

NUESTRAS ESCUELAS: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF THE  
BARRIERS TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN  
SPECIAL EDUCATION FACED BY  
UNDOCUMENTED MEXICAN  
IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

By

Santiago Morales

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate School  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Major Subject: Special Education

New Mexico State University

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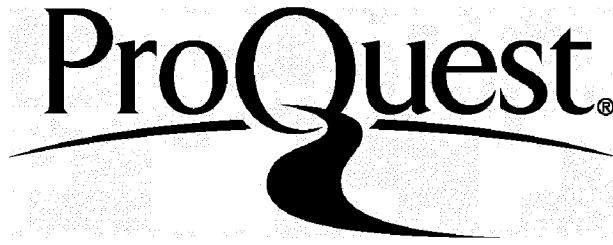
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## ABSTRACT

NUESTRAS ESCUELAS: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF THE  
BARRIERS TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION  
FACED BY UNDOCUMENTED MEXICAN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

BY

SANTIAGO MORALES

Doctor of Philosophy

New Mexico State University

Las Cruces, New Mexico, 2015

Immigration has played an important role in the history of the United States of America. As a country founded by immigrants more than two hundred years ago, it continues to attract individuals from across the globe. People journey to the United States in search of political and economic freedom as well as opportunities that may have been impossible for them to achieve in their native lands. The United States is the “the land of opportunity,” and is a land made up of a variety of cultures and beliefs. The diversity in this country has contributed to its strength and success. The potential that immigrants possess is immense as is their hope for a better future; however, the challenges that are faced by many undocumented immigrants are difficult and hinder their growth and ability to pursue the American dream. For undocumented Mexican immigrant families with children who have special needs, the benefits offered by the United States are worth the great lengths they must

endure to enter or even just to remain in the country. However, once in the United States, undocumented Mexican immigrants face new challenges. One such challenge comes in the form of family involvement in special education for their children identified with a disability. The following study aims to shed light on barriers to family involvement in special education faced by undocumented Mexican immigrant families. Through a qualitative research approach, utilizing a grounded theory design, undocumented Mexican immigrant families will provide a voice to their experiences and the challenges they have faced when attempting to participate in their children's special education program.

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## **Chapter 1: Overview of the Study**

### **Introduction**

This study will examine the barriers to family involvement faced by undocumented Mexican immigrant families with children receiving special education services. A better understanding of the barriers restricting access to families will provide educators the opportunity to scrutinize policies that contribute to the perceptions that school is off limits to undocumented Mexican immigrant families.

In 1975, President Gerald Ford took measures that would open the school door to many students who previously were left out of public education (Conroy, Yell, Katsiyannis, & Collins, 2010). President Ford signed into legislation the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which would eventually become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA. Prior to IDEA, many Americans diagnosed with a disability were excluded from public education. Today, IDEA allows for over six million students with an identified disability the opportunity to benefit from special education services (Czapanski, 2014). IDEA serves as the blueprint for special education services in the United States and is comprised of six guiding principles. The principles are: (a) zero reject, (b) nondiscriminatory identification and evaluation, (c) free and appropriate public education, (d) least restrictive environment, (e) due process, (f) and parental involvement (Heward, 2013). As one of the cornerstones of special education in the United States, parental involvement is an area of importance that deserves extensive attention.

Family involvement has been found to have a strong influence on a variety of educational outcomes, such as academic achievement, the development of a positive attitude towards academics, and feelings of competence, control, and curiosity (Usher & Kober, 2012). Research has promoted this ideal, and legislation has mandated family involvement in special education; however, it has remained an area that has had a lack of resources and commitment at the school level (Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). The interactions between schools and families influence the development and learning of children (Cardona, Jain, & Canfield-Davis, 2012). The positive influence that family involvement potentially has on the educational outcomes should be further explored and utilized to enhance services for students and families, in particular with populations that would benefit. Undocumented Mexican immigrant students and families can be at a disadvantage when navigating through the United States school system and would benefit from comprehensive family involvement practices.

