

Mexican Immigrants Families Traditional and Non-traditional Language and Literacy  
Practices at Home That Prepare Children for School in the United States.

by

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the at-home educational efforts of six immigrant families as they prepare their children for school in the United States. The participants' at-home educational activities were provided by the Mexican immigrant families using photographs of activities that they judged as skills which developed the child's ability to engage with other children, teachers, and the curriculum on their first day at school. Photovoice methodology was used in order to provide the Mexican immigrants' voice.

The families were recruited from a large urban city in the Southwest with a large immigrant population. They were recruited from medical centers, social support centers, churches with immigrant communities, and schools that had Mexican immigrant children in attendance. The schools and churches provided the greatest source of participants. The educational level of the parents varied from over fifteen years to three years of schooling in Mexico. The children in the study were citizens of the United States, were from two to four years of age, had not yet attended school in the U.S., but had siblings attending public schools in the United States. The families opened their life to the researcher and provided an insight through their photographs that could not have been gained if only interviews and/or questionnaires were used.

The twenty five photographs selected to identify the six educational themes that were highlighted throughout the study are demonstrative of what the families in the study were doing to prepare their children for their first day of school. Mexican immigrant

parents have high expectations for their children and are willing to sacrifice for the children's education.

## DEDICATION

To my wife who provided me the time away from home to complete my course works for  
whom I shall always be grateful.

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## CHAPTER 1

*I couldn't understand the language she spoke, at least not all of it, but the emotion pouring past her lips, the tears in her eyes, her clenched and shaking fists enunciated more clearly, than any piece of English Poetry I had ever read, and grabbed me, held me still. ...In that moment, her soul was in my arms*

**“Language Barrier” by John Kelly, 2014**

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Language, Identity, Demographic Shift, and Early Education*

This chapter introduces the reader to the present research study by describing its foundational characteristics. The chapter is organized in the following manner.

1. The first section illustrates the background that is in part the reason for completion of this dissertation.
2. The second section describes the demographic shifts that reveal the importance of the educational preparation of children of Mexican immigrants prior to their entry into public school.
3. The third section defines the research problem as the educational system's erroneous belief or habitus involving how prepared children are for school on the first day.
4. The fourth section describes the goals for the dissertation and the questions that guide the research.

#### *Background*

The persistent underachievement of minority children, especially Hispanic (term used in this research to refer to all Latinos, Chicanos, Mexican American) immigrant children, on nationally administered standardized tests has led to numerous research

projects that have identified several cultural beliefs and values held by Hispanic parents about their children's education. Despite this underachievement, these parents' expectations and aspirations for their children's educational success are highly positive.

Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing minority group in the country (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2002). Unfortunately, Hispanic children are over-represented in poverty statistics. In 2010, 35% of the Hispanic children lived in homes that were below the poverty line, while only 9% of European-American children lived below the poverty line (Lopez & Velasco, 2011). In addition, 58% of Hispanic children were from families living at twice below the official poverty line, while 25% of the European-American children were living under the same low-income circumstances; the data for this measure come from the 2000 and 2001 Supplementary Survey and the 2002 through 2013 American Community Survey (ACS). It is important to note that the incidence of poverty and low rates of income were higher for Hispanic immigrant families than native Hispanic families (Hernandez, 2006). Of all the subgroups of Hispanic families, Mexican-American children with immigrant parents are most likely to be low income (Hernandez, 2006). These demographics are changing the racial, ethnic, language, and economic composition of the American educational system, particularly of the early childhood education sector.

### *Demographics*

The data presented in this section was taken from the 2009 American Community Survey (hereafter, ACS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. According to the ACS, about 15.7% (over 48 million people) of the total population in the U.S. was of Hispanic

origin in 2009. About 65.5% of this population was of Mexican origin, followed by Puerto Ricans (9.2%), Central Americans (8.5%), South Americans (5.8%), Cubans (3.5%), and Dominicans (2.8%). Other Hispanics and Latinos accounted for the remaining 4.6% of this population. Over 15 million Hispanics over the age of 18 in the United States (48.9% of this age group) were married. Those who were never married accounted for 35% of the over-18 age group, and the remaining 16.9% were separated, divorced or widowed. In terms of households, 58.9% contained married couples; while 22.1% had only a female householder, and 10% only a male householder. Non-family households accounted for the remaining 9.1%. Over 14 million Hispanic children under 17 years old (over 85% of the Hispanic population) lived with parent householders, and 1.4 million (8.4%) lived with their grandparents. An individual look at the Mexican Immigrant population was done in 2003 by Robert Crosnoe in his book *Mexican Roots, American Schools*, published in 2006.

115,864 that is the number of Mexican Immigrants who came to The United States in 2003; 3,100,000, that is the number of Mexican Immigrants who have legal resident status in the United States; 55,946 that is the number of Mexican immigrants who were granted U. S. citizenship in 2003; 2,400,000, that is the number of Mexican immigrants who are currently eligible for U.S. citizenship Crosnoe, *Mexican Roots, American Schools*, 2006 (Crosnoe, *Mexican Roots, American Schools*, 2006).

The landscape of the USA will be transformed in the coming years by what all immigrant groups, especially Mexicans, can contribute (Crosnoe, 2006).

Many Hispanic households have multiple family members in the home. Over 4.5 million Hispanic families (46.3% of all Hispanic families) in 2009 had either three or four members in the household. There were over 2.6 million two-person families, and

also over 2.6 million families of five or more people. In 2009 alone, just under 1 million Hispanic women, ages 15 to 44, gave birth, accounting for almost 22% of the total number of births in the U.S. that year. Almost half of these women (43.4%) were unmarried.

As for educational attainment, 39% of the Hispanic population over 25 years old had not graduated from High School as of 2009. Only 26% of Hispanics over 25 graduated from High School, and less than 13% graduated from College. In that year alone, almost 300,000 Hispanic students from ages 16 through 19 dropped out of High School. This is almost one-third of the total number of dropouts in the United States that year. This attrition rate might be one of the explanations for why Hispanics were the only ethnic group with fewer than 30% college enrollment for people ages 18 to 24.

On average, Hispanics occupy a fragile position in the American economy. The numbers from the ACS also show that in 2009 over 70% of the Hispanic population ages 16 or older worked in one of the following occupation groups, office and administrative support (12.1%), installation, maintenance and repair (12%), construction and extraction (10.6%), sales (9.9%), building and grounds cleaning maintenance (9.2%), food preparation and serving (8.5%), and transportation (8.1%). Over 46% of the Hispanic population in the country earned less than \$20,000 a year, which is a higher percentage than any other ethnic group in the United States. Less than 15% of Hispanics earned over \$50,000 a year in that same year. In terms of household income, almost 50% of Hispanic households earned under \$40,000 per year, while only 11.4% earned over \$100,000.



Finally, it is important to draw attention to the fact that 47% of the Hispanic population in 2013 lived in poverty and 31.3% did not have health insurance. The only other groups with similar numbers in terms of poverty are African Americans, with 39% and Native Americans 34%; as for health insurance, no other ethnic group had over 18% of their population without benefits. After the Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010, Hispanics continued to have low health insurance coverage. As of 2011, nearly a third of the Hispanic nonelderly are uninsured (Report, 2013); in addition, even with the aid of Medicaid, sixteen percent of Hispanic children are still without medical coverage; Family Foundation estimates based on the Census Bureau's March 2014 Current Population Survey (CPS: Annual Social and Economic Supplements).

#### *Current State of Education*

Based on data from the Current Population Survey, the Hispanic dropout rate of 16- through 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school credential (either a diploma or an equivalency credential such as a General Educational Development [GED] certificate), decreased from 12 percent in 1990 to 7 percent in 2012, with most of the decline occurring after 2000 (when it was 11 percent). However, there was no measurable difference in the rate between 2011 and 2012. This information was taken from the Institute of Education Science, National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education here forth referred to as (IES).

The Hispanic male dropout rate declined from 12 percent in 1990 to 7 percent by 2012; most of the decline took place after 2000 (when it was 12 percent). For Hispanic females, the rate declined from 12 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2000 and then

continued to decline to 6 percent in 2012. Whites continue to have lower dropout rates than African Americans and Hispanics. During the period of 1990 to 2012, the dropout rate for Whites declined from 9 to 4 percent; the rate for African Americans declined from 13 to 8 percent; and the dropout rate for Hispanics declined from 32 to 13 percent (IES). With more Hispanics completing high school there is a greater opportunity for increased income and higher education; in fact, the census bureau reported that the rate of Hispanics with a bachelor's degree increased by eighty percent between 2001 and 2011. The percentage would appear high; however this increase is based on Hispanics who had completed their bachelor's degree and on the total Hispanic population. Of the 50.5 million Hispanics 14% had a bachelor's degree in 2011 compared to 11% in 2001; this is an indication that as graduation from high school increases, participation in higher education is to be expected.

Hispanics are not a homogenous group and the ancestry breakdown of Hispanics with bachelor's degrees is varied. Hispanics whose origin is from South America countries have a larger percentage of bachelor degree attainment then Hispanics whose origin is from Central America and Mexico. Among the Hispanic population 25 years or older and with a bachelor degree or higher, those of Venezuelan origin had the highest percentage of college completion at 50 percent. Seven additional Hispanic groups have bachelor degree attainment of 30 percent or higher. Those from Central American countries (with the exception of Panamanians who reported a percentage of 31) and Mexico were at the lower percentages.

This project will focus on the perspective of Mexican-immigrant parents' literacy preparation of their children. This project will use Photovoice, a participatory research method that combines pictorial representation with guided interviews to assess these perspectives. This study will enhance our knowledge base regarding the practices of immigrant Hispanic families and their attitudes and practices regarding their role in the literacy development of their young children. The specific questions to be explored are:

1. What are the practices, both traditional and nontraditional, of Mexican immigrant families that foster early literacy prior to school attendance?
2. How do the beliefs of Mexican immigrant families provide opportunities to support their children's literacy preparation?
3. What issues do Mexican immigrant families identify that need to be addressed in relation to the literacy education of their young children?
4. What do Mexican immigrant families propose through their reflections as methods or actions to address the literacy issues they have identified?

## CHAPTER 2

*You may write me down in history  
with your bitter, twisted lies,  
you may tread me in the very dirt  
but still, like dust, I'll rise*  
**Poem by Angela Angelou**

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Introduction*

There is an emerging body of research documenting the sociocultural patterns of Hispanic parents and the ways in which they influence child development (National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007). This research has found that there are a number of salient factors within the Hispanic family that influence child development; these factors include: respect, familism, and a socio-centric view on children's enculturation. Additionally, these studies have shown the belief systems, practices, and expectations of Hispanic parents to be significantly influenced by socioeconomic factors, maternal educational background, and level of socialization. However, when asked to define parental involvement, Hispanic parents reported participating in the children's social lives more often than in their academic involvement (Garcia, 2001).

In their analysis of the differences between Hispanic infants and those from other ethnic groups, Lopez, Barrueco, & Miles (2006) examined ECLS-B data and found that there seems to be no significant differences between infant developmental outcomes in Hispanic families and those from other ethnic groups. They conclude that education, socioeconomic resources, or ethnicity has less of an effect on child development than a

parent's emotional well-being, behavior, and parenting skills. However, Lopez, Barrueco, & Miles go on to conclude that while family resources, such as income and maternal education, did not directly associate with child development, they do have a bearing on parenting behaviors. For example, the socio-economic and educational backgrounds led to differences in mothers' observed teaching and responsive behavior, as well as frequency of reading, song singing, and storytelling. In relation to reading, several studies have found that Hispanic parents admit to having few books and literacy materials in their homes and to reading less often to their children compared to other ethnic groups. These factors contribute to lower performance on cognitive, language, and literacy activities (National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007).

Parental and familial participation in children's education, including linguistic development, has been documented as a critical element for student success across the races (Lee & Bowman, 2006; Raikes et al., 2006). Within the Hispanic community there are certain children that enter school having mastered the literacy requirements and therefore are ready to succeed at school (Rodriguez & Olswang, 2011). To identify these students, let us examine the following factors: 1) Sociolinguistics of Mexican immigrants, 2) Hispanic family composition, 3) Hispanic parental involvement in their children's education, 4) young Hispanic children academic standing in the early years of schooling.

### *Sociolinguistics of Mexican Immigrants*

Sociolinguistics is the study of language as a complex of resources. Additionally, sociolinguistics examines the value, distribution rights, ownership, and effects of

language. It is not a study of an abstract language, but the study of a concrete language resource in which people make different investments and to which they attribute different degrees of usefulness (Blommaert, 2010).

