perceptions of you as a member of the partnership?

9. To what extent does your social status impact other members’ (family, school professionals, or community specialists) perceptions of you in the partnership?

10. To what extent does the ethnicity of other members impact your perceptions of those individuals as members of the partnership?

11. To what extent does the social status of other members impact your perceptions of those individuals as members of the partnership?

12. Please describe your ideal role in family-school-community partnerships.
Appendix E
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THIRD PARENT FOCUS GROUP

A. Begin by revisiting information from last interview, questions, concerns, etc.

B. Questions

The questions for the third interview will emerge completely from information gathered in previous two interviews. Additionally, any information from Interview Guides 1 and 2 not covered in the first two interviews will be covered in interview three.
Appendix F
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FIRST EDUCATOR FOCUS GROUP

A. Begin interview by obtaining demographic information from each participant:
   1. Name
   2. Age
   3. Years employed as a school professional
   4. Information concerning work with immigrant students or families (School Counselors Only)
      a. Currently working with immigrant students
      b. Please give a brief description of the work you do with this population.

B. Questions

1. How do you define and describe family-school-community partnerships?

2. To what extent if any do school-family-community partnerships impact the education of your students?

3. Please describe the role of (parents, community professionals, school counselors, orientadores) in school-family-community partnerships as you believe it to be.

4. How are family-school-community partnerships structured in your community?

5. What, if anything, do family-school-community partnerships contribute to your community? your school community?

6. How could these partnerships be improved?

7. Have there been changes in your (community, family, school) as a result of these partnerships?

8. How, if at all, is your involvement in a child’s educational experience impacted by your involvement in family-school-community partnerships?

9. Please describe your personal hopes or expectations for your involvement in family-school-community partnerships.
Appendix G
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SECOND EDUCATOR FOCUS GROUP

A. Begin by revisiting information covered in previous interview. Start with a short summary to reorient participants to focus of study.

B. Questions

1. I would like to begin by asking if you would like to share anything you may have thought of since our first interview? Personal reflections, questions, concerns, etc.

2. In the last week, how, if any, has your involvement with families or community specialists been different than it was prior to our first interview? Have you experienced any changes in your involvement and experiences with family-school-community partnerships? If so, please describe these changes.

3. To what extent, if any, are family-school-community partnerships a part of your daily life?

4. How, if any, is access to resources (community and educational) impacted by the family's involvement with family-school-community partnerships?

5. How, if any, is a child's access to resources impacted by her caregiver’s involvement?

6. How, if at all, has your race or ethnicity impacted your involvement in family-school-community partnerships?

7. How does your social position or socioeconomic status impact your involvement in family-school-community partnerships?

8. To what extent does your ethnicity impact other members’ (family, school professionals, or community specialists) perceptions of you as a member of the partnership?

9. To what extent does your social status impact other members’ (family, school professionals, or community specialists) perceptions of you in the partnership?

10. To what extent does the ethnicity of other members impact your perceptions of those individuals as members of the partnership?

11. To what extent does the social status of other members impact your perceptions of those individuals as members of the partnership?

12. Please describe your ideal role in family-school-community partnerships.
Appendix H
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THIRD EDUCATOR FOCUS GROUP

A. Begin by revisiting information from last interview, questions, concerns, etc.

B. Questions

The questions for the third interview will emerge completely from information gathered in previous two interviews. Additionally, any information from Interview Guides 1 and 2 not covered in the first two interviews will be covered in interview three.
Appendix I
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FIRST INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW
Community Agency Specialist

A. Begin interview by obtaining demographic information from each participant:
   1. Name
   2. Age
   3. Years employed as a community agency specialist
   4. Information concerning work with families with young children
      a. Currently working with families with young children
      b. Please give a brief description of the work you do.

B. Questions

   1. How do you define and describe family-school-community partnerships?

   2. To what extent if any do school-family-community partnerships impact the
      healthy functioning of the families you serve?

   3. Please describe the role of (parents, community professionals, school counselors,
      orientadores) in school-family-community partnerships as you believe these roles
      to be.

   4. How are family-school-community partnerships structured in your community?

   5. What, if anything, do family-school-community partnerships contribute to your
      community? your agency’s work?

   6. How could these partnerships be improved?

   7. Have there been changes in your (community, family, school) as a result of these
      partnerships?

   8. How, if at all, is your involvement with a family impacted by your involvement in
      family-school-community partnerships?

   9. Please describe your personal hopes or expectations for your involvement in
      family-school-community partnerships.
Appendix J
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SECOND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW
Community Agency Specialist

A. Begin by revisiting information covered in previous interview. Start with a short summary to reorient participants to focus of study.

B. Questions

1. I would like to begin by asking if you would like to share anything you may have thought of since our first interview? Personal reflections, questions, concerns, etc.