Worldwide, 190 million people, or 3% of the world's population are immigrants (Hossain, 2007). In the United States the immigration issue is an antagonistic topic that has profound effects on the country. Immigration, in most cases is motivated by a desire to improve one's living condition. The majority of undocumented immigrants are overwhelmingly from Mexico (Ayon, 2013). The immigration issue is viewed as a problem, a perception that is aggravated by the media which often portrays immigrants as threats to the economy and to the way of life in the United States (Correa-Cabrera & Rojas-Arenaza, 2012). The media

attention has had an impact at the state level, and has prompted states to respond to the perceived threat with anti-immigration legislation. According to Casas & Cabrera (2011) 1,180 immigration bills were considered at the state level as a solution to the impending cataclysm facing the United States. The journey from Mexico to the United States is often fraught with peril and has claimed the lives of many who have taken on the venture. Even in the United States, undocumented Mexican immigrants are not safe and can experience traumatic events that limit the ability to fully enjoy the benefits of a new residence.

This chapter is intended to offer an overview of the study, including a brief description of related background information, a statement of the problem, an explanation of why the study is significant, the relevance to the field of special education, definitions, the purpose of the study, and the research questions to be addressed.

### **Statement of the problem**

The last several decades have seen a rapid growth in the Latino population of the United States, which has reshaped the populace (Greenman & Hall, 2013). According to Passel and Cohn (2011), there are approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. The stream of immigration between Latin America to the United States is among the highest in the world (Hossain, 2007). The growing number of immigrants has created a challenge for educators who are experiencing a diverse population in their classrooms, as these educators lack training in second language acquisition and cultural sensitivity (Sox,



2009). Educators are in need of better preparation and training to successfully provide services to children, especially if the child has an identified disability. Despite the increasing presences of undocumented Mexican immigrants, many are falling through the gaps, especially in the literature.

At the commencement of any discussion regarding the family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrants, it is critical to understand what most research has supported, that is that family involvement is beneficial to the education of children (Weiss, Bouffard, Bridgall, & Gordon, 2009). The benefits of family involvement go beyond the child and can be beneficial to both the family and school by increasing communication and confidence (Cardona, Jain, & Canfield-Davis, 2012). Research of family involvement in schools usually investigates families in general and their attendance at school functions. As a result of this short-sighted focus, the voices of undocumented Mexican immigrant families are not present in the research.

Much of the literature has focused on the success rate and strategies that will benefit immigrant students and has missed valuable information that could lead to a better understanding of the barriers to family involvement that are faced by undocumented Mexican immigrants (Gonzalez, Stein, Shannanhouse, & Prinstein, 2012). The general problem is the questionable challenges and perceptions experienced by undocumented Mexican immigrant families when attempting to participate in special education family involvement events. Therefore, this study will attempt to provide information regarding the relationship between family

involvement, special education and undocumented Mexican families who are navigating through special education. The focus of the study will give voice to undocumented Mexican immigrant families and fill a hole in the literature.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to investigate the interaction between family involvement, special education, and undocumented Mexican immigrant families and their children with special needs in the United States. Although research has described the impact of having family involvement in the education of children, there is little research focused on the experiences of undocumented Mexican immigrants. Previous studies have mainly focused on the interactions of Anglo white middle class families and the positive impact that family involvement has on children, families, and schools. However, very little attention is given to the factors that discourage family involvement, and little to no attention has focused on the growing undocumented Mexican immigrant population.

### **Rationale**

Immigration has sparked ongoing public debate and has grabbed national attention in the United States. The debate has been fueled by actions at the national level, with the promise of comprehensive immigration reform, and anti-immigration legislation that has passed at the state level (Valentino, Brader, & Jardina, 2013). Through the voices of those most affected by such attention, undocumented Mexican immigrant families, this study will showcase this population's experiences with family involvement and special education practices. The relevancy is clear and vital

to understanding the reservations of undocumented Mexican immigrants and provides educators an opportunity to enhance services to children. It will act as a voice that unites educators in providing opportunities to enhance services for families.