In the United States of America, Spanish or any other language other than English is a peripheral language; consequently, it is of little value to the speaker and immigrants are required to learn English (Blommaert, 2010). To understand sociolinguistics of Mexican Spanish we must first look at the Spanish linguistics developed in the USA from the time that Spanish and English first came in contact.

Spanish and English initially came in contact socially, economically, and politically after a series of historical events, including: the war with Mexico, the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Gadsden Purchase, and the USA annexation of the western territory. Overall, the Southwest can be divided into three separate zones New Mexico, Texas, and California – Arizona. Each area was colonized by Spain at separate times and each continues to be identifiable by separate language entities independent of each other (Berk-Seligson, 1980). Historically, New Mexico and Southern Colorado were colonized by Spaniards who arrived in the area directly from Spain. Their descendants maintained a generally illiterate, medieval folk culture that was isolated from the Mexican government. The early settlers in California – Arizona were different culturally in that they were wealthier, better educated, and generally more influential in Mexican culture. In contrast; Texas was forcefully settled by Spaniards who were sent from the Canary Islands. The colonized area eventually became settled with penal colonies in order to strength fortifications (Berk-Seligson, pp.69-70).

Language contact started earlier than American acquisition of the Western lands from Mexico. Some of the earliest contact between the two languages came with contact between frontier travelers and trappers on the Santa Fe Trail in Santa Fe and Taos and at the Eastern boundary of Texas. The effect of English being spoken by early migrants to the Southwest was intensified by American acquisition of the Western lands from Mexico. The Spanish speaking population was now in contact with the English of the United States. This created a large population of Spanish speaking indigenous Mexican-Americans (Peñalosa, 1980); Mexicans who elected to remain in their homeland and later immigrant Mexican-Americans. The linguistic development of the Southwest was initially that of a bilingual society with different scales in their language depending on the social circumstances present when the languages came into contact (Blommaert, 2010). Consequently, there developed a casual style and a formal style, and their use depended on the social circumstances at the time.

The Southwest of the USA is the site of the largest group of Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. This area is characterized by its linguistic diversity, which is embodied by some fairly complex contact situations (Ornstein, 1972). Ornstein identified a number of languages that were in contact: Mexican Spanish, Indian, Arabic, Czech, Polish, German, Basque American English, and multiple dialects of Spanish and English. Consequently, the Spanish spoken in this area is historically different due to the power relation between Spanish and English (Peñalosa, 1980). The speakers of both languages began the process of communicating with each other and developed a variety of linguistics outcomes, including borrowing of vocabulary and even the creation of a new

language. Within these two extremes a wide range of possibilities occurs, each with varying degrees of influence from one language to the other (Winford, 2003). Initially, Spanish was the language of preference due to the large number of Spanish speakers and because they were also the landholders. The Anglo settlers proceeded to learn Spanish in order to be able to communicate with Spanish speaking residents. This allowed for intra-group communication, marriages, and incorporation into society. Spanish words were borrowed and anglicized, creating changes in the vocabulary. The Spanish speaking community similarly began to borrow words from English especially words that did not have an equivalent word in Spanish. The contact created a new lexicon and morphology in each language. The contact allowed for the creation of “Spanglish.”

Over the years, the status of Spanish changed as the Anglo population increased and the American culture began to dominate. Eventually, indigenous Mexican Americans proceeded to claim their Spanish roots to avoid the stigma that was being placed on Spanish-speaking, indigent Mexican-Americans and the arriving Mexican immigrants. With the language shift from Spanglish to English, a Mexican English or a Chicano-English evolved from these social-political circumstances. Current Mexican American speech communities continue to reside as second class communities suffering from low socio-economic status due to continuing difficulties with the Standard English required in the American educational system and the high-stakes state standardized tests that have become so prevalent.



### *Hispanic Family Composition*

Even though variability within Hispanic groups exists in terms of country of origin (Garcia, 2001), these populations share certain demographic and sociocultural traits, mainly in family characteristics, parenting, home language, learning experiences, childcare and early education. These social characteristics include large family households, low parental education achievement, low-wage jobs, and high rates of poverty (Garcia, Jensen and Cuellar, 2006). Even though these socioeconomic factors may have a negative bearing on the children's development, other family characteristics may exert a protective influence on their development. For example, Hispanic households with a higher rate of grandparents and relatives living in the home may be conducive to communal caregiving and participation in infants' early learning experiences (Golan & Petersen, 2007). This environment may be particularly valuable for families with low-income, and this social solidarity can benefit some of the most marginalized groups, (Kessi, 2011).

Compared to other ethnic groups, Hispanic families generally outperform African American and American Indian families in terms of household income, percentage of two-parent households, percentage of married parents, and maternal depression, but Hispanic families do not fare as well as European American and Asian American families. Hispanic mothers lag behind African American mothers in terms of maternal education attainment and are less likely to be part of the workforce than most other groups (Lopez, Barrueco, & Miles, 2006).

However, when looking at families in the poverty sample of the ECLS-B dataset, Hispanic families seem to fare generally better than most of the other groups. For example, in terms of maternal depression, European American mothers show higher depression rates than Hispanic mothers (Rodriguez & Olswang, 2011). Moreover, Hispanic families in poverty did not differ significantly from European American and Asian American families in poverty in most of the factors where they fall behind compared to the full sample (National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007). Parental involvement of Hispanic families in their children's education depends on the education of the parents. Hispanic families, especially Mexican immigrants are the least educated, (Orlando & Garcia, 2013). Because these families have not experienced education, they are left without a means to navigate the United States Public Education System and are dependent on the schools to meet their children's needs without any input from the families. In addition, there is an inability to effectively communicate with school administrators or teachers because of the language differences (Orlando & Garcia, 2013). There are other barriers, stereotypes, and stigmas that have been identified as particular challenges for Mexican immigrants. The research of Quezada, Diaz, & Sanchez identify the following challenges:

1. Lacking the ability to understand English.
2. Fearing participation in the school.
3. Being uninformed about the school system.
4. Having limited education.
5. Having multiple obligations.

6. Having adverse school experiences.
7. Experiencing the negative or patronizing attitudes of school staff.
8. Having a need for transportation or childcare.

Despite these barriers, Mexican immigrants who have left behind the known elements of their life and experience the discomfort of poverty still have the expectation that their children will have a better life than what they as parents have had. They look at their children's future as the reason they have undertaken this journey to the United States of America. Despite these expectations, the Mexican immigrants historically have been a failure educationally and are at a disadvantage in the modern economy of the USA. The American economy is often described as having an hourglass shape; the more secure jobs and those with a higher wage are at the top of the hourglass, and the least secure jobs with lower wages are at the bottom. The narrow funnel between the two does not allow for movement from the bottom to the security of the jobs at the top (Crosnoe, *Mexican Roots, American Schools*, 2006).

#### *Hispanic Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education*

Hispanic parents have reported participating in the children's social development more often than in their academic development while in a school environment (Garcia, 2001). Immigrant parent's scholastic achievement contributes to their children's early literacy development; consequently, the fact that Mexican immigrants are the least likely of having achieved a college education would seem to indicate that their children would not be well prepared to commence school in the United States (Orlando & Garcia, 2013).

However, this lack of education motivates the families' desires that their children attain a college education (Goldenberg, Reese, & Garnier, 2001).

*Young Hispanic Children's Academic Standing in the Early Years of Schooling*

Hispanic children face negative structural educational circumstances. They are the most segregated group of children in the American educational system. Further, they are much more likely to attend schools in the barrio that are overcrowded, with a high proportion of students of color who live in poverty and with under-qualified teachers. Hispanic students are also the least likely group of children to attend preschool. Although Hispanic parents have demonstrated great interest in enrolling their children in preschool programs if programs were available with teachers that understood the Hispanic culture. Consequently children whose only or main language at home is Spanish start kindergarten with weak skills in math and reading compared to children whose dominant language at home is English. Rapid success in kindergarten and first grade, primarily in reading, is more apparent in children from homes in which Spanish is the only language spoken (Orlando & Garcia, 2013).

There are a number of studies that have identified several Hispanic cultural beliefs and values about children's education (e.g., Donohue, 2008; Hammer, Rodriguez, Lawrence & Miccio, 2007; Rodriguez & Olswang, 2003; Goldenberg, Reese, & Garnier, 2001). For the purposes of this proposal, "beliefs" are defined as constructs of reality that incorporate one's knowledge and do not require evidence for their truthfulness (Sigel, 1985). These beliefs influence child rearing and provide the space through which children are initially educated (Murphy, 1992).

In light of this extensive research it seems appropriate now to examine and extend current research with a study on how Mexican-immigrant parents and families prepare their children's literacy development and, if possible, what funds of knowledge support this preparation (Velez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992).

### *Photovoice*

The best method available to obtain an insight on the perspective and methods of Mexican immigrants is to use a participatory research methodology. This research project's use of Photovoice, a community-based participatory research method, allows Mexican-immigrant parents and families to express their voices. The project's inquiry will be on what families of Mexican immigrants do to support the literacy of young children at home and to identify possible issues that hinder Mexican immigrants from actively participating in their children's education.

### *What is Photovoice?*

Photovoice, a qualitative and exploratory methodology founded on the principles of constructivism, empowerment education, and documentary photography, enables participants to record and reflect on the strengths and concerns of their community through photographic images and group discussion (PhotoVoice, 2013).

A Photovoice discourse can help keep Hispanic immigrants from being regarded as poor and underdeveloped. Kessi's Photovoice research of disenfranchised children in Tanzania and South Africa led to improvement after the research was presented to community leadership (Kessi, 2011).

### *History of Photovoice*

Photovoice was developed by Caroline C. Wang of the University of Michigan and Mary Ann Burris, research associate of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London. In 1992, Wang and Burris created what is now known as "Photovoice" as a way to enable rural women of Yunnan Province, China, to influence the policies and programs that affected them. It has since been used multiple times with different communities, including: among homeless adults in Ann Arbor, Michigan, among community health workers and teachers in rural South Africa by Dr. Claudia Mitchell et al., and with brain injury survivors by Dr. Laura S. Lorenz of the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University.

The concept owes a debt to the Paulo Freire's pedagogy related to critical consciousness, feminist theory, and empowerment. Dr. Lorenz offers Photovoice Workshops for educators, facilitators, service providers, researchers, development workers, and others seeking to gain conceptual and hands-on experience with this dynamic community assessment and reflection method. Workshops are tailored to meet audience needs. Participants leave ready to design and implement a project in their local context. A CD of conceptual and practical materials for applying Photovoice and managing project logistics and outreach is provided as well.

Photovoice is a participatory research and critical thinking method that allows patients, clients, and community members to share their experiences and collaborate for change. Using photographs can illuminate barriers to access, illustrate quality of care, or influence policy and resource decision-making in respectful and supportive ways. It can

help unite service providers and patients through visual accounts, which allows health care issues to become a shared endeavor. It is an innovative technique of interest to community members, graduate students, policy makers, professionals, and more.

Photovoice asks people to take photographs of their community to document both positive and negative aspects of their community. The photos are combined with written narratives to share points of view with political or community decision makers.

Participants reach decision makers via community project sessions, in their homes, web sites, public exhibits, etc. The decision makers they reach may be themselves, family, friends, neighbors, peers, teachers, community leaders, elected officials, or foundations.

Because this methodology is participatory research, each of the researchers arrived at their findings using the principals of Photovoice differently (PhotoVoice, 2013). Dr. Wang and Dr. Burris in their 1997 article titled *Photovoice: Concepts, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment*, provided information on its use in their research with women living in Yunnan, one of the poorest rural provinces of China. The researchers identified ten contributions that Photovoice makes to need-assessment research:

1. It enables researchers the possibility of seeing the viewpoint of people who are not traditionally in control.
2. Second, Photovoice addresses the descriptive mandates of need assessment by using visual images.
3. Third, the process can affirm the perspectives of the vulnerable. For example, in Yunnan many of the women are

not formally educated, poor, and have to work in order to support their families.

4. Fourth, the method facilitates sampling of different social and behavioral settings. For example, Yunnan women took the cameras to the market, work areas, the water pump, and the rice paddy.
5. Fifth, the method can sustain community participation.
6. Sixth, Photovoice provides a way to reaffirm or redefine goals that were initially set.
7. Seventh, Photovoice enables the participants to bring the ideas and stories of others into the process.
8. Eighth, Photovoice provides tangible and immediate benefits to the people.
9. Ninth, Photovoice enables the participants to depict the community needs and assets.
10. Finally, embedded in Photovoice is the Freirian context of problem-posing education.

