

DISSERTATION

FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE: A CONSTRUCTIVIST STUDY TO EXAMINE THE ASSETS  
OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES

Submitted by

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## ABSTRACT

### FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE: A CONSTRUCTIVIST STUDY TO EXAMINE THE ASSETS OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES

This dissertation crosses the barriers of language and culture in education, by examining the funds of knowledge of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families from research framed by an Appreciative Inquiry lens. Northern Colorado is predominately white, but home to a small diverse and vibrant Latino community whose stories of strength are invaluable to educators all across the United States. I conducted one pilot focus group, three bilingual focus groups and four face-to-face, bilingual, follow-up interviews with Latino parents/guardians of school-aged children. I examined themes constructed through participants' funds of knowledge as described to me through their personal stories or "dichos". All participants identified as CLD, and their participation was determined by using the following criteria: ethnicity, gender, migrant status, and home language. This research proposes a constructivist model of study that incorporates findings through the identification of several themes that answer the research question, "What are the "funds of knowledge" of culturally and linguistically diverse families?" The findings examine participants' perceptions regarding: parent biographies and experiences and how they influence support for their children's education; strengths and assets of CLD families; what they want their children's teachers to know about working with CLD families; and aspirations for their children. These themes relate to prior research and informs culturally responsive instructional strategies that can be used by administrators and teachers so they can better understand CLD students and create more inclusive environments. These practices can

bring CLD students, many of whom continue to struggle to achieve at high levels, closer to the academic arena of postsecondary readiness.

*Keywords: funds of knowledge, appreciative inquiry, culturally and linguistically diverse, focus groups, bilingual, face-to-face individual interviews*

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## DEDICATION

*This dissertation is dedicated to my family; To my mother, Gloria, whose life is a testament to her tremendous strength. To Diane, Obed Jr., Eliud, Lino, and Nora for believing in me. To my father, Obed Sr., who taught me how to persevere. To my brother, Richard, whose resilience was an untapped reservoir. To my sweet children; Rachel, Sarah and Daniel - your love for life, patience and unconditional love brighten my world every day. Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my husband and best friend, Danny - you are my rock.*

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### Background and Context of the Problem

According to the United States Department of Education (2014), effective family-school partnerships that support student achievement and school improvement center on three essential areas. School and program staff can:

1. honor and recognize families' funds of knowledge,
2. connect family engagement to student learning, and
3. create welcoming, inviting cultures.

*Funds of knowledge* is a term used to refer to “these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being.” (Greenberg, 1989; Tapia, 1991; Vélez-Ibáñez, 1988). They are community members' culturally developed strengths, assets and expertise. However, to promote positive family-school partnerships, most schools across the United States create programming centered around family strengths from dominant cultural groups (e.g., European American or White and/or middle class). In so doing, they often neglect to recognize linguistic and cultural differences among families as strengths, missing the opportunity to capitalize on these assets and thus failing at promoting effective family-school partnerships that are inclusive. In fact, these inequities are so rampant that the American Psychological Association created a Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities and published a report that outlined disparities in several areas of education. Specific to this research, the report detailed disparities in the education of immigrant students and English language learners. The report made several recommendations stating, “Very little research has addressed the significant challenges faced by children of parents

who hold undocumented immigrant status in the U.S.,” (p. 93) and that further research was needed in this area. Regarding the educational system, the report recommends:

Immigrant families should be empowered to be informed consumers of the U.S. educational system by providing information about how their children can be successful in U.S. schools, including prerequisite skills for elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as in higher education. Many immigrant families have high aspirations for the educational attainment of their children. (p. 93)

PK-12 educational institutions too often posit cultural differences as deficits and thus eliminate cultural difference through assimilationist practices that create for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students an environment that is unwelcoming and unsafe (Nieto & Bode, 2008). This deficit-based perspective allows for well-meaning educators and administrators to feel sorry for a community and lowers the expectations for these groups in an ill-informed effort to close achievement gaps.

This deficit-based perspective is also known as the “pobrecito syndrome,” since, roughly translated, ‘pobrecito’ means *poor little boy* in Spanish. Noguera (2010) argues the pobrecito syndrome is in effect when well-meaning educators do not expect much from students who are poor, minority, or who are not native English speakers. The “pobrecito syndrome” promotes a deficit-perception of culturally and linguistically diverse people; one where they are pitied and held in low regard, resulting in lowered teacher expectations of their academic performance (Cepeda, 2013). The pobrecito syndrome can negatively influence CLD students and lead these students to believe they are children who *think* they are going somewhere but who behave differently than children who *believe* they are going nowhere (Noguera, 2010). In other words, students who know their goals for their future, make plans for their future, and believe they will attain these goals are not negatively influenced by the pobrecito syndrome. Students who just think they are going to college but who do not make plans for their future are negatively affected.

Prior to a summer of exceptionally charged racial unrest in cities across the country in 2016, conservative politician Donald Trump encouraged negative stereotypes and perceptions with comments like these during his 2015 presidential announcement speech: “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re bringing people that have lots of problems...They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people” (Le, 2015). In a report from the Southern Poverty Law Center, teachers report, “students have been emboldened to make bigoted and inflammatory statements about minorities, immigrants, the poor, etc.” (Costello, 2016, p. 10). However, such stereotypes of people of Mexican origin have long plagued the hallways of the schools even before this election cycle. For example, in 2014, a hand-written, student-generated document of “40 Mexican jokes” surfaced in a middle school cafeteria in Northern Colorado. The student who found this piece of paper took it to his mother. Offended by the contents, the mother brought the document to the attention of school administrators. The callous spirit of racism permeated this document. The jokes read; “*What is the difference between a Mexican and an elevator? One can raise a child.*” “*Why do Mexican kids walk around school like they own the place? Because their dad built it and their mom cleans it.*” “*Did you hear about the one Mexican that went to college? Yeah, me neither*” (Anonymous, 2014). These jokes continued for four pages and ended with the writer apologizing to his or her friend for the last joke saying, “*Ok, that one was mean.*”

Negative stereotypes and sentiments such as these, along with the ‘pobrecito’ syndrome and the negative educational and social statistics so often associated with CLD families, generate a vocabulary of negativity, weakness, and failure directed towards CLD communities. Negative stereotypes permeate our school culture and perpetuate an attitude of hatred towards others who are different from the majority culture. Latinos and Latinas across the United States viewed

television images of an angry mob holding up signs in Murrieta, California, in 2014 that read, “*Send the illegals back,*” “*Return to Sender,*” and “*WARNING: Diseases.*” (Martinez & Yan, 2014) These signs lined the city streets of Murrieta while busses carrying Central American women and children were transported from the Mexican-Texas border to California. In 2014, our country celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and yet in some parts of our country, we still see anger and resentment toward culturally and linguistically diverse people, specifically brown people.

Not much has changed regarding this deficit perspective and its consequences for Latino learners. Looking back nearly twenty years at Laurie Olsen’s 1997 ethnographic study, *Made in America*, 32 immigrant- and U.S.-born Latino/Latina students described a similar story. At Madison High School in California, immigrant students attempting to acculturate in a new country and find assistance during the college application process reported the treatment they received by school counselors. Consistent negative messages focused solely on what the counselors felt the immigrant students could *not* accomplish instead of how they could succeed. For example, Latino students heard comments like, “you aren’t college material,” “you don’t have the credits,” “you’d better consider the community colleges,” “you don’t have a prayer of getting into a four-year college,” and “don’t bother” (Olsen, p. 81).

As educators, we very often blame the parents and believe poor CLD parents do not care about their child’s education. A deficit ‘blame the victim’ view was promulgated by Ruby Payne in her popular work on the culture of poverty (Payne, 2005). Even after Olsen’s study, 20 years later, deficit-based stereotypes like these continue to perpetuate the belief that members of CLD families are lazy, drop out of school, and go to jail, indicating little has changed to move toward

understanding others for their culturally developed strengths and assets (Bomer, Dworin, May & Semingson, 2008).

CLD families have been historically marginalized in U.S. schools and often live in the shadows of our society. Faced with daunting barriers to their students' academic success, CLD parents and guardians often struggle to access the college preparation dialogue that could allow them to meet their child's needs. With school systems growing increasingly dependent on technology for communication and access, how do families without a home computer or Internet access grades, attendance, and school communications? How do they help their student with schoolwork that may be beyond their educational level or stay abreast of the standards expected for their child to graduate from high school and be post-secondary ready?

Such opportunity gaps (Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2014) must be addressed to build effective school-home and school-community partnerships with CLD communities. Schools need to build on the strengths and assets CLD children bring with them from their families and communities. This study takes a step in this direction by describing the *funds of knowledge* (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) CLD parents identify within their own communities, funds of knowledge that their children draw upon and bring to school every day, funds of knowledge that defy these negative stereotypes that perpetuate oppression and marginalization.

Funds of knowledge researchers (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) believed that people have culturally developed knowledge that has been developed through their life experiences. Anthropologists Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) introduced the concept of funds of knowledge as those skills and experiences that are culturally developed by a specific group of people. Gonzalez, et al. agree: all students have assets that can be leveraged to support the

school-to-home relationship through an appreciative dialogue and vocabulary of positivity and hope. For example, Gonzales, Moll, and Amanti (2005) have found Latino families have accumulated a wealth of knowledge in the areas of metallurgy, ranching, animal husbandry, mining, transborder transactions, and business (Gonzales et al.).

Luis Moll developed an innovative educational approach that supports educators in creating ‘zones of possibilities’ for their students by understanding their students’ strengths and their family’s funds of knowledge to enhance their teaching practices. Today, Moll continues to lead teams of teacher researchers in the identification of family strengths. His work has been the basis for many researchers to continue to study a family’s funds of knowledge and understand how to engage families in the educational world by using their strengths as assets (Gonzales, et al., 2005; Kiyama, 2010; Marshall & Toohey, 2010; Rios-Aquilar, 2010). By looking through a family’s cultural lens, teacher-research teams interview and learn the vocational and educational experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse families and utilize this new knowledge to create instructional units in the classroom. This research lies at the crossroads of culture, psychology, and education as it relates to the education of Latino children. This study is grounded in this research base of cultural funds of knowledge.

### **Purpose of the Study**

It is significant that the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) builds on funds of knowledge research to underscore the value of tapping into the strengths and assets of families from diverse backgrounds to build strong family-school relationships. Despite the USDE’s charge for effective parent-school engagement focused on a family’s cultural and linguistic strengths, we are still far from this reality. Figure 1 illustrates the need to move the funds of knowledge of CLD families, which lies in the outskirts of the educational experience, to the



center of it. The orange circle symbolizes the families whose backgrounds include a language and diverse culture outside of the dominant culture. They often find themselves outside of the school community and struggle to incorporate the educational system and pedagogical practices into their home. The green circle symbolizes those educators who struggle to understand and accept the funds of knowledge that reside in CLD communities. The blue circle symbolizes what is proposed in this study: a combination of CLD funds of knowledge and school pedagogical practices.

This study proposes to further understand CLD parent/guardian perspectives of their cultural funds of knowledge through focus and home-based interviews with parents/guardians of children in one large school district in the Rocky Mountain west. This research study will both generate new knowledge and inform the practice and policy of school-family engagement.

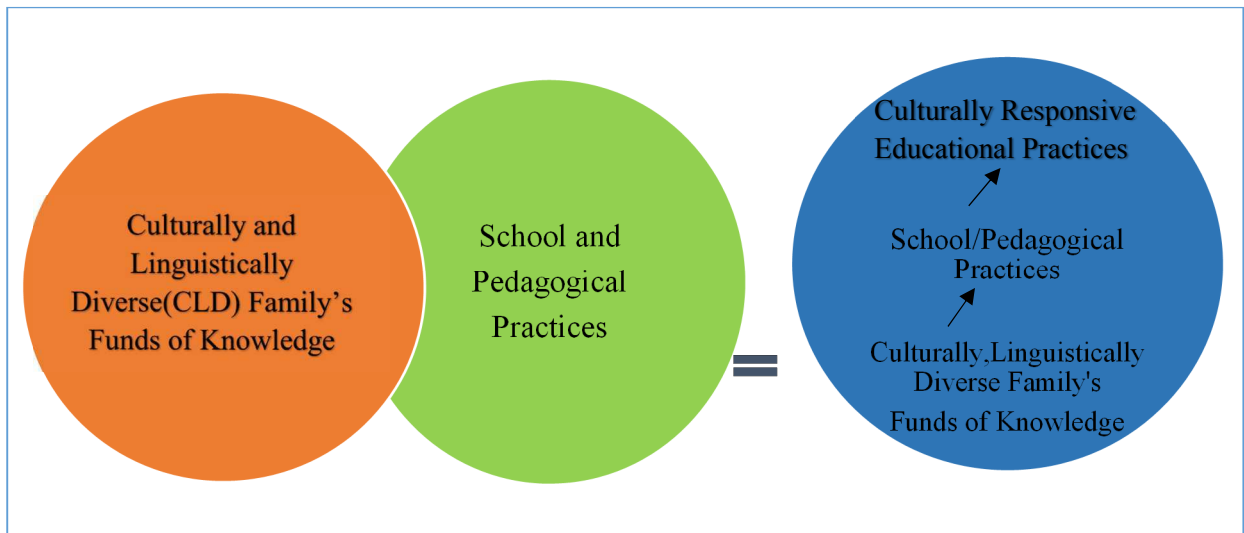


Figure 1: Moving Toward the Culturally Responsive Classroom

Specifically, I interviewed CLD parents in School District A to gather their perspectives on funds of knowledge within their communities. For this study, and based upon participant criteria, any parent/guardian who participated in this study will be referred to as a CLD parent/guardian. I then engaged in individual interviews with four of the participants to learn

more about how these funds of knowledge are present in their lives and influence how they parent their children with respect to school and life. Finally, I use that local knowledge to inform professional development process and practices within my educational community. To promote an understanding among the educational profession of the assets that CLD families bring to schools, this study examines what CLD parents identify as the culturally developed *funds of knowledge* of CLD families in Northern Colorado.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions are:

1. What do participating CLD parents indicate are funds of knowledge in their communities?
  - a. How are these “funds of knowledge” evident from the data gathered from focus group interviews and participant interviews?
  - b. What cultural themes are represented across participant’s descriptions of local funds of knowledge?
2. How can I use the cultural themes to design a professional development opportunity for educators/educational administrators?

These questions will be addressed through an appreciative inquiry approach. This appreciative theory approach will be described more fully in chapter three. Cooperrider (2001) describes Appreciative Inquiry as:

“Deliberately seek[ing] to discover people’s exceptionality – their unique gifts, strengths, and qualities. It actively searches and recognizes people for their specialties – their essential contributions and achievements. And it is based on principles of equality of voice – everyone is asked to speak about their vision of the true, the good, and the possible. Appreciative Inquiry builds momentum and success because it believes in people. It really is an invitation to a positive revolution. Its goal is to discover in all human beings the exceptional and the essential. Its goal is to create organizations that are in full voice!”. (p. 12)

## Significance of the Study

Many culturally and linguistically diverse students continue to struggle to find academic success in school. Educators in high poverty schools, who are overwhelmingly white and middle class, are more likely to be inexperienced or teach outside their specialty area. See Table 1 (Jensen, 2009). These factors provide significant challenges for educators to promote authentic student engagement opportunities in the classroom that draw from a family's funds of knowledge, experience, and work expertise. A family's assets are important to the learning process and engage a student who struggles to find meaning in the school day for their future. Therefore, a school district's professional development and its assessment of teachers and administrators ought to build on this knowledge base. It is critical for a teacher who teaches in a high poverty school to be highly qualified in their area of expertise, especially in the subjects of Math and English.

Table 1  
Percentage of Teachers Outside Their Subject Expertise Assigned to Teach in High Poverty Schools

Content	All Public Schools	High Poverty Schools
MATH	35.8%	<b>51.4%</b>
ENGLISH	33.1%	<b>41.7%</b>
HISTORY	58.5%	61.2%
PHYSICAL SCIENCE	59.1%	61.2%

Source: Adapted from *Teaching with Poverty in Mind* (Jensen, 2009).

Nelson Mandela (2003) said, "Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world." As educators, we are acutely aware knowledge is power and we are morally obligated to create educational opportunities for all families in our schools, especially those who have been historically marginalized. Culturally and linguistically diverse families live in a bicultural and bilingual world and should know from their schools that their traditional family strengths and their native language are assets to the classroom. As CLD families move through

their child's academic career, they must be confident in their talents and strengths and know they can draw from them as they support their child, especially as they make post-secondary plans.

The goal of this study is to build educator capacity in realizing culturally responsive classrooms and schools. Often, the most effective way to bring about these educational changes is to integrate new learning with existing policies and practices. I plan to integrate the findings of this study in professional development opportunities for educators that address their existing professional development goals in their districts (discussed in chapter five). For example, in many districts across Colorado, educator evaluations incorporate rubrics that speak to becoming more culturally responsive in the classroom, increasing student engagement or addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse parents/guardians in their own language (CEL, 2014).

My goal with this research is for educators to 'look in the mirror and not out the window' as they address educational gaps for CLD children. All too often, educators see CLD families as deficient, at-risk or needing help. I propose that enlisting a positive, supportive and asset-based manner of working with CLD families will increase parent/guardian engagement and ultimately increase student achievement in their districts. As educators begin to concern themselves with the culture and language of all families, the funds of knowledge research can provide for educators a tool for how to engage CLD families. Through appreciative inquiry and the promotion of culturally developed strengths, teachers can leverage new knowledge that will ultimately support their students in a constructive and positive school-family partnership.

## **Researcher Perspective**

A parent is a child's first teacher. Like the participants shared in this study, my first teacher was and continues to be my mother. One of 15 brothers and sisters who worked the family's cotton farm in the Rio Grande Valley at the southern tip of the Texas/Mexican border, my mother dropped out of school in the fifth grade to work the cotton fields and contribute financially to her family. At 19 years old, she married my father and together they began a migrant farm-working life through the Texas, and Colorado fields. They settled on an asparagus farm along the "migrant highway" in Colorado, US I-85 in 1960. It was on this migrant highway where my siblings and I grew up and worked the asparagus, onion, and cucumber fields in exchange for the rent of a small two-bedroom farmhouse. This is where my education as a field worker began and where the most memorable experiences of my childhood occurred.

One summer day, my middle school science teacher visited our home unannounced and we sat on our cement porch on a hot summer day while Ms. Springfield reported my test scores. As my mother asked questions with her limited English and described our story as migrant farm-workers, Ms. Springfield listened intently. What I remember most about this visit is that my mother did most of the talking. For the first time, I could remember, someone who I viewed as 'important' listened to my mother. Ms. Springfield did not interrupt her; she did not correct her use of the English language, and she did not judge her. My mother talked about our family hardships and limited experiences, allowing for Ms. Springfield to understand even though our life was difficult, my parents were solid supporters and engaged players in my education. They cared about our education and had high expectations for all seven of their children.

Before she left, Ms. Springfield opened a letter with a logo on it that read CEA. I would not know until much later in my life this acronym stood for Colorado Education Association.

CEA offered me a scholarship to attend a summer enrichment camp at a local university as a sixth grader. My mother agreed to send me, and even though I had never been away from my family for even one night, soon I was living on a college campus for the summer and my life was transformed. Ms. Springfield left our home that day without knowing how her decision to make a personal connection with my family changed the trajectory of my life. This simple, one-hour visit made my mother proud of me; it empowered her and it solidified my belief that I had academic worth.

My experiences as a first-generation student connects and informs the study by giving the reader an understanding of the power that an educator has in supporting the hopes and dreams of a CLD family. My researcher bias comes from my migrant, farm-working experience and as a middle school educator who advocates for marginalized families, many who are immigrant families and migrant workers. As a secondary school administrator, I know how my decisions can affect a family. Ms. Springfield's visit encouraged my mother to believe our family had a reservoir of strengths she and other teachers supported in my school. I, too, want to engage families in powerfully defining moments like these and teach other educators how their gift of time might be the single most important strategy that allows them to engage historically disenfranchised families at higher levels. As I have moved from the fieldwork of picking crops to the fieldwork of interviewing parents, I am empathetic toward families whose backgrounds are like mine. Likewise, I am passionate about reaching out to teachers, counselors and administrators who look to become more culturally responsive in their practice.

## **CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Introduction**

Research and practice grounded in cultural funds of knowledge provide an assets-based approach that can counteract the deficit perspective that has permeated the educational landscape for years. To understand the need for an assets-based approach, I include a review and critique of the Deficit-Perspective and its history. This literature presents a framework of deficit-based beliefs that most educational institutions have held toward CLD families for many years. I then review the literature on educator uses of funds of knowledge, arguing it provides an assets-based educational approach that can promote higher levels of achievement for CLD students. I describe how funds of knowledge offer a culturally responsive teaching strategy that promotes positivity and vocabularies of hope and strength. The history of funds of knowledge research and several examples of current funds of knowledge research will be presented as a foundation for the research design of the present study. I draw on Coperrider (1999) to describe Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a fundamental basis for developing the design of the study. I argue that, when viewed through the lens of Appreciative Inquiry, Moll's paradigm for constructing funds of knowledge creates the Advocacy, Participatory and Constructivist theoretical framework from which this research project is designed and will be conducted. Addressed are the primary terms and concepts as well as the relationship and fit with the philosophical paradigms of inquiry.

### **Countering the Deficit-Perspective**

Most schools across the United States profess to seek to close the achievement gap. It is essential to understand the deficit nature of what educators commonly refer to as “closing the achievement gap” and why it exists. This term has been used in education to explain the

achievement differences among students in the U.S. The achievement gap, is therefore used to identify students, typically minority, whose test scores are significantly lower than their white peers. This is a “blame the learner” term and implies that those on the lower end of the test score are not as capable of achieving at high levels. The asset-based perspective shows us a different picture of the academic landscape of academic achievement and focuses on a continuum of academic growth. The “opportunity gap” is the term used to identify those “opportunities” that many students do not have access to that keep them from achieving at high levels.

Generally speaking, achievement gap refers to outputs—the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits—while opportunity gap refers to inputs—the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Learning gap refers to relative performance of individual students—i.e., the disparity between what students have actually learned and what they were expected to learn at a particular age or grade level. (Glossary of Education Reform, 2016, p. 1)

As a secondary school administrator, I have routinely offered professional development for colleagues in equity, diversity, and parent engagement. In a recent professional development session in a local middle school, I asked teachers to identify for themselves what an opportunity gap is and what it looks like in their school for their CLD students. After long silences and a few blank stares, several teachers identified the lack of technology in the home and transportation home after school events as concepts that could support students’ ongoing learning. A common theme identified was the lack of knowledge around community resources available to families or the lack of knowledge of how to use their smart phone to support their child’s learning from home, specifically looking up grades, tardies, and missing assignments. One teacher recounted his belief that Latino parents oftentimes “do not value education.” This teacher was a recent arrival to the educational profession and had little experience working with families who are different from his own. His comment reminded me that, even today, too many educators still



hold potentially damaging beliefs about CLD families and blame the underachievement of their students on the family and their culture, referring to them as uninvolved.

As disconcerting as this deficit-thinking comment was to me, it was as disconcerting that this educator was a recent graduate of a university teacher preparatory program where issues of equity and achievement gaps should have been discussed and understood by graduates. High numbers of Black and Latino absences and in-school and out-of-school suspensions continue to remove students from the classroom, widening the gap even further as students struggle to catch up when they return due to significant missed instructional time (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Boykin and Noguera (2011) identify how these opportunity gaps can be the basis for widening gaps in Reading and Math. NAEP testing data shows a significant void between White, Black, and Latino student reading and math data from 1998-2007 as illustrated in Table 2 and Table 3. Table 2 reflects reading achievement, with differences in scale scores between White students and their Black and Latino peers continues to differ significantly year after year, with differences as high as 27 points. Table 3 shows how the gaps in math are even more significant—as high as 40 points difference—with little to no change over a period of ten years. This is unacceptable, especially during a time in education where millions of dollars are spent yearly to increase educational achievement in the United States.

Table 2  
8th Grade Reading Achievement (MAIN NAEP)

Year	Average Scale Score			Achievement Gap	
	White	Black	Latino	Black/White	Latino/White
2007	270	244	246	-26	-25
2005	269	242	245	-27	-24
2003	270	244	244	-27	<b>-27</b>
2002	271	244	245	-27	-26
1998	268	242	241	-26	-27

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Educational Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998-2007 Reading Assessments. Bold and italicized numbers indicate gaps that are statistically different from the 2007 gaps as calculated by the U.S. Department of Education's NAEP Data Explorer.

Table 3  
Grade Math Achievement (MAIN NAEP)

Year	Average Scale Score			Achievement Gap	
	White	Black	Latino	Black/White	Latino/White
2007	290	259	264	-31	-26
2005	288	254	261	<b>-33</b>	-26
2003	287	252	258	<b>-35</b>	<b>-28</b>
2000	283	243	252	<b>-40</b>	<b>-31</b>
1996	279	239	249	<b>-40</b>	-30

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Educational Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1996-2007 Mathematics Assessments. Bold and italicized numbers indicate gaps that are statistically different from the 2007 gaps as calculated by the U.S. Department of Education's NAEP Data Explorer.