### **Background of the researcher**

To relay who I am as a researcher, I must first clearly explain where I come from. I am the youngest of five children born to immigrants from Mexico. Born and raised in the Southwestern United States, I was immediately immersed in two cultures. I received a heavy dosage of American culture from my brothers and sisters, and connected to my Mexican heritage via my mother and father. My first experience in public schools was also my first encounter with the two cultures clashing, which up until then had been working together in harmony. I was placed in a bilingual classroom, based on my surname, until it was discovered that my English language skills far exceeded my Spanish. As I navigated the public school system, I learned how to walk the line between both cultures, knowing when it would be acceptable to show American culture or my Mexican culture. This balancing act would serve me well as I began a career in special education.

In order to be effective in the special education classroom, I quickly learned that family involvement was vital to success. In order to build trust and communication with my families, I would have to relate to them through my own experiences and cultural values. This would prove difficult in situations when both cultures came together, such as in an IEP committee.

As a first generation Mexican American, I walk the line between two imposing cultures. My family has developed strong ties to both cultures. Education has been valued and stressed in my family, as a means to a better way of life. As I ended my high school career, I never envisioned another path other than the one that would earn me a college degree. This desire to continue my education pushed me forward to earn a Master's degree, which gave me the skills needed to win a job as an administrator with Head Start. It was during my tenure at Head Start that I became interested in working with families from undocumented backgrounds. Parents of children who had exited the Head Start program would return to speak to me in order to share their accounts of how the public school had dismissed them or treated them unfairly for a variety of reasons. I began to notice that many of the parents that would share their experiences with me would often cite language, culture, socio-economic status, and discrimination as reasons for their ill treatment. Being from a similar background, I could empathize with these parents. I did not experience these issues as I went through the school system; however, the thought that these families were experiencing these issues and in ways which may have consequences that will impact their children, made me interested in working towards enhancing services and understanding.

### **Assumptions**

The following assumptions were made by the researcher, and should be taken into consideration when reading this study. The first assumption is that the participants of the current study have been exposed to family involvement activities

in the schools serving their children. Despite the mandates for family involvement, it is possible, too, that some families have had no significant experiences at their children's school. Another issue pertaining to the aforementioned assumption is that the participants accurately and honestly shared information during the interviews. The nature of the study explores topics that may be sensitive and demand caution by the participants. Last, as time passed, the participants will discuss issues of family involvement in detail. This may have skewed perceived barriers to family involvement. A reason for this is that as the participants explored the issue of family involvement, they may have become increasingly comfortable with seeking out opportunities to become involved in the education of their children.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study should be considered due to the researcher drawing conclusions from the findings. Limitations are as follows: (a) the participants of this study were not chosen randomly, but were chosen purposefully; (b) this study cannot be generalized to other undocumented Mexican immigrants with children receiving special education services; (c) participants in this study will be undocumented Mexican immigrants, who have been in the United States for at least one year and less than three years; (d) and the participants have children receiving special education services and identified with a high incidence disability.

## **Definitions**

This study contains terminology that is particular and distinct to the circumstances under investigation. The pertinent terminology is defined below to provide a mutual understanding of the context of which is the focus of the study.

**Admission, Review, and Dismissal.** The ARD committee qualifies children for special education and related services, as well as develops, reviews, and revises the individualized educational program (Texas Education Agency, 2015).

**Anti-immigrant sentiment.** The opposition to immigration based on the belief that it will distort the cultural values of the hosting country. The rise of immigrants to the country may lead to increased anti-immigrant sentiment which has translated to anti-immigration legislation (Lopez-Cevallos, 2014).

**Barriers.** Specific to this study the term barriers is defined as any behavior or perception that inhibits or prevents an action from occurring.

**Emigrate.** Leaving one's own country in order to settle permanently in another (Oxford English Dictionary).

**Gauntlet theory.** Menacing or demanding people or things through which one must pass (Free Dictionary, 2011).

**Grounded theory.** A qualitative research design intended to move beyond a description to the development of a theory. The participant's experiences are a key component of the development of the theory that will help explain a behavior or provide the opportunity for further research (Creswell, 2007).

**Immigrant.** A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country (Oxford English Dictionary).

**Undocumented immigrant.** Foreign nationals who are in the United States without proper authorization. Authorization is granted through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which can grant immigrants work permits, residency, and visitations to the country (Soden, 2013).