### *Stages of Photovoice*

The stages of Photovoice include:

1. Conceptualizing the problem,
2. Defining broader goals and objectives,
3. Recruiting policy makers as the audience for Photovoice findings,



4. Conducting Photovoice training,
5. Devising the initial theme or themes for taking pictures,
6. Facilitating group discussion,
7. Critical reflection and dialogue,
8. Selecting photographs for discussion,
9. Documenting the stories and contextualizing storytelling by codifying issues, themes, and theories,
10. Conducting the formative evaluation,
11. Reaching policy makers, donors, media, researchers, and others who may be mobilized to create change.
12. Conducting participatory evaluation of policy and program implementation

Photovoice allows community members to share their experiences and collaborate for change. In addition, Photovoice may provide for the participants a means to demonstrate their perceived strengths and needs by exploring their own funds of knowledge. This interaction promotes dialogue with the host community. For example, the researchers Castleden and Garvin in their Huu-ay-aht First Nation 2008 Photovoice study of the indigenous people of Vancouver Island, Canada hosted a symposium with the Huu-ay-aht to discuss their past, present, and future needs for cedar.

#### *Photovoice in this Study*

Here are the key questions that will be addressed utilizing Photovoice:

1. What are the practices of Mexican immigrant families that foster early literacy; including, traditional and nontraditional experiences at home prior to school attendance? (For example: family trips, shopping, dinner table discussions, etc.)
2. How do the beliefs of Mexican immigrant families provide opportunities to support their children's literacy preparation?
3. What issues do Mexican immigrant families identify that need to be addressed in relation to the literacy education of their young children?
4. What do Mexican immigrant families propose through their reflections as ways or actions to address literacy issues that they have identified?

The terms traditional refer to the literacy practices that are used in the instructions of literacy at school as replicated at home by the Mexican immigrants; while nontraditional refers to the use of at home resources such as the use of advertisements flyers for language development and cereal or similar items as counters for numeracy activities. Providing the answers to these questions about the beliefs, practices, and educational issues of Mexican immigrants can be useful in informing the host community, policy makers, education providers, and the community at large. The discourse developed from the answers to these questions will help resist the stigmatization and stereotyping of being poor and socially underdeveloped (Kessi, 2011).

### CHAPTER 3

*Now if you listen closely  
I'll tell you what I know  
Storm clouds are gathering  
the wind is gonna blow  
the race of man is suffering  
and I can hear the moan,  
'Cause nobody,  
But nobody  
Can make it out here alone.*

**From “Alone” by Maya Agelou**

### ACQUISITION OF DATA THROUGH PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

#### *Method*

The use of Photovoice, a qualitative research method, was selected in order to be able to conduct participatory research that would provide and encourage all participants to have an active role within the research. Descriptive questions were designed to incorporate the participants' thoughts about activities that prepared their children for school in the U.S. The setting of the study was a large urban city in the southwest. The research population was the Mexican immigrants of this large urban city. Questionnaires were designed that would initially provide demographic, educational, and personal data for each family participating in the research; additionally, the research was designed for participating parents to meet with the researcher for a minimum of four sessions. In the first session they received training on the use of a digital camera; for example, taking pictures of their child or any other child in a manner that concealed the identity of the child as much as possible (i.e. from behind or an oblique angle). In the first sessions families were also provided information on the research and research goals. The following three sessions allowed the parents to compile a photo journal that answered the

research questions. Afterwards they participated in a recorded session where they described how each photograph answers the research questions. The data gathered was extensive in that each session had to be transcribed, reviewed, and approved by the participants and then translated into English, codified, compared, and categorized. This chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the details, and implications of the methodology and techniques used in this research.

Having grown up in the Hispanic culture, I lived with my grandparents in a small town in New Mexico, with Spanish as my first language; English was introduced into my life by the nuns when I entered kindergarten. Instructing Mexican immigrants' children in an elementary dual language program with a large immigrant population provided an introduction into the Mexican immigrant community. My cultural and language ability allowed me to be accepted as participant-researcher into the Mexican immigrant families lives. This provided an access that otherwise would not have been possible to an outsider.

A brief history of qualitative research elucidates the reasons that qualitative research was selected as the methodology. Qualitative research has been used to make sense of actions, narratives, and the way they intersect (Glesne, 2011). The research framework is from the perspective of the Critical Feminist Research paradigm; this paradigm is appropriate because Mexican immigrants are in the lower educational and economic levels in the USA. The widening cultural gap between immigrant students and their teachers has been well documented (Gay, 2010). This wide divide produces a social conflict that engenders inequities in the education provided to students whose home language is not English. These students are referred to as English Language Learners,

hereafter ELLs. This divide is created by the national education system's belief that a home language other than English has no place in school. There is a further belief that ELL's should learn English quickly and exclude the home language from use in school. Additionally, the educational system has unknowingly created a socially ingrained belief, or habitus, that the immigrant children have no life experience and must be given this experience in order to become productive citizens. Habitus refers to the lifestyle, values, dispositions and expectations of particular social groups that are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. In other words, the habitus could be understood as a structure of the mind characterized by a set of acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions and taste. Habitus follows the dominant society's philosophy that English must be quickly acquired at all costs even if it excludes the home language and the family's culture. Habitus is formed over time in a society through the social process that leads to patterns; these patterns are enduring and transferable from one context to another over time. Though habitus is not permanent it will not be changed quickly (Bourdieu, 1984). The use of a Feminist paradigm helps address the issues that are identified in the research and can help school administrators and teachers begin to change this habitus. To a certain extent, this change began with Brown VS Board of Education in 1954 and continues to change with dual-language education; however, there is still much work to be done.

Using a participatory research methodology assisted in informing this sociological process. In order to begin the research, the questions must be of interest and importance to both the research population and society. Second, the most critical component of

feminist methodology is a concern for research relationship and honoring such a relationship. That is to say, the rapport that is established between the researcher and the participants must be respected. Third, the researcher advocates critical self-reflection on their own role as a researcher. Fourth, feminist researchers tend to position themselves as advocates on behalf of his or her participants (Glesne, 2011). As an advocate I looked at the preparation of Mexican immigrant children for school in the USA. I observed a group of Mexican immigrant parents in a large urban city in the Southwest of the United States with the intent of demonstrating the involvement of immigrant parents in their children's preparation for school. Photovoice is the participatory action at the center of the research gathering. The use of photography as a means of gathering information has been increasing because of the development of small digital and disposable cameras that are available to researchers. The use of digital cameras provides a means for researchers to conduct interviews that can be voice recorded; additionally, these photos can be downloaded onto computers, which extend the observation. The photographs provide a density that is greater than simple observation because after the interview the researcher can return to the photograph and repeatedly gather data that was not available at the time of the initial interview. The use of photographs can also assist a shy participant in that it provides a means for the researcher to direct the attention away from the interview to the photograph (Glesne, 2011).

In order to investigate what Mexican Immigrant parents do or do not do to prepare their children for school in the USA, a qualitative approach was taken in this study. The qualitative research requires researchers to seek an understanding of the social

phenomena through induction and emphasize process, values, context, and interpretation in the constructs of concepts and meaning (Goodwin, 1996). The qualitative approach provides the researcher the means through which open-ended questions can be utilized in participatory research (Glesne, 2011). With the use of visual data a researcher can create photographs that document aspects of social interaction, and the researcher and participants can collaborate in the creation of the study (Glesne, 2011). Through this collaboration, the researcher becomes a participant in the study; thus the researcher is able to establish a closer bond with the participant. As a result, an ethnographic methodology evolves as the researcher proceeds with his research. The emersion of the participants with the researcher provides a cultural view of the parents and their families. The emersion of the researcher in the families' life and the use of Photovoice as participatory action research provide a denser description of the activities that the families determine to be examples of school preparation.

Photovoice provides photographs and accompanying captions created by the affected community, which can assist the host community (Escalante Public Schools) in the removal of many of the challenges that hinder the literacy education of Mexican immigrant's children. Thus the persistent low academic achievement of these students can be addressed through the use of photography to provide data that is convincing in a way that standard data is not (Daw, 2013).

Photovoice allows the participants do as much of the project as possible; including its conception and design through every step of the research (Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchinson, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004). Participants own the data and decide how to publish

or share this information. Photovoice uses a grassroots approach to allow the groups or persons involved in the study to participate in the research, which provides buy-in. It has been primarily used in health research to “empower marginalized recipients of health systems in an effort to create positive change;” the data suggests that Photovoice is “an effective way of communicating with people in positions of power” (Castleden, Garniv, & Huu-ay-aht First Nation, 2008, Kessi, 2011). Photovoice has also been used by members of vulnerable communities such as homeless people, senior citizens, immigrant citizens, and citizens with HIV/AIDS to generate change for and within these communities (Castleden, Garniv, & Huu-ay-aht First Nation, 2008).

Recall that Photovoice has three goals. First, it helps people record and reflects on their community strengths and problems; second, it identifies important issues through group discussion and photographs; third, it gets the attention of policy makers and politicians (Wang & Burris, 2008). At the conclusion of the study, a photo exhibit with captions will be provided in order for the community’s stories to be told to the host community.

Despite its growing use in research, Photovoice has not been used in academic investigations of Hispanic populations and the condition of their education. Furthermore, it has not been used to address the literacy practices of Mexican immigrant families prior to their children going to school. By providing the missing voices of the Mexican immigrant parents, my research provides information that can help fill in these missing pieces (Daw, 2013).



Analysis of the information was a three stage process involving the participants and myself:

1. Selection of photos that represent the practices that foster early literacy.
2. Contextualizing or telling the meaning of photos in regards to the first and second questions.
3. Codifying the themes, issues, patterns, and/or theories that emerge in the discussion groups.

A written photo consent form was obtained from all participants (Attachment 3). As required by the ASU Review Board, all documents provided to participants were translated into Spanish.

Due to the nature of community participatory action research it is anticipated that elements of social justice or awareness were incorporated within the research results (Daw, 2013). All meetings were digitally recorded and meetings were transcribed and provided to the individuals for verification and approval. This dialogue created a chance to learn about each other's perspective.

The necessary research activities conducted to answer these four initial questions are:

1. Obtained ASU Institutional Review Board approval.
2. Recruited families for participation (n=8).
3. Conducted a family orientation.
4. Provided cameras to participating parents with instructions to take pictures of activities at home and in the community that

they feel help parents/families develop child oral and literacy development.

5. Scheduled a meeting with participants a week after the parents receive the cameras to answer any questions that the parents/families may have in regards to the research that has been digitally recorded.
6. Allowed 2-3 weeks for additional data gathering.
7. Met with participants individually and select photographs for discussion with the whole group. This meeting was digitally recorded and transcribed and provided to participants to insure that the transcription was correct. Transcriptions were done both in Spanish and English.
8. Results were then provided to all participants for approval and additional input.
9. Three complete sessions were conducted to insure that as much data as possible was compiled.
10. A final meeting was scheduled to select the community's 20-30 photographs. These were assembled into a photograph gallery to be displayed publicly at a site selected by the community.
11. Analysis of data was done as the study advanced; however, upon completion of the photo gallery and its placement, a more complete analysis was initiated. These findings were written up

with the anticipated completion and submission to the committee for a defense in spring semester 2015.

All interviews were semi-structured with opened ended questions to initiate the interview. These questions were open-ended to allow the participants to direct the research; Table 1 is the format followed in conducting the record sessions.

Table 1

<b>Step</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Transition</b>
<b>Session Title</b>	Orientation	Photo Take 1	Photo Take 2 and Reflection	
<b>Procedure</b>	Research introduction; Photo instructions	1 week	2-3 weeks	Transcription of reflection and analysis of data
<b>Expectations</b>	All participants present	ANS Q	30 photos per participant Dialogue creates learning about each other's perspective; Select 10 for posters	Transcription of reflection and analysis of data

### *Setting*

This study took place in a large urban area (hereafter referred to by an assigned alias, “Escalante”) located in the southwest United States of America. The urban area was chosen because of the large number of Mexican immigrants that have children attending the local public schools. In order to attain access to this population I met with several officials from various schools and church organizations that support immigrants; additionally, I met with local, state, and federal immigrant support agencies. I called each organization and explained that I was a graduate student interested in studying what

Mexican immigrants did to prepare their children for attending school. I explained that I was using photography as a means for creating a family-created photo journal of those activities. The project recruited from Mexican immigrant families who have 3 and 4 year old children who are not in pre-school in Escalante. The families that agreed to participate were surveyed in order to select participants that met the criteria of the project.