In this section, I will illustrate the entrenched nature of deficit thinking in our school systems by examining the extent to which one deficit framework is institutionalized in our schools, a framework that is related to deficit perspectives for CLD families. Of the most notable deficit-based educational perspectives institutionalized in public schools, Ruby Payne's (2005) *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* is also among the most disputed. Payne, a long-time Texas educator, details in her book her understanding of poor people.

She compiled several scenarios based on her work educating children whose families lived with few resources and then shared with educators these scenarios. This collection has been shared with educators across the country through professional development opportunities called the “a’ha! Process, Inc.” Ruby Payne’s books can still be seen on many educators’ bookshelves across the United States and are still routinely referenced as a framework by educators, often with good intentions, to better support the achievement of low income students (Payne, 2005).

Payne proposes several key points in her framework with educators as they work with students and families who live in poverty, many of whom are culturally and linguistically diverse families. They are as follows:

**Poverty is relative.** If everyone around you has similar circumstances, the notion of poverty and wealth is vague. Poverty or wealth only exists in relationship to the know quantities or expectations.

**Poverty occurs among people of all ethnic backgrounds and in all countries.** The notion of a middle class as a large segment of society is a phenomenon of this century. The percentage of the population that is poor is subject to definition and circumstance.

**Economic class is continuous line, not a clear-cut distinction.** Individuals move and are stationed all along the continuum of income.

**Generational poverty and situational poverty are different.** Generational poverty is defined as being in poverty for two generations or longer. Situational poverty exists for a shorter time and is caused by circumstances like death, illness, or divorce.

**An individual brings with them the hidden rules of the class in which they were raised.** Even though the income of the individual may rise significantly, many patterns of thought, social interaction, cognitive strategies, and so on remain with the individual.

**School and business operate from middle class norms and use the hidden rules of the middle class.** These norms and hidden rules are never directly taught in schools or in businesses.

**We must understand our students’ hidden rules and teach them the hidden middle class rules that will make them successful at school and work.** We can neither excuse them nor scold them for not knowing; we must teach them and provide support, insistence, and expectations.

**To move from poverty to middle class or from middle class to wealth, an individual must give up relationships for achievement. (Payne, 2017)**

Many educational researchers have analyzed Payne's research and her professional development materials. Bomer, et al. (2009) spent substantial time redefining poverty and debunking Ruby Payne's *culture of poverty* framework. In *Miseducating Teachers about the Poor: A Critical Analysis of Ruby Payne's Claims about Poverty*, the authors argue that Payne perpetuates a deficit-perspective for families who live in poverty as well as promotes teaching practices that adopt negative stereotypes for families and children who live in poverty. Bomer, et al. (2009) state Payne suffers from the lack of attention to a critical perspective and her perspective encourages educators to adopt a blame-the-victim perspective. These authors agree Payne's work operates from a deficit perspective, which promotes the idea that families with limited resources have learned helplessness and have very little to offer their children as they journey through their academic careers. They claim that promoting Payne's *culture of poverty* continues to solidify stereotypes of negative cultural traits that claim,

[poor] people are lazy, fatalistic, hedonistic, violent, distrustful, people living in common law unions, as well as in dysfunctional, female-centered, authoritarian families who are chronically unemployed and rarely participate in local civic activities, vote or trust the police and political leaders. (Bomer, et al., 2009, p. 2505)

These studies that critique Payne's work force the reader to face their biases and ask themselves tough questions not just about how they see children in poverty, but also how they see learners from other marginalized groups. Bomer, et al. (2009) prompt educators to ask questions such as, through what lens do I see culturally and linguistically diverse children? What are my beliefs about poverty? Through what lens do I allow myself to be seen by CLD parents? What impact do I have on my students today?

In *What is Wrong with a Deficit Perspective?* (Bomer, et al., 2009), the authors react to Ruby Payne's response to their critical analysis. The authors stand firm in their charge that the

when an educator holds a “deficit-perspective,”—which Payne promotes—s/he has been shown to lower the quality of education for children from low-income households. Bomer, et al., 2009 contend when educators hold these negative perspectives towards children who live in poverty, the conversations teachers have with their students are diminished and the instruction is sub-standard, often offering them less instruction and speaking to them less than students who live in middle-class homes.

Bomer, et al. (2009) contend the following three points counter Payne’s deficit perspective and ultimately dispel the myth that children who live in poverty are more difficult to educate. First, they believe the way a teacher interacts with his/her students has the potential to make a substantial, qualitative difference in that student’s life. Second, the authors contend teachers all over the world do work daily to create spaces of hope and resistance to the larger social givens. Finally, they say children of all ages as well as adults invent new opportunities for themselves all the time, that they make something new out of current relationships and experiences, and they often reject these negative messages that they hear by the adults in their lives or by the people in their lives that dismiss them as less than they are. (Bomer, et al.) This inner resistance to negative messages allows families who live in poverty to find a path of hope and determination. When educators promote vocabularies of hope and an appreciation of differences for all children, they have embarked on the path of becoming culturally responsive.

While I focused on deficit perspectives from a poverty viewpoint, a deficit framework permeates educator thinking in many ways, and its effects on learners and families are profound. I aim to demonstrate how an assets-based framework is critical both in terms of re-framing educator lenses and for developing educational research approaches. As a researcher, I was drawn to funds of knowledge research as a crucial assets-based approach and I wish to engage in

a research method that is consistent with this strengths-based approach. Thus, I turn next to funds of knowledge and Appreciative Inquiry as the framework that guides the development of my research study.

### **Funds of Knowledge History and Background**

Luis Moll came to the United States from Puerto Rico when he was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. As a young, monolingual Spanish-speaking student, he found himself thrust into a 1960s American educational system unforgiving of those whose differences looked like challenges too difficult for the student to overcome in the classroom. In 1972, Moll entered California State Polytechnic University in Pomona where he earned his bachelor's degree and two years later acquired a master's degree in social work from the University of Southern California. In 1978, Moll became a doctoral student at the University of California where he began his research in bilingual and cross-cultural communications in education. In 1986, Moll moved to Arizona to become an associate professor and ultimately a highly esteemed researcher, professor and lecturer in the area of language, reading, and culture within the College of Education.

Moll was heavily influenced by Vélez-Ibáñez, Greenberg (1989), and Russian philosopher and researcher Vygotsky. Moll utilized Vygotsky's "zones of proximal development" as a foundation for his funds of knowledge work that has become known by educators as a model for becoming more culturally responsive in their teaching practices. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) has been defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Vygotsky believed a child could understand a concept far better when prompted—or “scaffolded”—by an expert. ZPD represented in Figure 2, clearly depicts the area (or zone) where a child is and where he/she can reach beyond his/her current ability with support, therefore gaining the ability to grasp and learn new content.

Through his research, Moll developed an innovative educational approach that supported educators in creating ‘zones of possibilities’ for their students by understanding their students’ strengths and their families’ funds of knowledge to enhance their teaching practices. This approach trained teachers as cultural anthropologists. By looking through a family’s cultural lens, teacher research teams interview and learn the vocational and educational experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse families; they utilize this new knowledge to create instructional units in the classroom. Moll’s research lies at the crossroads of culture, psychology, and education as it relates to the education of CLD children.

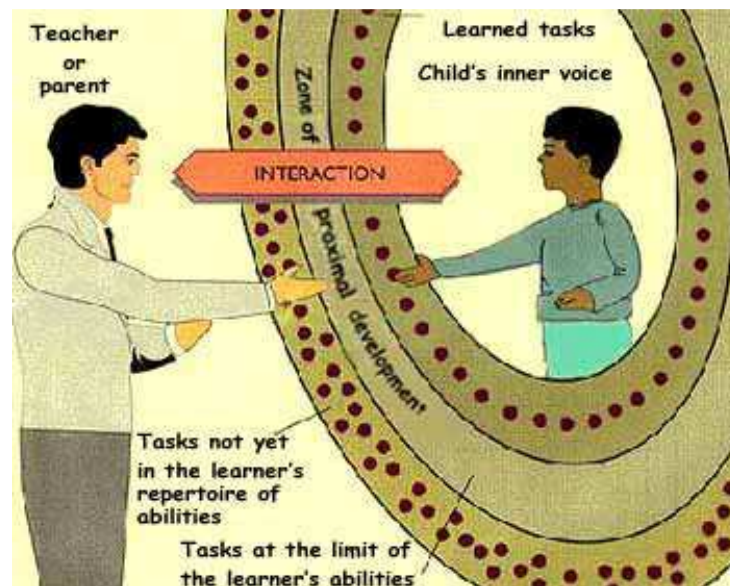


Figure 2: Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978)

Anthropologists Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg give us the first examples of the funds of knowledge research as early as 1992. Together, they worked to identify the cultural identities of

U.S./Mexican children along the southwestern border. In their seminal work, *Formation and Transformation of Funds of Knowledge among U.S.-Mexican Households*, Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1988) explain the concept of funds of knowledge as those skills and experiences, which are developed culturally by a specific group of people. These skills and experiences can be separated into multiple categories such as social funds (i.e. kinship and friendship), caloric funds (i.e. nutrition), and funds of rent (i.e. housing). These skills make up the foundation and a great depth of knowledge by a group of people who use it to find life and family success. For example, well-known funds of knowledge researchers, Gonzales et al. (2005) found Latino families in southern Arizona have accumulated a wealth of knowledge in the areas of metallurgy, ranching, animal husbandry, mining, transborder transactions, and business.

Moll's work began in the late 1980s, and although the emphasis in many of these early studies was family literacy, Moll and others found new information through home interviews can reveal information about the assets of a family unit. Heavily influenced by Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1988), Moll implemented a three-part Community Literacy Project (CLP) that incorporated home observations of a family unit. This three-part study included observations and interviews in the home, in after-school study groups, and observation of a student's classroom work. Of the projects, he stated,

This project convinced us of the great theoretical utility of the concept of funds of knowledge in developing a systematic approach to households. We realized that we could visit a wide variety of households, with a range of living arrangements and collect information reliably that would inform us about how families generated, obtained and distributed knowledge, among other aspects of housed life. (Gonzales, et al., 2005, p. 5)

The journal articles and books reviewed for this study included qualitative research designs in the forms of case studies, narratives, and ethnographic studies. Researchers who were completing their doctoral dissertations or who co-authored research with a university cohort wrote several of the articles. Books reviewed include *Funds of Knowledge*, *Theorizing Practices*



*in Households, Communities, and Classrooms*, a compilation of research articles by Gonzales, Moll, and Amanti and Luis Moll's *L.S. Vygotsky and Education* (2013).

Based on the Vygotsky's theoretical framework, Luis Moll's research on *funds of knowledge* called educators to move away from the deficit perspective that has plagued CLD families and move into an appreciative model for understanding others. By conducting individual interviews with CLD families, a deeper reflection of family strengths has the potential to assist the educator in developing an understanding of their students' reality (Gonzales, et al., 2005). As we co-construct knowledge with families, we become more aware of our own personal biases. These new discoveries have the power to propel educators to change their classroom environment and to promote a climate and culture of appreciation and respect. Schechter (2011) stated, "Rather than focusing on deficit-based practices, these [AI] approaches focus on discovering what work well, and how successes can generate a more positive course of human and organizational welfare" (p. 2422).

### **Research Design Aligned with Current Funds of Knowledge Research**

A constructivist method in understanding funds of knowledge is the theoretical framework for many funds of knowledge researchers and is the foundation for the research design for this study. *Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms* (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) is a highly successful partnership between families and researchers. Here, authors employed a qualitative approach that included "a combination of ethnographic observations, open-ended interviewing strategies, life histories, and case studies that, when combined analytically, can portray accurately the complex functions of households within their sociohistorical contexts" (Gonzales, et al., 2005, p. 71). Here, Gonzales portrays the stories of teachers who experience a transformation as they conduct

interviews with CLD families in their homes. Some teachers kept journals describing their experiences and personal thoughts during the interview process. This allowed them to gauge their personal process throughout the project. Oftentimes, interviews with families were audio-recorded instead of hand-recorded to more accurately record the interview and allow for a more personal dialogue with the participants and repeated listening.

Throughout the study, teachers refer to themselves as anthropologists. As they tell their stories, those who kept personal journals reported their research experience as rich and transformative. From the personal experience of interviewing participants and the repeated listening of the audio-recording, authors describe how their views about CLD families has been changed.

Half of the children in my classroom are international travelers, and yet this experience is not recognized or valued because they are Mexican children going to Mexico. Anglo children may spend a summer in France and we make a big deal about it, by asking them to speak to the class about their summer activities! Carlos spends summers in Magdalena, Mexico, yet he's probably rarely been asked to share his experiences with anyone. (Gonzales, et al., 2005, p. 79)

The researchers discovered CLD participants possess similar strengths and educators could use these funds of knowledge in their classrooms. One teacher created a candy unit based on what she discovered in visiting a family that sold candy in their neighborhood. She invited the mother of the child to come and teach the children how to make *pipitoria*, a Mexican candy treat and together with the teacher taught the students math, writing and science concepts using information with which they were familiar (Gonzales, et al., 2005).

Olmedo (2009) wrote about a Mexican community called La Villita in Chicago where families could operate completely in their native language of Spanish. The community was separated from the suburban areas that surround the Chicago city limits and house almost a completely Mexican community. This community includes companies which provide the

necessities for their Latino community. This study described the lives of parents who lived in La Villita and how they could live in this upper mid-west community without ever having to learn the language of the dominant community, English. Their children lived in two worlds: a predominantly Mexican and Spanish speaking community by night and an English-speaking school by day. In this study, the elementary school educators transformed their teaching practices to fit the needs of the children and families and chose to incorporate the family's funds of knowledge into their teaching practices (Olmedo).

As seen in *Family Lessons and Funds of Knowledge: College Going Paths in Mexican American Families*, Kiyama (2010) used a qualitative multiple case study to discover how Mexican-American families' extended networks and prior college process knowledge aids in the positive understanding of the college process. The participants for this study were recruited from a university outreach program and were represented in her study as families or household clusters. Like most of the funds of knowledge research, Kiyama utilizes Moll's (2010) traditional model for research and conducts her study along the U.S./Mexico border. The participants in her study identify themselves as Latino/Hispanic and many participants report to use the free and reduced priced lunch program at their children's schools. Kiyama used a face-to-face interview process to meet with families in their homes, neighborhood libraries, parks, and restaurants and collected oral history interviews from six families/extended families, providing for her study rich, personal reflections. This rich data exemplifies the family's funds of knowledge in family history, labor history, routine household practices, family schedules and routines and child rearing philosophies, all of which were made available with the educational community through this study (Kiyama, 2010).

A study conducted by Cecilia Rios-Aquilar (2010) from the University of Arizona took the concept of identifying a group of people's funds of knowledge and applied it to the transition to higher education. In *Measuring Funds of Knowledge: Contributions to Latina/o Students' Academic and Nonacademic Outcomes*, Rios-Aquilar uses a quantitative, factor analysis research method to examine the relationship between the funds of knowledge of Latino(a) students and their transition to college. The purpose of this study was born from the gap of knowledge in the literature to understand why students from Latino backgrounds continue to graduate from high school and attend colleges and universities at lower rates than their peers and if discovering a family's funds of knowledge can be a model for increasing these rates. Unlike Kiyama (2010), Rios-Aquilar found there was significant response bias. This response bias included a relatively low percentage of returned surveys. She attributes this to the nature of the data collection system, a mailed paper survey. This survey was sent out to a parent group in a school district whose percentages for responding to this type of method had already been proven low. In this study, Rios-Aquilar found among the 1100 families that mailed a survey, only 19% (212 families) responded. Of the various information collected through this study, of most importance is that this study informed this research by solidifying for the researcher "Latina/o students and families do engage in many different activities that contribute to students' learning. Instead of viewing Latino families as needing remediation services and lacking resources to support students' learning, it is critical to build on their life experiences, knowledge, and skills" (p. 2247). Additionally, to avoid relatively low response rates among Latino families, conducting face-to-face interviews are preferable. I have designed my study based, in part, on these recommendations, basing data collection on focus group and individual interviews.

While much of the research found focused on Latino/Hispanic families in the southwest, in *Representing Family: Community Funds of Knowledge, Bilingualism, and Multimodality* (Marshall & Toohey, 2010) followed the communities and families of Punjabi Sikh students at a Canadian elementary school. This study utilizes technology to record the stories as told by the grandparents in their native language and then translated into English. Through a multi-language method of sharing information, children could recount bilingual stories with their teachers about their family's history in India and religious conflict. Furthermore, this research project opened the discussion specific to current educational practices that dismissed the language and cultural practices of 73% of the school's student body. It allowed teachers to understand the language and culture of the Indian children in their school and to create a more inclusive environment for their families.

The underlying theme in the collective research conducted to discover a family's funds of knowledge centralizes on the linguistic and cultural knowledge a child brings to his or her classroom, knowledge that may differ from the cultural knowledge of the dominant group and school staff. While many of these studies depend on the teacher as researcher to construct community funds of knowledge, this proposed study is designed to build on this work by integrating focus group interviews with follow up individual interviews so I can gain insight on the funds of knowledge parents have identified. Additionally, I plan to use principles of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in this research design to construct meaning with the participants. As described in the next section, AI principles will be the basis for the development of interview questions, focus group and interview interactions, and the co-constructed themes that will ultimately be analyzed.

## **Appreciative Inquiry Principles**

According to Kessler (2013), *Appreciative Inquiry* (AI) is

...a method for studying and changing social systems (groups, organizations, communities) that advocates collective inquiry into the best of what is in order to imagine what could be, followed by collective design of a desired future state that is compelling and thus, does not require the use of incentives, coercion or persuasion for planned change to occur. (p. 1)

As an advocate and champion for the poor in India, Mother Teresa, now St. Teresa of Calcutta, wrote about the importance of an appreciative dialogue,

Drive across town – get to know your neighbor, learn their names, teach them yours...embrace differences, learn from them and become compassionate and empathetic even if you are uncomfortable in a new and unusual environment. People may look different or be dressed differently, or may have a different education or position. But they are all the same. They are all people to be loved. They are all hungry for love. (Beller & Chase, 2008, p. 43)

Like Moll, Mother Teresa knew all too well that to visit with a person, even if it was in the street, created dialogue. It allowed participants to create understanding and mutual respect.

The articles reviewed that address Appreciative Inquiry (AI) include several qualitative studies conducted at Benedictine College and Case Western Reserve University (Coperrider & Whitney, 1999). AI is a relatively new theory based on creating positive change by focusing on the assets of an organization or community instead of the deficits. Coperrider, a doctoral student who worked with Dr. Suresh Srivastva, identified AI in the late 1980s at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. As part of his doctoral work in organizational management and development, Coperrider regularly asked questions from a deficit perspective (Coperrider & Whitney, 1999). Instead of asking a company about their commonly held strengths, he would ask, “What is wrong with your organization?” These deficit-based questions created tension within the organization and his work with several companies became tense and challenging. Thus, Coperrider began designing the basic tenets for an asset-based approach they called

appreciative inquiry. Through the lens of AI, one can become more aware of biases and work to address negative attitudes (Coperrider, Sorensen, & Whitney, 2000; Coperrider & Whitney).

Researchers like Moll and Coperrider argue for the co-construction of knowledge through the participatory nature of conducting qualitative research. AI posits that the more positive the question, the more positive the willingness for participants to engage in the study. Ludema (2001) writes about a community's vocabulary of hope. He stated by using AI as a foundation for creating positive dialogue during interviews, people are more hopeful when their community is recognized as holding important knowledge. Ludema (2001) stated communities create their vocabularies of hope by co-constructing knowledge with the researcher through what he called the utilization of appreciative modes of inquiry. Once this condition is created, these community qualities can be nurtured and allow for the construction of hopeful vocabularies.

Bushe and Kassam (2005) posited to appreciate the assets communities and organizations hold, one must understand the five principles of AI. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is the foundation for this funds of knowledge research study that centers on focus group and personal interviews. As such, AI assisted me in this process so I could be deliberate about co-constructing a new paradigm for learning with the participant (Head & Young, 1998). Table 4 describes the five principles of AI: Constructionist, Simultaneity, Poetic, Anticipatory, and Positive. These five principles were used as a basis to determine where certain components of my research fit and their uses in this research are discussed in more depth in chapter 4.

Table 4  
Five Principles of Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Five Principles	Description	Example
Constructionist Principle	Our capacity for imagination and creation of images. The future allows human systems (including organizations) to be altered or reconstructed.	Daily conversations co-construct the environment we live in.
Simultaneity Principle	Seeds of change are planted in the first question asked. Therefore, inquiry and intervention are interrelated and simultaneous.	Instead of “What are we doing wrong?” we ask, “What are we doing well?”
Poetic Principle	Organizations are like an open book or poetry. They are open to multiple interpretations and conclusions.	Words invoke feelings and create meaning.
Anticipatory Principle	An image of the future precedes the actual change.	Positive imagery
Positive Principle	Momentum and sustainable change requires positive affect and social bonding.	Sentiments like hope, excitement, inspiration, and joy increase openness to new ideas.

Source: Adapted from *Coperrider, D. L., & Whitney, D. (1999)*

### **The Constructionist Principle**

The Constructionist Principle is seen daily in the interactions and conversations one has with his or her environment and people with whom they surround themselves. These interactions allow one to develop meaning based on the information received, how one perceives this new information and their personal experiences.

### **The Simultaneity Principle**

The Simultaneity Principle allows the interviewer to ask a question in a positive manner. As seen in Table 1, instead of asking the question “What are we doing wrong?” we ask, “What are we doing well and what are the strengths of this family or institution?” This opens the conversation and interaction in a positive tone and solicits answers that will most likely invoke positive feelings and responses.



### **The Poetic Principle**

In the Poetic Principle, the process is fluid and open. Here participants are allowed space and time to say what they believe to be true and real to them. These experiences belong to the participant. They should not be clouded by the interviewer's perceptions or beliefs.

### **The Anticipatory Principle**

The Anticipatory Principle allows for a family, institution, or group to dream. This principle is most closely associated with the visioning and planning process that we all go through when making decisions. A group can imagine all the possibilities to whatever situation they are in and use this as a motivating factor for the planning done today.

### **The Positive Principle**

Finally, the Positive Principle says to continue a process of sustainable change, the group must continue to interact positively and work towards the desired goal together.

When used as a foundation for funds of knowledge research and personal interviews, AI can assist in this process so the researcher is deliberate about co-constructing a new paradigm for learning with the participant (Head & Young, 1998). Figure 3 shows the four phases of AI: Discovery, Destiny, Dream, and Design. In the Discovery phase, what should be appreciated and valued is found. In the Destiny phase, information learned is used to lead to change and growth. In the Dream phase, possibilities of what could be are envisioned. In the final phase, Design, the ideal and human potential is found.

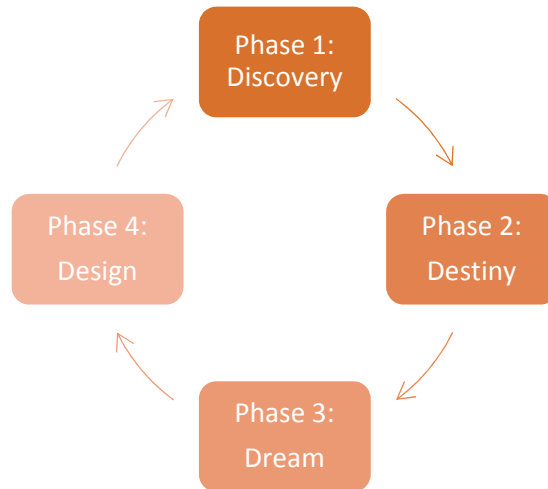


Figure 3: Four Phases of Appreciative Inquiry

In my research, I used these five AI principles and four phases as a foundation for the design of the focus group and personal interviews. A description of how the five AI principles and four phases were used in the interview process can be found in Chapter 3. Throughout the interviews, I plan to use each of the four phases of AI. In the Discovery phase, I will focus on understanding what should be appreciated and valued. As I listen to the responses of each participant, I will carefully document the words, phrases, pauses, inflections in voice and in their silence. Within this phase, I will pay special attention to what the participant is saying and support them to develop their responses by listening and asking probing questions.

In the Destiny phase, my job is to document all information with fidelity, coding and analyzing the data thoroughly and completely. Once this data is collected, it is my hope it will be used to lead change and growth within school districts all over Colorado and beyond.

In the Dream phase, data will be used to promote and develop possibilities for CLD families and school partnerships. In this phase, the participants and I will design professional development opportunities so educators and education administrators may understand how to use the strengths of a CLD family.