### **Organization of Chapters**

The intention of Chapter 1 was to provide the reader with an introduction to the entire dissertation. Included in this chapter is the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, rationale, background of the researcher, assumptions, limitations, definitions, and organization of the chapters.

Chapter 2 provides a background and a review of the literature that is relevant to the dissertation. The chapter includes a review of special education, special education for undocumented Mexican immigrants, and family involvement. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) claim that a review of literature should be in the general area of the research topic. In essence, the review of the literature serves to complement and support the study.

The methodology employed in this study is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Included in the explanation is the organizational statement, research question, research design, a description of participants, data collection methods, and data analysis.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The current study examines a group of people that face a great deal of adversity at each phase of their transition from Mexico to the United States, as well as the hurdles they must overcome to gain access to the special education program that serves their child. The literature review in this chapter examines pertinent literature which describes the special education system that is mandated by legislation and implemented by the education systems that are serving undocumented Mexican immigrant families. Family involvement in the education system is also covered by the literature review. Next, a review of the literature regarding undocumented Mexican immigrant families is reported. A history of immigration policies in education, and lastly, a review of the barriers to family involvement that immigrants perceive or experience is provided.

Historically, immigration in the United States has had a varied reception in accordance to the condition of the nation. Economics, wars, and opportunities for a better life have attracted many people from around the globe. Recently, the focus has been on immigration coming from Mexico. The current wave of immigration has sparked heated debate and grabbed the attention of the United States. Caught in the turmoil are students with special needs, their families, and educators who are struggling to create the best possible opportunities for learning. The challenges faced, the trauma endured, and the lack of solutions have created a cultural clash that has created barriers to meaningful participation in special education by undocumented Mexican immigrant families.



Immigration has played an important role in the history of the United States of America. As a country founded by immigrants more than two hundred years ago, it continues to attract individuals from across the globe. People journey to the United States in search of political and economic freedom, as well as opportunities that may have been impossible for them to achieve in their native lands. The United States is the “the land of opportunity,” and is a land made up of a variety of cultures and beliefs. The diversity in this country has contributed to its strength and success. The potential that immigrants possess is immense as is their hope for a better future; however, the challenges that are faced by many immigrants are difficult and hinder growth and the ability to pursue the American dream.

For undocumented Mexican immigrant families with children who have special needs, the benefits offered by the United States are worth the great lengths endured to enter or even just to remain in the country. The journey into the United States for an undocumented Mexican immigrant is filled with peril from natural forces and unsavory characters. The completed journey is not the end of suffering and fear for undocumented Mexican immigrants and their families. Many live in fear of deportation and suffer discrimination and harassment that is fueled by a growing anti-immigrant sentiment that is sweeping the United States.

### **Special Education**

In the United States it is believed that every person should have the right to receive a basic education. The belief that education is a fundamental right has been challenged by those who wish to exclude certain groups, but the right to an education

has prevailed. Individuals with special needs are no exception to having to make their voices heard in order to guarantee that they will have the opportunity to benefit from educational services. Today, children with disabilities attend public schools with their non-disabled peers and have access to the educational programs and activities that will benefit them.

**Special education history.** Prior to any legislation, students with special needs had limited avenues towards an education. A grassroots movement of parents who were frustrated with the limited educational opportunities for their children with special needs gained momentum resulting in national attention that would later put pressure on lawmakers to take action. In 1975, President Gerald Ford signed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, later renamed as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), into law. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act ensured the right of all children, with or without a disability, to an education, while IDEA provided students who qualified for service an individualized education. The President's signature was the beginning of legislation that would be the foundation for special education today (Conroy, Yell, Katsiyannis, & Collins, 2010).

**Principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.** IDEA (2004) is the guiding foundation for special education. It can often be complicated for educators to interpret and implement. IDEA has six guiding principles that cover every aspect of special education. The six principles include; zero reject,

nondiscriminatory identification and evaluation, free and appropriate public education, least restrictive environment, due process, and parental involvement.