Research Criteria:

1. Started on 1, July, 2013 after I obtained IRB approval
2. Criteria for participation was:
  - a. The families must be Mexican immigrants that are experiencing this country's educational system with their children (Attachment 2).
  - b. The families must consist of two parents.

Upon the completion of the selection process, I met with the selected participants individually (at a location that was convenient to the parents) in order to provide training on the digital cameras and the questions that would provide the data I was seeking. The data-gathering sessions were conducted during the additional three meetings in three separate locations: a church meeting room, a classroom of the child's school and on one occasion at the home of one of the participants. The data gathering sessions were conducted privately with only the parents present. At these sessions the photographs they had taken of the literacy activities were downloaded onto the researcher's laptop. Each photograph was individually discussed, the conversation digitally recorded, and then

transcribed by the researcher at a later time. The participants approved each transcription during the follow-up sessions; any changes were noted by the parent and changed by the researcher on his documents in the presence of the parent.

### Participants

The participants in this study were a total of six two-parent families from Escalante's Mexican immigrant community. The participants were selected from a list of families provided by teachers and families recommended by church administrators. In order to obtain a purposeful sampling that would provide a specific group that met the study's purpose, the expertise of the teachers and church administrators about this specific group were used to select participants for a deeper study (Berg, 2004). The twelve recommended families were identified as most likely to participate in the study, and each family was provided a letter inviting them to be part of the study (Appendix A). I spoke personally to each of the families. Of the twelve identified families, eight initially agreed to participate; however, two of the eight withdrew from the study, stating that they had lost the use of the family vehicle and did not have access to any other mode of transportation.

The participating parents had been in the country anywhere from seventeen to nine years. Their formal education ranged from completion of university and technological certification to only having gone to the first three years of school. Employment history was one of seasonal construction and domestic housekeeping due to required citizenship documents. English language fluency mainly consisted of the minimum English required for seeking employment. Due to legal status and seasonal

employment the families were of the lower social economic group. Of the six families, five had the parents as the sole adults in the home and one consisted of adult combinations of parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles. These families had no interest in returning to Mexico.

All of the children in the study were from two to four years of age, had not been in school, and were not attending daycare outside of the home. The children spoke only Spanish but did have some exposure to English due to having siblings that were attending public schools in Escalante.

#### *Data Collection*

The Institutional Review Board of Arizona State University requirements for the protection of the participants were strictly adhered to as approved for this study. Written parental consent was obtained for the use of the family's photographs. Further, families were instructed that the photos they took should only have a profile image of their child in order to provide some anonymity. Additionally, consent was provided for the digital recording and transcription of each session. The informed consent forms were written in English using non-jargon and translated into Spanish for all of the participants in the study. The participants were provided the digital camera on the initial training session and were provided a twenty-five dollar gift card for each of the three subsequent recording sessions. This compensation was not expected to influence the information that the participants shared with the researcher, and no evidence of such influence was detected. Additionally, no deception was employed at any time. The sessions were

formatted in accordance with Photovoice training manual (Palibroda, Krieg, Murdock, & Havelock, 2014).

The data for this study was principally generated by the Photovoice methodology; however, field notes and in-depth ethnographic interviews were also used. These two methods proved to be an excellent complement to each other; especially in expanding the information behind the photographs. The field notes were collected at each recording session and expanded after the session in order to maintain the flow of the conversation and to be able to attend to the administrative task of transitioning to the following photograph at the appropriate time. In addition, I needed to be attuned to the participants' explanation in order to understand the reason they selected that specific time as a learning moment and to be able to ask clarifying questions. All sessions were conducted in Spanish, the families' home language. Being able to speak and understand Spanish allowed for interaction between the parents and me during the recording sessions. Being able to ask and answer questions in their home language expanded the information gathered through the interactions. In addition, the recording of my observation after each session allowed me to maintain a friendly, conversational interview style (Spradly, 1979); thus allowing for the participants and the researcher to confidently ask questions of each other. The rapport that developed during the interviews allowed for occasional interaction with the child as they expressed an interest in the proceedings.

The recorded sessions were scheduled anywhere from one to two weeks apart to allow the families time to record photographs of the activities they felt contributed to their children's preparation for school (Palibroda, Krieg, Murdock, & Havelock, 2014).

The photographs in subsequent sessions tended to be different from the previous session due to the interaction of the participants amongst themselves and at times with the researcher. I felt that this interaction allowed for reflection on other activities that they had not considered as activities that prepared their children for school attendance but were common non-traditional literacy activities (i.e. going to the store or playing with other children). At times, the preparatory natures of these activities were a source of revelation to me.

The interviews were composed of descriptive questions designed to encourage the participants to respond to the study's three questions:

1. What does this photograph show in regards to literacy development?  
*¿Qué es que esta foto muestra en referencia al desarrollo de lectura?*
2. What do you want to say about the activity?  
*¿Qué es lo que quieren decir en referencia de esta actividad?*
3. How does this help your child's literacy development or preparation for school?  
*¿Cómo le ayuda a su Nino/a en el desarrollo de la lectura?*

From these answers I extracted the data that was needed for the study.

### *Data Analysis*

Analysis was done from the transcriptions and recorded interviews along with a photography record provided by the participating families. The data revealed recurring themes and beliefs about their child's education, the practices that lead to development of school readiness in regards to literacy development, and activities that are both traditional



and non-traditional in literacy development. Also, serious concerns were raised about the education process in the United States. Answers to my research questions provided information on the funds of knowledge immigrant families have and will inform the host community of the families' efforts. Using these funds of knowledge, immigrant families can bridge the communication gap between themselves and the host community (U. S. education system). This interaction introduces the voices of Mexican Immigrants into the educational discussion, which will help school administrators and educators realize both their own personal beliefs about ELL's in their schools and how these beliefs are influencing, for better or for worse, the quality of the education these children are experiencing. In other words, the educational system of the U.S. will be informed of the knowledge of these children and will be able to make better instructional decisions as to where teachers begin the basic curriculum; this stands in contrast to the current method of assuming that these children are not prepared and have to be instructed on basic skills.

## CHAPTER 4

*"There is nothing less to our credit than our neglect of the foreigner and his children, unless it be the arrogance most of us betray when we set out to Americanize him."*

**From Human Nature and the Social Order  
By Charles Horton Cooley**

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### *Introduction*

In the following conversation, the father is answering my questions in regards to the activity that he had photographed of his son's efforts in developing language skills to be able to recognize and say the alphabet in Spanish and how the activity develops specific academic skills in his son. I could feel the strong sense of pride in the father as he quietly spoke of his son's efforts at saying his ABCs as if it were a miracle. It was at this moment that I realized that the father was making every effort to insure that his son gets an education here in the United States and was willing to risk all! I purposely left the conversation untranslated for those who are able to read it.

Jeronimo: ¿Que es que este foto muestra en referencia al desarrollo de lectura?  
¿Qué es lo que quieren decir en referencia de esta actividad? ¿Cómo le ayuda a su Niño/a en el desarrollo de lectura?

Papá: "Este es el momento que él muchacho, de nombre Alberto, bueno está haciendo una actividad con un conjunto de figuras y el abecedario en donde están comenzando a conocer las letras las imagines relacionadas con lo mismo para empezar hace el conocimiento de lo que sería sus primeras vocales. Empezar las primeras imagines y letras a los números también la parte posterior es un ábaco donde ya tiene conjuntos de diez. Lo empieza a contar a conjuntitos de uno o de dos, de tres, cuatro y lo hemos notado que hace conjuntos de cinco, (Jerry very good).

In this chapter the research findings and concomitant discussion are presented in four sections. The first section is biographical sketches of the participating families that

impart the readers an understanding of how families go through preparing their children for school in the United States prior to actual attendance. The second section introduces the twenty five pictures selected in coordination with the families to depicted activities that the parents indicated they were doing at home that prepared their child for school. The recorded comments of the family who provided the selected photograph and additional comments made by other participating parents that support and complement the discussed photograph are in this section. Finally, a summary of the family cultural models of family involvement in the education preparation of children for schooling is provided.

#### *Narrative Introduction to Participants*

In order to fully understand this study, it is imperative to be familiar with the participants' social cultural history. This section provides short biographical narrative introduction of each family that participated in this study. The data used is the personal information furnished by the family and data from my field notes. The short biographical sketch identifies the similarities and differences of each family. All families have been given an alpha identity from A to F in order to protect their identities.

#### *Participants*

The participants in this study are a total of six two-parent families from Escalante's Mexican immigrant community. The participants were selected from a list of families provided by teachers and families recommended by church administrators. In order to obtain a purposeful sampling that would provide a specific group that met the

study's purpose, the expertise of the teachers and church administrators about this specific group were used to select participants for a deeper study. The twelve recommended families were identified as most likely to participate in the study, and each family was provided a letter inviting them to be part of the study. I spoke personally to each of the families. Of the twelve identified families, eight initially agreed to participate; however, two of the eight withdrew from the study, stating that they had lost the use of the family vehicle and did not have access to any other mode of transportation.

The participating parents have been in the country anywhere from nine to seventeen years. Their formal education ranged from completion of university and technological certification to only having gone to the first three years of school in Mexico. Employment history was one characterized by seasonal construction and domestic housekeeping regardless of educational achievement. English language fluency mainly consisted of the minimum English required for seeking employment. The families were of the lower social economic group, the school age children of these parents qualified for the federal free lunch program. Required qualification the National Nutrition School Program for the school year 2014/2015 is an annual income of \$23,850 which is equivalent to the national poverty level for a family of four (National Free and Reduced Lunch Nutritional Program, 2014). Of the six families, five had the parents as the sole adults in the home and one consisted of adult combinations of parents, grandparents, aunts and/or uncles.

All of the children in the study were from three to four years of age, had not been in school, and were not attending daycare outside of the home. The children spoke only

Spanish but did have some exposure to English due to having siblings that were attending public schools.

#### *Family A*

Family A is a well-educated family. The father has the equivalent of a technical certificate of seventeen years in chemical engineering while the mother finished high school in Mexico. Both parents work outside the home whenever possible. There are three children in the family of which the eldest, a Dreamer, is fourteen- and was brought in to the country as an infant. The other two are seven and two years old. There is also a grandparent and sister with an infant son born in the U.S., for a total of eight. Two of the children are attending public school. The home language is Spanish with some English spoken by the children attending school. The family lives in a small two bedroom mobile home within the immigrant barrio. The family has other relatives that live in Escalante. Employment for the parents has been seasonal construction, including landscaping. The mother works as a hotel maid. The parents have been in the U. S. for eleven years. Medical assistance, with the exception for the three citizen children who have Medicaid from the State, has been limited to local clinics or Mexican curanderas (herbalists) when there are funds to pay for the visits.

#### *Family B*

Family B is characterized by the education level of twelve years for the mother this achieved in Mexico; the father's education was not provided because it was unknown. The father has been in country for eighteen years, while the mother has been in

the U. S. for a period of seven years. They are both documented immigrants of the U.S. both are employed in full time jobs and are economically stable. Spanish is the home language. They are not married, however, they live together and the children from this relationship are a boy seven years old and a girl two years old born in the United States.

#### *Family C*

Family C reported a parent education level in line with the average educational attainment of Mexican immigrants in the U. S. according to the US Census Report; the father finished twelve years education, while the mother has nine years of education. They have been in the U. S. for a total of seventeen years each. The father is documented and mother is not. The home language is Spanish. There are five living at home: both parents and three sons; ages of the children are four, eight, and seventeen years; the two eldest attend public school. The father was employed as a carpet layer and did occasional mechanical work on automobiles and appliances.

#### *Family D*

Families D is characterized by both parents educated with bachelor's degrees obtained in Mexico. The family's home language is Spanish. In this family the mother works at home providing home care to the children and the father works outside the home in seasonal construction work and has a small landscaping business that helps supplement the family income. Both parents have been in the U. S. for ten years. There are only four in the family; two sons that are six and three years old. Their eldest son attends public school. Family D lives in a small home amongst the immigrant community of Escalante.

They receive Medicaid from the State for their son; however for themselves they are dependent on curanderas when they require any medical assistance. They are aware that being involved in the education of their children is very important having participated in the Abriendo Puertas Family Involvement program administered by a California nonprofit organization *Families in School*.