Finally, in the Design phase of my research, a funds of knowledge professional development opportunity will be offered to educators and education administrators. Locally, I will be presenting this work to a university diversity symposium and for pre-service education students at a university. Possible additional vehicles for these opportunities could include education conferences such as the Colorado Association for School Executives (CASE), the Colorado Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) and the American Education Research Association (AERA).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Grounded in the literature of funds of knowledge and appreciative inquiry, the conceptual framework for this research draws on the ethnographic worldview of participant observation and constructivist theories. In this study, I address the following research question: What do CLD families describe as culturally developed funds of knowledge? Through the lens of AI and by co-constructing knowledge with the participant, I use the tenets of the Advocacy/Participatory observation framework. AI tells us our research should “contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researchers’ lives” (Creswell, 2013, p. 21). This study advocates for a group of people in education whose voices are not often heard and who are found in the shadows of their child’s academic world. As part of the findings in Chapter 5, I advocate for educators to more fully understand a CLD family’s funds of knowledge by presenting to various educational entities.

Leading funds of knowledge researchers propose the key to successful replication of this research is for the participant observer is “to enter the homes in the role of ‘learner,’ willing to interact and prepared to document what one learns, to produce new ‘firsthand’ knowledge about the families and community” (Gonzales, et al., 2005, p. 109). In this study, even though I did not

enter the participant's home, I did enter the role of the learner and was willing to interact and prepared to document what was learned and produce firsthand knowledge about the CLD families in Northern Colorado.

“Constructivism understands reality as being locally constructed and based on shared experiences and, because groups/individuals are changeable, identifies it as ‘relativist realism’ or ‘relative ontology’” (Howell, 2013, p. 88). One could argue using Constructivism alone as the theoretical basis for a design study does not go far enough to call educators to change teaching practices to engage CLD parents who have been historically marginalized. While reality is locally constructed and based on the participants' experiences, it is also shared and co-created by many, including educators, parents, and students. Therefore, understanding that from the participatory paradigm a “shared experience and situational context... offers an alternative means for undertaking social research projects and programmes,” such as this funds of knowledge study. (Howell, p. 94)

Epistemologically, the findings in this study were created through the process of the investigation. To lessen the distance between myself and the and the participants, I collaborate with the participants during the interviews. These interviews, while not conducted in the living rooms of the participants' homes, were conducted in locations very near to their place of work or a location most convenient and comfortable for them. Together, the participants and I shared informal time, before and after the interviews, discussing the family's summer activities. It was my researcher goal to be seen and treated as an “insider” for the findings to be developed together. One “participate[s] on the same level in the environment you are studying” (Willis, 2007, p. 206). This was done for several reasons. First and foremost, I wanted participants to know I care about them and that I genuinely wanted all participants to feel comfortable in their

surroundings. They were taking time out of their busy work/personal schedule to meet with me and I wanted all participants to know that I appreciated their time.

The educational landscape has changed significantly for our CLD families. Where once they would walk through the hallways of their child's school and see very few parents who looked like and talk like them, they now see many families of diverse languages and ethnic backgrounds. What has not changed is the makeup of the teachers who are responsible for the teaching and learning of their most special children. Families trust the schools, often referring to their child's teacher as "professor." With the Department of Education's three-tiered statement identifying what schools can do to foster effective family-school partnerships; 1) honor and recognize families' funds of knowledge, 2) connect family engagement to student learning, and 3) create welcoming and inviting cultures, this study underscores the need for a teacher's engagement in the learning and understanding of their students and the homes in which they are reared. Effective family engagement addresses opportunity gaps and deficit thinking by providing educators and administrators a more in-depth understanding of potential funds of knowledge of CLD families. It is our duty, our moral imperative, to be better stewards of a family's funds of knowledge and these funds must be a priority for schools everywhere.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter explains the rationale behind the qualitative methodology used to explore a CLD family's funds of knowledge. First, a description of the constructivist approach used in this research is presented. Next, the chapter indicates how preliminary findings from a pilot study informed the design of the current study. The research question and secondary research question are presented followed by the current state of Colorado students' demographics that includes data specific to the Colorado school improvement status and Colorado achievement data by subgroups. Finally, data collection, data collection procedures, participant selection, data analysis, and protocols are addressed with special attention given to the interview protocols. Finally, my perspective and significance of the study are included.

### **Constructivist Approach to Research**

The data collection methodology and procedure closely follows the constructivist process, utilizing both focus groups and interviews. Morgan (1997) stated through this multi-method use, "focus groups typically add to the data that are gathered through other qualitative methods, such as participant observation and individual interviews" (p. 3). The selection of the Constructivist approach was chosen for its holistic and interactive approach to research. Informed by the pilot study conducted in the summer of 2014, this qualitative method is the perfect research method for creating an atmosphere of respect and understanding between myself and the participants. *Patience, Humor, and Honesty: A Pilot Study* was conducted in the summer of 2014 with a small participant group of CLD parents in Northern Colorado. Through this study,

participants and researcher co-constructed knowledge as the family's funds of knowledge were discussed through interviews.

### **Pilot Study, Summer 2014**

In July 2014, four culturally and linguistically diverse parents were selected to participate in a pilot qualitative study conducted by myself. These participants were selected based on their child's participation in an afterschool program that supported a diverse group of students. In this pilot study, four participants were invited to attend and ultimately three participants took part in an individual interview. These participants met most of the following criteria: 1) Parent/guardian of a secondary school-aged student, 2) Self-identified as culturally and linguistically diverse, and 3) Self-identified as receiving free or reduced priced lunch at school.

Data were collected in several steps during each interview and participant observation and interviewing through scripting and audio recording was used to gather participant stories. The interviews were semi-structured and I took hand-written field notes as the participants described their stories. Data were gathered through a face-to-face interview and all interviews were audio-recorded. Additionally, I kept a hand-written reflection journal and wrote in this journal after each interview. This pilot study integrated data collected from three individual interviews.

The pilot study interview questions were broad. For example, the first question asked of participants was: "Tell me about your experience in school." Although this question focused on an educational experience, it cast too wide of a net and allowed for the participants to select any/all experiences in school. Overwhelmingly, the participants chose to talk about negative experiences with teachers, administrators, and their peers. These stories garnered a great deal of emotion from the participants and made it difficult for me to ask other questions.

Through the pilot study, it was clear adjustments needed to be made for the present study: increase the interview time from one hour to two hours, realign the interview questions so they are in line with an assets-based perspective, allow participants to choose where they would be interviewed, and define the participant selection criteria to be more inclusive of a wide array of culturally and linguistically diverse families. Thus, I have designed the proposed funds of knowledge study with rewritten and expanded questions that promote a positive, assets-based perspective. I also expanded the participant selection criteria to include language diversity and country of birth so more families can be included. Once adjusted, there was ample interview time for participants to express themselves and co-construct meaning, sufficient time for me to follow up with participants with clarifying questions and validating the findings, time to keep a researcher journal, and time to thoroughly code and analyze data through a thematic coding process. Finally, I included meeting location choice so participants felt more comfortable with the interview process. These changes were made to garner a richer, in-depth level of research.

### **Appreciative Inquiry through Constructivism**

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is the foundation for this funds of knowledge research, focus group, and personal interviews. As such, AI assisted me in this process so I could be deliberate about co-constructing a new paradigm for learning with the participant (Head & Young, 1998). Table 7 shows how the five AI principles were used as the foundation in the interview process for each focus group and individual interview. The five principles were used as a basis to determine where certain components of my research fit.

For example, the Constructivist Principle, which allows for imagination and creation was the foundation for the time spent with participants during the interview process. Participants spoke freely with each as they answered the questions about their personal experiences. The



Simultaneity Principle proposes that the first question asked plants the seeds of change. Therefore, the title of this research and its “assets-based” foundation fits within this principle because it sets the stage for the research. The Poetic Principle allows for multiple interpretations. This was accomplished by offered several types of focus groups and interviews whereby CLD participants could choose based on their level of comfortability. For example, most the immigrant CLD participants who are monolingual Spanish speaking, chose to participate in the Spanish only focus group. The questions that were asked of the participants were positive in their design and focused on “what could be”. These questions fit nicely within the Anticipatory Principle. Finally, the Positive Principle proposes that sustainable change requires positive affect and social bonding. This became very clear to me as each transcript went through the thematic coding process. What CLD families want and need are communities of support where they can learn how to support their children more effectively or how to become a more fluent English speaker. It is within this last principle where the professional development and ideas for future research can be found.

Table 5  
AI's Five Principles as Seen in This Study

Five Principles	Description	Evidence within Research
Constructionist Principle	Our capacity for imagination and creation of images. The future allows human systems (including organizations) to be altered or reconstructed.	Significant time within focus group interviews and individual interviews was given for participants to recount their experiences, talk with each other and co-construct meaning. Interviews were conducted in a safe, public location. Participants were given ample time to recount personal experiences and construct meaning verbally and in their home language.
Simultaneity Principle	Seeds of change are planted in the first question asked. Therefore, inquiry and intervention are interrelated and simultaneous.	<p><b>Dissertation title:</b> Funds of Knowledge: A Constructivist Study to Examine the Assets of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families.</p> <p><b>Primary Research Question:</b> What do participating CLD parents indicate are funds of knowledge in their communities?</p>
Poetic Principle	Organizations are like an open book or poetry. They are open to multiple interpretations and conclusions.	<p>Multiple levels/types of interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Focus Groups: Male and Female participants, Spanish and English.</li> <li>• Individual Interviews: Male and Female participants, Spanish and English</li> </ul>
Anticipatory Principle	An image of the future precedes the actual change.	<p>Questions for participants focused on what could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your hopes and dreams for your child?</li> <li>• What advice would you give your child's teacher about how to better work with your family?</li> <li>• Co-constructive foundation led to group support and advice-giving among participants</li> </ul>
Positive Principle	Momentum and sustainable change requires positive affect and social bonding.	Educator professional development Support groups/expanded classes for CLD families

Figure 4 below shows us how the four phases of AI were applied in the Funds of Knowledge research and how they were used as a guide to come from an assets-based perspective in researching the cultural strengths of CLD families.

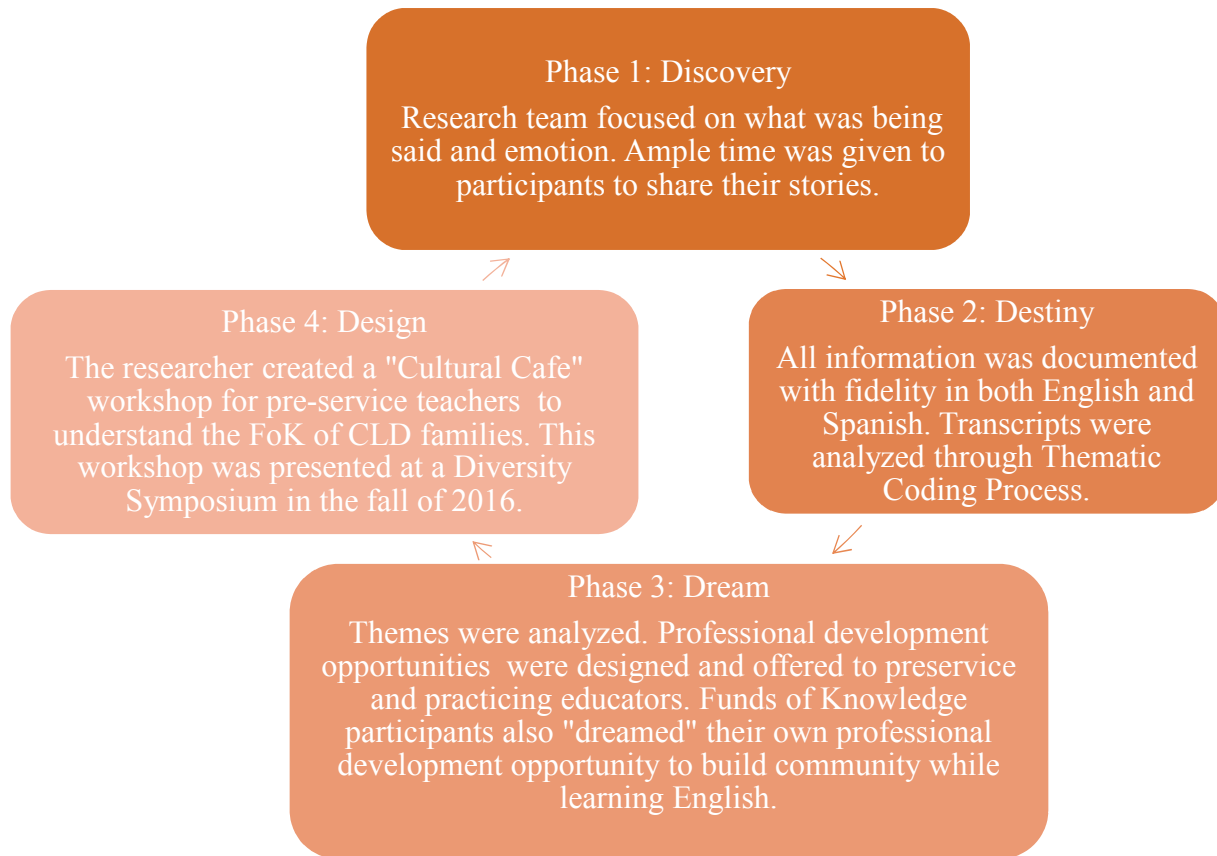


Figure 4: Four Phases of AI as seen through the lens of *funds of knowledge* research

In the Discovery phase, one should focus on what should be appreciated and valued. In the Destiny phase, the information learned will be used to lead to change and growth. In the Dream phase, the possibilities of what could be are envisioned and finally, in the Design phase, the ideal and human potential is found.

Throughout each interview, I used each of the four phases to construct meaning. For example, in the Discovery phase I focused on the understanding of what should be appreciated and valued. As we listened to the responses of each participant, the research team carefully

documented the words, phrases, pauses, inflections in voice and even their silence in English and Spanish. Within this phase, special attention was paid to what the participant was saying. Wait time and support was given to each participant as they developed their responses. This was done by listening, asking probing questions and allowing significant wait time for the participant to gather and define their thoughts.

In the Destiny phase, the research team documented all information with fidelity, transcribing, coding and analyzing the data thoroughly and completely using a thematic coding process. Several of the participants were either mono-lingual Spanish speaking, bilingual or mono-lingual English speaking. Careful attention was given to translate all the Spanish speaking interviews into English with fidelity and verbatim. Once all the data was collected and analyzed, it was synthesized through a thematic coding process (Braun & Clark, 2006) to collect data extracts for each theme in a way that allowed a clear and simple process for transferring these data extracts into the body of chapter 4.

This work contributed significantly to the Dream phase where I took the funds of knowledge themes and identified potential professional development opportunities for educators. It was also in this phase that a separate opportunity for further learning emerged. Only this was the ongoing learning for the participants. Through the focus group and individual interviews, many participants expressed a desire to have a class/group devoted to their ongoing learning of the English language, the culture of the United States and college and career opportunities for their children. These two ideas are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Finally, in the Design phase, findings from this research will be communicated with pre-service and practicing educators and education administrators. With data collected in the Dream phase, I designed a professional development opportunity for educators and administrators so

that they may understand how to engage CLD families at higher levels. Vehicles for sharing this professional development opportunity may include requests to present at the following educational conferences; Colorado Association for School Executives (CASE), Colorado Association for Bilingual Education (CABE), and the American Education Research Association (AERA). A proposal to present this research has been approved by the 2016 Colorado State University Diversity Symposium. This data can be used to lead change and growth within school districts all over Colorado and beyond through an educator's commitment to understanding and using the assets and strengths of CLD families in the classrooms.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions are:

1. What do participating CLD parents indicate are funds of knowledge in their communities?
  - a. How are these funds of knowledge evident from the data gathered from focus group interviews and participant interviews?
  - b. What cultural themes are represented across participant's descriptions of local funds of knowledge?
2. How can I use these cultural constructs to design a professional development opportunity for educators/educational administrators?

### **Colorado Demographics and District Data**

According to the District Accountability Handbook published by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE, 2015b), district will be assigned accreditation in the form of four plans based on the following four performance indicators for their students: Academic

Achievement, Academic Growth, Academic Growth Gaps and Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness. The four major accreditation plans follow and are assigned annually each August.

- 1) **Accredited with Distinction**- the district meets or exceeds state expectations for attainment on the Performance Indicators and is required to adopt and implement a Performance plan; **Accredited**- meaning the district meets state expectations for attainment on the Performance Indicators and is required to adopt and implement a Performance plan;
- 2) **Accredited with Improvement Plan**- the district has not met state expectations for attainment on the Performance Indicators and is required to adopt and implement an Improvement plan;
- 3) **Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan**- the district has not met state expectations for attainment on the Performance Indicators and is required to adopt and implement a Priority Improvement plan; and
- 4) **Accredited with Turnaround Plan**- the district has not met state expectations for attainment on the Performance Indicators and is required to adopt, with the commissioner's approval, and implement a Turnaround plan.

According to the Colorado Department of Education School View website (Retrieved on May 16, 2015), Colorado boasts over 1800 public schools in the state. Of these schools, 50.9% are elementary schools, 8.2% are elementary/middle schools, 4.3% are K-12 schools, 14.3% are middle schools, 5.8% are middle/high schools and 16.2% are solely educating high school students. Of these schools, only 55.1% are accredited by the Colorado Department of Education as meeting the performance indicators of achievement, growth, extent of gaps, and postsecondary and workforce readiness. Each of these categories are given a yearly rating, which

depends on the academic achievement attained by their students as evidenced by the state standardized assessment. What is interesting to note, is that of the remaining 44.9% of the schools, 24.04% are in Improvement status, 4.9% are in Priority Improvement status and 0.54% is in Turnaround status. These three status levels make up almost 30% of all the schools in Colorado that are not finding academic achievement for many of their students. Only 14% of our schools can be determined as accredited in the Distinction category, which means they can show success in all four key performance indicators.

Of the 183 districts in Colorado, overwhelmingly the districts with Distinction status are in the most affluent cities/districts in Colorado such as Telluride, Boulder Valley, Academy 20, Douglas County, Steamboat Springs, and Littleton. Unlike these districts, those with Improvement status will be found in the most rural and urban areas of our state and areas in which a higher percentage of minority families dwell. Urban areas like Denver County, Greeley, and Adams 12 Five Star Schools can be found on Improvement status. Also on this list are some of the most rural areas of our state like Huerfano, Fort Morgan, Trinidad, Wray, and Weld County.

Concerning the reading, writing, mathematics, and science assessment data, Hispanic, Black, and American Indian students have consistently scored lower than their Asian, Hawaiian, and White peers in these areas for the last three years. In some cases, Hispanic and Black students are scoring 20-30 percentage points lower than White and Asian students. Hispanic and Black students in Colorado have also had some of the highest dropout rates at 4.73% and 4.41% respectfully in 2012. American Indian students had the highest dropout rate in 2012 at 5.36%. Even though ACT data shows high scores for many of our Colorado students, Hispanic, and

Black students continue to have the lowest scores of all high school students at an ACT score of 17 while their counterparts attain composite scores of 19 and above.

According to the American Community Survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau (2008-2012), 41.4% of all grandparents living in Colorado are solely responsible for raising their grandchildren. In the KIDS COUNT study released by the Colorado Children's Campaign (2014), it is reported that of Colorado's one million children, 18% or 224,000 children live in poverty. With a population of 310,715 in Larimer County, 32% of school-aged children qualify to receive free or reduced-priced lunch at school. In a year where the Larimer County median income is \$56,132 (KIDS COUNT, 2014), families (many of whom are culturally and linguistically diverse) are still unable to attain a middle-class lifestyle. In fact, of all the Colorado children under 18 who lived in poverty in 2012, 91% are ethnic minority with 41% being Black, 31% being Hispanic and 19% being Two or More Races) (KIDS COUNT, et al., 2014, p. 13).

In 2013, only 50% of all Colorado students identified as "homeless" received a diploma while the Colorado high school graduation average for all students was 77% (KIDS COUNT, et al., 2014, p.78). Of the total student population of just over 880,470 students in Colorado, almost a third of these students or 294,435, identify as Latino/Hispanic. Hispanic students make up the second largest group of students in Colorado and one of the lowest performing student groups in Colorado (Colorado Department of Education, 2015a).

### **Data Collection Methodology and Procedure**

Data collection and methodology are discussed in this section of the study. Appendix F is a Research Design Map, entitled "My Dissertation Journey" (Jennings, 2014) adapted and designed as a roadmap for this research project. Guiding each step of the process, this map was outlined and refined prior to conducting any research. It provided for the research team, a home



base to check and recheck benchmarks as the research and writing process continued, oftentimes refining the process and identifying more effective terminology within the dissertation. From the initial design of the dissertation title to creating a professional development opportunity for educators, this map was a critical element for the success of this study.

The main data collection procedures include three focus group interviews with a range of 5-10 participants each and three face-to-face participant interviews who were selected from the focus group participants. The data collection process garnered in-depth information with the assistance of recording devices and a note taker. The research assistant is a college student. She was trained through the university human subjects training, CITI and through a “focus group training session” (Table 8) conducted by myself. Working with a research assistant was an important part of the research process and allowed me the ability to focus time and attention on the participants without having to take notes. The overall instrument protocol included the following; a bilingual Participant Nomination Form (Appendix B); a bilingual Script for Participant Recruitment, used to introduce me and the research (Appendix C); a bilingual Informational Script used to welcome participants at the beginning of each focus group (below); and a short bilingual demographic survey (Appendix D), used to gather basic demographic data before each focus groups began.

### **Participant Selection**

The IRB process included a thorough description of the types of interviews that would be conducted of CLD participants, how the data would be collected and used. Much time was spent in the winter of 2015 ensuring the interview protocol was clear and all the documents needed for the bilingual interviews were translated into Spanish. Additionally, in the fall of 2015,

permission to conduct research with CLD parents was given to me by the school district in Northern Colorado.

Criterion sampling was used to select the participants. In qualitative studies, “The criteria for selecting who and what to study..., are based on gaining some perspective on chronological time in the social life of the group, people representative of the culture-sharing group in terms of demographics” (Creswell, 2013, p. 129). Participants were chosen by collaborating with community advocates and parent-engagement programs within School District A. For example, the English Language Acquisition program of School District A is a federal program funded by the Colorado Department of Education and it offers educational support to children and families across the state whose home language is identified as “Other than English.” By requesting permission to conduct research through School District A’s department of research and assessment, I secured a partnership with the English Language Acquisition (ELA) program.

This partnership was possible due to several factors, one of which included several years of collaboration between me, the community of Northern Colorado, and School District A’s parent-engagement programs within the school district. For example, in 2010, I designed a Parent Leadership Institute and trained several school district teams that worked directly with culturally and linguistically diverse parents. The ELA Parent Liaison team is the “parent support side” of a school district’s ELA program and at that time, each ELA Parent Liaison attended the Parent Leadership Institute. I also trained several Parent Liaisons who work with the Integrated Services department, the Early Childhood department, and the McKinney/Vento department. Additionally, I supervised and evaluated the ELA Parent Liaison team throughout the 2008-2012 academic years. Through these trainings, Parent Liaisons began conducting several parent groups throughout the school district offering monolingual Spanish speaking parents, migrant parents

and parents of students with disabilities an avenue for learning and growing in the areas of technology, school systems and supporting their children. Additionally, I routinely collaborated with community advocates to support Latino families in Northern Colorado. Such collaborations included partnerships with area mobile home parks, university and community partnerships. These relationships, built on respect and trust, allowed for the creation of strong research collaboration.

Participants satisfied these following criteria:

1. Parents/grandparents or guardians of School District A children
2. Parents/grandparents who speak a language other than English in the home
3. Children/grandchildren attend or have attended a school in School District A
4. Children identify as born in the United States with Latino heritage and/or identify as Latino or Hispanic/American

Participants may have additional criteria that were preferable but not required:

5. Children speak Spanish at home and English at school
6. Migrant/farming background

The criteria were unbalanced among the parents/families, and families who met most the criteria were selected. These differences were addressed by offering focus group experiences based on participant criteria. For example, if a participant was mono-lingual Spanish-speaking, they were invited to attend the Spanish only focus group. This allowed the participants to communicate their varied experiences and background in a safe, inclusive environment.

Additionally, this selection criterion is readily available to confirm through the computerized program in the school system. In the end, this step was not needed as all participants who were

interviewed were also nominated by myself (a school-district employee) or by a school district liaison who directly supports their children in school.

The selection process used to identify 31 participants required me to attend a school/community meeting within School District A to introduce the research questions and to obtain nominations from community liaisons. Thirty-one adult participants were nominated and invited to attend one of three focus groups in the spring of 2016. Focus Group #1 was conducted in Spanish and all participants were female. Focus group #2 was conducted in English and all participants were female. Focus Group #3 was conducted bilingually in English and Spanish and participants were male and female. I made a personal phone call to each nominated participant who met the criteria to determine their level of commitment and to finalize the selection process. Of the total 31 participants invited to attend a focus group, 23 participants attended.