***Zero reject.*** According to the principle of zero reject, regardless of the severity or nature of the disability, all students are entitled to a public education. Students between the ages of 3 and 21 can take advantage of an education in the public school setting. School districts are required to seek out children with disabilities in order to provide them an education through the child find system. The most significant point of zero reject is that “all children” means all children (Hammel & Hourigan, 2011).

***Nondiscriminatory identification and evaluation.*** Once identified as possibly needing special education services, a child must be evaluated using non-discriminatory evaluation procedures to determine if he or she qualifies as a student whose disability impacts his/her ability to learn at school. A qualified team must perform the evaluation and determine in which areas the student is in need of services. The team must meet with other professionals and parents to determine the placement of the student (Hammel & Hourigan, 2011).

***Free and appropriate public education.*** Students identified as having disabilities and needing special education services are entitled to an education that is at no cost to the family of the student and is appropriate for the student. An appropriate education is one that is developed to meet the needs of students with special needs as they would meet the needs of a non-disabled peer. An appropriate education will provide evaluation and placement procedures to ensure that

misclassification and inappropriate placements are avoided (Office of Civil Rights, 2007).

***Least restrictive environment.*** Students with disabilities are to be educated with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Least restrictive environment is a safeguard to prevent students with disabilities from being segregated and to provide the opportunity for inclusion, where appropriate. Inclusion is to have students work alongside non-disabled peers by adapting instruction (Hammel & Hourigan, 2011).

***Due process.*** Schools must provide students and families the safeguards to protect their rights under IDEA. Safeguards include obtaining parental consent for evaluations, maintaining confidentiality, a procedure to challenge the results of an evaluation performed by the school, and a due process hearing where parents may challenge the decisions and evaluations conducted (Office of Civil Rights, 2007).

***Parental involvement.*** School districts must collaborate with parents and, when appropriate, the student with a disability in the development of the special education program. As a result, the input and ideas of the parent and student must be reflected in the Individualized Education Plan. A key component to IDEA is providing parents the opportunity to meaningfully participate in their child's education (Conroy et al., 2010).

Students who are identified as needing special education services under IDEA will have been labeled with one or more of the 13 categories of disabilities described by the law. The categories recognized by IDEA include: Auditory impairment,

autism, deaf-blindness, emotional disturbance, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, non-categorical early childhood age three to five, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (ESC 18, 2012). Each student will have his or her needs met through the implementation of the individualized education plan.

From its inception, IDEA has mandated services to students with disabilities throughout the United States. A different system has been developed in Mexico to serve children with disabilities. The system used in Mexico has improved, but has not made sufficient gains to provide services to the special needs population

### **Special Education in Mexico**

The world has experienced a shift in the way that children with disabilities are educated. The traditional segregated education that was once the norm, is now giving way to inclusive education that aims to integrate students with disabilities with non-disabled peers (Forlin, Cedillo, Romero-Contreras, Fletcher, & Hernandez, 2010). The shift to a more inclusive practice has been attempted by many countries. Mexico is one part of the world that is adopting this approach, and although the transition has not been smooth, progress has occurred (Garcia & Romero, 2009). According to Florin et al., (2010), the Ministry of Public Education for Mexico launched the National Project for Educational Integration in three states to promote the integration of students with special needs. The project has since grown to serve over 492,000 students with special needs in 32 states in Mexico (SEP, 2009). The lower

educational level in Mexico and the promise of a better life is a strong motivator for many people to immigrate to the United States (Hanson, 2007).

### **Family Involvement**

Family involvement in schools has had a long history in the United States. The first parent teacher organizations was formed over 100 years ago (Ludlow, 2012). Family involvement is a vital support for a child's learning; however, it is also one of the most neglected (Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). Despite its long history, the United States government has only recently mandated the partnerships between education and families within such legislation as the Elementary Secondary Education Act, No Child Left Behind, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Ludlow, 2012). Parental involvement is mandated by legislation, but only in the early childhood level is family-centered planning mandated.