#### *Family E*

For Family E, the father has completed three years of high school in the Mexico, while the mother finished high school in Mexico. This is a family of four with two children whose ages are six and four years old. The six year old is the only child attending public school. The parents have been in the U. S. for ten years and both are undocumented. Spanish is the home language. Both parents work outside of the home. The father works in seasonal jobs while the mother is employed as a home health provider to elderly families. The mother is the one most involved with the children's education at home. She reported helping with homework and providing activities that engages them academically. This family is dependent on a brother in law for educational resources used at home or when they visit her brother in law at his home.

#### *Family F*

Family F is a family of four that is bilingual. The mother is a U. S. citizen who speaks mostly English and understands some Spanish while the father is a documented Mexican immigrant that has been in the US for eleven years and whose primary language is Spanish. The father has eight years of schooling in Mexico, while the mother graduated

from high school and has taken classes at the local community college. This is a bilingual family whose home language is both Spanish and English. The father is employed for a roofing company as a roofer. I was informed by the mother that the father was involved in his children's Spanish language education while the mother was responsible for English support.

### *Family Preparation of Children for School in the US*

The twenty five photographs selected by the parents from the one hundred sixty seven photographs submitted in this section are utilized to answer the study's research questions:

1. What are the practices, both traditional and nontraditional, of Mexican immigrant families that foster early literacy prior to school attendance?
2. How do the beliefs of Mexican immigrant families provide opportunities to support their children's literacy preparation?
3. What issues do Mexican immigrant families identify that need to be addressed in relation to the literacy education of their young children?
4. What do Mexican immigrant families propose through their reflections as methods or actions to address the literacy issues they identified?

In order to answer the research questions using Photovoice as the methodology the families in the study were asked to photograph activities at home that they regarded as efforts to prepare their child for school. They were to be prepared to explain the activity in light of the following questions.

1. What does this photograph show in regards to literacy development?



2. What do you want to say about this activity?
3. How does this help your child's literacy development?

In answering these while selecting the photos, the families in this study were all very concerned about their children's education and had high expectations for their children to succeed educationally. In addressing the study's four research questions, the following twenty five photographs are indicative of intensive language and literacy development along with, numeracy, social skills, technology, and dexterity development at home. These immigrant parents were supporting their children's preparation for their first day at public school in the United States. In addition, families were creative in providing the support of children's education, primarily using all available resources that they had at hand or expending economic resources whenever possible.



*Figure 1: Father, “My son is indicating the parts of his body as I ask him to indicate its location”*

### *Examples of Literacy Support Activities*

Oral language development is the beginning of literacy development and is the initial steps all families take in preparing a child’s literacy skills by speaking to their children in the language spoken at home. Additional, comments on oral development are encountered in the comments of other parents to include the use of music in the development of language acquisition: In Figure 1, a father is providing his son with vocabulary development related to body parts in Spanish. A lesson that is being done in a rather Hispanic fashion, the father is sitting, while the son is standing in front of the

father answering the questions. The child appears to be comfortable as seen with what looks like a lollipop in his mouth.

A comment made by a mother in a photograph (not used) is an additional example of parents engaged in oral development.

Family F, Mother, “Here my daughter is asking why does one tree does not have leaves and another one does not while we are at the park? She was asking questions as to why things are different; I had to explain why.”



*Figure 2: Father, “In this flyer I am showing my son objects, numbers, and letters; as I stated about the previous photograph (Reference to prior photograph during interview session) he is identifying the objects as I name them, he is developing the ability to concentrate.”*

Figure 2 provides an example of parent’s literacy development through use of multiple visual, tactile and listening modalities. In Figure 2, the child is being provided the opportunity to engage in the literacy activity using all of the modalities, looking at various images, listening to his father, touching the individual image. The importance of the father being in this figure cannot be over emphasized. Seen in the photograph is how deeply the Hispanic culture is imbedded in the family’s activities. The altar to the left of the group with statues of “El Santo Niño de Atocha” one of the most significant Christ

figures, the ceramic angel along with other saintly images that the family honors is rather traditional in Hispanic homes.



*Figure 3: Mother, “In this activity my daughter is placing the letters that I ask her for; this activity helps her develop letter recognition for when she is in school and when they ask her a word she will be know the letters that are in the word.” Jerry, “Does she know letter sounds?” Mother, “No that is what we are working on.”*

Figure 3 portrays a more formal educational endeavor related to literacy development. Using the magnetic board to develop oral literacy skills such as letter recognition is an example of the family involvement in their children’s education. The intensity of the young girl’s gaze upon the letters, attests to the attention and concentration being applied by the young lady to the task, an ability that will serve her in education.



*Figure 4: Mother, “In the photograph my son is writing make- believe words in that that he had not yet learn how to write words other than small three letter words.”*

Figure 4 depicts a very specific effort by families to engage their children in an introduction to writing. The mother makes clear that the writing is at the earliest level of development which is indicated by the manner that the pen is being held. This and other direct literacy activities were observed in each of the families participating in the study. At-home writing experience is the beginning writing activities used in an early education curriculum.



*Figure 5: Mother, “My son chooses books from a box of books and sits by the window and looks at the pictures without being prompted.”*

Figure 5 provides an example of attention to book handling skills, page turning, word recognition, and use of pictures to retell the stories in a book. The mother not only describes what is going on in this picture but makes clear that books in the home are a common feature. In essence, this parent is extolling the importance of having picture books or literature at home since it provides early exposure to reading and the proper matter of manipulating of the literature. Of additional importance in the mother’s statement, “sits by the window,” indicates a place that has been identified for the child as a distraction free location where he can peacefully read.





*Figure 6: Mother, “In this photograph my daughter is reading a kinder book that has pictures above some words, she cannot read, however, she does make up a story using the pictures that are in the book.”*

Figure 6 depicts the parent’s use of picture books in a more traditional literacy practices used by the families participating in the study. Figure 6 is a picture perfect example of what all teachers of early readers do. They use the pictures as a clue as to what is written to tell the story. Notice that in this figure, the child is using her fingers to keep track of the letters and words. The damaged wall in the background is significant in that it reflects that family funds are not available for repairs however the girl is well groomed.



*Figure 7: Father, "That as their son pretended to read he would say what he thought the story was about according to the pictures; and that he was holding the book correctly and turning pages properly."*

Figure 7 provides another example of a parent's attention specifically to book reading. The father is concerned with the physical aspects of holding the book as well as the content of the story. The literacy activity is occurring at bedtime. In this figure, bedtime appears to be the routine time for reading.



*Figure 8: Mother explained, “My daughter was pretend to read in English using school resources that my son brought home for reading homework and that I was unable to tell if the words were correct in that I speak no English.”*

As Figure 8 indicates the exposure to English in immigrant’s life creates a problem to families that are developing home language literacy. However, in figure eight, the family is using available resources acquired from the school to develop proper book handling skills. The mother’s quote indicates a concern for English development that may be needed when her child goes to school.



*Figure 9: Father, “He shows us with his finger the letters that are printed on the labels on the bottle and we say water; we than begin to show him the letters w-a-t-e-r. My son begins to associate the letters with the word and attempts to say water.”*

Figure 9 provides evidence of the use of environmental print as a teaching method recognized by parents. Children are exposed to print throughout the community and items that are purchased for consumption at home. The use of environmental print by the family in Figure 9 is rather sophisticated and indicative of the efforts Mexican immigrant families are practicing supporting their children’s early literacy awareness.



*Figure 10: Mother stated, “This photograph is of a game that we put together to help my daughter to recognize colors and that it is played daily.”*

In Figure 10, a homemade activity to assist color identification is indicative of parents’ innovation when it comes to the use of at-hand resources in assisting their children’s learning. Of particular note is the consistency of the activity as indicated by the mother statement in our conversation that this activity was one of her daughter’s favorite done several times a week.



*Figure 11: Mother, “In this photograph my oldest daughter is reading to her younger sister; this has developed in her younger sister the ability to focus when someone else is reading, a skill required when she goes to school.”*

Figure 11, depicts the valuable resource in having an older child in school in that the sibling attending school mimics the teacher’s reading modeling practices used while reading to the class. This parent reported that observation of literacy practices used in

school while attending parent/teachers conferences and visits in classrooms provided traditional instructional methods that become resources for parents use at home.



*Figure 12: Mother, “In this photograph I am helping guide of my daughter’s hand by superimposing my hand on the child’s hand to help construct numbers correctly and that it is important to properly construct numbers.*

Figure 12 provides a demonstration of the parent combining writing skills that are being used to teach the construction of numbers from one to ten with understanding number structure and is a clear illustration of the willingness of families’ to participate in their children’s education. In this figure, oral language and writing literacy that learning numbers in Spanish at home will transfer into English. The mother’s attention to detail indicates her concern that such attention will assist the child at school.





*Figure 13: Mother, “In this photograph she is counting cereal, while placing them in a line and counting them.”*

### *Numeracy Development*

Figure 13 provides an example of developing number sense using cereal as counters to place in groups of three. This unitary strategy helps the child beginning to form the three aspects of number verbal, quantitative, and symbolic that leads to more complex mathematics such as adding on or taking away. It further demonstrates the versatility of using common items for children’s number sense.



*Figure 14: Mother, “This counting activity will prepare my daughter for counting activities at school.” Mother also said, “My daughter is able to count to five and they help her to add on.”*

While the activity in Figure 14 appears as a simple task it is rather complicated process that leads to number recognition. This activity is a demonstration of children developing strategies for coping with large quantities by selecting smaller quantities to manipulate. Of note, the pieces seem to replicate counters that are seen at school classrooms. These counters are tools used to scaffold counting in grades pre-K to third grade. Using what is available at home to provide interesting educational activities is reflected here as well.



*Figure 15: Mother “This activity will develop my daughter’s counting skills.”*

In Figure 15, provides another example of numeracy, a common theme in the parent pictures and their conceptualization of what is important in preparing their children for school. Mathematically, the child in Figure 15 is constructing a grouping using multiple modalities as well as learning the verbal and quantitative aspects of numbers.



*Figure 16: Mother, “By doing this my daughter is getting ready for school because she is learning to place things that she has been using in their proper place so others who would want to use or play with the equipment would not have to hunt for them.”*

### *Social Development*

Figure 16 depicts an activity that helps in the development of a child’s personnel and social skills that will be required throughout the child’s educational career. The mother felt it was a necessary skill that their children should have in order for there to be harmony in classrooms.



*Figure 17: Mother, “My daughter is learning the importance of playing harmoniously while playing with other children; something that is needed in whole group activities at school.”*

Figure 17, expresses the cooperative social skills and the development of this skill was very important to the families in the study. They felt that children needed to be able to play and work together in order to maintain harmony in the classroom and playgrounds. The parents reported that they had established specific social rules for their children including respect for others, turn taking, and attention to the language they would use (Spanish or English).