Each participant agreed to attend a 60-90-minute focus group session at a public location with the research team. At the focus group sessions, all participants were asked if they were interested in participating in an individual interview. From these focus groups, four participants agreed to attend an individual interview at a public location for a one-hour, follow-up, face-to-face interview in late spring of 2016. The four individual participants were selected based on their personal request to participate. To clarify, after each focus group, individual participants made a personal request to participate in one of the individual interviews. By collaborating with School District A's Parent Liaison team and community advocates, I could access parents/guardians within the community who not only met the criteria, but who were genuinely interested in participating in the study, ensuring a more committed group of participants.

## **Participants and Setting**

Table 6 includes the data profiles collected through the demographic surveys. Of notable importance is that of the 23 participants, 11 were monolingual Spanish speakers, 5 were monolingual English speaking and 7 were multilingual Spanish/English speaking with 2 participants speaking an additional language, French. 14 participants were born in a country other than the United States (Mexico, Dominican Republic) and 9 participants were born in the United States (CO, WY, TX). Of the total participants, six were male, 17 were female and the average age is 42 years. 73% of all participants reported living in a married or co-habitant household. 53% reported living in a house and 47% reported living in an apartment or a mobile home. Specific to the children who live in the home, all 23 participants reported having a child in a secondary school (middle or high school) with 18 individual children graduating from high school and many still in a K-12 school with the dream of graduating and going on to a college or a career. Of the total number of potential high school graduates, several participants reported the difficulty their children had in high school and their decision-making process for transferring their children from their home high school to a charter school or alternative school. These specific examples can be found in the themed section in this chapter. In Table 6, the information highlighted in yellow includes those four participants who joined in the follow up individual interviews.

Table 6  
Focus Group Participant Profiles

Age	Gender	Languages spoken	Birth Place	Living Situation	Ages of children who live in home	# of children who have graduated from high school	Partner status
51	F	Spanish	Mexico	Own home	14 to 21	3	Married
41	F	Spanish	Mexico	Mobile home	0 to 9 10 to 13	NA	Co-habitant
43	F	Spanish	Mexico	Mobile Home	0 to 9 10 to 13 14 to 21	NA	Divorced
47	F	Spanish	Mexico	House	0 to 9 10 to 13 14 to 21	1	Married
34	F	Spanish	Mexico	Mobile Home	0 to 9 10-13	0	Married
34	F	Spanish	Mexico	Mobile Home	0 to 9 10 to 13 14 to 21	1	Married
32	F	English Spanish	Mexico	Mobile Home	0 to 9 10 to 13	0	NA
36	F	Spanish	Mexico	Apartment	10 to 13 14 to 21	NA	NA
37	F	Spanish	Mexico	Apartment	10 to 13 14 to 21		Married
49	F	Spanish	Mexico	Apartment	10 to 13 14 to 21	3	Married
38	F	English	CA	Own House	0 to 9 10 to 13	1	Married
44	F	English	CO	Own House	10 to 13 14 to 21	None yet	Single
37	F	English Spanish	Mexico	Mobile Home	0 to 9 10 to 13 14 to 21	1	Divorced
43	M	English Spanish	CO	House	10-13	1	Married
47	M	English	CO	House	10 to 13 14 to 21	4	Married
38	M	English	CO	House	10 to 13	NA	Married
33	M	English, Spanish	WY	House	0 to 9 10 to 13 14 to 21	NA	Married
44	M	English, Spanish French	TX	House	10 to 13 14 to 21	None yet	Married
44	F	English Spanish	TX	House	10 to 13 14 to 21	None yet	Married
50	F	Spanish	Mexico	Mobile Home	14 to 21	2	Married
52	M	Spanish	Mexico	Mobile Home	14 to 21	2	Married
55	F	Spanish English French	Dominican Republic	House	14-21	Attends Charter School	Married
44	F	English	CO	Own House	14 to 21	1	Divorced

## **Research Team Training Session**

The research team consisted of two people: a primary researcher and a research assistant. I conducted the study and moderated each interview. The research assistant oversaw assisting with coordinating the facilities, equipment and scripting non-verbal communication during focus groups and interviews. I was also in charge of interpreting the questions and responses from English to Spanish during Focus Group #3. Krueger and King (1998) stated the performance of the research team increases significantly if the team is trained experientially. Since the research team included a young adult (the research assistant) with no experience moderating focus groups, it was imperative she felt comfortable in her role prior to the first focus group. This was done by designing a focus group session that allowed the research team to participate in an experientially-based focused group training session conducted in February 2016 at a public location. This practice session provided for the research team, a time and place to practice the steps necessary to conduct a focus group successfully, to become familiar with the equipment that would be used during each focus group, to become familiar with one another as a team, and to refine the focus group protocol. This was an important part of the study because it standardized the process for the data collection and ensured the research team held the same goals in how the data would be gathered. Krueger and King's (1998) training format was adapted by the research team and included the following items that more closely aligned with the research equipment and needs of this study.

Table 7  
Focus Group Training Session

<b>TIME ALLOTTED</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>
15 minutes	Welcome and Purpose of the study
30 minutes	Description of a generic focus group and how it works a. Observe a focus group in process – video
One Hour	Go over specific expectations of research team a. Research assistant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice operating equipment</li> <li>• Practice scripting on Word document</li> <li>• Non-verbal communication exercise</li> </ul> b. Researcher/Translator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate all questions prior to focus group/interview</li> <li>• Practice moderating using non-biased language</li> <li>• Practice translating with the research assistant</li> </ul>
One Hour	Practice a. Research team practices their roles during a practice focus group b. Research team process and wrap up

The Focus Group Training Session was conducted in February 2016 and allowed ample time for the research team to practice working together. At this session, the research assistant was trained on how to set up the technology, where the snacks and paperwork would be located, and how the tables and chairs would be set up. The research assistant took photos of the set up to remind herself how the room was set up to replicate it when each focus group was conducted. The research assistant went through a mock scripting session with me as I called potential participants to schedule them to attend a focus group. The research assistant took notes on non-verbal motions and inflection of voice. The research team went over each of the questions in both English and in Spanish, practicing pronunciation and pacing.

During the actual focus group, the research assistant was introduced to the participants as a trained researcher and college student. Her role was described and clarified. During each focus group, the research assistant scripted her notes and observations on a word document. The



research assistant took great pride in scripting nonverbal communication, personal observations and personal reflections. Excerpts of these reflections can be found in the Researcher Perspective in chapter five.

### **Focus Groups**

In December of 2015 and after securing IRB permission, I reached out to the director of the English Language Acquisition program at School District A to talk about the process for selecting participants for the focus groups and individual interviews. Through our conversations, we agreed I should work directly with the supervisor for the Parent Liaison program and set up a time to present at one of their monthly meetings. After speaking with the Parent Liaison Supervisor, a date in January 2016 was scheduled and I presented my research to this team and requested their support for participant nominations. I sent a flyer in English and Spanish describing the purpose of the study prior to the meeting, along with a bilingual recommendation form for them to nominate participants. More than 15 Parent Liaisons and two supervisors attended this presentation, each of them bilingual and bi-cultural and worked directly with culturally and linguistically diverse parents throughout PreK-12 schools in School District A. They each introduced themselves and I explained my research to the group. Each parent liaison was given a packet that included copies of the bilingual flyer and bilingual nomination forms. They asked clarifying questions that centered on the availability of child care and location. The focus groups were to be scheduled at an area middle school and potential dates and times were given to the parent liaisons.

Within one week, parent liaisons contacted me and to nominated a total of 18 parent nomination forms from monolingual Spanish-speaking parents. Nomination forms for the first focus group came from the following: 12 participant nominations from middle schools, two from

high schools and four nominations came from elementary schools. All participants in Focus Group #1 were mono-lingual Spanish-speaking or slightly bilingual Spanish/English, all women and all born in a country other than the United States. The age group for these women ranged from 32 years of age to 51 years of age. Of the 18 original participants nominated and invited to attend a focus group, 10 attended.

For the second focus group, I nominated six bilingual Spanish/English speaking CLD participants whom I knew from working in the school system. Following is the demographic breakdown: Five participants have children in both middle schools and high schools and one participant had one high school student who currently attends a private school. Three of the participants were born and raised in the United States, and three were born and raised in a country outside of the United States. Of the six participants, one was fluent in three languages (English/Spanish/French), two were fluent in two languages (English/Spanish) and three were monolingual English speaking. All the participants in Focus Group #2 were women and their ages ranged from 40-55. Of the six participants who were nominated, four attended focus group #2.

For the third focus group, I nominated eight participants and all eight participants accepted and attended. This focus group was intended to incorporate the perspective of the father since focus groups one and two were all female. Of the eight participants, six were male and two were female. There were four males and two couples that made up this CO-ED, bilingual focus group. Of the eight participants, all participants had children in middle school, high school or who had graduated from high school. The total number of participants invited to attend three focus groups was 31 and 23 participants attended one of the three focus groups. See Table 6 in chapter four for a detailed description of the focus group demographic data.

Each focus group was conducted at an area middle school located in the heart of the city. This was done so that families who were travelling from anywhere in the city, could easily find the school and not have to drive too far away from their homes. All parents had allowed me to text them directions to the school location via their cell number and all participants had their own transportation. Focus Group #1 was the only group that requested childcare and childcare was made available for this group only. The focus groups were conducted in the media center, central to the building. This area was quiet and had enough seating and space to set up for snacks, paperwork, and for the participants to sit in a semi-circle with a table in front of them. I sent a personal email request to several area schools requesting the use of their building to conduct the focus groups. Of the 17 schools that received a request, seven schools responded (two high schools, three middle schools, and two elementary schools) offering their building for this research. The original email can be seen in the Appendix. G.

The focus group questions were vetted to three colleagues who are parents and/or educators to see if the responses would be of value to the educator. One educator suggested I have the questions available for the parents to read during the actual focus group. This idea was employed after the first focus group seemed to have difficulty staying focused on the question at hand. The focus groups that followed ran much more smoothly since they had the questions and they seemed more prepared with their answers. It sped up the focus group process in focus groups two and three because some of the participants in these groups knew what the additional questions were. This was not the case with the first focus group. This group's flow was very informal, participants asked questions of each other and gave each other feedback and information and lasted almost the entire: 90 minutes. I believe not having the questions during this group allowed for more of a flow of questions and answers back and forth from facilitator

and participants. I also believe this group had a common “immigrant” connection and for most of them, for the first time, found themselves with a group of people who had the same social and educational concerns.

### **Focus Group Protocol**

On the day of the focus group interview, the research team arrived one hour prior to participants arriving to set up the table, chairs, snacks, technology, paperwork, and sound check. The research assistant assigned each participant a number at the table and ensured that she sat in a neutral location that allowed her sight and sound of all participants. I waited at the front door of the building to ensure that participants were welcomed personally and felt comfortable from the very beginning. As participants entered the interview location, they were asked to sit at any seat of their choice. Designed to allow the research assistant to identify the participant speaking at any time during the interview, these seats corresponded with the number given to that chair by the research assistant. The research assistant used that number to identify each participant accurately and recorded observational data throughout the interview.

As participants arrived, they were welcomed and the research assistant offered them something to eat and drink before they were seated. Participants sat in a semi-circle facing the front of the room and toward the audio and video recorder. I introduced myself and the research assistant, thanked them for attending, and explained our roles to the participants. I explained to the participants that the research assistant taking notes would be observing non-verbal communication during each session and gathering this data. I went over the Consent Form with each participant verbally and explained the use of the audio/video recorder. Their right to confidentiality was addressed as well. Each participant was asked to keep the information

expressed in this focus group by other participants confidential and participants were reminded they should share to their level of comfort.

Once participants were seated, I read aloud the following script and participants were told they could stop the interview at any time during the process if they felt uncomfortable with the questions. Following is the Introduction Script used during the introduction at each focus group.

*Thank you for agreeing to talk with us today about your family and your life experiences. The purpose of this focus group/interview is to listen to your family experiences and learn from you about what we call your “funds of knowledge”. The “concept of funds of knowledge, is based on a simple premise: People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge” (Gonzalez et al., 2005). By learning about your family’s strengths, educators may be better able to understand culturally and linguistically diverse families and engage your children at higher levels in the classroom. You were selected because a parent liaison or a community advocate nominated you, you are culturally and linguistically diverse and you have much to offer all educators.*

*The information you share with us today will be written into a dissertation and shared with educators and researchers. It will be used for educational research purposes through Colorado State University and presented at national conferences. Your name, address or any identifiable information will not be used. Your names, your children’s names and the schools that they attend will be changed and pseudonyms will be given to each of you. There are no wrong answers, just different points of view. You do not need to agree with others, but please be respectful of other participants and their opinions and experiences.*

*This focus group will be audio-recorded. The research assistant will be taking notes on non-verbal communication and interpreting as needed. My role as the moderator of the focus group will be to guide the discussion. Please talk with each other as you share your experiences. Please turn off your cell phones during the session and if you must take a call, please take it in the hallway and return to the group as quickly as possible. If at any time, you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions or if you want to stop the interview, you may do so. Do you understand the purpose of the study? Do you have any questions? Do I have your permission to continue with this focus group/interview?*

A bilingual demographic survey was given to each participant at the beginning of the focus group. It was explained that this questionnaire was being given to gather demographic data and the actual focus group session would begin after the surveys were completed and the Consent Forms were signed. The research team checked for understanding as the participants completed the written survey by walking around the room. This strategy informed the focus

group process significantly as participants wrote down their information on the Demographic Survey and were confused by a Spanish word. One participant asked the question, “Do you want to know if our children have finished middle school or high school?” I answered with high school and asked them which word was confusing. She replied that in the Spanish version of the demographic survey, the word “secundaria” was used to describe high school. The participants made it clear to me that they use the word “prepa” for high school and “secundaria” for middle school. This important clarification allowed participants to fully understand the question and give clear data as to how many of their children have graduated from high school, not middle school. The demographic survey can be found as Appendix E.

I created the focus group protocol to use as a guide during each of the focus groups for consistency. The questions used in each focus group are included in this section. Before each focus group, the audio-recorders were tested and the date and time was recorded. Each focus group was scheduled for a total of two hours per session and each individual interview was scheduled for a one-hour session. Even though each focus group was scheduled for two-hours, the actual focus group typically lasted for 60-90 minutes. Extra time was given to allow for any unexpected technology difficulties or for participants arriving late or leaving early. Each focus group was audio-recorded, scripted, and I served as the bilingual interpreter to translate for bilingual participants. The research assistant was asked to keep a research journal and write her experiences after each focus group. Excerpts of these journal entries can be found in the data analysis section of this paper. Likewise, I wrote in a research journal after each focus group and throughout the research process. Excerpts of these notes can also be found in the data analysis and future research section of this paper. Following are the focus group questions that were used to guide the interviews. I used an appreciative inquiry lens to write the questions. This allowed

me to promote a climate and culture of safety. This open-ended approach with broad questions focused on the participants' own experiences in schools as well as the cultural values important to them.

### **Focus Group Questions**

#### **School Experience**

1. What is the most memorable experience you had as a student in school?
2. What is the most memorable experience you have had with your child's school?

#### **Work and Family**

3. Whom are you named after?
  - a. What did/do your father do as a profession? Your mother?
4. In your opinion, what work skill(s) was most important to your parents that they wanted to pass on to their children?
5. What did you choose to do as your profession? (A "stay-at home parent" and/or family caregiver is important. All professions are important whether you choose them or they choose you.)
  - a. Where did you learn the skills for this profession?
  - b. What work skill is most important to you?
  - c. What would you prefer to be doing? Why?
6. What is the most important value that your family felt you should exhibit/show/have in your life?
  - a. How did you learn this? Examples: through stories, role models, "dichos"
  - b. How old were you when you learned this?
7. Some lessons that we choose to pass on are what we want our children *to do* or *not do*.

- a. Talk about the lessons that you chose to pass on to your children.
- b. Share as well the “what not to do” life lessons.

### **Individual Interview Protocol**

After the three focus groups were completed, four participants were selected to be part of the individual interview portion of the research. These four participants were selected by the following criteria:

1. Volunteer to allow the research team to conduct an individual interview for a period of one to two hours
2. Share their family story (how they came to the United States, work/life experience)
3. Share their beliefs about education in the United States
4. Share their hopes and dreams for their children

At the time of the focus group, participants were given a demographic survey (Appendix E) and a bilingual consent form (Appendix C) that asked them if they were interested in participating in a follow up individual interview. Most of the focus group participants agreed to participate in a follow up interview on the consent form, but there were three participants who personally approached me after the focus group or called me personally to ask if they could participate in an individual interview. Participant #1 was unable to attend FG2 due to family constraints and called me to request an individual interview. All four participants selected to participate in the individual interviews were willing to attend an additional interview outside of their work day. They also each had a personal desire to share their family stories with me in more depth in the hopes that their story would reach teachers and administrators. They each expressed their desire for their family story to make a difference in the lives of other Latino families. Each participant could select a time, date, and place that was suitable for them.



Participants agreed to meet at a public library close to their homes or at a local coffee shop. All interviews were conducted on a day that was convenient for the participant and in the evenings after they finished their workday. The couple interview was the only one conducted in Spanish. Participant demographics for both the focus groups and the individual interviews can be found in Table 6.

Each of the individual interviews represented the Latino community in differing ways. For example, two of the participants were a married couple, originally from Mexico and came to the United States in search of a better life for themselves and their children. They are both native Spanish speakers and they have raised their children in the United States as native Spanish speakers as well. All their children have graduated from high school in School District A and have or are attending college. The third participant represents the Latino community that is born and raised in the United States, who may or may not speak Spanish. Her story is one of single-motherhood, who has raised her sons with the loving support of her family. Her expectations for the schools that her children have attended have been high, as one of her children had an individual education plan (IEP). In her words, she had to “fight for his needs in elementary school”. Finally, the fourth participant represents the families in the Latino community who come from countries other than Mexico. She is remarried to a Caucasian American and has raised her child to become fluent in both Spanish and English, teaching him Spanish first. Additionally, after several years in School District A, she chose to move her child to a school outside of the district to allow him more opportunities and challenges.

Each participant was given the consent form and the demographic data survey if they had not received it during the focus group, and significant time was given at the beginning of the interview to answer any questions about the research. Each participant was welcomed with a

thank you note and had refused a gift of any kind, saying that there was no need for books or gift card for the family; sharing of their stories was gift enough. The research assistant was not present for the individual interviews and I took personal notes after each interview was completed in the privacy of my home. All participants requested to meet at a public location. I paid special attention to the personal observations, feelings or concerns, reactions to something that was said during the interview, and environmental observations.

The protocol used for the individual interview included a need for deeper understanding from families' funds of knowledge. The individual interviews were audio-recorded. By using several of the focus group questions as a guide, the individual interview instrument allowed participants to expand on their family's influence, school experience, and work expertise allowing me to gain knowledge at a deeper and richer level. During the individual interview, special attention was paid to the questions that reference family strengths. Examples of how these questions were extended during the individual interview are:

1. Tell me more about how your family influenced you.
2. What skill or value did you learn from them?
3. How have you used these values/skills in your life?
4. How have you passed them on to your children?
5. How would you like to be remembered by your children?
6. What are your hopes and dreams for your children?
7. If you could teach your child's teacher anything about your family, what would it be?

## **Procedures for Data Analysis**

After each focus group and interview was completed, I began the data organization process. The transcribed notes from each focus group and interview were gathered and transcribed by the research assistant, myself, or by a transcription company.

The transcription conventions used in this study were managed by the research assistant during each focus group. Her aim was to record the appearance of the text in the notes that reflected emotions. For example, in focus group 1 the research assistant carefully documented the emotion that the group felt while others shared very personal and intimate stories of grief and loss. Her system for doing so was to number the chairs at the table and while each participant spoke, she would note the number of the participant and the physical emotions that were displayed. Throughout each focus group, she carefully noted non-verbal communication, significant pauses from the group or a participant, and any emotion that the group displayed individually or collectively. I referred to these notes as I transcribed the video transcript or reread them for accuracy. In regard to the individual interviews, I managed the transcription. This was much easier to manage as only one or two participants were interviewed at any one time. As I transcribed the individual interviews, careful attention was given to document pauses, inflection of words or emotion. (Schegloff, 2016)

The focus group and interview conducted in Spanish went through an additional translation process prior to transcribing. This process took several weeks and once all the documents were transcribed, they were saved in a Word document. This ensured that I could organize the data corpus into data items and ultimately data extracts easily.

“Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 6). Thematic coding was used to screen the data

corpus, data item and data extracts. The data corpus refers to the entire body of data I used in analysis. A data item refers to each individual piece of data collected, which together make up the data set or corpus. For example, an individual participant interview is a data item. A data extracts refers to an individual coded chunk of data that has been identified within an extracted data item (Braun & Clark, 2006) Thematic coding involves six phases of coding: 1) familiarizing yourself with your data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report. This six-phase process offered me a road-map for analyzing and synthesizing over 460 pages of transcribed data.

During phase one (familiarizing yourself with the data), I analyzed the data corpus by “reading and re-reading” each script, highlighting important quotes and words and “noting initial ideas” in the margins. In phase two (generating initial codes), I “coded interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion” by identifying interesting data extracts throughout each transcript.

The analytic questions were:

- What were the markers of “memorable experiences” across the data set?
- What were the markers of “memorable family experiences” across the data set?
- What is the range of values expressed by participants?
- What types of “dichos/stories” could be drawn across the data set?
- What was the range of work experiences expressed by participants?
- What types of skills or values did participants share?
- What is the range of “hopes and dreams” participants have in common for their children?
- What are the most common understandings all participants wanted their child’s teacher to know?

In phase three (searching for themes), I reread each transcript again, including the focus group transcripts. As I reread the transcripts, I circled important thoughts and ideas from each transcript. As I completed this process, I read each transcript several times and began to gather thoughts and ideas by grouping them by number. For example, if participants shared a story about their work experience, I circled it and gave it a number. Once this process was completed for each transcript, I hung poster-sized sheets of paper in my dining room and wrote the overall theme at the top of this poster paper. This process allowed me to not only gather data extracts directly into the script memo for each of the interviews but it allowed me to visualize the big ideas that cut across all the data set.

After this process was completed, the data extracts were counted by how many times it was mentioned in a script. I then gathered from each transcript the actual thoughts, quotes or important ideas from each script and color-coded them by the identified theme into a transcript memo. A memo was typed up for each transcript that included a total number of references mentioned by item for each theme. At the end of phase three, a summary memo was written up that incorporated the data from each of the six memos. A sample memo follows in Figure 5. As you will note, after each color-coded item there is a number. This number refers to the number of times an item was mentioned and identified as fitting under that sub-theme. The process of compiling subthemes under the greater theme was used throughout the development of each of the six taxonomies.