2. In the last week, how, if any, has your involvement with families or community specialists been different than it was prior to our first interview? Have you experienced any changes in your involvement and experiences with family-school-community partnerships? If so, please describe these changes.

3. To what extent, if any, are family-school-community partnerships a part of your daily life?

4. How, if any, is access to resources (community and educational) impacted by the family’s involvement with family-school-community partnerships?

5. How, if any, is a child’s access to resources impacted by her caregiver’s involvement?

6. How, if at all, has your race or ethnicity impacted your involvement in family-school-community partnerships?

7. How does your social position or socioeconomic status impact your involvement in family-school-community partnerships?

8. To what extent does your ethnicity impact other members’ (family, school professionals, or community specialists) perceptions of you as a member of the partnership?

9. To what extent does your social status impact other members’ (family, school professionals, or community specialists) perceptions of you in the partnership?

10. To what extent does the ethnicity of other members impact your perceptions of those individuals as members of the partnership?

11. To what extent does the social status of other members impact your perceptions of those individuals as members of the partnership?

12. Please describe your ideal role in family-school-community partnerships.
Appendix K
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THIRD INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW
Community Agency Specialist

A. Begin by revisiting information from last interview, questions, concerns, etc.

B. Questions

The questions for the third interview will emerge completely from information gathered in previous two interviews. Additionally, any information from Interview Guides 1 and 2 not covered in the first two interviews will be covered in interview three.
Kylie P. Dotson-Blake  
P.O. Box 1086  
Washington, NC 27899  
Email: kylieblake@mac.com  
Tel: 252-945-0271

EDUCATION

Ph.D.  Counselor Education
The College of William and Mary (CACREP accredited)
Department of School Psychology and Counselor Education

Cognate:  School-Family Collaboration

Dissertation Title:  *A Praxis of Empowerment: Critically Exploring Family-School-Community Partnerships in Mexico and the United States*

Doctoral Candidate: Expected date of graduation, May 2006

M.S.  School Counseling
East Carolina University
Department of Counselor and Adult Education
December 2002

B.S.  Exercise and Sport Science, Teacher Preparation Option
East Carolina University
Department of Health and Human Performance
University Scholar
Magna Cum Laude
December 2000

CERTIFICATION, AND LICENSURE

North Carolina Licensed Professional Counselor: #4986
National Certified Counselor: #79255
Licensed Professional School Counselor, North Carolina
American Red Cross Disaster Services Mental Health Training, Fall 2004

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Grant Development
Writing Effective Grant Proposals  Beaufort County Community College  2006
Advanced Grant Proposal Writing  Beaufort County Community College  2006
Assessment in Family Counseling
Assessing Depression: The CAD for Counselors (Clinical Assessment of Depression) [Presented by Bruce Bracken, Ph.D., Instrument Developer] 2005
Utilizing the Global Assessment of Relational Functioning (GARF) in Treatment Planning 2004
Incorporating Family Process Diagrams and Structural Mapping in Treatment 2004
The CAB (Clinical Assessment of Behavior): A Collaborative Tool for Family Therapists [Presented by Bruce Bracken, Ph.D., Instrument Developer] 2004

COURSES TAUGHT

Adjunct Professor: College of William and Mary
ED C33 Techniques of Counseling, Fall 2005

Instructor: East Carolina University
COAD 6406 Counseling in Schools, Summer 2004

Teaching Assistant: College of William and Mary
ED 627 Marriage and Family Counseling, Spring 2006
ED C47 Supervised Internship in School Counseling, Fall 2003-Fall 2004.
ED C42 Supervised Practicum in School Counseling, Spring 2004
ED C33 Techniques of Counseling, Fall 2005

Invited Lectures
Family-School Collaboration for Family Counselors, College of William and Mary, Family Counseling Practicum, 8/05
Broaching issues of difference. College of William and Mary, Theory and Practice of Multicultural Counseling, 4/05
Family counseling: An introduction. East Carolina University, Introduction to Counseling, 6/04
Group counseling: An introduction: East Carolina University, Introduction to Counseling, 6/04.
Scientifically-based research: A good move for education? College of William and Mary, Principles of Educational Research, 4/04

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Family Counseling Clinic Director Summer 2005-Present
New Horizons Family Counseling Center, Williamsburg VA

New Horizons Family Counseling Center (NHFCC) is a project funded through a consortium of six local school divisions to enhance school and family relationships and student success through the provision of free year-round family counseling.
services within the school systems. Counseling services are provided at the William and Mary campus and in four regional schools. Research and training projects are central to the mission of the center. Families referred: approximately 320 families/year from six local school districts. Families served: approximately 250-260 per year.

Responsibilities of the Director include program administration and coordination of NHFCC in concordance with the Family Counseling internship and Doctoral Cognate; development and update of Policy and Procedure Manual; writing the Annual Report to the Board of Directors, School Superintendents and Dean of the School of Education; administer face-to-face individual and group supervision; provision of staff development workshops and specialized training modules in family counseling; development and supervision of research projects; supervise and direct data collection; and maintain HIPAA requirements.