*Figure 18: Mother, “This activity will help her when she goes to school in that she will be informed on what to do on the bus.”*

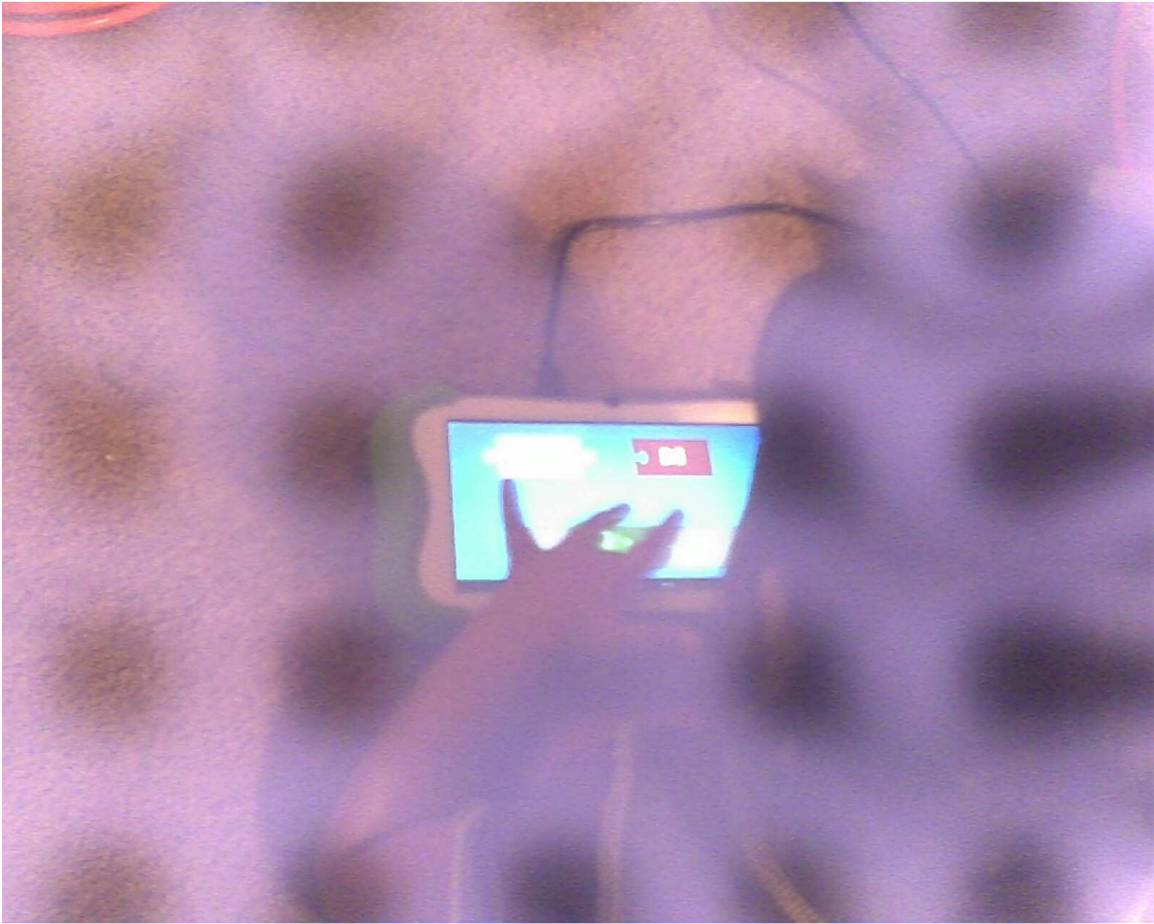
Figure 18 is depicting the older experienced sibling instructing her sister on the etiquette required while riding on the school bus. This activity is certainly providing the knowledge that would assist in navigating the complex world of the first school bus ride. A rather unique example of what having children in school contributes to the preparation of younger children for school is seen in the photograph above. The contribution of having experienced schooling in the US is a valuable resource for parents to have in preparing the younger generation for school



*Figure 19: Mother, “My daughter is using an abacus to learn letter sounds in English.*

### *Technology*

In Figure 19, the child is introduced to a technology that may be useful in preparation for school. Although the abacuses are not a twenty first century technology tool, it was the beginning of a mathematical tool. Figure 19 , however is an example of the use of traditional educational methods used in preparing children for school attendance; in this case English letters, and words, as well as groups of ten.



*Figure 20: Mother, “Her older sister got a tablet for her birthday, and she is trying to make words out of the letters on the app.; this will help her get used to the technology when she gets to school.”*

Figure 20, exhibits the use of technology to develop letter recognition and spelling. Eye and hand coordination is observed as a requirement to be able to effectively interact with the tablet. All families reported having cellphones with technical advancements and that the children are accomplished users.





*Figure 21: Mother, “It is the same tablet but a different app. The lady asks find the “A”, she has to point out the letter that is asked for and if a mistake is made the computer says “Ops that is not it”. So you can try it again and if you get it right it will say “Great job!” “This will be good because she can recognize the ones that they ask for, (letters).*

Figure 21 depicts introduction electronic learning supports. The flexibility of tablets provides a multitude of literacy, mathematical, and increasing levels of instruction. Figure 21, indicated parents were interested in providing comfortable and peaceful settings conducive to learning using electronic devices.



*Figure 22: Mother, “She hears the music and starts to dance, yesterday she was trying to follow the dance on the television; following the instructions given by the character on the television this develops her coordination of her feet, hands, eyes and following instructions.”*

### *Technology and Physical Coordination*

Figure 22, a children’s television program is engaging the young lady in following instructions and coordination. The concentration of listening to and following instructions affords an ideal multitasking skill development. This ability will serve the child while at school listening to oral instructions and completing assignments tasks at school. Parents reported consistently that technology is being used in the form of cell

phone apps, tablets, and the television's children's educational program for a variety of educational tasks; such as letter recognition, letter sound, following directions, muscle coordination. Technology was also used at times as a means of keeping the child entertained during the times that the mother was attending to family activities that required her attention. Technology served as a babysitting tool at home and while driving or when they were attending the recording sessions of the study.



*Figure23: Father, “Mother is playing with her son using building blocks her son has developed a sense of what is required to balance blocks and to use the Lego like blocks to build combination of color structures. In this photograph you can see that he has placed one of the towers on a block that has wheels and is moving the blocks.”*

### *Dexterity Development*

Figure 23 demonstrates in home parent participation in their child’s physical education skills. We witness how using blocks help in the development of dexterity, an essential skill required by the children for the participation in school activities.

Engineering a means to move objects easily from one place to another is a reflection on the family’s involvement. According this parent, building blocks help develop the manual

dexterity, hand and eye coordination, and turn taking; expectations that schools' curriculum anticipate in children while in the classroom.



*Figure 24: Mother, “My son is playing on the playground equipment at a local park and this is will help in the muscle development and dexterity skills for when the child goes to school. Also in developing social skills required when playing with other children.”*

In Figure 24, parents indicate that they are aware of the value for their children to develop social skills while being active on playground equipment with unrelated children. Children’s playing in a group activity at home or on public playgrounds is indicated by parents as important social skills required for activities at school.



*Figure25: Mother, “My son is fascinated with wheels and that they go around and around. He will lie on the floor and watch the wheels turn as he pushes the car forwards and backwards.”*

Figure 25 depicts a child’s fascination the turning of wheels. This activity indicates that such activity meet his curiosity and his principal tactile learning modality. As observed in a photograph, (not used in the twenty five that are in this section) which in part was a mother’s effort attempting to teach her son how to brush his teeth and he insisted on doing it by himself.

### *Summary of Results*

In this section there will be a discussion of the families as to their participation in their children's education and preparation of children for schooling as observed during the interview sessions and the shared photographs in line with the research questions.

#### *Family Involvement in Children's Education:*

*What are the practices, both traditional and nontraditional, of Mexican immigrants that foster early literacy?* The parents in the study expressed a variety of traditional methods that promoted literacy, - such as oral language development, using picture books, writing, environmental print, counting, grouping of objects, social development, technology (i. e. tablets and cell phones), and muscle coordination and dexterity using wooden blocks and public playground equipment. Literacy development within the research families was for the most part done in Spanish, with some English. In the nontraditional methods, I would place the use of cell phones with games and YouTube videos, cereal counters, and advertisements. All of the families were actively involved in preparing their children for school in the US.

*How do the beliefs of Mexican immigrant families provide opportunities to support their children's literacy preparation?* Small investments were made to acquire educational resources such as providing books, some electronic devices including simple interactive tablets that allowed the children to engage in multiple literacy and mathematical activities. Occasionally, parents reported using apps on cell phones and tuning in to children educational television programs. The families in the study applied what they had learned from having children in public schools and made the effort to



prepare the children at home who were not in school to insure that they would be ready for school both socially and academically.

*What issues do Mexican immigrant families identify that need to be addressed in relation to the literacy education of their young children?* The families express concern over being able to effectively communicate with the schools and teachers. Ideas as to how to extend the limited resources they have available. The data indicate that families are involved in helping their children's literacy development; however, they recognize that they are limited in what they can do.

*What do Mexican immigrant families propose through their reflections, methods or action to address the literacy issues they have identified?* In addressing this question directly, parents indicated that all of the school's communications should be in the home language in order that parents better understand the child's school requirements. Moreover, they recommended that a photo gallery of the twenty five photographs be displayed in the community.

## CHAPTER 5

*Can't you see all I got to tell you?  
Can't you tell just by the sound of my steps?  
And as it seems you won't notice at all  
And I won't tell you, not now, not tomorrow  
Till you notice what have you done  
How does that stomping on my dreams  
Dragging all I know down  
What I thought was concrete now is just flour on the floor.  
From ASKING by Ana Alicia*

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Moving Forward with Their Voices*

This final chapter reiterates the important aspects of the research project and is divided into the following sections: first, Foundations, Theory, and Methods; second, Summary of Major Findings; third, Observations Related to Early Childhood Standards and the home preparation for children regarding those standards; fourth, Practice and Policy Recommendations; fifth, study Contribution to the Field; sixth, Limitations of the study, and finally, Future Research Recommendations. The voices of the parents clearly revealed that they are concerned about their children's education and that will expend resources that are available to prepare their children for their future educational endeavors. Immigrant parents' voices in Figure 1 through Figure 25 express the ways that they are involved in preparing their children for the first day of school. Of particular note is the consistency of the activity as indicated by the mother's statement in our conversation that this activity was one of her daughter's favorite done several times a week.

### *Foundations, Theory, and Methods*

This study investigated the educational in home practices of Mexican immigrants in the US in preparing their children for the first day of school. Photovoice methodology was used to allow the immigrant families to tell their story about activities they do at home to prepare their children for school. While teaching in elementary schools in New Mexico, where the majority of the students were Hispanic and whose home language was other than English, I developed an interest in learning, how languages are acquired while being educated in a language other than the child's home language. Hearing some teachers say that the Mexican immigrant children had no life experiences or that their parents were not preparing their children for school motivated me too specifically, research what Mexican immigrant parents were doing if anything to prepare their children for school. The persistent underachievement of minority children, especially Hispanic immigrant children, on nationally administered standardized tests has led to numerous research projects that have identified several cultural beliefs and values held by Hispanic parents about their children's education. Despite this underachievement, these parents' expectations and aspirations for their children's educational success are highly positive.

With the demographic shift of the Southwest into a minority-majority and Hispanics being the largest minority group of this majority, and research literature's recognition of the wide disconnect between Hispanic homes and American schools, provided the motivation in observing specifically Mexican immigrant parents and what they were

doing to prepare their children for school. Photovoice methodology was used to answer the following questions in the parent's own voice:

- 1.) What are the practices, both traditional and nontraditional, of Mexican immigrant families that foster early literacy prior to school attendance?
- 2.) How do the beliefs of Mexican immigrant families provide opportunities to support their children's literacy preparation?
- 3.) What issues do Mexican immigrant families identify that need to be addressed in relation to the literacy education of their young children?
- 4.) What do Mexican immigrant families propose through their reflections as methods or actions to address the literacy issues they have identified?

The basic theoretical framework of this research includes sociocultural, feminist theory, and a home-to-school discontinuity perspective that exists in the educational system of the US. The immigrant parents presented their voice and ideas about educating their children and preparing them for school. In a total of one hundred sixty seven photographs over a four month period that involved eighteen recorded sessions six parent's voices were expressed with a selected a moment in which each photograph demonstrated,

1. What the photograph was expressing in regards to literacy development,
2. What was said by the parents in regards to literacy and school preparation in the photograph?

3. Why the activity would assist their child's literacy development and preparation for attending school.

*Summary of Major Findings*

This study revealed several important aspects in how Mexican immigrants prepare their children for school in the United States specifically prior to the child's first day of school. Using Photovoice the parents provided an insight into their private family life, and in particular the efforts made in preparing their children academically for school. Of note, is the deep cultural ties observed within each family, Spanish was the family's home language and contact with their extended family was very important whether in their native country or in the U.S. The dependence on their social network helps the families to cope with the complex political and economic changes. They are willing to invest considerable energy and resources to maintain the strong family interrelations. The fact that the children were always well groomed in the photographs, as well when they were present during the interview is a reflection of the families' cultural competence in ensuring that the family was well represented.

The educational background of the family impacted on the types of educational activities that were selected as moments that they wanted to share. Within the study group two sets of parents had fifteen or more years of schooling and both parents were involved with their children's at home education and both sets of parents participated in the interviews. The parents chose literacy activities such as book handling, page turning, writing, number skills and dexterity skills such as building blocks construction. All the families spent time reading to their children; reading time was inconsistent due to the

parents work schedule. The parents stated that when they did read to the child it was for no more than fifteen minutes. Physical activity and motor proficiency were important to the families, as seen in several photographs where children were playing on playground equipment, riding tricycles, kicking soccer balls, or running around in parks or playgrounds. With the proliferation of cell phones and small inexpensive electronic games all the children demonstrated some skill in being able to manipulate these devices. Some photographs had the children using a variety of educational tablets that involved literacy or mathematical proficiency. On occasion, parents used their cell phones during our interviews as a means to entertain the child while attending to the interview. The families, due to income limitations, were adept in using whatever was at hand to provide a learning opportunity to their child. Other on hand resources, such as cereal was used for developing number sense, crayons for counting and grouping as well as coloring. When it came to electronic games they relied on being able to acquire them at flea markets or yard sales as the devices appeared to be earlier generations of electronic systems. The families were concerned about their child having the social ability to get along at school.