Interview #1 MEMO

Category Key	
Theme	# of Mentions
Strengths/values	48
Parent experience (educational attainment, bilingualism, work)	20
What teachers should know about us	31
Types of work experience	10
Pride in children/Hopes and Dreams	54
MISC -References to God	4

- Educational system in Mexico is not good
- Humble parents
- Humble family
- Regret not finishing school
- Stuck in poverty
- Give to my children what I didn't have
- Pride for bilingual children
- Don't forget where you come from
- Hard work
- Agricultural work
- Hopes and dreams for children
- Hard work – long hours
- Big family
- Lack of educational opportunities in Mexico
- Education in Mexico is too expensive
- Agricultural work
- Desired to do more academically
- Pride of being bilingual
- Business work
- Belief in god
- Hope
- Separation from family
- Negative view of educational system in Mexico
- Parent as role model
- Poverty
- Separation from family
- Sacrifice for children
- Pride in their children
- Perception of Mexican by the media
- Mexican educational system is poor
- Hard work
- Big family that cares for each other
- Leave school to work and help support family
- Care for younger siblings

- Missing family
- Hopes and dreams for children
- Humble family
- Miss family in Mexico
- Sugar cane work
- Violence in Mexico –brother was killed
- Associates degree attained in Mexico
- Pride in child’s accomplishments at school
- Desire to become bilingual
- Perception that immigration status will limit their child in America
- Poor Mexican educational system
- Bilingual child
- Hopes and dreams for child
- Pride in child
- Parents have minimal education
- Masonry work
- High educational attainment in Mexico
- Desire to become bilingual
- Separated from family system in Mexico
- Children are bilingual
- Drug trafficking in Mexico
- Bilingualism is a strength – do not lose your language
- Long work hours make it difficult to learn English
- It is a priority to raise the children to ensure language and culture are not lost
- Importance of speaking Spanish at home
- Strong parental belief that children cannot learn Spanish at school - they must learn it at home
- Parental desire to learn English as children get older
- Big family
- Work experience and knowledge is valued by employer
- Parents as educators
- Field work was what parent had to do even though she had a degree from Mexico
- Parents teach by using life lessons
- Pride in culture
- Belief in god
- Violence in marriage led to divorce
- Strength as a single parent
- Belief in god
- Big family
- Teach through sayings (ex. Think before acting)
- Value of education
- Family comes first
- Many reasons to stay in US even though family is missed, homesick
- Strength of the father

- Bilingual child
- God reference
- Pride in child's accomplishments
- Parental work including cleaning offices even though she had a degree
- Long hours of work
- Father is a good provider and father even though he is gone a lot (2 or 3 jobs)
- Communication with parents – look at the internet or school website
- Welding work
- Belief that you cannot go to college if you are undocumented
- Pride for child
- Learning English is important
- Resource sharing is needed
- Spanish only rule at home
- Children who are American born do not want to move to Mexico
- Sacrifice
- Hopes and dreams
- Belief that college is not an option – you will go
- Bilingual parent communicates with more people than wife
- Child's expectation of parents learning English
- How parent who is monolingual Spanish speaking is treated by child's peers
- Perseverance
- Nursing degree and background in Mexico
- Medical vocabulary is familiar
- Electrician
- Policeman
- Do not learn English because even our bosses speak Spanish with us
- Hopes and dreams for children
- Children graduated from high school – pride in children
- Reference to god – thanks to god
- Spanish only at home
- Big family
- Belief in god
- Children are the priority
- Field work
- Restaurant work
- Fear of losing language or culture
- Pride in language and culture
- Continue Spanish in the home so that family can communicate in one common language
- Children who are US born rebel
- Parents are the teachers
- Teachers teach English, parents teach language and culture
- Separation from family support system
- Came to US to learn and be strong
- Hopes and dreams for children



- Desire to meet together as a parent group
- Sacrifice
- College prep program – LDZ
- Active in seeking resources
- Resource sharing
- Poverty
- Hopes and dreams for children
- Sacrifice basic needs to give children opportunities (food, shelter)
- Sadness – missing home and family – cannot go back for funerals, etc.
- Strength of the family unit – when you are separated from this it is difficult because you are on your own with limited resources and ways to communicate
- Parents need to know resources
- Perseverance
- Parental engagement is important
- Perseverance
- Ingenuity in making money
- Hard work
- Belief that you can succeed
- He who is a parrot is green wherever he goes – hard work = success
- Money cannot buy intelligence and perseverance
- Family unity
- Latino warmth
- Unity
- Hard work
- Caring for others
- Honest
- Trustworthiness
- Modesty
- Good character
- Remembering who you are – don't forget your roots (this is hard for American born children)
- Perseverance
- Hard work
- Hope
- Remember those who help you
- Give back to others
- Everything has a solution except death – hope
- Honest
- Clean conscience
- Strength of the father
- Humble
- Strength through adversity
- Children learn from parents – “be aware of the path you take because right behind you come your children”

- Advice for educators (seen 5 times)
- Personal triumph
- School/community based programs
  - Parenting Partners
  - LDZ – College and Career program at CSU for Latino students
  - English classes for parents where they practice speaking routinely

Figure 5: Thematic Coding Memo Example (Focus Group #1)

In phase four (reviewing themes), I developed several thematic “taxonomy maps” (Spradley, 1980) to visually identify the themes and their sub-themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). Figure 6 shows an example of how I took the coded data from all six transcripts, counted them and created a visual example of how the participants’ family stories related to the overall theme of Family Strengths and Assets. The taxonomies for themes are present at the beginning of each theme in Findings Section of chapter 4.

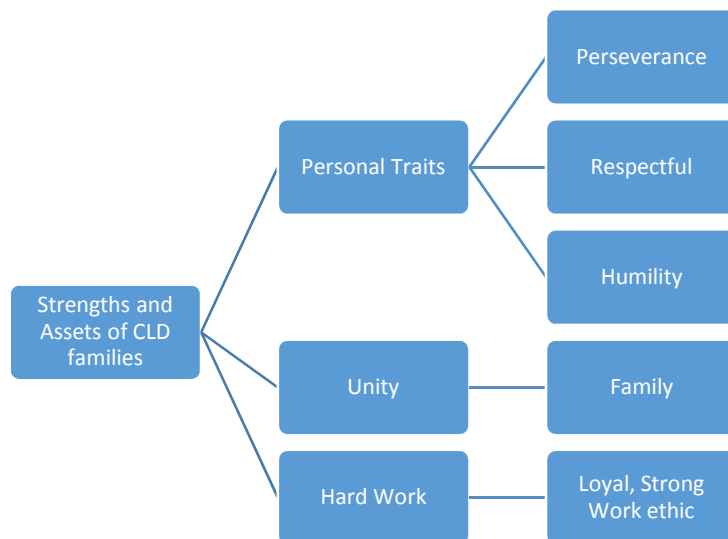


Figure 6: Example of “Family Strengths and Assets” Taxonomy

Phase five (defining and naming themes) allowed me to understand the system I needed to create to refine the details of each theme, synthesize the stories and determine clear definitions and names for each theme (Braun & Clark, 2006). It was during this phase I reported the initial analysis to three participants as well as the research assistant to ensure trustworthiness for my

research and to assist in the refining of the theme names and definitions. This is a critical step of the qualitative process because it further validates the findings and strengthens the co-construction of knowledge between me and the participants. In the sixth and final phase of thematic coding (producing the report), I “extracted vivid, compelling examples” of the analyzed data to “relate my findings back to the research question and literature to produce a scholarly report of the analysis” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 23).

As a part of the sixth phase, this study proposes the development of a professional development opportunity to address for educators, strategies for positively engaging CLD families. Chapter 5 addresses the format for this professional development opportunity and makes the case for further research areas. This section is based on the themed data received from participants in the “Strengths/Assets (funds of knowledge) of CLD families” and “Advice for Educators”. By sharing strategies from CLD family’s funds of knowledge research, educators across the state will not only gain the skills necessary to understand the assets and background knowledge CLD students bring to the classroom, but they will learn why it is so important to break down their own biases to have increased parent engagement.

This professional development opportunity will provide educators a firsthand look at what CLD families believe are their assets and strengths, their dreams for their child’s future and their advice for their child’s teacher. This educator training will ask teachers to address the following:

- 1) How does this information inform my teaching practice?
- 2) How does this information support my understanding of a CLD family’s funds of knowledge?

- 3) How does this information support my capacity to cultivate rapport with CLD families?
- 4) How does this information support my work toward positively engaging CLD students in my school?

This information will help to break down the self-made barriers teachers face as they struggle to understand culturally relevant teaching practices. It will support an educator's work of "looking in the mirror" instead of "looking out the window" when contemplating their educational practices with CLD students. A sample abstract for the presentation of this professional development opportunity can be found in Appendix E.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a critical step during data analysis. It was during the fifth phase of thematic coding in which I reported the initial analysis to three participants as well as the research assistant and received important feedback. Lincoln & Guba posit that member checking, when data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions are tested with members of those groups from whom the data were originally obtained is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility (1985). The three participants reviewed the themes for accuracy and gave me feedback that verified the themes were valid and trustworthy.

Additionally, the research assistant, who attended all three focus groups, made vivid for me the differences between focus group participants in their hopes and dreams for their children. The research assistant's feedback was more consistent with peer debriefing in what Lincoln & Guba (1985) define as;

It is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session(s) and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind. (p. 308)

While my peer debrief person was the research assistant and very much interested in the research, her feedback gave me information that helped me to explore different aspect of the inquiry that I may have otherwise omitted. For example, she remembered several participants talked about their faith in ways that were important to them. Even though these comments throughout the data did reach high levels, they were significant and I ultimately added this information in the findings.

Trust and rapport are important aspects of trustworthiness and quality criteria for qualitative research. While a participant who identifies as an immigrant, Latino parent may define the protection of their “language and culture” as the major hope and dream for their children, a first-generation, American-born Latino parent may define “the ability to attend college or have a career” as their greatest hope for their child. CLD participants overwhelmingly responded with thanks for including them in this process and offered to be included in any professional development for educators. This step ensured trustworthiness for my research and assisted in the refining of the theme names and their definitions. It further validated the findings and strengthened the co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

## **CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

I utilized a constructivist approach to describe the funds of knowledge of culturally and linguistically diverse parents of Latino students, knowledge that could inform an assets-based approach to education of Latino students in School District A and beyond. This research goal was achieved by interviewing 23 CLD participants in the spring of 2016 via three bilingual focus groups and four bilingual individual interviews.

This chapter will address research question 1 and its sub questions: What do participating CLD parents indicate are funds of knowledge in their communities? How are these funds of knowledge evident from the data gathered from focus group interviews and participant interviews? What themes are represented across participant's descriptions of local funds of knowledge? In Chapter Five, I address Research Question 2: How can I use these themes to design a professional development opportunity for educators/educational administrators?

### **Participant Profiles**

Focus group one participants were monolingual Spanish speaking, mostly undocumented, mothers who have immigrated here from another country. Members of this group emphasized family cultural and linguistic strengths and the opportunities of a quality education. One participant captured the statements of many in this group when she said “the teacher teaches them about academics but we teach them about our language and culture, the school doesn't know how to do that.”

The participants in focus groups two and three were mostly United States born, English speaking, high school graduates and first generation college graduates. The themes of family

cultural and linguistic strengths also came through strong and revolved around the notion of family unity. These groups spoke mostly about their struggles with being seen by community members as “different” for their language, skin color and ethnicity – but their strength of unity seemed to assist them to graduate high school and go to college. Many of these participants spoke about a coach, teacher or administrator who “was there for them,” who supported them, who saw something in them that supported them in finishing high school or going to college. It was evident in this research that CLD participants, regardless of immigrant or language status, talked about their tendency to lean on each other to persevere and overcome barriers.

### **Thematic Analysis**

I examined the transcripts of the three focus groups and three individual interviews to better understand how participating parents and guardians described local funds of knowledge. A thematic analysis resulted in the construction of four themes with qualitatively high reference numbers throughout all six interviews. Table 8 below shows the identified themes, the number of references per interview, and the total combined references per them: Parent Experiences (Personal/Work), Family Strengths/Assets, What Teachers Should Know, and Hopes and Dreams for Our Children. Each of these themes had references that numbered from 90-125 throughout all six interviews. Although this is an important fact, it is not what was used to determine significance within the data. I will be examining each theme in depth to better examine the significance and interactions of the knowledge and perspectives shared by the participants. It is important to note that these are not themes of “cultural funds of knowledge,” but themes that relate to participant discussions of their own cultural experiences. It is important to remember each theme is made up of coded categories that are related and work together to articulate the theme. I will examine each theme in depth.

Table 8  
Thematic Coding

<b>Identified Themes and Number of Data Items</b>							
<b>IDENTIFIED THEMES</b>	<b>FG1</b>	<b>FG2</b>	<b>FG3</b>	<b>Interview 1</b>	<b>Interview 2</b>	<b>Interview 3</b>	<b>Combined</b>
Parent Experiences	30	19	17	19	8	10	103
Strengths and Assets of CLD Families	48	24	7	7	16	23	125
What Teachers Should Know	31	15	10	9	6	22	93
Hopes and Dreams for our Children	54	9	9	4	9	5	90

Total data items identified = 411

### **Identified Themes**

#### **Theme 1: Parent Experiences**

Latino parents who immigrated to the U.S. and were born in the U.S. readily shared about their jobs and personal experiences related to education. Many stories echoed the charge of the oldest child who attended school if he/she could until the family needs were so great that leaving school to go to work was the only option. Others struggled to earn a high school diploma or a bachelor's degree as single parents, sometimes with little to no financial support. In general, these CLD parents sacrificed greatly throughout their lives to provide educational opportunities for their children. Participants shared poignant stories of their families working long hours in dangerous mines in Mexico and some in the not so dangerous, but equally isolating streets of the United States. Each struggle had a purpose: they taught their children how to persevere and how to maintain family unity by making their language and culture a priority. According to the participants, these struggles have taught their children to remain humble and to respect their elders. It has taught their children that together, they are stronger. Figure 7, the Parent



Experience Taxonomy shows us the two main thematic categories that were identified through focus group and individual interviews, becoming bilingual and work and education.

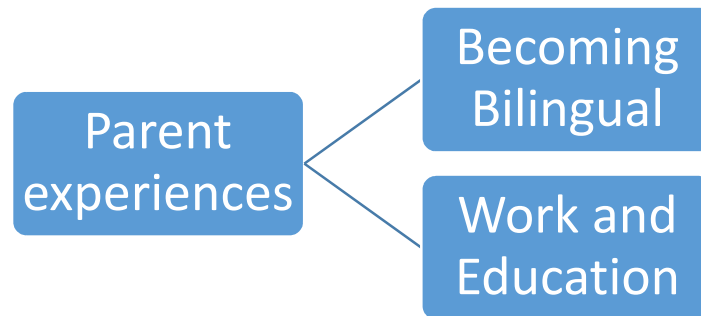


Figure 7: Parent Experiences Taxonomy

### **Becoming Bilingual**

Participants in general valued bilingualism. Many of the parents across several groups spoke about the “free English classes that are offered throughout the community” and referenced their wish for more convenient class times and offerings closer to their homes. Participants imparted their gratitude for the few free English classes offered by community-based programs for adults. Participants said that it provides support for many people who come from other countries who want to learn English. Participants said that the classes are basic English classes and that it would be beneficial to offer classes that were also geared toward speaking everyday English in schools, hospitals, stores, and businesses. Some participants mentioned they do not frequent certain businesses and often do not go to a location without a relative—often their children—to help with interpretation.

Other parent support programs that focused on “personal triumph” were also acknowledged as important. For example, participant eight in focus group three left the focus group early to teach a parent leadership class for monolingual Spanish-speaking Latino families across town at his church. Likewise, participants in focus group one emphasized being able to attend parent leadership groups that offer a culture of safety and familiarity. Participants spoke in

general about community based programs that offered English classes at local churches and elementary schools. These programs offered a safe environment for Spanish-speaking adults to use their native language freely, sharing their feelings of homesickness, love for their family, and their country while they learned how to read and write in English.

### **Work and Family**

Parental work and personal experiences described by all participants show their children why it is important for them to get a quality education. Table 9 shows us the many jobs and careers the 23 participants and their families have had and/or currently hold today. The key points of this table include the fact that the jobs were categorized by level of education and or training attained to be hired for a position. Several of the professional jobs required a bachelor's degree or higher or a certification of some kind. Many of the jobs in trade or agriculture required a high level of experience in that field, while other positions required a level of knowledge that could only be attained by careful studying others. For example, a homemaker or seamstress requires a person to devote a significant amount of time learning the trade. This is often attained in the home, with family members or learning from a mentor or close friend. Many participants believed if their child earned a quality education, the child would not have to work "as hard" as they did. One participant from focus group one shared her story of working in the United States; even though she had a degree in Mexico, because she was not fluent in English she could only acquire hard, manual labor positions.

It's true that it's a sacrifice for many, or almost all that came... mothers who come from work, from looking after children, cleaning houses and doing everything. Me, here? I come from work, then I go to another job. And when I feel tired and am dragging my feet, I ask myself, "What am I doing here? Then I remember why I am here. I don't want my daughters to live like I do. And it is not that I want my daughters to work less, maybe they will work equally as hard, but the quality of like they will have will be totally different. And that is when I recharge my batteries and say to myself, "that is the reason why I am here."

throughout the interviews talked about how they work hard to show their children that choosing an educational path could prevent their future from looking like the hard work of their parents. They shared stories of hope, encouragement and perseverance. Gabriella of focus group one said, “Right now my children sleep on the floor. I tell my daughter that I have come here and gone through very ugly situations, many hardships...even to ask; What will I feed my children today? This is why I tell my daughter how important it is for her to study. I tell her that she needs to put in 200% effort, even more than other girls.”

Table 9  
Types of Work Experience

<b>TYPES OF JOBS HELD BY CLD PARENTS/GUARDIANS</b>			
<b>Degreed/Managerial</b>	<b>Trade</b>	<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>Homemaker</b>
Business Owner	Construction	Field work	Teach language at home
Educator	Seamstress	Farming	Teach culture
Judicial system	Electrician	Mining	Teach family expectations
Police Officer	Barber		Care for the children
Supervisor	Coach		
Translator/Interpreter	House cleaning		

It is important to note of all the types of jobs held by CLD parents/guardians, most CLD families born in another country held trade jobs here in the United States, even if they held degrees in education or nursing from other countries. Additionally, the degreed positions listed above were currently held by participants who were either bilingual or English speaking and born in the U.S. Of all the trade positions listed above, men held most these positions and were most likely the sole breadwinner in the home. The agricultural positions listed above were more likely to be held by participants when they were young children, parents, or grandparents currently, or jobs participants held when they were recent immigrants to the United States. Of the homemaking positions, these jobs were the sole responsibility of the mother, grandmother and

aunts in the home or among the family unit. Sometimes, families would send their child to live with a family member in another town for them to attend school. Mya and Humberto shared their story:

Humberto: I had many brothers who still lived in the ranch, so when one of the nephews, or my cousins would get sick or if they needed medical attention or had an accident, my mother would be the one who would take care of them.

Mya: “Or to study, in the town where they lived, was out in the country, when the cousins would go to study in middle school, they would go into town.”

Researcher: “So, the family that lived in town...”

Mya: “They would help them?”

Humberto: “It was my family...Sometimes there would be 10 or 12 people in my house.”

Mya: You know, kids, children, young people for school. So, my mother in law with a million ways, she would do it to make tortillas and food for so many children for school. All the time she saw that it didn't matter if they were there because it was for them to study. Who cares if they had to sleep on the floor, they found ways to accommodate themselves but she had all here nephews there so that they could go to school.

Families entrusted each other to teach their children about their language and culture. They worked together toward a common goal and used their resources efficiently and effectively.

Several participants talked about their educational and work experiences, but one story was most compelling. Humberto chronicled his vivid story about how he lived on a farm and how he tried for several years to be accepted into a safe and quality high school. The barriers inevitably drove him and his wife to leave his family, his home country and his beloved farm life for a better life in the United States is clearly described.

In that time, no one knew anything about phones, there were no telephones, we did have electricity...we had running water, but it was not potable...so I [was] seven-years-old when I started to help my mom get water to drink and to wash the dishes for our food, I walked about 3 kilometers there and back, it was about a mile to get there and a mile to come back. I did this for about five years, carrying water every day, every day - one or two days per day, when I was in school the classes were divided into two turns, we would go in around 9:00 in the morning.

A person had to do a test, aptitude, an exam, to see if you were ready to go to high school – you had to have a high percentage to be accepted, but if you don't have help or if you don't have money - even if you have great grades... there are people who have lower grades and they would be accepted. Because they have money or because they know someone... I wanted to get into a school of technology – technology meaning a school of electricity, carpentry, mechanics – all the types like that – so then I couldn't get in, so then I applied for the normal school to become a teacher, I didn't like that too much but I thought, I have to do something. Then I applied for another one for physical education – teacher of physical education, as well I did the tests, and I didn't pass them either – or I passed them but they didn't accept them. So, then for all the students or all the students that couldn't get into a school, they opened a new school – a school of technology – but the plant or the school wasn't secured yet so they sent us to a primary school. So, then they didn't have laboratories, chalk boards - so it was not possible to learn the career of technology. If you don't practice, if you go to learn about electrician work with just pictures on a board, you are not going to learn. So, because of this, I left. So then I got into a different high school, so that I after I left from there I could get into a technology school that I wanted - and the same thing happened to me again – the school that I got into was a school that they were renting – two houses – two very old houses – they didn't have laboratories or talleres [laboratories] so then again everything was pictures on the chalk board so I thought, *Well, I am not going to learn anything here either* – so instead I left school and started to work.

Mya said, “He fought hard to try to get an education.” As Mya finished her thought, Humberto looked at me and smiles as he ends his story with one of opportunity in the United States, “Just last year, I finished preparatory (high school) here.”

What is most telling about Mya and Humberto's story is that his experiences with attempting to earn a college degree, albeit futile, catapulted him and his wife to leave their home country in search of a better life. They chose to leave their homes—their families—in hopes they would find academic and work opportunities that were not available to them in another country. Humberto's story is the story of so many Latino men who work long hours to provide for their families and who continue to strive for a better life.

## Theme 2: Strengths and Assets of CLD Families

The theme of Strengths and Assets of CLD Families encapsulated the notions of being bilingual, perseverance, family unity, and a strong work ethic (See Figure 8). This was evident through the coding process as this theme included a combined 125 identified references throughout all 6 interviews, the most of all four themes. As seen in Figure 8, several subthemes were found under perseverance like being respectful and being humble. Additionally, under work ethic we also found many references to loyalty and being a hard worker. These subthemes were also collected under the greater theme that corresponded with these traits.

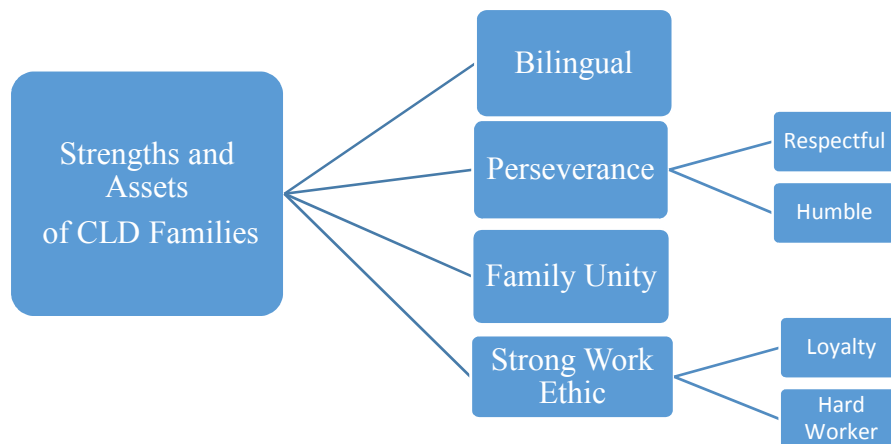


Figure 8: Strengths and Assets of CLD Families Taxonomy

### **Bilingual: English and Spanish**

In theme one, “becoming bilingual” is a subtheme that spoke to the participants’ own personal experiences of becoming bilingual. Many spoke of their love/hate relationship with “becoming bilingual” because to do this, might mean that their children may lose their ability to become bilingual themselves. Living in a country where assimilation threatens the family’s ability to comfortably become bilingual, parents often sacrifice their own English language development so that they can ensure that their children continue to speak Spanish. In theme two, being bilingual is more about how their children’s language development relates more to the

children's bilingual capacities. Being bilingual is a source of great pride for these culturally and linguistically diverse families and one that they believe is an asset to their family and children to be successful in school and in life.

The fear of losing their language or culture is very real. Take for example, Amanda from focus group 1 shared an interaction between she and her son as they talked about "becoming more American" as her English language skills were becoming more fluent.

My son comes to me and says, how is it possible? I learned English in six months...not everything of course, but at least 80%. Even the teachers are surprised. He says to me, "Mom, you should just dye your hair blonde. I'll teach you to speak English, [we] will be just like an American family. And I say to him, now listen to you...becoming racist or what? Don't forget your roots. Then he says, Okay Mom, but it wouldn't be a bad idea. I remind him, don't forget where we come from, you must always be modest.

Being bilingual is a strength and an asset and one that, in their eyes, isn't always admired by their child's peers in school or in the hallways of their schools. These family members' strong belief in their children's bilingualism not only allows them to continue to communicate with their children at home, but it also allows them to pass on their culture and values to their children as they live dual lives in the United States. Many participants talked about their pride in their children's bilingual ability and how, without it, their ability to communicate with their own children would disappear.

Gloria from focus group one also portrayed for the group how her family's journey to the United States provided opportunities to add to their cultural knowledge without losing the values and language of their origin culture.

I feel that many doors have opened for myself and my children. To begin with, my children speak a second language, considering how important English is. Of course, without ever forgetting Spanish and without forgetting our Mexican culture and our values that we have at home. And I think it's going to be better for us here; it *is* better for us here.

As group members discussed the importance of learning English, Ashtyn also made it clear to the group how she and her husband have made a rule in the home around language so that their children do not forget the Spanish language.

For my children, at home we speak Spanish. They step outside the home and they can speak English, but at home we speak Spanish. This is another reason why I can't advance with English. Sometimes I ask my son, "Can you tell me what it says here in English?" and he answers, "Mom, we're at home, we speak Spanish at home."

Even though their choice has made it difficult for her to learn English, it has been what she called a blessing for her children. She sees this as a blessing because her children can maneuver in two worlds. This language ability gives the family power to communicate in two countries and cultures, with two totally different groups of people and family members. This asset opens doors for their children to gain access to opportunities they may not have had otherwise. Most importantly, the ability to communicate in two languages allows them to continue to learn and grow in their culture while they are learning the ways of a new country.