**Types of family involvement.** Educators have known that family involvement in the education of a child is critical to the success of the child (Souto-Manning, 2010). Undocumented Mexican immigrant families face a multitude of barriers to family involvement in the education of their children. The issue has received limited attention in the literature. The diversity of cultures in the United States has made finding a suitable definition for family involvement difficult. Families may consider involvement as pursuing supplemental learning opportunities for their children, such as tutoring or participating in extracurricular activities. These families may never have made any contact with their children's school (Wiseman, 2010). Other families are involved with the school and perceive themselves as a

major part of the academic life of their children. These families could be active members of the school through volunteering, participating in parent/teacher meetings, and communicating frequently with school staff. The different types of family involvement can be categorized into home-based and school-based (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

**Home-based.** In home-based involvement, families assist their children in reaching educational goals and objectives through activities that are often not noticed by educators. Home-based activities include: helping children with homework, talking to children about school, and engaging in intellectual activities (Altschul, 2011). The subtle nature of home-based involvement can lead educators to the conclusion that families are not interested in the academic performance of their children and that they have other priorities. Latino immigrant parents often appear to be uninvolved with their child's education. This conclusion may be inaccurate resulting from the family's cultural values, such as the concept of *respeto* (Gonzalez, Borders, Hines, Villalba, & Henderson, 2013). *Respeto* is a cultural value in the Mexican culture, which creates high esteem for professionals in the community, to the extent that family members may not question decisions made by teachers or other school authorities.

**School-based.** The school-based approach to family involvement is visible partnership with educators and families. School-based involvement includes: attending parent-teacher conferences, attending school meetings and events, and involvement in parent-teacher organizations (Altschul, 2011). The presence of the

family at the school is viewed by educators as a sign that the family is invested in the education of their child. However, barriers exist that are perceived by parents, which hinder family involvement. According to Larocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011), emotional barriers, language barriers, cultural differences, and physical barriers exist to minimize a parent's ability to participate in the education of their child.

***Benefits of family involvement.*** The link between family involvement and academic achievement has been studied extensively, and has shown that students benefit greatly from families taking active roles in their education. Families play an important role in their children's cognitive, social, and emotional development from birth to adolescence (Weiss et al., 2009). The impact that family involvement has on a student becomes paramount to their success and is even more important when the child has a special need. Educators who address both the student and family reduce the stress related to raising a child with a disability (Edwards & Da Fonte, 2012). Understanding the connection and intensifying their efforts to increase family involvement for students identified as needing special education is important for schools (Ludlow, 2012). However, with the increasing pressure to increase test scores, many schools emphasize family involvement that is superficial rather than intensive and effective (Ferralazzo, 2011).

**Family Involvement in Special Education.** Due to the mandates in federal law, families are the most invested in the education of their child when there is a disability. The benefits of family involvement in special education has been well documented; however, some teachers are not prepared with strategies for making a



meaningful connection with this valuable resource (Stoddard, Braun & Koorland, 2011). Parent involvement is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) as a means to enhance parent and student participation (Bacon & Causton-Theoharis, 2012). The mandate for parent involvement in IDEA 2004 makes the parent a part of the individualized education plan team. The inclusion of parents makes the team responsible for taking into account the concerns the parent brings to the planning meeting and gives them a voice in making decisions (Staples & Diliberto, 2010).

Family participation in the education of their child with a special need is beneficial to the student's attendance, behavior, and achievement (Stoddard, Braun & Koorland, 2011). The potential positive effects of having family participation in special education have been overshadowed by the darker confrontational nature of the special education process. Families often find themselves in unfamiliar territory when entering the special education process and are quickly consumed by an overwhelming force consisting of specialized terms, confusing data, obtrusive professionals, and grim projections for success. The overwhelming situation that parents find themselves in demands that they become strong advocates for their children (Bacon & Causton-Theoharis, 2012). According to Wellner (2012), special education has developed on a foundation that sometimes puts families at odds with educators, possibly leading to the use of attorneys and advocates to resolve educational issues. Appeasing the confrontational nature of special education requires the action of both families and educators. Opportunities for involvement

must be created by educators, and families must partake of the events created. The increased participation by families will create a connection and belonging to the school that will ease collaboration during formal concourse, such as the individualized education planning meetings (Staples & Diliberto, 2010).