The family's legal status was a significant detriment in that the flexibility of the family's ability to acquire some benefits from the government assistance programs which depended on citizenship or legal residence status. The children in the study were all citizens, however not all the children in the family were citizens; most of the parents had acquired legal documents for residency. The length of residency, legal or otherwise, ranged from seventeen to nine years and employment was manual seasonal construction, landscaping work or domestic housekeeping employment. In all the families by the end

of the study both parents were working one or two jobs; however there were periods of unemployment especially for fathers.

### *Observations Related to Early Childhood Standards*

The shared photographs, when evaluated with the state's six performance standards for a curriculum, closely matched the activities that a group of preschool teachers selected as the requirement that would demonstrate proficiency of the Performance Standards. This being the case, I believe that these children are being well prepared for their first day of school. The experience of having had a child in school in the U.S. provided the knowledge of what is expected of children in school. The parents have high expectation for their children's education and were making every effort within their resources to prepare children as best as possible for school.

An examination of a state's performance standards for a Pre-Kinder unit provided the means through which I evaluated the activities the families express in their photographs as to what they are doing to prepare their child for school in the US. I used the parent's voices to define the photographs and the parent's thoughts in regards to the research questions as compared with the following performance standards.

1. Performance Standard I: Child will demonstrate effective personal and social skills
2. Performance Standard II: Children will participate as active and effective learners
3. Performance Standard III: Children will communicate optimally and effectively in a variety of settings

4. Performance Standard IV: Children will use their bodies optimally to explore, negotiate, and manipulate the environment.
5. Performance Standard V: Children will demonstrate optimal independence in areas of daily life
6. Performance Standard VI: Children will engage in a variety of meaningful literacy experiences

The photographs, the parent's statements, and the analysis of the photographs using the six performance standards as the means to observe what it is that the parents in the study do to prepare their child for school in the U.S. was used to answer the research questions, of what the parents are doing to prepare their children for school, the parent's beliefs in supporting literacy preparation, identify the necessities that need to be addressed in regards to literacy education of their children, and what the immigrant parents propose should be taken to address literacy issues identified.

The first performance standard requires that the child demonstrate effective personal and social skills. The collage of photographs submitted by the parents reflects the cultural the meticulous hygiene care Hispanic immigrant parents take prior to taking any photograph of their child. There are twenty photographs that depict children playing harmoniously on playground equipment and at home, turn taking, safely using equipment, respectful of adults and other children. A culture skill that researchers have identified is an expectation of the Hispanic families' requirement of its children. The children are aware of the expectations of their parents in regard to what is acceptable at home and outside of the home. In this respect, Hispanic children are well prepared for



their first day of school. This strong cultural bond with the extended family will serve as a resource that will be with them through most of their beginning school years.

Within the following comments from parents with regard to the development of personal and social skills, we get an understanding of the cultural basis for Hispanic familial importance of the extended family relationships.

Figure 17 demonstrates children developing the social skills outlined as a requirement by the first performance standard:

Mamá: “En esa foto ella está enseñando se a compartir con los demás niños que eso tiene que saber que tiene que compartir las cosas no nomas yo voy hacer esto. Hay está compartiendo con los demás. Porque ella es muy vergonzosa.”

Translation: Mother, “In this photo she (daughter) is learning to share with others, a skill that she has to learn; she has to learn that it is not only “me”. She is very shy.”

The following comment of Family B in regards to a photograph not used in the twenty five figures of the study is a commentary of an activity that demonstrates the importance of the family’s internal relationship and how children learn the cultural expectations in regards to the nuclear family. The requirement of the first performance and answers in part the first research question, what Mexican immigrants do to foster early literacy and support their children’s early literacy development?

Mamá “En ese (foto) ella estaba contando los dulces. Siempre me dice los colores. Y ella agarra cuando vamos a la tienda, siempre para ella y su hermano. Pienso que eso le sí pre, porque cuando ella vía a la escuela ella va aprender a compartiré. Porque ella siempre agarra para ella y su hermano.”

Translation: Mother “In that photo she is counting the candy and telling me their color. When we go to the store she always gets one for herself and her brother. I believe that will help her when she goes to school she will learn to share; because she always gets for herself and brother.”

The father's comments demonstrates the machismo that is culturally instilled in the Hispanic male; however I felt that the father's use of the Spanish word "valor" is meant in a positive sense of courage to seek improvement or help. This is a partial segment of comments made of photograph (not included) where the father is kicking a soccer ball with his son.

Papá "Y para decirlo en otra manera el valor yo pienso poder ayudarle interactuar con otro niños. Se quieren ponerse con las personas que saben y le pueden ayudar,"

Translation: Father "To say it another way knowing that he has some skill in playing soccer will allow him to interact with other children. He will not be afraid to join others that are better skilled and they will be able to help him."

The second performance standard requires that children be able to participate as active and effective learners. Active learning is described as strategies in which students are involved in doing things and thinking about what they are doing. Effective learners are students that are using their unique style of learning. The classroom for early education must allow for the students to learn through the effective use of their own learning modality.

Figure five demonstrate the children are actively involved in the selection of a book and that they are totally committed to it as seen in the photograph. A dental hygiene lesson is initiated from a Mickey Mouse picture book of teeth brushing. In the following conversation the mother details the active involvement and how the process becomes a demonstration of the child's learning modality. The conversation in regard to the child's picture book selection is initiated from the following question, "What else do you want to say about this picture? Are you also there with him?" In the conversation the young man

appears to be a visual and kinesthetic learner. Of special note the book is in English and the child does not read in either of the language.

Mamá, “A veces el solo se pone, se pone en la ventana él solito Tenemos una caja de libros y el solo agarra uno y el que más gana la atención como el que tiene más dibujos. Y le gusta mucho Mickey – Mouse porque ven muchos de ese libro de Mickey – Mouse. De cepillar los dientes. El aprendió a ir al baño con el libro que se llama “Time to Potty” el leía mucho ya el niño quiera ir al baño yo le di este nombre le dije mira que Paquito va al baño. El agarro la idea de allí y también de su hermanito grande.”

Jerónimo, “¿El libro con muchos dibujos es de Mickey – Mouse también o es otro?”

Mamá, “Sí ese es de Mickey – Mouse.”

Jerónimo, “¿El mismo del primero?”

Mamá, “De (Jerry de brush your teeth) yes”

Jerónimo, “¿Y qué has el cuándo está mirando los dibujos él se cepilla los dientes el?”

Mamá, “Sí él se quiere cepillar todos los dientes pero yo le quiero ayudar porque él no lo has bien entonces no, siempre se enoja porque él quiere hacerlo solo. Lo dejo un rato y le quiero ayuda pero no me deja él lo quiere hacerlo solo. Le digo como déjame enseñarte, no quiere. Él solo. No se deja mucho, él quiere hacer las cosas solo.”

Translation: Mother, “Sometimes he will independently get a book to read and sit on the windowsill by himself. We have a box of books and he will get a picture book which is most attractive to him with lots of pictures. He enjoys Mickey – Mouse because they look at Mickey – Mouse books the most; the one titled “Brush Your Teeth”. He learned to use the bathroom from a book titled “Time to Potty” he would constantly read the book I (Mother) would read the book to him in Spanish and I gave the book a Spanish title (Paquito va al baño) From the book and his older brother as a model he started his bathroom training.”

Jeronimo, “the book with many pictures was it the Mickey – Mouse book. Or was it another book?”

Mother, “Correct, it was the Mickey – Mouse book”

Jeronimo, “Was it the same book that we saw him reading earlier?”

Mother, “Book of brushing your teeth”

Jeronimo, “What does he do when he is reading the book; does he brush his teeth?”

Mother, “He does brush his teeth. I attempt to help him because he does not brush correctly. He gets upset when I try to help; he wants to do it himself. I let him do it for a while and then try to help him again. He will

not let me help he wants to do it alone. I ask him to let me show him how to brush his teeth and he refuses the help. He wants to do things by himself.”

This conversation demonstrates that children can learn from an English picture book when the parent’s reading is a translation of the book in Spanish, the child’s home language. It is an example of the ingenuity of the mother using what is available to provide instruction to her child and involvement in the child’s education.

The involvement of children as active and effective learners was also demonstrated in the conversation below regarding following verbal instructions as the child of Figure twenty two was participating as a viewer, learning a dance that was demonstrated on a Spanish children’s television program. The television personality was demonstrating a dance while providing verbal instructions to the children on how to perform the dance. Using Spanish children programs on television in developing literacy is now becoming an important technology tool used by parents and schools along with computers for instruction.

Mamá, “Es que estaba bailando, oía la música y ella se mueve. Andaba bailando ayer y trata hacer los pasos que hacen en la tele entonces ella también emita eso también le ayuda el de le tele baila algo y ella quiere copiar igual. Piensa también que como seguir lo que el niño está diciendo. Estaba bailando a las tres. (La coordinación de los pies, las manos, y los ojos. Siguiendo instrucciones.) Está mirando y luego empieza seguir bailando. Está mirando como hacen y todo.”

Translation: Mother, “she is dancing. Hearing the music she is rhythmically dancing. Yesterday, she was trying to follow the instructions that were being given on the television program. The child on the program would give the instructions and she would imitate the dance movements. (This helps coordination of the legs, feet, and hand muscles along with her eyes. Also teaches her how to follow oral instructions.) She watches and then starts to dance. She watches how they do everything.”

Additional evidence of active and effective learners is demonstrated in the following interview with Family D. In a photograph (not used) a young man is actively participating by playing with a group of dinosaurs on the floor. The effectiveness of the interaction is discussed by the mother.

Mamá, “Allí está jugando con unos dinosaurios y él sabe cómo se llaman y que están haciendo. Como vamos al zoológico se está desarrollando su mente de los animales.”

Translation: Mother, “He is playing with some dinosaurs. He knows the names of the dinosaurs and what they do. We go to the zoo, which helps in developing his knowledge of the animals.”

The third performance standard requires that children be able to communicate optimally and effectively in a variety of settings. Using a curriculum based on the six performance standards to determine what is meant by communicate optimally and effectively or what it may look like in a classroom, the following expectations were identified. First a child will use gestures, sounds, words, or sentences to convey wants and needs or to express meaning to others. Second a child will demonstrate understanding of conversational rules, and increasing awareness of social aspects of discourse. What are the immigrant families doing to prepare their children for this performance standard?

The discussion on pages eighty-four and eighty-five with Family C where the mother has a conversation with her son in regard to teeth brushing is an example of this performance standard. Additionally, the performance standard to communicate optimally and effectively is demonstrated rather well in Figure seventeen where several young ladies are playing with wooden building blocks. In this activity there had to have been verbal communication amongst them where the expectations as to the use of gestures,

words, or sentences to convey the wants and needs, and some form of rules of discourse such as turn taking in the conversations and respecting each other while constructing their wooden towers. However, there is no mention of the verbal skills that are required for an orderly harmonious activity.

Mamá, “En esa foto ella está enseñando se a compartir con los demás niños que eso tiene que saber que tiene que compartir las cosas no nomas yo voy hacer esto. Hay está compartiendo con los demás. Porque ella es muy vergonzosa.”

Translation: Mother, “In this photo she is learning to share with others; it is not only I will do this. She is learning to share with others. She is very shy.

The fourth performance standard requires that children will use their bodies optimally to explore, negotiate, and manipulate the environment. The child shows increasing confidence in balance/motor control and motor planning ability, demonstrating increasing skill with tabletop activities, skill level by manipulating or playing with toys or devices.

There are several examples of children demonstrating the expectations of this performance standard, and, the parent’s comments in regard to the importance of the development of physical, motor skills, balance, and being able to manipulate the environment.

Familia B - Mamá, “En ese nos ponemos a recortar una hoja de su hermano también y ella estaba recortando, estaba recortando la hoja y según a ella iba hacer un carro. Eso me dijo un maestro que poner los a recortar, o a escribir, o a jugar con plastilina, color o algo así le ayuda a ella para que ella tenga una bonita letra.”