Below is an exchange between Evelyn, Gloria, and Mya from focus group one as they express their feelings around the importance of teaching their children to become bilingual and the difficulty of learning English for themselves. Evelyn, adamant about the "Spanish Only Rule" in her home, described how she and her husband believe it was imperative that this rule remain in effect in their home while they lived in the United States:

I have the "Spanish Only Rule" at my house and my daughter speaks perfect Spanish even though she's never been to a bilingual school. My children are 100% bilingual and in my home, you never hear English at all, and that is something that we wanted to encourage in our children, starting with our first son. We always taught them that 'English at school', and that at school they would learn it, but that only us was going to teach them Spanish. I prefer never to speak English to them...not being able to understand me one day that I need to communicate something to them? I want them to understand me 100%! And the same for them, if one day they have a problem, I want to be able to understand them.



Gloria; “And not to lose our roots.”

Mya; “Yes, and all that comes with the encouragement of speaking Spanish at home, that include[s] teaching about our roots and our culture.”

Susannah from focus group two also described with great pride how she alone fostered her son’s Spanish development before he entered the school system in the United States.

So, we were doing things at home and in preschool he was...in two languages. His first language was Spanish and when he got to preschool, he learned English. We were doing things at home in both languages, but he definitely received more in Spanish first.

In their individual interview, Mya and Humberto made several poignant references to the “Spanish Only” rule.

Mya: “They have known; they still know that in the house only Spanish is spoken there – our children never speak English in the house”

Researcher: “Never?”

Mya: No, not even with each other. Not with us or even with each other –them as brothers they could be talking and it is all in Spanish – all of it... So, this is something that for us is very important – just like I have always told them that for me it doesn’t interest me that I don’t speak English -it interests me that my children speak Spanish – so that they can communicate with their family like they are supposed to.

Humberto: “So I knew, they... they are going to be in school and they will learn English in school – they *have* to learn Spanish with us.”

Mya: Because no one is going to teach them Spanish. It is in the practice, the practice of them always speaking Spanish...everywhere I go they congratulate me for ‘the Spanish of my children. Wherever...now they are older and they speak English really well, you know, like they should...and their Spanish I don’t notice that they speak it poorly, they speak it really well, really well.

CLD participants clearly identified that being bilingual is a priority and a skill they foster in their homes. For many CLD families, being a native Spanish speaker in the United States is not always seen as positive. Take for example, the terms we use in education to identify the language development of a native Spanish speaker. The Colorado Department of Education identifies immigrant students in the following manner: NEP (Non-English Proficient), LEP (Limited English Proficient and FEP (Fluent English Proficient). These terms are tossed around

in school meetings as teachers refer to their students as their “NEPS, LEPS or FEPS.” These terms do not honor the language of a native Spanish speaker and instead give us the sense that there is something wrong with a student who is not yet fluent in English – again, a deficit perspective.

Leading researchers in bilingual education agree teaching children in their home or native language first or in dual-language programs offers for these students a higher ability to become proficient in their second language within a few years. Students learn a second language faster when their native language is honored and developed. For many CLD students, they enter a school and are quickly labeled as Non-English or Limited English proficient, are segregated in classes throughout their day and begin to feel “lesser” than their peers. Their language and culture is not seen as an asset and therefore families are left to surmise that their only recourse is to implore a “Spanish Only” rule in their home so that their children do not lose the very fabric of who they are as people or their only form of communication with their parents or grandparents; the same parents and grandparents who so often are the historians and the connection to a country so far away. The same parents and grandparents who teach their culture and language through “dichos” (stories) and foster the strength of language which can lead a family through difficult of times.

### **Perseverance**

The asset of “perseverance” is highly evident in the family stories of strength throughout all interviews. Among them, seven major references to individual perseverance were shared during focus group one. As stories of hardship and poverty were described, many participants spoke specifically about the difficulty of being separated from their families in Mexico or being unable to visit a family member’s gravesite due to their immigration status in the United States.

They spoke about the need to leave impoverished living conditions and a sub-par educational system. Other participants described the development of their perseverance as a Latino American through single parenthood and alcoholism or drug use. One young mother, Victoria, drew upon her memories;

My mother would always say, well... it's very little that I remember of her, but she would always say, "He who perseveres, always achieves." My mother died when I was 14 years old and she left me with three younger brothers ranging from 1-year-old to 11-years-old and I had to go right to work to get ahead. We were left with absolutely nothing in Mexico, but I persevered and now I've been here for a year and not one day goes by that I don't want to return.

Gabriella spoke poignantly about her recent move to the United States, grief and loss of her brother, her feeling of isolation and her love for her daughter.

I think I am the one who is been here the last two years. I came to the United States the same as others. I have a humble family. My father passed away when I was 18 years old. I come from a city where we are hard hit by violence. My brother was kidnapped and unfortunately, I haven't seen him again. We had a business as well, but it didn't go very well, so we decided to come here. And like the other lady, I don't want to be here either, but I stayed here because of my daughter. Right now, I have almost decided that I want to return, but my husband says tells me not to leave. I stay because of my daughter. And my daughter, she is my example that I follow. My daughter stresses out because she wants to learn more because she only arrived two years ago. My daughter speaks a lot of English; she translates a lot for me. I'm sorry...

The researcher assistant's notes below capture the emotion in the room as several participants describe their stories of perseverance of homesickness, grief, isolation, and frustration;

Aria: Explains her story with a lot of strength, sadness and emotion when speaking about life in Mexico;

Mya: Emotional during Aria's story; sadness, seems to be on the edge of tears right at the beginning of her story;

Aria: Open body language; good eye contact;

Mya seems tired and preoccupied, emotional and sad when discussing the illness of her father and about the future of her children, emotional when discussing the identity of her children and how that is different than how Mexicans are portrayed on the television;

Elena's voice cracks and a lot of sadness, tears when discussing the death of her mother and how her family is still in Mexico, multiple women get up or take tissues for their tears, continues to try to stop crying throughout her story;

Aria wipes tears when Elena discusses the death of her aunts;

Victoria seems concerned and upset;

Evelyn is very affectionate

Evelyn seems slightly uncomfortable, voice cracks and begins tearing up when speaking about life in Chihuahua; 9 still is very sad and avoiding eye contact; women all are in agreement when talking about the difficulties of not knowing English.

These examples of strong emotional responses captured by the research assistant were felt in the room. It was clear many of the participants were sharing their stories of isolation for the very first time and the need for immigrant families to find community and to emote in their home language is a critical component of dealing with the loss that one feels from leaving their support system, and their loved ones.

For others, perseverance was more about the loss of a marriage or the use of drugs or alcohol by a family member. Diana from focus group two, depicted a particularly personal story of how she overcame adversity with the help of educators;

My daughter was in second grade and...our life was in turmoil. My husband was an alcoholic and he died from chronic alcoholism and it was completely unexpected...and the principal, a wonderful man - he's the principal that knows every kid's name and their parents and grandparents. I mean when he sees you it's "Hi...You know... And they really were so supportive. When I called the school to let them know what had happened and that I needed to pick up my daughter, they had a counselor there to meet us...they had already advised the teachers and the principal just took really good care of us. They, they talked to me about how to break the news to my then 7- year-old child and even my three-year old son. And I just felt so loved and taken care of and when my daughter left from school that day, her teacher grabbed her and kissed her. And it just really melted my heart. That's when I knew, "oh she's in the right place" and when my son eventually went there...I felt taken care of. I felt loved and supported and my kids were in the best hands.

Her story continues and showed how she came through adversity of raising her children as a single mother and how important the love of her immediate family and the school's role assisted in her eventual success.

Kierra in focus group two also referred to persevering through a very difficult childhood, and how she dealt with these difficulties without the support of educators like in Diana's story;

Growing up, that's all I ever saw was alcohol and drugs. So, it's important to me that they [my children] don't do that. I mean I've never even touched drugs in my life, not even marijuana and so that's important to me. I broke it. Where everyone else [still doing that] and so it's important to me that they don't...I definitely don't want them to be a teen parent or not graduate." In this story, Kierra shared with us her our personal struggle with what she called, "breaking the cycle". Unfortunately, she did not have support from her family or any school where her children attended. Instead, she said later in the interview that the high school where her children currently attend is not supportive at all. She said, "they see him [my husband] and get standoffish, and scared of his tattoos.

Additionally, her belief is that her son's school is uninterested in supporting her him as he struggled to finish his last year of school. In fact, she told the group he would most likely leave his current high school and apply for admission to an alternative high school in the hopes he can graduate.

Focus group three had many similar stories of perseverance but some, found the strength they needed to overcome the negative perceptions that some community members held of Latino people and their skin color.

Roland: I experienced a lot of racism here. I went to—gosh, I went to (blank) Elementary for kindergarten and first. Went to (blank)—moved back to (blank) for a year, second grade, came back and I went to (blank) and (blank), and then I went to (Blank) Junior High School all throughout, and that's where I really experienced that [racism]—was junior high school.

Daniel added: A lot of—a lot of negativity towards Hispanics" as a young man. He retells a story of when, he as a teen ager, went to a store to cash a check and the store clerk told him; "She said that I wasn't Mexican, because of my last name, and I tried to, [participants' voice cracks as he holds back tears] I'm sorry, I get kind of emotional about it, but it's true, man. She didn't believe who I was, you know? And she said, "You can't have a Spanish surname if you're not..." I knew the implication was there, you know? Yeah, it was very rude. Very rude. Both my parents are Spanish, and just because I'm

light complected [complexion], doesn't mean I'm not just as much Spanish or Mexicano than anybody else.

The pain of what many described as overcoming adversity through grief and loss, drug addiction, and racism was seen throughout the focus groups and although the stories were different, what was highly evident was the ability for the CLD families to overcome these painful times in their lives.

Diana from focus group two talked of perseverance through her faith,

For me it's our faith, we went to... my parents sent my sister and I to [Catholic School A]. It was nice because we learned our religion, but we also loved it. It was fun to take part in the mass and things like that and also...you know I'm not really this anymore...I don't go to Catholic Church. I go to church, but I'm more spiritual...praying is very important to me. I pray every, day multiple times a day and one of the first things I say is, I'm blessed. Faith just played such a tremendous part in my life - with help through some really difficult times, like losing my husband. I was only 36 at the time. That was a really hard thing to accept, but having faith... I don't know how I would have gotten through it if I didn't have faith in God. That feeling that I was still protected and loved and so I still try to pass it on to my kids. It was really important to have that, especially through difficult times.

This CLD parent depicts for us very clearly how her faith is one, if not the main reason for her to be able to get through difficult times. For a lesser number of participants, faith was mentioned as the family strength that allowed them to get through difficult times. Many participants throughout the interviews would add to the end of their story, "Thanks to God," "Thank God," "With the help of God," and "I am more spiritual than religious," not specifically identifying a religion as the reason for their ability to persevere. This subtle reference does give us a glimpse of what many participants believe in and fall back on to make it through difficult times. At the outset of this research, I was confident that faith and God would be a major theme and I was surprised that religion was not more prominent in these parents' discussions. It is possible that allowing more time for the interviews would have elicited deeper conversation about faith. More research can be done in this area to garner a clearer picture of its meaning.

During each of the individual interviews, the awareness of persevering was mentioned, but not as strongly as when the participants were in the group. I attribute this to the fact that the individual interviewees could talk about difficult family times and perseverance during the focus group and what they wanted to talk about during the individual interview were their success stories. I found the individual interviews were very positive and participants were very willing to meet with me in a public location and share their family strengths and stories.

During the individual interviews, perseverance came through in personal stories, and stories of “making it in America.” For example, Mya and Humberto described the personal struggle to attain an education in Mexico. Humberto conveyed an image of an inadequate, expensive and inequitable educational system and even faced with this reality, he continued several attempts to gain acceptance to multiple high schools in Mexico. While this couple described their personal struggle in the focus group, during the individual interview, they stressed their success through perseverance in the United States.

All focus groups addressed the idea of “perseverance” but focus groups one and two addressed it more fully in their stories of immigration, grief and loss, and/or divorce. It is important to note that focus group three was made up of mostly men or couples which included a male partner. Unlike the individual interviews, the focus group participants made sense of their stories together. They spoke of “perseverance” with one another, talking directly and commenting about on another’s lives and stories. They were kind to one another; they listened, were empathetic, and gave one another support and advice. These stories of perseverance relate to each other in that CLD families found strength in their family unit, close friends, and sometimes from complete strangers. They differ in that the reasons for their perseverance differed greatly due to immigration status, English language ability and socio-economic factors.

In respect to a participant's specific cultural community, the cultural funds of knowledge were similar. It was highly evident that even if a CLD family was born in a country other than the U.S. or born and raised in the U.S., each story of perseverance and strength defied the deficit perspective.

### **Being Respectful and Humble**

Being respectful, a good person, and to be humble—especially through difficult times—are all qualities that were talked about in almost every script. In focus group one, Gloria shares a story of how people in the community view and treat her mother because of her good character:

I admire her so much because she's poor, but she has such a big heart. Daily, there is someone who stops by to say hello and invite her for a coffee...she is full of modesty... she has no money and suddenly a neighbor will stop by and give her a bag of potatoes and onions and she says, "thanks to God." But it's because people see her good character.

Noelle from focus group two shared her family's story of respect, pride, and love for her two sons. Even after sharing her story of a difficult divorce and a breakup from a long-term relationship, both due to infidelity, she beamed with pride at the understanding that other adults noticed how respectful and kind her sons are.

I think lessons that I have passed on to my sons, is respect. You gotta treat people with respect... you treat people the way you want to be treated. If they've ever gone to a friend to spend the night, the parents said to me, "You've got the most polite [politest] boys." It's a huge pat on my back, because I did that myself. I am a very strict mother as well, but I think they are just used to it, they just accept how it's going to be. *I did that myself.*

This is such a powerful statement of respect and perseverance and it permeates the notion that as a Latina mother, her belief in being respectful to others, especially women, is so high that her children's cultural strengths can be seen by others; someone else has noticed this in her children, and complimented her directly on this family asset.

Likewise, in focus group two, Diana talked about the importance of passing on to her children the notion of "being respectful" even when their life was in turmoil.



I think respect is really important in our house too, and kindness and compassion. We could use this for example, a lot of people didn't know what was going on in our home when my husband was drinking so heavily...my kids are not straight A students or anything like that, but they are some of the most polite [politest], loving kids. I've had a lot of teachers tell me that and it makes me feel good and so proud.

It is important to highlight that when several participants spoke of a family strength such as respect or humility, they were especially proud when a teacher or another adult also recognized this strength in their child and commented on this directly or indirectly to the parent. This is a source of great pride for the family, because they believe their children's assets reflect on the family. Susannah said it best when she said what she believed to be the most important lesson she learned from her father, "...I passed that lesson to my son; to be kind and to treat all people with the utmost respect."

### **Family Unity**

Under the Family Strength theme, a subtheme of family unity was clearly identified.

Evelyn in focus group one said,

Something I like about us Latinos is that we try to take care of our own children and not put them in daycare. Why? So, we can continue passing on our culture and our rules and our way of living because here, it's totally different.

Participant after participant made vivid their heartfelt family stories throughout all interviews, but perhaps the most compelling story of family unity came from Aria in focus group one as she spoke of how her grandfather held the family together:

Well, my grandfather raised me. My parents divorced when I was six years old. He would always say that our union was our strength. He would grab a stick [from the ground] and say, "this is you..." I would get so tired of listening to him. He would say, "this is you and if you have a problem, you break, but if you and me and your mother and your grandmother..." and he would grab all the sticks and put them together and say, "if we try and break them – we can't". Now it is me who takes out a box of toothpicks with my children. It doesn't matter that one is here and one is far away...the feeling of being united is what makes us strong.

This story is a strong example of family unity and the strength of the family bond. It reminded me of my own father who would call us his “palomia” roughly translated in English, a group of doves. It was his way of explaining to us that we were stronger together and if we stayed together, no one could hurt us or tear us apart. The story of the sticks has the same meaning for this participant. Through her story, she depicted clearly for the group that even though she was hundreds of miles away from her family in Mexico, she is still stronger because she knows she belongs to them. Even though she does not have access to sticks from a farm, as she raises her own family here in the United States, she found a way to share the same meaning of family unity and strength to her own children by using what is available to her: toothpicks.

### **Strong Work Ethic**

Loyalty, a strong work ethic, and being hard-working were major subthemes of Family Strengths and Assets. Strong work ethic was undoubtedly the single most talked about trait of all the focus groups and interviews. Participant after participant depicted countless examples of how hard work, loyalty and a strong work ethic permeates their family’s careers. For many, strong work ethic could be seen in the family as a father woke up early in the morning to drive to his job as a baker for his entire career or as a father who spent his day working in the coal mines of Mexico only to come home, take a shower, and go to his next job as a barber. Many mothers take on the sole responsibility of caring for children as they teach them their language and culture through food, music, and family functions. Many mothers worked outside the home, too; some in labor intensive positions like working in the fields, as a seamstress, or cleaning offices while other mothers cared for their children as single mothers and worked long hours outside of the home in the legal profession, teaching, or clerical positions. Nonetheless, CLD families teach their children to have a strong work ethic through their actions and their words.

Several participants identified their family “dichos” as examples of how they teach their children how to behave, about their culture, and what the expectations for them are outside of the home. “Dichos” in English are “sayings.” It is what the Latino community uses to teach children about family values (strengths) such as hard work, loyalty, or a strong work ethic through a saying or short story, often in Spanish. For example, the “dicho,” “He who is a parrot is green wherever he goes” is a well-known Spanish “dicho” that means if someone is a hard worker, they will always be a hard worker. One participant in focus group one explained, “I am a hard worker...that’s how I was taught. I, like my parents, didn’t study very much but like the saying says, he who is green – is green everywhere.” When asked about its meaning, participants expressed that it means, “If you are a hard worker, you will always be a hard worker no matter where you live.”

Evelyn in focus group one portrayed for us her family story of hard work and a strong work ethic. Working as a cleaning lady here in the United States, even though she holds a college degree from another country, she tells her children,

I am not ashamed... right now I don’t have another option. I go to [English] classes and I participate in all the activities of the school. [Their] dad goes to work in the fields and leaves at 5:00 a.m. and comes back at 10:00 p.m. He’s not home much but that doesn’t mean that he isn’t a good father. He provides our economic needs and I take care of them.

Loyalty to the family unit is evident as she shows us she is highly committed to her children and even with limited English speaking skills and long work hours, she and her husband want very much to be included in the school community.

Noelle from focus group two gave her example of how her father taught them the meaning of hard work:

My dad is a retired baker from [college] and he would go to work at two in the morning. My dad would just tell [us], “you two need to get smarts.” That’s how he would put it.

You need to go and get smarts so you don't ever have to get up at two in the morning and go to work." So, getting college degrees really wasn't anything that my brother and I, I guess, ever really thought against doing it. It was just, that was just kind of instilled in us when we were very young that once you go to high school, then you go to college, and you "get your smarts", you get a good job...so family was very important...my brother and I...we never call in sick. I've been at my job for twenty-two years and you call in sick when you're sick and that's it.

The significance and meaning of this finding regarding strong work ethic was not a surprise to me. For many of the participants, working long hours at a job that may not have "filled their emotional cup" was what they did to make ends meet, to support their family, and to be a good parent. Stories like that of the baker teach us through his life of hard work, his ability to build a foundation for his family allowed his children to attain higher education and choose their career path. They would not have to work long hours like he did and the expectation of going to college was not an option for them, it was a requirement.

### **Theme 3: What Teachers Should Know**

In the What Teachers Should Know theme, participants shared what they wish teachers knew about their families. Figure 9 shows subthemes compiled from stories of CLD participants who said teachers went the extra mile. It revealed for us those stories of community members who took the time to help CLD parents understand the school or legal system which is different from how they grew up. This theme sheds light on the educators who recognize Latino children for the assets that they bring to school, those who remember names, and those who welcome them daily. This theme revealed for us stories of those educators who made the biggest impact on, not only the child, but the entire family.

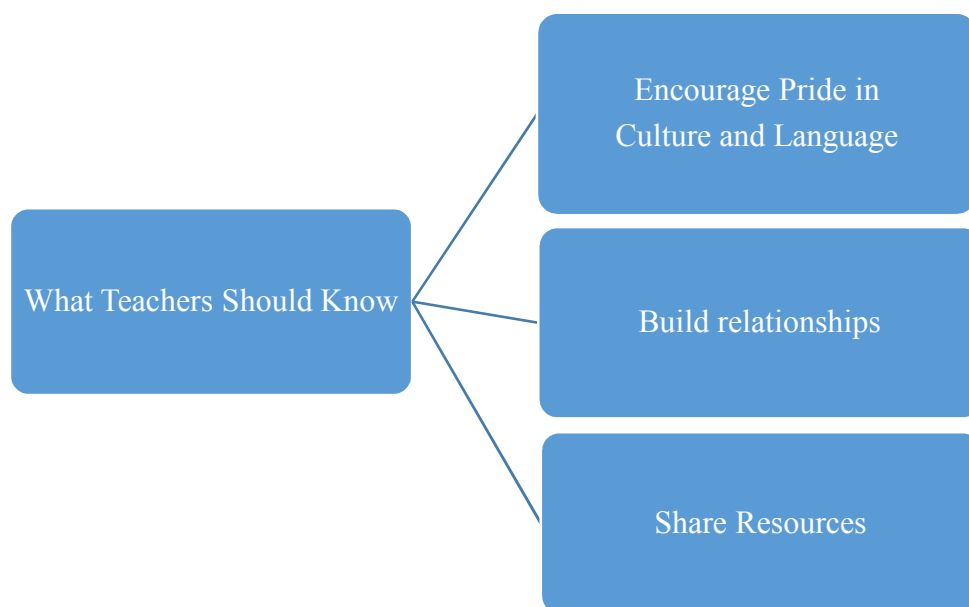


Figure 9: What Teachers Should Know Taxonomy

### **Encourage Pride in Culture and Language**

Alonzo from focus group three was quick to tell the group what schools need to know about their Latino children who are new to their school, “My daughter was this close to transferring schools because she didn’t feel like she belonged and she didn’t feel accepted.”

Clearly, a homeroom teacher or a counselor should check on new Latino students and call their parents to see how the transition is going. It was clear from this story the family had to do the work to find someone in the building who could support their daughter. It is important to note this family is very used to advocating for their children and would not have felt uncomfortable calling a school counselor or administrator.

Roland from focus group three defines for educators what he believes is the best way to connect with students: “I would tell them to get to know the strengths of weaknesses of each child and their personalities. I have a daughter that is really shy and she can be overlooked by teachers at times because of this.” He talked about how his daughter, because of her shyness,

gets overlooked in class and therefore may not become engaged in opportunities that support her academically.

Of a teacher's heart, Daniel from focus group three said,

Teachers sometimes lose sight of what is important after a while; I know that they are busy but they lose that spark and that light in their eyes that first brought them to teaching. It is really important for teachers to have a passion and a heart for educating children.

This participant said what we all know to be true in education: "we get burned out." He reminds us to keep that passion for teaching alive in the classroom because our students know when it is no longer there.

Additionally, from focus group three, Lee and Alonzo shared the same notion that teachers need to make a personal connection with students, even if they do not have them in class. Lee of focus group three,

My job at my school is to run the ISS (in school suspension) room, I am the ISS guy. Teachers need to take even just five minutes out of their time to talk to the kids that are acting out and get to know their family life. The kids I work with sometimes come from single-parent homes or their parents work a lot of hours... every student has their own story and are just as important as any other kid.

Alonzo, "I agree; teachers should help students be proud of who they are and encourage pride for their background."

Susannah wants to remind teachers to:

...not assume...because people just assumed because [my son's] surname is [Hispanic surname], his father is from Argentina and people just assume "oh, you're Hispanic." They assume because they know that he is Hispanic that we're... that they know all about him. No. As you know, within the Hispanic community, we're all different. Some of us were born here. Some were born in another country.

Being bilingual increases self-esteem and boosts confidence. Holding onto the home language and culture is a priority for Latino families. Participants from focus group one made significant references to this topic. For example, one participant recounts her struggles with not

learning English “fast enough” in the United States. She and other participants expressed sadness or embarrassment that the English language has been so difficult for them to grasp but beamed when Aria and Jessica described the following examples:

For my children at home, we speak Spanish. They step outside the home and they can speak English. But at home, we speak Spanish. This is another reason why I can't advance with English” and “...what you said about English and our children...I always have the thought that maybe I didn't learn English because I never let my children speak English at home. My children are 100% bilingual and in my home, you never hear English. We always taught them ‘English at school’, but that no one but us was going to teach them Spanish.

Of her oldest child, Kristen of focus group two told the group one of the most important skills she has passed on to her children is to be bilingual.