Students currently enrolled – 7 Masters Level Interns, 6 Doctoral Interns, 2 Post Graduate Interns.

Director: Project EMPOWER
School Counseling Collaborative Prevention Program: Williamsburg, VA

Project EMPOWER is a comprehensive collaborative prevention effort between university faculty, public school professionals, and graduate students from the school psychology and school counseling programs at the College of William and Mary. The program is headed by two Doctoral Directors, selected by Counseling and School Psychology faculty. Responsibilities of the director include planning and facilitating a comprehensive data-driven prevention program in local schools, supervising graduate student assistants, planning and facilitating collaborative efforts between university students and public school faculty, conducting weekly classroom guidance sessions and working closely with Advisory Board.

Doctoral Intern & Graduate Assistant
New Horizons Family Counseling Clinic, Williamsburg VA

Assistant School of Education faculty in research, administrative obligations and teaching. Ongoing responsibilities include maintenance of clinic database and organizing workshops and in-services for local school personnel, university faculty, clinic staff and students.

Professional School Counselor
Beaufort County Schools, Washington, NC

Responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing comprehensive school counseling program in an intermediate school (4th and 5th grades, 630 students). Provided individual, group, and family counseling, classroom guidance, career and college preparation education, and consultation. Organized and facilitated parent education workshops and community involvement initiatives.
Public School Teacher 2000-2001
Pitt County Schools, Bethel, NC
Exceptional Children’s Teacher
Designed, implemented and evaluated IEP’s in the special education classroom. Worked collaboratively with the school counselor, parents and administration to provide appropriate services to students. Handled remedial classes for grades 3-4 and special education for grades 5-8

Counselor in Higher Education Setting 2001-2002
Beaufort County Community College, NC
Provided counseling to students focusing on personal, academic, and career issues. Administered, interpreted and discussed CHOICES findings and the use of such findings in career and educational planning with students. Assisted with Orientation to College Life class instruction.

Research Assistant August 2003-July 2005
Virginia Space Grant Consortium
NASA Undergraduate Student Research Program (USRP)
Assisted with evaluation of NASA USRP program. Developed charts, tables and documents presenting statistical findings about yearly evaluation of undergraduate program. Assisted with longitudinal evaluation of program.

RESEARCH AND PRESENTATIONS

Refereed Publications
*After the first author, authors are sequenced randomly and contributed equally.

Edited Publications

Publications
**Manuscripts in Progress**


**Research in Progress**

Foster, V., McAdams, C., Dotson-Blake, K., & Craigen, L. (2005). Factors influencing the process of family counseling: Data from a university-based clinic serving families referred by schools.


**Reports**


**Refereed Professional Presentations**


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**Minor Research Grants**

October 2004  Reves Center International Travel Grant. $500.00. Secured funding for international research project.

**Other Assignments**

Associate Editor, Virginia Counselors Journal, 2005-2006.

Graduate Student Representative, Southern Association of Counselors Educators and Supervisors (SACES), 2004-2005.

Event coordinator, VACES Graduate Student Counseling Conference, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, 2004-2006.

Chair, Graduate Student Interest Network, SACES, 2004-2005.

President, Kappa Delta Pi, College of William and Mary, 2005-2006

Vice-President of Educational Programs, Kappa Delta Pi, College of William and Mary, 2004-2005
Member, Search Committee, Counselor Education, College of William and Mary, 2006

New Professional/Student Representative, International Association of Marriage and Family Counseling, 2006-2007

**Honors and Awards**

School of Education Award for Excellence, College of William and Mary, 2006
ACA Ross Fellowship Recipient, 2005
The John and Ardyss Wherry Scholarship, College of William and Mary, 2005
Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society
Chi Sigma Iota-Counseling Honor Society
Omicron Delta Kappa-Leadership Honor Society

**Professional Memberships**

International Association for Marriage and Family Counseling (IAMFC)
American Counseling Association (ACA)
Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES)
National Latino/a Psychological Association
Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (SACES)
Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD)
American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ)
North Carolina Counselors Association (NCCA)
Virginia Counselors Association (VCA)
Virginia Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (VACES)
REFERENCES

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Doctoral Adviser and Dissertation Chair
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School of Education, College of William and Mary
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Dr. Charles (Rip) McAdams, III, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
School of Education, College of William and Mary
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Julia Bryan, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
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Tel: 757-221-2419
Email: jabrya@wm.edu

Dr. Sharon Krumpe, Ph.D.
Clinical Instructor
School of Education, College of William and Mary
Tel: 757-221-1865
Email: swkrum@wm.edu

Mrs. Sue Brookshire
Director of Retention Services/Former Supervisor
Beaufort County Community College
Tel: 252-940-6328
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