Translation: Mother, “She is cutting a piece of paper that her brother had. She stated that she was going to make a car out of the paper. This is an activity that a teacher recommended that she should, cut, write, play with clay, and color. These activities would help in developing her writing.”

Mamá, “Yo considero que ir al parque él está haciendo un poco de ejercicio. Él está haciendo mucho ejercicio y le gusta. Le gusta andar corriendo porque yo corro a lado de los juegos me pongo a caminar y él me sigue y le gusta que yo le córrete a él me hace como (ahooo) le gusta que lo corretea e igual a su hermanito cuando él está allí. Que haga ejercicio y aire saludable”

Translation: “I think that going to the park he is exercising. He likes to be exercising and enjoys it very much. He likes to run; he runs near the playground equipment because I run around them and when I start walking he will follow me. He enjoys when I chase after him and he makes a noise like (ahooo) as well as his brother when his brother happens to be at the park with us. Exercising outside in the fresh air is healthy.”

Additional examples:

Familia C- Mamá, “Hay está con la pelota, le sirve para sus reflexiones de su manos, sus músculos, y a aventar, agarra, tener buena reflexión para ventar la pelota la agarra bien. Allí es lo mismo la agarra con las dos manos y fuerte no la suelta tiene muy buena reflexión también.”

Translation: “In this activity he has the ball this helps with his coordination, helps in the development of his muscles. He is well coordinated when throwing the ball. There he is catching the ball with both hands and he is very strong.”

Family F- Mother, “This activity helps her get ready for school because she has to put the blocks along a path and she was getting upset because of the trouble she was having in moving the blocks along the wire because they were not going where she wanted them to go.” (This family’s sessions were done in English.)

For the performance standard of being physically active, Mexican immigrant parents are very involved in because all of the families in the research commented that children should be physically active and be able to climb, jump, run and manipulate different objects.

The fifth performance standard requires that children be able to demonstrate optimal independence in areas of daily life. As seen in a working curriculum, a child must actively participate in mealtime activities with increasing independence; a child must actively participates in dressing; a child must actively participate in self-care; a

child must actively participate in self-safety. Traditional virtues within Hispanic families are emphasized in that a child be brought up well-mannered and family meals are a means for the parents to develop behavior that is socially acceptable. Children that I have observed in pre-k classes during the school 2014/2015 year were capable of attending to their needs quite well i.e. going to the restroom when required and they were capable of returning to the classroom properly dressed. When made aware of the acceptable behavior in the classroom the children walked rather than ran, properly used scissors and were respectful especially of teachers and classmates. Things were not always perfect for there were times when a child required assistance with a button, or a change of clothing, running to get in line, and some spilled juice during snack time. Within the collage of photographs there were no photographs that specifically dealt with this performance standard.

The sixth performance standard requires that children engage in a variety of meaningful literacy experiences. Parents in the study displayed several literacy activities and commented about their child's being able to handle books and some cases read small three letter words.

Familia C – Mamá, “A veces él solo se pone, se sienta en la ventana él solito. Tenemos una caja de libros y él solo agarra uno y el que más gana la atención como el que tiene más dibujos. Y le gusta mucho Mickey-Mouse porque ven mucho de ese libro de Mickey-Mouse.”

Translation: Mother, “Sometimes he will get a book without prompting. We have a box of books and he will get and the one that he likes the most is Mickey Mouse for it has several pictures.”

Familia A – Papá, “Siguiendo fotografía con un libro en la mano. Es librito lo está hojeando y describiendo el entre sus balbuceos y unas palabras y otras que ya pronuncia correctas el niño. Los hemos hecho con la infanda que él niño vaya conociendo lo que es un texto, frases escritas



de un libro. Le leemos y a leer el libro el niño empieza asociar lo que escucha con los fotografías.”

Translation: Father, “The following photograph shows him with a book in hand. He is turning the pages; within his mutterings he will occasionally say a word correctly. We have made an effort to ensure that our son understands what text is and there are sentences written in a book. We read the book to him and he begins to associate the photographs with what he is hearing.”

Familia B – Mamá, “En esta otra foto ella está leyendo un librito de kínder es librito le ensena los dibujos arriba de la palabra, horita no sabe leer todas las palabras pero ve el deseno y sabe que dice.”

Translation: Mother, “In this photograph she is reading a kinder book which has pictures of the word above the word. She does not know all of the words, hover she sees the pictures and knows what the word is.”

Familia D – Mamá, “Hay está escribiendo su nombre que no sabe pero él ya está poniendo una por una letras. Y él solito agarra una libreta y una lápices y pone hacer su nombre, números, y él ya sabe el abecedario y él está escribiendo lo.”

Translation: Mother, “He is writing his name (not correctly); however he is writing letters that he can write. He will get a notebook and a pencil and begin to write his name, numbers, and the alphabet which already knows.”

Familia B – Mamá, “¡En ese allí estaba leyendo según ella!, desea lea, este el libro era en inglés y ella piensa que ella lea en inglés. Yo no sé lo que dice, no dice nada, pero es que le ayuda porque ella empieza a reconocer poquito la letras. La niña ya sabe cómo agarra el libro, ya sabe cuándo están a revece, derecho, puede mover las hoyas.”

Translation: Mother, “In this photograph she is reading according to her! This book was in English and she thinks that she is reading English. I do not understand English; however this will help her because she is beginning to understand some of the letters. She already knows how to hold a book, recognizes when it is upside down, and correctly turn the pages!”

Family G – Mother, “This is a book of about bears like about what they eat and how they hunt. It wasn’t graphic. It was talking about what they do during the day. She was trying to read to her Daddy (Researcher, “Had the book been read to her before?”) Yeah. (Researcher, “She has an idea of what the book is about?”) Yeah. (Researcher, “Does she hold the book correctly?”) Yeah she is, pretty much she does, and sometimes she

doesn't. (Researcher, "Does she turn the pages from right to left?") Yeah she turns the pages. This prepares for school because she will have the vocabulary and stuff. By the time she gets to school she will be comfortable with books and hopefully she will learn to read by then. You know she will be able to read some words by then. Probably she will not be able to read the big words. But words like the, than and words like that." (Family G's sessions conducted in English)

Multiple themes were emphasized during the interview that identified what the parents' believed to be important in preparing their children for school in America. They were literacy, numeracy, social skills, logical behavior skills, and technology. As seen in the photographs and comments made by the parents throughout the sessions. The parents in the study demonstrated an active involvement in their child's education and concern over their child's learning.

Additional, observations are those that are expected culturally, such as allowing the children to be active while the interviews were conducted as long as they did not interrupt the adults and in the personal appearance of the family during the interviews, by all participants dressing appropriately. The families had some English language knowledge and were making efforts to enhance their speaking ability in English by participating in English as a Second Language classes provided by the community. Of interest was that families, neither in their selected activities nor in the personal conversations, never mentioned the family taking recreational trips outside of the city other than a field trip with their child's class.

### *Practice and Policy Recommendations*

In order to avoid the loss of instructional time teaching skills that the children have already learned, teachers and school administrators would benefit by developing a system that informs them of the parents' literacy practices in the home that prepare their children's capability prior to entering pre-school. Preschool teachers make a home visit with the families that have children starting pre-school during these visits they should have a standard questionnaire that provides information about the in home educational practices being done to prepare the children in literacy, mathematics, and social skills prior to attending school. The U.S. educational system must eliminate the cultural biases within the system by providing cultural sensitive teachers and developing a collaborating curriculum that supports the children's learning experiences at home and using the entire child's learning modalities.

Parents within the study appear to be as active in their children's education as expected by the public school system of the U.S. The parents' at home involvement is productive for the child's educational development; however, parents need to be invited to continue their involvement at school and be provided the support that would allow them to continue their efforts. This could include language support, resources for parents that are not speakers of English and a welcoming environment where the all the staff is involved.

School culture needs to recognize that Mexican immigrant parents are involved in their children's education at home prior to their children attending the first day of class; especially families with siblings already in attendance. They use the resources that are

provided by the school to the sibling, such as picture books, by observing instructional items in the room when taking or getting their children to/or from the class. Parents become aware as to how the teacher uses the resources in the classroom. Parents may be economically limited; however the study indicated that what resources they see being used at school can be replicated with some of the resources they have at home, such as cereal for math counters and first generation electronic devices that they may find at flea markets or garage sales.

#### *The Study's Contributions to the Field*

The study suggested that parents are involved in the child's education at home in a multiple ways and are concerned with insuring that their child is prepared for school. Siblings in school are a primary resource for the parents and an example to the child not in school, as demonstrated by a young lady instructing her younger sister in bus etiquette, and other sibling reading to their younger siblings demonstrating book handling skills. That immigrant parents are aware of importance of educational readiness of their children prior to their child entering school for the first time.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

The qualitative nature of this study may precludes- its specific replication and while the results suggest valuable information regarding Mexican immigrants preparing children for school The findings may not be generalized to other settings. The intention of the study was to gather rich data to allow for better informed follow up studies.

A second limitation was that not all of the father's voices were heard, as they did not participate in the interview sessions; however, they must have been aware of their family's participation in the study. The lack of participation of the fathers does not mean that they are not interested in their children's education as research has shown. Finally as I investigated the data obtained from the interviews and photographs there was a strong relation that developed with families where both parents were involved in that there appeared to be a richer data set that was not in the interview sessions when only the mother was representing the family activities.

#### *Future Research*

There is a need for more detailed knowledge regarding the early education practices of Mexican immigrants prior to the children commencing school. Ongoing research studies would continue to raise awareness about how Mexican parents' involvement at home in preparing their children educationally prior to first day at school. This important line of inquiry is needed to insure that the voice of the immigrant continues to be used within the inquiry. An expanded study to examine the educational practices, the frequency and type of activity, by economic status, minority, and white subgroups using home based participation in children's education prior to attending school would broaden the data base. And by using Photovoice to expand and reinforce current research, including the Hispanic families' voices within the research, would enlighten not only the research community but administrators in a way that would be more complete.

When early educational practices are studied using a sociocultural paradigm, the social background in which they occur are essential in understanding the impact of such activity. The finding of this study suggests that more detailed knowledge is required in the at home literacy practices of immigrant families, including the frequency of the literacy and mathematical activities. The impact of fathers' contribution to their children's education, and what the impact of undocumented status has in the educational readiness of children would extent the research.

To better understand Mexican immigrants at home educational practices and the impact of the effects on children over time a longitudinal study employing Photovoice methodology to express the practices in the immigrant's voice. In order to obtain an understanding of these practices, future studies should continue to provide the parents voice regarding their at home educational beliefs and actual involvement in developing activities that further prepare their children prior to attend school.

Future studies should seek to make additional observations on all immigrants' especially the practices that Mexican immigrants' families use to prepare their children for school prior to schooling in the United States. Designed must provide, findings as to those who are active participants in the education of children in this country and can influence educational practices through curriculum. Only when the educational system in this country understands the value of the in home involvement of immigrants, will we be able to improve classroom instruction that ensures that immigrant, economic and social disadvantaged children are able to master the requirements that are used to judge the success of each individual.

Finally, additional information on the children involved in the study regarding their achievement as they progress in school would measure the value of family home based activities practiced and reinforce the value of parents participation in their children's' education. I could commence the longitudinal studies suggest above.

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APPENDIX A

FAMILY SURVEY INVITATION DOCUMENT

Dear Family,

I am writing to ask you to participate in a study with your student in (name of teacher) class that will look at how your participation with your child in his or her education helps them do better in school.

Participation in this study is voluntary and your decision to participate, or not to participate, will not affect your child's grade or advancement in school in any way. Your participation will be kept anonymous and your information will be kept in a separate file to which I will have the only key in a location not in school.

Thank you in advance for your help with this study.

Jeronimo Chavez Zamora

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENT RECRUITMENT

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

City of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

State of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Education Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Years in United States: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

City of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

State of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Education Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Years in United States: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Children & Age: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Children in School: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C

PHOTO CONSENT FORM



With this form I give – or refuse – permission for my photographs and captions be used in a public display.

Yes, I am willing to have my photographs and captions used in a public display.

No, I do not want my photographs and captions used in a public display.

I also give – or refuse – permission for my name to be listed as the photographer.

I want my Full Name listed as the photographer.

I want only my First Name listed as the photographer.

I Do Not want my name listed at all.

Please list any concerns or comments:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX D

INITIATING QUESTIONS

What does this photo show in regards to literacy development?

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What do you want to say about the activity?

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How does this help your child's literacy development?

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