I think for me is to give him my kids both languages. My 21-year-old is 100% English and Spanish. If you speak Spanish to him he answers back to you with no [English] accent, nobody would believe him that he was born here in United States. They would say, ‘No you're from Mexico’ and he'd say, ‘No’ and then the teacher would say ‘Raise your hand who ever came from another country’ and he would just sit there and his friends would say, ‘Hey you’ He's like, “No, I was born here.” ‘No you are from Mexico’ and they don't believe him! Because he was easy to speak both languages with no problem. That is the most value that I want to give them.

The message to these parents’ children is clear, “Do not lose your roots, remember where you came from, and be proud of who you are.” Now link this to what teachers should know.

Susannah beams with pride as she talks about how she feels about her own language development,

I just loved languages. I loved literature; I just lived for these classes. I remember my guidance counselor saying I don't think we've ever had a student take AP French and AP Spanish or get to an AP level in two different languages at the same time. I didn't start with Spanish one, because I was already fluent, and they didn't have Spanish for native speakers. So, they had me start in Spanish 3 And then I went from 3 to AP and it wasn't a great fit but I did learn some grammar in 3 and then I jumped from 3 to, like, 4 and then AP. [The teacher] wasn't used to having a fluent Spanish speaker in class. I would model a lot of the speaking. It made me build my self-confidence. Whenever there was a speaking activity, he used me a lot. He would have me come sometimes during another class period and model some of the speaking roles. I just remember I was a 10th grader! I was doing this in front of seniors! I thought, “I've got a skill here! I have something that I

have to offer.” It was really good for my self-esteem [and] my self-confidence. The language and literature teachers, they really built up my confidence.

Culturally and linguistically diverse children and families have many assets to share with their schools, their futures, and their community. Of significance in this theme was the unspoken “permission” to speak only Spanish in their homes. The power of sharing stories together allowed several participants to hear how other CLD families have chosen to prioritize their language and culture as they raise their often American-born children. Add some discussion on why this is important for teachers to know.

### **Build Relationships**

*“Call us when you have something good to share, get to know the whole family and don’t give up on our children,”* was the mantra for most CLD parents. Of a teacher going out of her way to share with a parent a positive story of their child’s day, Susannah expresses just how much this meant to her:

[laughs] So, I was so happy that she shared that with me because that’s what I was hoping, that he would have that enthusiasm that I had to learn, because that’s so important, and that he would share it with his teachers because teachers work so hard. They don’t always get to hear that their hard work has been appreciated by the student or by the parents.

Participants in focus group two implores teachers, “Don’t give up on our children, they might mess up.” Kierra says,

I think like just because a child, a Hispanic child, messes up once or twice it doesn't mean that they're going to be a screw up the rest of their life and they think that a lot of times, they're like “oh he's one of the screwed-up kids just leave them there, they just kind of pushed him.

Kristen says of Latino children in schools, “They need to believe in themselves, because no matter what - that feeling is there, and it is always going to be their fault.” Kierra agrees,

Yeah, they need to be more built up instead of tearing down and that's kind of what I'm struggling with right now with my son, because they're not building him up, they are tearing him down, so he is not graduating this year, which he should be. So, it really



sucks for him. So, I don't know if I will be able to get him to go back next year. I'm hoping so, but I don't know if he'll go back.

Perhaps Susannah says it best:

Even at [High School A], even though it was two years, on my way out of the experience, I had teachers saying 'you need to focus on the syllabus, not so much on the life 101', I said 'you know these kids are not going to remember the past perfect of this verb. If I need to stop what I'm doing to address this issue.' I have had so many kids come back to me, that are still in touch with me, that say, 'This is what I remember about your class. That you cared about me. That when I was having this problem with my parent, that when we were homeless and living in a van and nobody knew about it, you went into the office and got me some help. And when I was too embarrassed to talk to anybody else, I felt like I could talk to you.' It was the connection that could be made. Not all teachers have that connection. That human connection.

These are compelling examples of why it is so important for teachers to make connections with students and build rapport with their families. Several participants felt their children are invisible at school and many of their teachers are not interested in building relationships with their families. Participants shared they believe that positive connections lead to a healthy school climate where their children can ask questions about school, sports, and college that the parents may not be able to. In essence, these teacher-student connections are the window to the academic world that so often feels out of reach for many CLD parents due to a language barrier.

### **Share Resources**

Of parent-school communication, the research assistant's notes tell a story of how one participant in focus group one depended on the kindness and support of others and the need to have positive communication with her daughter's teachers.

Aria: ...sad when talking about the first person that helped her when she came to the US and had a horrible accident; still grateful and humble for the opportunities that she has been given in this life; many concerns about the lack of communication between teachers and the children and the problems that language barriers bring up for their families; talk about how they live in a trailer, and daughter asks mom to do homework in the house...the teacher does not know how they live and she does not know how to communicate these problems.

Kierra, Diana and Kristen from focus group two plead to teachers, “Don’t be scared of us,” “Bilingual people are essential for us,” “Get to know the whole family,” and “Know our names.”

Additionally, from focus group two, Noelle believes,

[sometimes educators] stereotype us – I mean as much as I hate to say that... teachers have their idea of how things ... are with them and that's one thing that I have been frustrated about and that is... that is not the norm nowadays, and parents do want to be involved and not only want to hear the negative things that are going on. That kind of stuff. Going to back to school night - they always seemed really surprised to see you.

Kierra recounts her story of how she and her husband felt uncomfortable at their son’s

Back to School Night as she explained how she felt teachers treated them:

They're kind of standoffish, and very standoffish especially with my husband because you know he walks in, you know, he’s tatted-up. I'm like... we are approachable, you don’t have to be afraid, we should be able to be approached and that... it just sucks.

Dianna from focus group two talks about how administrators and teachers can successfully build rapport with families:

I would have to say we had a really good experience in our elementary school. Both of my children attended Elementary School A... My daughter was in second grade and our life was in turmoil. My husband was an alcoholic and he died from chronic alcoholism and it was completely unexpected. And the principal, [was a] wonderful man. He’s the principal that knows every kid’s name and their parents and grandparents. I mean when he sees you, it’s “Hi [parent name]!” When I called the school to let them know what had happened and that I needed to pick up my daughter, they had a counselor there to meet us... they had already advised the teachers and [the principal] just took really good care of us. They talked to me about how to break the news to my then seven-year-old child and even my three-year-old son. And I just felt so loved and taken care of and when my daughter left for school that day, her teacher grabbed her and kissed her. And it just really melted my heart. That’s when I knew, “oh she’s in the right place” and when my son eventually went there again, I felt taken care of. I felt loved and supported and my kids were in the best hands.

Kristen from focus group three echoed the need for administrators to know their children and support them at school:

[My daughter] goes to school at Middle School A and she has had some issues at school that she went through – but she had a good [assistant] principal, and I don’t think all principals have to be Latino – but it was helpful to have someone who understands her.

Kristen speaks to the need to know about community resources that are available to them. She believes this is critical for parent-school engagement. Of the lack of knowledge of community resources available for Spanish speaking adults, Kristen shared her sister-in-law's story:

I actually learned that [legal information] myself because I was with my sister-in-law and we went to the courthouse. She was having a problem and I was translating for her, so I was in front of the judge and everybody and I knew the case, so I was answering right away...right away. I was answering without waiting and anything. They offered me a job over there actually, they say, "I will pay you 2 weeks here", and I said, "No way, I want out of this!" I wasn't ready for a case like that. That is why I tell my son...to do everything [in school], or you will be working somewhere else.

The data revealed in this theme reminded me that it is not enough for a school to send emails and newsletters to parents. In this day of quick information and fast technology, we spend less face-to-face time with each other and instead hold big meetings where we share a huge amount of information for parents to understand. We take for granted that all parents know and understand the information being shared. What is truer is that CLD families want a more face-to-face connection with school staff. The participants in this study revealed for me the urgent need for schools to make personal contacts with families to invite them to school events, and in their home language. This extra step requires schools to know the families' home language and to ensure that families receive all information in their native language and in a personal format. A newsletter or blanket email will reach 80% of our parent population but personal phone calls and notes home will reach out to the extra 20% of families who we may not see in our buildings on a regular basis.

#### **Theme 4: Hopes and Dreams for Our Children**

Theme 4 revealed for us what CLD families hope and dream for their children, now and for their future. In Figure 10 a taxonomy shows the major hopes and dreams that CLD parents have for their children are to maintain their Spanish language and culture, work hard in school so

that they can access the opportunities available to them for higher education including four-year colleges and universities as well as two-year community colleges and trade schools.

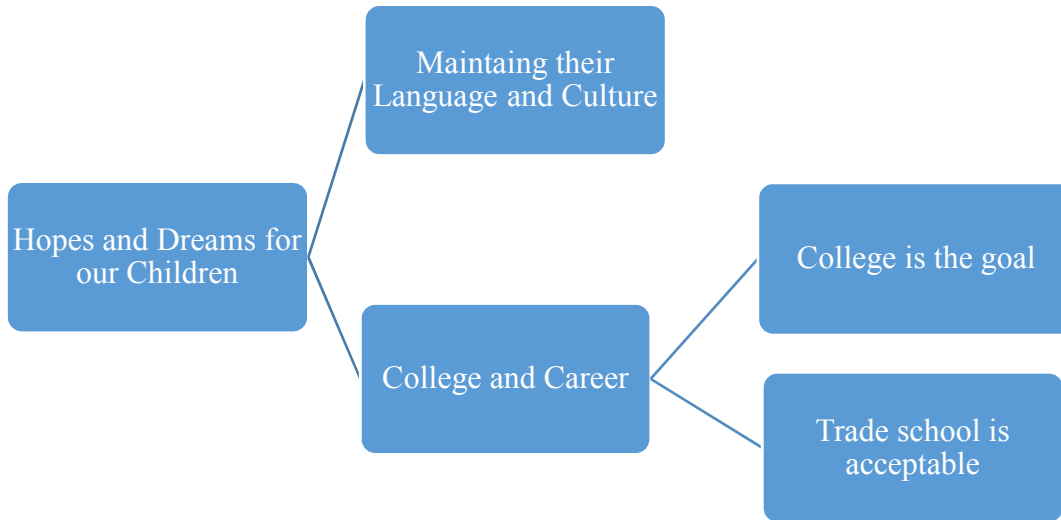


Figure 10: Hopes and Dreams for our Children Taxonomy

### **Maintaining Their Language and Culture**

Maintaining the language and culture of their family is one of the biggest hopes and dreams of most the participants. CLD families beam with pride as they shared their stories of how their children’s English accent could not be detected in Mexico. This was a sure sign of literacy and of the commitment the family made to their native language. Allowing their children to speak only English in their eyes not only diminished the importance of their culture but it would also segregate their children from having authentic conversations with beloved family members in other countries. It would also break the strong family ties that the family unit relies on so much in the United States to be successful. As Mya focus group one put it, “I need to be able to communicate with my own children in my own language.”

## **College and Career**

Participants from the Spanish-only focus group and the bilingual co-ed groups mentioned the college prep program for high school Latino students named Lorenzo de Zavala. They referenced this program's high expectations, college focus, and scholarship opportunities for Latino students among colleges across the United States. "We want college to be an option for children. We want our children to be ready to go to college if they want to and we want to know what resources are available for our children to access," participants said. For example, Margaret from focus group three reconciles the difficult path for her oldest son and his economic struggles during his college experience even though he received multiple athletic scholarships:

My oldest son, when he finished high school, he was given an opportunity to play soccer for the Colorado Rapids and he was given a scholarship and since he wasn't born here he received many scholarships for sports but he couldn't access them but there was a school in [out of state college] and they paid for a year and a half, they paid for his studies for a year and a half – but we couldn't pay for the room and board anymore.

Marcos adds,

After a year and a half, he had to come back to [home] and finish at [Community College A], and he had to do a math exam to see if he could be accepted at [COLLEGE A] and he passed it.

Margaret: "But because we are immigrants, he didn't have the same opportunities."

College and career programs that were discussed in several of the focus groups consisted of college prep programs like Lorenzo de Zavala. This program is a college program offered to Latino students in high school that focuses on leadership development. Aria from focus group one said, "It teaches us that college is not an option, offers scholarships at [College A] and other universities in the nation, students live on campus and live like a college student."

Likewise, Trina in focus group three talked about the need for their family to find an organization within the community to support their language and culture. Of their daughter's school experience, she said,

She didn't feel accepted because of the color of her skin and she actually died her hair blonde! But there was a diversity program at her school that helped her feel more comfortable to be who she is and proud of who she is and where she comes from. They have also gotten her connected to a college prep program called LDZ leadership program. She will be attending ...next week.

Of career readiness and community colleges, Participants in all interviews described their desire for their children to have access for career and leadership opportunities. For example, Margaret from focus group three said,

My daughter became a leader at Community College A and was selected to be a representative...for a leadership program. Now she travels with school officials to talk about Community College A with other students and she has a very important role. She is a very important person.

Of college readiness, Susannah said, "My son will graduate early and all his classes are earning him college credit right now – he is not in the school district – he is at a charter school." Noelle from focus group two said, "My son will work to become a firefighter – he didn't get this support in school."

Diana from focus group two also had a similarly difficult experience as a high school student as she struggled to be noticed by her counselor,

My experience, like in high school is that I felt invisible being Latina, like I don't think they felt like even though I was a straight-A student, and National Honor Society, I played Varsity Sports, I don't think they expected me to go to college or thought that I was in college material. I remember going to my counselor and I had to get his signature for something, probably for an application for [College A] and he said, 'Oh you mean, for like college?' and I said, 'Yeah' and he said, "Well, have you taken your ACT or SAT?", and I said, "Yeah", and he said, "Well what did you get?" I gave him my scores and he said, "Well, those are really good scores," like he was so surprised. So yeah, I would think communicating, like with the parents, like we are not invisible. We are actively involved or volunteering and we want to know how our kids are doing.

Additionally, Alonzo from focus group three shared his frustration with how he and his children felt like second-class citizens for not choosing to attend a four-year college and attend a community college or choose a trade instead.

Teachers need to be able to find what students are good at even if it's not sending them to college. My parents didn't go to college and neither did I, beer is my craft. I work for [beer company]. Teachers should be able to hone the talents of each child even if it is not book smarts. Students need to find their niche in life and they shouldn't feel bad if education is not their strongest quality.

This participant said what most educators think but do not say. He spoke about the need for educators to support students in career readiness through vocational and trade schools. Educators push students to attend a four-year college or university and minimize vocational and trade schools. What I appreciated the most about Alonzo's comments was that he has successfully raised six children and clearly knew he has a fund of personal knowledge and experience that has allowed him to make a good living, and he supports his children's career choices whatever they may be. He learned a trade from his family and focused on building a career around this knowledge. He also did not weigh himself down with tremendous college loan debt. We in education tend to promote college matriculation and offer significant scholarships and resources to those students who choose a four-year degree. This participant very much supports those students who want to attend a traditional university or college, but he was a reminder to all educators that we should also promote and support those students who want to learn a trade. He reminds us these students should be able to access financial and educational support while in high school and not have the added emotional barrier of feel bad for not choosing the traditional college route.

The key takeaways for this subsection included the understanding that even though CLD parents have a strong desire to support their children in higher education or career/vocational education, they have an equally strong desire to maintain the language and culture of their family. Maintaining both hopes and dreams is a tricky balance and for some families, the transition of becoming "college educated" sometimes means watching their children become less Latino and more American. For some, this is a sense of loss and promotes a fear of losing their

roots, and ultimately a loss of connection with their children. Some CLD participants, however, have managed this balance between two worlds and shared their experiences with other CLD parents as a model for finding success in the home and at school.

### **Research Team Personal Reflections**

The following section incorporates personal reflections from the research team. As stated earlier, the research team kept a journal of personal notes where they would write about their feelings or thoughts after an interview or about the research process. The research assistant is a CLD student at the local university, and through her eyes I understood yet another tier of what it means to be a child of a CLD parent. The research assistant, a CLD university student herself, shares her understanding of CLD participant's pride of culture and language. Her perspective speaks to their hopes and dreams for a college education. She then reflects on her own hopes and dreams for her future family and how because of the sacrifices her first-generation mother made, these hopes and dreams can focus on health and wellness.

#### **Research Assistant**

The feeling that comes from [participants] is incredibly heart-warming and I'm not sure that there is really any specific reason for it. Every parent seems very involved in their families, children, in their schooling, and with their interactions with each other. You can tell that these parents are so proud of their children but are not strangers to the unique experiences the children have living in a city and attending schools that are overwhelmingly white. The issues that are discussed with being a minority brought tears to my eyes a couple of times. The struggle of being a "half-breed" or passing as white but being proud of your heritage is not a struggle that everyone can understand, it is a very unique experience. I appreciate the fact that these parents seem very involved in their children's lives to know how these obstacles directly and emotionally impact their children. It is very interesting to me that most first generation college graduates push education more than any other value when raising their children. It makes sense but it makes me reflect on what values I will teach my children more than anything. Education is a give-in for my children so what will be the most important value I teach my children? Acceptance? Tolerance? Love? To have a fighting spirit? Every generation passes down different "most important" values to the next. For my parents, education was more important than anything. For my children, I think there will be a greater attention towards



maintaining mental health and acceptance; about how education is incredibly important but not more important than your happiness or love of life.

### **Researcher**

I noticed the research assistant's scripting and reflection revealed what I also found to be true of the three focus groups. That is, each group talked about core strengths that were specific to how they see themselves in the United States. Although the range of their experience in this country is varied, it was apparent the primary collective strength of focus group participants revolved around their ability to persevere. Their strength of family unity and language was the single most important aspect that allowed them to persevere. Participant after participant, immigrant and U.S. citizen alike, recounted their personal stories of "being there for one another" through financial, social, and emotional difficulties. They also demonstrated for all educators their gratitude to those who reach out to their families and make positive connections, to those who encourage their children to have pride in the Spanish language and their culture, and to those who ensure the ability to communicate in their home language so that culturally and linguistically diverse parents are positively engaged, connected and informed.

Chapter four offers the findings for this research, the thematic coding analysis process and identified themes. The four themes that were identified included: Parent Experiences, Strengths and Assets of CLD Families, What Teachers Should Know, and Hopes and Dreams for our Children. Subthemes were also included as part of these four themes with data extracts from the interview scripts. Provided for the reader as well was the thematic data in taxonomy view to show the depth of information garnered from this research.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### Introduction

As stated in Chapter one, the United States Department of Education’s charge for effective parent-school engagement focuses on a family’s cultural and linguistic strengths. Even though we are still far from this reality, the fact remains that many school districts are moving toward incorporating the cultural and linguistic strengths of families into the fabric of their culture. Those districts that value the cultural assets that CLD children bring from their homes and communities—like being bilingual and family unity—are well on their way to promoting culturally responsive educational practices for all students, as illustrated in Figure 11.

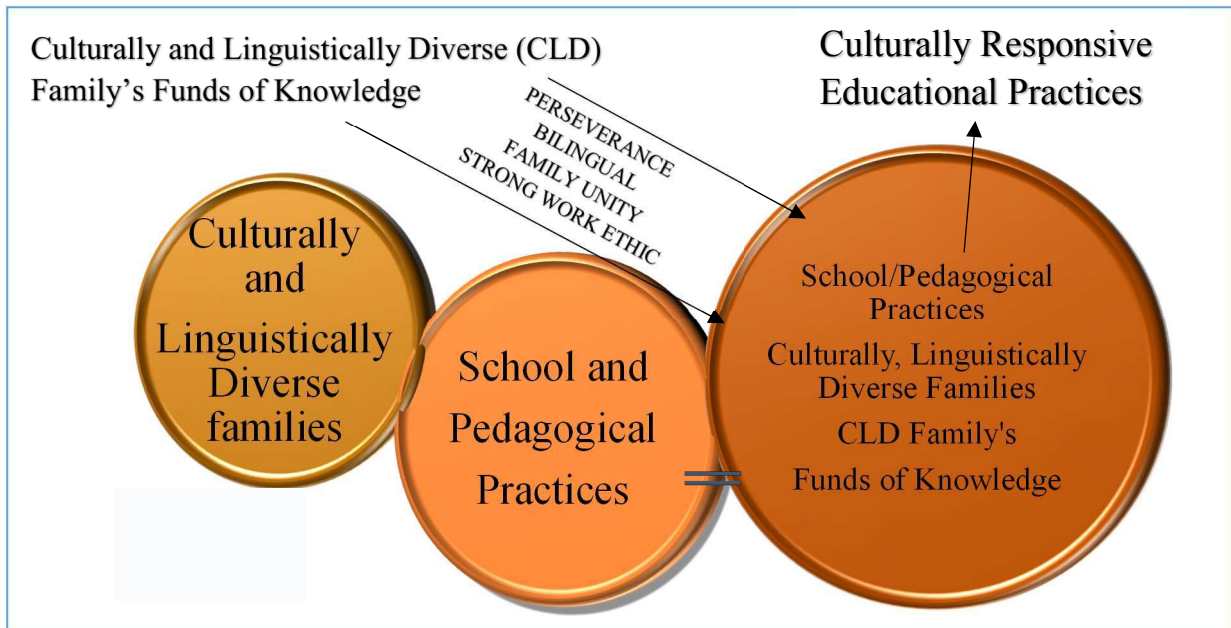


Figure 11: Becoming Culturally Responsive by Incorporating CLD Family Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge research, as conducted by researchers Moll (2005), Amanti (2005), and other educational anthropologists, is an assets-based approach that counteracts the deficit perspective represented through popular materials used in teacher professional development,

such as Ruby Payne's (2003, 2005) "A-ha!" literature on the culture of poverty. Moll's asset-based work and strength based work not only counter deficit arguments, they illustrate the value of approaching CLD families and communities of all kinds from an appreciative inquiry perspective. The major premise of my research study promotes an assets-based belief system that educational institutions need to move toward when working with and educating the children of CLD families. This positive approach, which draws upon the construct of cultural funds of knowledge, helps us to understand how an assets-based educational perspective can enhance higher levels of achievement for CLD students. Understanding and learning about a CLD family's funds of knowledge promotes culturally responsive teaching strategies as well as vocabularies of hope and strength.

Research on cultural funds of knowledge research provided the foundation for the current research study. Additionally, the literature on Coperrider and Whitney (1999) Appreciative Inquiry served as the fundamental basis the research design for this study. My research and Moll's paradigm for co-constructing a family's funds of knowledge, when viewed through the lens of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), creates the Advocacy, Participatory, and Constructivist theoretical framework from which this research project was designed and was conducted.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study was conducted to increase the understanding among the educational profession of the assets that CLD families from Northern Colorado bring to their school communities and how we, as educators can use these strengths to promote higher levels of parent engagement. We examined what CLD parents identify as their culturally developed funds of knowledge through an appreciative inquiry foundation. After interviewing 23 CLD parents/guardians from School District A to gather their perspectives on funds of knowledge

within their communities, I then engaged in individual interviews with four of the participants to learn more about how these funds of knowledge are present in their lives.

The original research questions answered in this study were:

1. What do participating CLD parents indicate are funds of knowledge in their communities? How are these funds of knowledge evident from the data gathered from focus group interviews and participant interviews? What cultural themes are represented across participant's descriptions of local funds of knowledge?
2. How can I use these cultural constructs to design a professional development opportunity for educators/educational administrators?

The cultural funds of knowledge or “strengths and assets” that, in general, participating CLD parents/guardians indicated could be found in their communities were: 1) Being bilingual, 2) Perseverance, 3) Family Unity, and 4) Strong Work Ethic. These funds of knowledge were evident from thematic analysis of the data gathered from focus group interviews and individual participant interviews. Additionally, the following four themes were identified and represented across participants' descriptions of their local funds of knowledge; 1) Parent Experiences (both work and personal), 2) Strengths and Assets of CLD families, 3) What Teachers Should Know, and 4) Hopes and Dreams for our Children. I am now building on these findings to design a professional development opportunity for educators/educational administrators, described below in the Implications for Practice section of this chapter.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study include the fact that participants were all interviewed in public locations and not in the homes of participants. This was due to the size of the focus groups and the comfort of the participants. It is possible if more time was given to the length of this study,

interviewing participants in their homes would have been possible. Despite this limitation, I believe that culturally rich information about the assets of each participant was garnered and conducting the interviews in public locations did not hinder my ability to learn about the strengths and assets of CLD families. Other limitations include the fact that the results are dependent on the personal perspectives of each individual participant and their participation depended on their comfort to attend a group-like setting with other participants they did not know prior to the interview.

Additionally, this study was limited to interviewing CLD families who self-identified with most identified criteria. Therefore, this study is limited to the perceptions of the CLD families whose background and history fit the following criteria listed in Chapters 1 and 3.

The assumptions for this study are: I, with the assistance of cultural mediators, identified and recruited over 31 potential participants to be interviewed and 23 chose to participate in the study. The participants self-reported that they are either monolingual English or Spanish speaking or bilingual English and Spanish at various levels of literacy. Another assumption is this research will inform the current teaching practices of educators and administrators who choose to incorporate a CLD's family funds of knowledge with an appreciative inquiry lens into their current educational practices.

### **Implications for Practice**

This study informs the practice of professionals in certain fields. Examples of these fields include the following: teacher preparation programs, educational administrative organizations, professional development for practicing educators, equity and diversity leaders in education and community agencies and organizations. Of the different fields that can use this information, I

believe based on the research, each organization will find value and rich information that will support the movement into more culturally responsive practice.

In the fall of 2016, I presented to a small group of community and university members at a local university at a Diversity Symposium, and to a class of 20 future educators from a local university. In the spring of 2017, I will present the findings of this research to educational leaders and focus the presentation on “what teachers need to know.” This presentation request is in response to supporting the work of a school district in Northern Colorado that is encouraging equity understanding of their school leaders. All three presentations offer strategies for positively engaging culturally and linguistically diverse parents and guardians so that their children may attend schools that are culturally responsive by allowing time for the participants to construct their own understanding of the data and identifying culturally responsive strategies that they can use in their communities.

The professional development session at the Diversity Symposium in September 2016, included a “World Café” activity. This activity was used in the presentation to allow participants in the session to reflect on the strengths/assets of CLD parents/guardians. After defining for educators, the significance of this study and its findings, the presentation took on the form of a “World Café.” Participants were divided into four groups with a “host” at each table. As groups rotate through each “Café,” they discussed the “strengths and assets” theme and rotated through each “strength and asset” found in the study. Workshop participants shared the following evaluation;

<b>The presentation was worth my time</b>	<b>Before this session, I was knowledgeable about the topic</b>	<b>I am now more knowledgeable about the topic</b>	<b>Your role</b>
4	3	4	CSU employee
5	5	5	CSU employee
5	5	5	Student
5	4	5	CSU employee
5	1	5	CSU employee
5	4	5	Community
5	4	4	Community, Other
4	4	4	Faculty
5	2	5	CSU employee

Figure 12: Diversity Symposium Evaluation Data

Figure 12 shows evaluation data from the Diversity Symposium session. Participants were asked to evaluate the session on a five-point scale, with one being a “low” rating and five being a “high” rating. Participants found the session worth their time and they all indicated that they gained more knowledge about the topic because of participating in this session. Of note, three of the nine participants reported moving from having very little knowledge about the topic to having gained a great deal of knowledge because of participating in this session.

During the World Café activity, session participants shared their personal experiences. For example, one Latina participant shared her school experience with teachers who had low expectations of her academically. One participant shared her confusion with the “work ethic” of CLD families and said that she thought many people had strong work ethics. This sparked deep conversation among the group who talked about how they felt that while this is true, CLD families, (from the data) had to also deal with stereotypes, lower expectations, and opportunity gaps that made supporting their child’s education difficult. Many session participants said they were unaware of these cultural assets and the term “funds of knowledge” and appreciated understanding this more fully. Additionally, many participants shared what they would do

differently because of participating in this session. One session participant said she would seek to understand the lives of CLD families more while another participant shared she will be a better listener and approach CLD families more often so she can meet and understand people from different cultures.

The pre-service teaching presentation was designed and developed specifically with the audience in mind – future educators. Session participants were offered an expanded version of the presentation shared at the Diversity Symposium. After the Diversity Symposium, I understood more fully that future or current teacher participants wanted to hear “what teachers should know” about CLD families. Instead of offering a “World Café” activity, I chose to offer the students a “Jig Saw” activity where they read excerpts of the “What Teachers Should Know” theme and discussed in small groups one “noticing or wondering” or one “personal connection.” As pre-service teachers shared out their thoughts, several participants struggled to make a connection. I asked them to think about this in terms of gender or socio-economic class and they were more able to make connections. In fact, several women participants shared their own personal experiences of being the “only female in the agriculture department” and how they are treated by their male peers. Two CLD participants shared their stories of struggle at the university and the family strength that they draw upon to continue their higher education journey.

At the end of the presentation, I shared a video entitled, “Your Why Becomes Your What” whereby a choir teacher is asked to sing the well-known hymn, Amazing Grace. He sings the song as he is asked. He is then asked to sing the song as if his uncle just got shot, his cousin just got out of prison and .... The teacher begins to sing a version of Amazing Grace that pierces the auditorium and evokes such emotion from his peers that most of the audience is standing on



their feet and clapping. It is truly amazing. The message of this video is simple: as a teacher, your why becomes your what. At the end of the session, I ask the participants to leave with this simple message: know your why, because it becomes your what. One of my goals of this research is to increase family engagement among CLD families. I believe through presentations like these for current and future educators, participants leave with an understanding of what funds of knowledge is, how they can understand a CLD's funds of knowledge more fully, and most importantly why this is so important.

Additionally, below are several vehicles where by this research may be offered and presented to educators:

- National Education Conferences (AERA, CABE, NAME, NABE)
- University, Pre-Service requirement/Classroom presentations
- State and Local Conferences (Diversity Symposiums on Equity/Diversity)

A presentation here and there is not enough to impact the educational field at a significant level. Further professional development can be offered through school districts' professional development departments, additional presentations at local universities, as well as offering the findings to educational journals for publication. Ludema (2001) speaks to the vocabulary of hope and strength for communities. I want to take this research and offer educators, as well as CLD families an opportunity to engage in their communities through their vocabularies of hope and strength.

There is also a need for schools to embed funds of knowledge information within school-wide practices, not just in classrooms. For example, the findings from this research found overwhelmingly, that the pride of "being/becoming bilingual" among CLD families is strong. If schools changed practices due to this new knowledge, many schools would offer more

programming in Spanish Literacy and Dual Language immersion programs. Bilingual schools would be highlighted and teachers with CLD endorsements and who are bilingual would be highly sought after. It is also possible that due to a push for teacher CLD certification and bilingualism, Human Resource departments would need to offer pay comparable to this additional qualification. This funds of knowledge research also informs the field of education for English Language Learners by defying some views that “Latino/a parents want their children to speak English fluently (assimilate)” and “parents don’t recognize the value of bilingualism.” In other words, their values of bilingualism are ahead of our educational system, which is only beginning to see the value of bilingual education resurge after it lost gains in the 1980s.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study yielded insight into the experiences of 23 culturally and linguistically diverse parents/guardians of Latino children in Northern Colorado. However, several unanswered questions remain and lend opportunities for potential study. I made the following recommendations for future research:

#### **Conduct More Research on CLD Parents/Guardians Who Identify as Immigrants**

During the focus group interviews, it was clear participants who identified as immigrants shared a common experience of isolation, different than the CLD parents/guardians who were born in the United States. This could be due to the many barriers this group finds themselves up against like language, socio-economic difficulties, work conditions, housing conditions, and loss of their support system in their home country.

### **Conduct More Research on CLD Parents/Guardian Who Identify as Latino, Born in the United States and Who May Not Speak Spanish**

Like the immigrant parent group, this group of participants also found themselves somewhat isolated from the typical American, and saw themselves as “different” from their U.S. born, Spanish-speaking peers. Their stories of perseverance differed in that, even though they had family to fall back on, they may not have had the cultural stories that Spanish speaking CLD parents had to draw from when life became difficult. How this impacts their lives and the lives of their children would be tremendously helpful to the educational community.

### **Conduct More Research on Faith and God Within this Context**

As stated in chapter four, Faith and God were among the many themes that surprisingly did not make its way to a major theme. This was surprising to me and as such, it would be interesting to know if the reason that it was not as strong was due to the length of the interviews, the types of questions asked, or some other factor.

### **Examine the Funds of Knowledge of Latino (Male) Parents and Guardians.**

This study attempted to garner the strengths and assets of many CLD families but overwhelmingly, women chose to attend the interviews more than men. This was not surprising to me and I was very thankful I could interview the male participants I did. I would, however, be very interested to speak to more CLD grandfathers, fathers, uncles, and cousins to learn what they believe collectively are their cultural funds of knowledge. Based on the individual interview from participant four, I do believe the information a male CLD parent/guardian would share would be different from that of female CLD parents and guardians.

## **Conclusion**

The significance of this study is: culturally and linguistically diverse families have much to offer their school, work, and social communities. They have reservoirs of untapped knowledge, language and personal experiences that can inform our teaching practices and perhaps move us to change certain educational policies and practices. Through these interviews, CLD families have opened for us a door to another world. A world of deep humility, respect for others, strength of faith, dual language communication and expertise, and most importantly, a world where the strength of the family unit is unbreakable: “Together, we are stronger.”

Perhaps, the most riveting implication of this study will be discovered only after educators embed the research findings into their educational practice over a period of time. Only then might an educator see an increase in student achievement because of incorporating their family’s funds of knowledge into their teaching practices and policies. Culturally and linguistically diverse families have much to teach educators. It is my hope the information gained in this study and future studies like these, which identify a CLD family’s funds of knowledge, train educators to acknowledge these family assets and ultimately bring CLD families out of the shadows and into the light.

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**APPENDIX A: RELEASE FORM**

**FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY TO DISCOVER THE ASSETS OF  
CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES**  
Release Form for Use of Photo, Video and Audio-Recording

Norma Huerta-Kelley, PhD Candidate, Colorado State University  
Dr. Louise Jennings, Professor, Colorado State University  
Department of Education  
(970) 491-1101  
nhuertak@psdschools.org  
Colorado State University, Fort Collins CO 80525

Please Print

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

*I am 18 years of age or older and hereby give my permission to Norma Huerta-Kelley to use any photos, video or audio-recording material taken of myself during her research on Funds of Knowledge. The photos, video or audio-recorded material will only be used for research purposes and for the presentation of the research. My name or any identifiable information will not be used in any publication. I will make no monetary or other claim against CSU for the use of the photos, video or audio-recordings. As with all research consent, I may at any time, withdraw permission for photos, video or audio-recorded footage of me to be used in this research project.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If Participant is under 18 years old, the parent or legal guardian must provide consent:

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

IRB No.: 15-5895H

Date of IRB Approval: 12/18/2015

CSU#: 15-5895H  
APPROVED: 12/18/2015 \* EXPIRES: 9/8/2016

***Consent to Participate in a Research Study***  
***Colorado State University***

**TITLE OF STUDY:**

Funds of Knowledge: A Constructivist Study to [Community College A] the Assets of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

Louise Jennings, PhD, School of Education, (970) 491-5425 Louise. Jennings@colostate.edu

**CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

Norma Huerta-Kelley, PhD Candidate, School of Education, (970) 472-3711, nhuertak@psdschools.org

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

You are being invited to participate in this research project because you are/were a parent of a school-aged student, are Latino and have cultural and linguistic diversity that we would like to know more about. As an educator, I would like to learn about your culturally developed experiences and strengths so that I can support teachers as they learn how to teach your children in a culturally responsive manner that supports your family strengths.

**WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?**

My name is Norma Huerta-Kelley and I am an assistant principal in a middle school in Northern Colorado. I am Latina and speak Spanish. My research assistant is my daughter, Sarah Kelley who is a college student at Colorado State University. She is also Spanish speaking and her primary role will be to take notes during the focus group and in-home interviews. The translator, is a bilingual professional who lives in northern Colorado. She will be translating each of the four focus group interactions (English/Spanish) and all documents into Spanish that you will be required to fill out. You will have the choice of filling forms in English or Spanish.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

This study will examine the findings from research conducted in the fall of 2015. In a public setting in Northern Colorado, one pilot focus group, four focus groups and four face-to-face interviews with parents and grandparents of K-12 school aged Latino children from Northern Colorado will be conducted to examine the themes related to the participant's Funds of Knowledge. All the participants will have self-identified as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) and your participation in this study will be determined by the following criteria: ethnicity, gender, migrant status and home language.

This study will develop results by incorporating co-constructed findings between myself and the participants. Through the identification of three cultural domains and several culturally developed constructs related to the research question, *what are the "funds of knowledge" of culturally and linguistically diverse families?* this study will contribute to the educational field by sharing culturally responsive strategies for positive parent engagement with Latino families through professional development opportunities that will be developed through this research.

## **WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

Parents and grandparents of K-12 school-aged Latino/Latina children from Northern Colorado will be asked to participate in this research, which will examine the themes related to the participant's Funds of Knowledge. Participants will be asked to self-identify as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) by referring to the following criteria: ethnicity, gender, migrant status and home language. 40-50 parents/grandparents will be asked to participate in four focus groups. Each focus group will include a group of parents/grandparents of about 10 adults. Four parents/grandparents will be asked to participate in an in-home interview. All focus groups will be conducted in a public setting centrally located to the participants' homes (i.e. Public Library, School). All in-home interviews will be conducted in the home of the participant or a public setting.

Each focus group participant will be interviewed once each for 2 hours. Four families from the focus groups will participate in an additional 2-hour in-home interview. Focus group and in-home participants may be asked to review the data after the interviews are completed and the research has been analyzed. The duration for the research project is approximately six months to one year. Each focus group participant can expect to commit for a total of 4 hours and an additional 3 hours for those who agree and are selected to participate in the in-home interview

## **WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

You will be asked to participant for 2 hours in a focus group. The focus group is a meeting of several people in a public location like the public library or a school. At this meeting, I (Norma Huerta-Kelley) will read several documents to you and ask if you have any questions about the research or the focus group meeting. Once the questions have been answered, you will be asked to answer a few questions on a survey. I will read these questions aloud to the group and will be available to assist in recording this data on the paper if necessary. Once the survey is complete, we will be able to start the focus group meeting.

During the focus group meeting, you will be asked to sit with a group of either all Latina women or Latino men. These adults will be parents or grandparents of school-aged children in Northern Colorado like you are. We will have water, coffee, juice and snacks available for you. This group is only for adults and children will need to be cared for by someone other than you while you are participating in the focus group. During the focus group, you will be asked several questions about your life experiences and family. All questions are intended to learn the positive and supportive strengths that you learned from your family or your life.

After you are finished with the focus group, you may be asked to participate in another interview where the research team would come to your home to ask you and your family more questions about your life. This interview is intended to learn more about your family strengths so that the research team has a solid understanding of the assets that you and your family bring to your child's school and to the community. If you are not comfortable with the research team coming into your home, we can talk outside or in a public setting. All interviews and data collection will be recorded using audio/video recording devices and note takers so that I can focus time and attention on the participants.

### **ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You should not take part in this study if you are under 18 years of age and are currently attending a public school from Kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Participants will be asked to share personal information about their lives and families, if you are uncomfortable doing this or if sharing personal family information is too emotionally painful to talk about, you should not take part in this study.

### **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

There are no known risks or discomforts to you as a result of participating in this study. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but I have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

### **ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The potential benefits to be gained by the subjects and/or the results of the study may benefit future subjects include social/emotional benefits. The potential for you as a culturally and linguistically diverse family to feel more confident and become more engaged in the school system or your child's school increases by sharing your funds of knowledge with the research team and knowing that the results will be shared with educators in your child's school district.

### **DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

### **WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?**

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

This study is anonymous. For this study, we are not obtaining your name or other identifiable data from you, so nobody (not even the research team) will be able to identify you or your data. We may ask you to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary. In addition, for funded studies, the CSU financial management team may also request an audit of research expenditures. For financial audits, only the fact that you participated would be shared, not any research data. When we write about the study to share with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. Pseudonyms for all participants will be given. All schools and district names will be given pseudonyms.

You should know that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court OR to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

### **CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?**

There may be situations in which a participant might be removed from the study by me(s). For example, if you fail to show up to your focus group session you may be removed from the study. You may be removed from the study if your behavior during the focus groups or interview process pose a threat to yourself, another participant or the research team.

**WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There will be no monetary compensation paid to participants. There will be gift baskets given to each family who participates in the in-home interviews that include gift certificates to local restaurants and business and books for their children. All focus group participants will receive a small gift for sharing their time and knowledge with the research team.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?**

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

**WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Norma Huerta-Kelley at (970) 631-7077. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: [RICRO\\_IRB@mail.colostate.edu](mailto:RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu); 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

**WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?**

After the focus group interviews are complete. Four families will be asked to continue participating in this study by participating in an In-home Interview to learn more about family strengths. If you are interested in being considered, please check the boxes below.

Please initial by each research activity listed below that you are volunteering to participate in.

- Researchers can observe me in the course of my daily work activities at home \_\_\_\_ (initials)
- I will participate in an In-Home interview \_\_\_\_ (initials)
- Researchers may take photos of me \_\_\_\_ (initials)

I would like to audiotape your interview to be sure that your comments are accurately recorded. Only our research team will have access to the audiotapes, and they will be destroyed when they have been transcribed.

Do you give me permission to audiotape your interview? Please initial next to your choice below.

- Yes, I agree to be digitally recorded \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)
- No, do not audiotape my interview \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 7 pages.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person providing information to participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Staff

## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT NOMINATION FORM

1. Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_
2. Would you be interested in participating in a study that focuses on the strengths and assets of your family?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Maybe
3. If yes, are you willing to attend a focus group meeting at a school or public library on a Saturday for two hours? YES NO
4. Do you have transportation?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No – I would need a ride to the library or school.
5. After the focus group, would you be willing to invite me into your home and participate in a home interview for one hour on a day that is mutually agreeable?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. If no, would you rather meet at the public location like the library or your child's school?
    - o Yes, the Library
    - o Yes, the School

**APPENDIX C: SCRIPT FOR PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT**

Good morning/evening.

My name is Norma Huerta-Kelley and I want to thank you for agreeing to let me speak with you about my research. I am excited about this work and want you to know that your commitment to education will allow us to understand the important role that culturally and linguistically diverse families play in their child’s education and how teachers can learn from you and your strengths.

A. I would like to talk about your participation in a focus group and/or individual visit within the next several weeks. There are several expectations that I have for the work that we will be conducting through this study:

- a. You will be asked to attend a focus group on a weekend for 2 hours.
- b. You may be asked to continue the study and allow our research team to interview you in your home for one-hour session on a Saturday.
- c. You will be audio-recorded during this focus group and interview.
- d. Your name and personal information will not be used.
- e. Your family’s name and personal information will not be used.
- f. You and your family members will be given a pseudonym (pretend name).

B. Are you agreeable to these conditions? Yes    No

C. Your focus group is scheduled:

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: \_\_\_\_\_

- a. Focus Group #1: \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Focus Group #2: \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Focus Group #3: \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:         Male         Female

Cultural/ethnic background:

- African/American (Black)
- American Indian
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/Latino/a
- White
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many brothers or sisters do you have in your family?    0-5,  6-10,  11+

2. How many languages do you speak?    One  Two  More than 2

3. What state where you born? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Where do you live?

- Apartment
- Mobile Home (Own or Rent)
- House (Own or Rent)
- other

5. Who lives with you?

- Children
- Extended family (aunts/uncles/cousins)
- Parents
- Grandparents
- Non-family members

6. Are you:

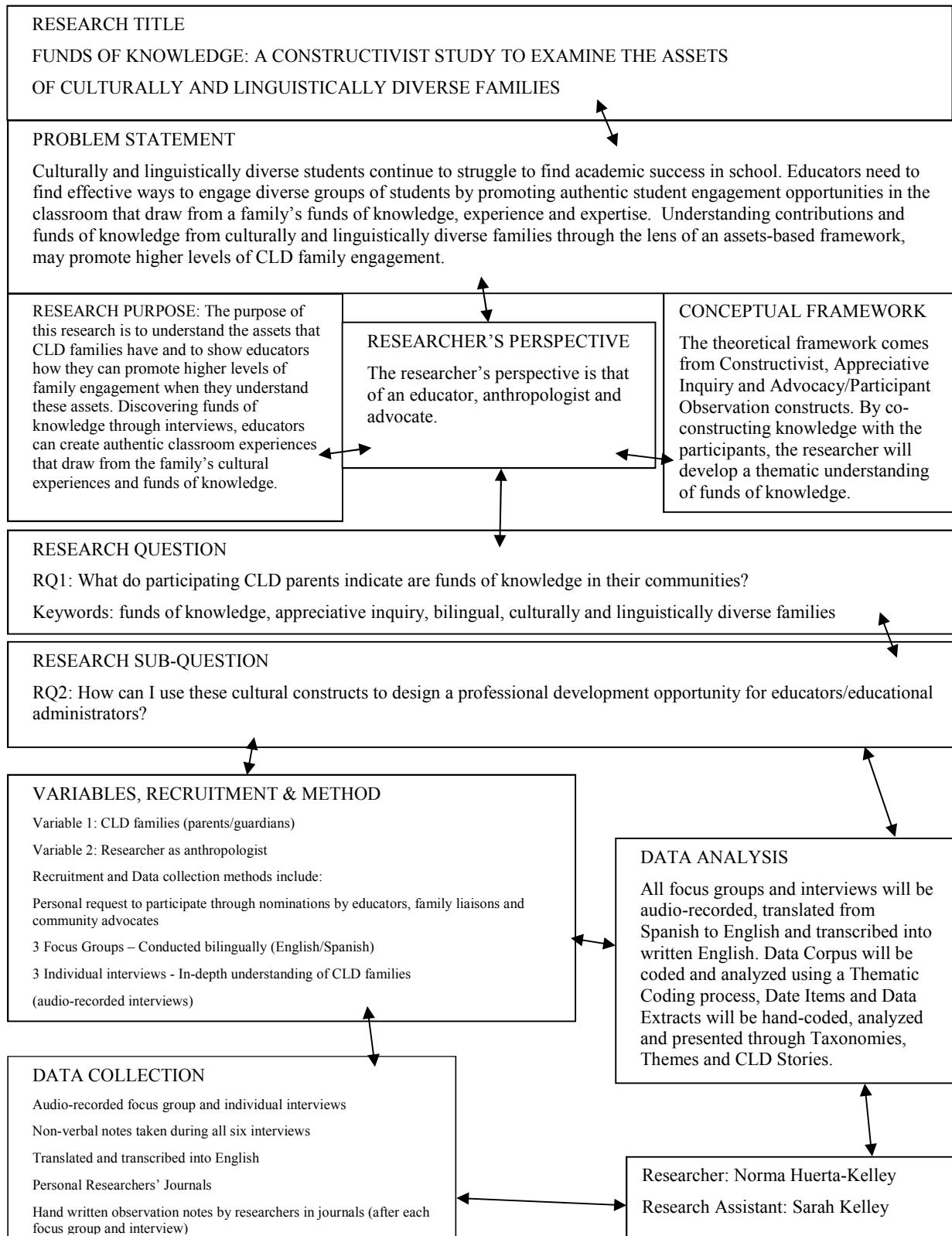
- Single
- Never married
- Divorced
- Married
- Living with a partner

## **APPENDIX E: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ABSTRACT**

### **Funds of Knowledge: A Constructivist Study to Examine the Assets of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families**

This session will offer pre-service/current educators/administrators a deeper understanding of the “funds of knowledge or assets” of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families. No longer seen as deficits, CLD families teach us how their ethnicity, gender, migrant status and home language is a strength and how educators who value this are able to create an instructional environment based on these assets, ultimately creating an environment of inclusivity and higher student engagement. Themes related to the research are discussed and pedagogical strategies identified because of this study will be shared as effective, culturally responsive strategies for positive CLD family engagement. This session format will be a combination of data sharing and collaboration. If you are a pre-service/current teacher or administrator and would like to add to your practice, a deeper understanding of CLD families and researched-based strategies to increase student engagement in your classroom or school, join us!

## APPENDIX F: RESEARCH DESIGN MAP: “MY DISSERTATION JOURNEY”



## APPENDIX G: SCHOOL EMAIL REQUESTING SPACE

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this email finds you all relaxing and having a great time with family and friends. As some of you know, I am in the last stage of my dissertation. It has been a long haul for sure and I am excited about the final step, the actual research! My research focuses on learning about what researchers call the “funds of knowledge” of Latino families. The actual title of the project is, FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE: A CONSTRUCTIVIST STUDY TO EXAMINE THE ASSETS OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES.

In January, I will begin recruiting families to participate in 3 bilingual Focus Groups and 3 bilingual Family Interviews. The data that I will gather is designed to examine the strengths and assets of a family, in this case Latino families. I will be recruiting families from your schools in various ways and will be taking recommendations from ELL Parent Liaisons, community agencies/advocates, counselors and administrators. I hope to have the research completed by March and will communicate my findings with School District A when the analysis is complete. My goal is to discover valuable information that will inform educators about the strengths and assets of Latino families, many of whom have children who graduate from high school.

I am emailing you to request space in your building to meet with the families for the focus groups and interviews. My goal is to schedule one practice focus group, three focus groups and three parent interviews during the evening or on a Saturday morning during the spring. I am looking to use a media center or a comfortable area in your school where families can easily access and feel safe. Each focus group will include at least 10 parents and my research team consists of one additional person.

Please see the attached approval letter from School District A. If you are willing to share a space for this work, I would be so very grateful!! I am grateful for this opportunity to work with you and I look forward to sharing this information with educators in Colorado!

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Norma Huerta-Kelley