**Expectations in United States.** Families in the United States create partnerships with schools that place an emphasis on the child doing better in their academic performance. This partnership remains between the school and the family, rarely extending into the community. The result of such a partnership is a sharp focus on the family involvement opportunities that will enhance the academics (Dotson-Blake, 2010).

Undocumented Mexican immigrant families may not understand the expectations of involvement in the education of children in this country and as a result, this can lead to the perception that they do not value education (Rivera, 2012). Parent participation is limited by many barriers, which can include language differences, unfamiliarity of the school system, and differences in cultures (Arias, & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

Undocumented Mexican students face many issues that may not be familiar to educators; as a result, families may not be incorporated into the school culture (Orozco, 2008). Orozco analyzed the comments of eighteen parents who called into the “La Placita Bilingue” radio show. The analysis identified four categories that reflected the values of the parent participants. The special place that children play in their family, knowledge is power, hard work is necessary to get ahead, and the

preservation of the culture should be a top priority. The importance of preserving the culture is overlooked by the education system that traditionally teaches only the mainstream culture in their curriculum. The expectation of family involvement in the United States are important to examine due to the diversity of people in the country. The identified categories that represent the values of the parent participants in Orozco's (2008) study are not isolated to undocumented Mexican immigrants, but could be experienced by other immigrant groups.

### **Undocumented Mexican Immigrant Families**

“Undocumented immigrants” is the term used to describe foreign nationals who are in the United States without proper authorization. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) grants immigrants access to the United States to work, allows them to establish residency, and regulates their visits (Soden, 2013). In 2008, an estimated 11.9 million undocumented immigrants are estimated to reside in the United States (Passel & Cohn, 2009). The number of undocumented immigrants may vary dramatically as there is no way to accurately know how many have entered the United States. Those individuals who have recently legally immigrated to the United States compound this number. According to Passel (2006), 56 percent of all undocumented immigrants were from Mexico and another 22 percent were from a Latin country. Working with diverse populations was once a concern of those that lived in the major gateways for immigration; however, a new pattern of Latino settlement is emerging. Places such as the Midwest and

Southern East Coast of the United States have seen an increase in Latino immigrant settlement (Skop & Zanowiak-Antonelli, 2011).

The need for undocumented Mexican families to not be grouped into one single stereotype is critical. Undocumented Mexican families are not homogeneous; instead, they are diverse with different immigration status, cultural, and economic backgrounds. The families may consist of all members having an unauthorized status or may have children who are citizens, but have one or more parents who are not (Landale, Thomas, & Van Hook, 2011). Passel (2006), estimates that one-third of Mexican children of immigrants are unauthorized or have at least one parent who is in the country without permission. Despite the differences in the immigration status, families often face similar challenges when navigating their new country, which places a strain on the family's ability to participate meaningfully in the education of their children.

Many of the families who entered the United States without authorization, have endured experiences that create psychological stress (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009). Mexican families go through many experiences during their immigration to the United States. The immigration begins when they are motivated to leave Mexico. Next, the family is faced with the hardships of physically entering the United States. Lastly, they face the difficult experience of assimilating into the United States.

Currently, more than one in five United States children are living in a family where at least one parent is foreign born (Landale, 2011). The legal status of parents

can add uncertainty to a family, who may come home to find that a member was detained and possibly deported (Salas, Ayon, & Gurrola, 2013). The unauthorized status can entangle families in poverty, unstable living arrangement, and the development of a fear of deportation that can make them reluctant to seek services (Landal, 2011).

The traditional values that Mexican families bring into the United States often clash with the mainstream culture and create another obstacle that must be scaled in order to assimilate. Mexican families possess many values, among them are some that may inhibit their participation or create a perception that education is not a priority. An example of such a value is familialism, the belief that the family is the center of an individual's life (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009) and may contribute to less family participation because the needs of the entire group take priority over the needs of one person, regardless of a disability.

### **History of Immigration Policy Related to Education**

As a country founded by immigrants over 300 years ago, the United States has been shaped by immigration. Education continues to be an area that will be impacted in the future by the influx of people entering the country, both legally and illegally. Educators providing services to undocumented Mexican families and their children with special needs must have an understanding of how the profession has been impacted by immigration issues in the past in order to have a successful future. Limited avenues to obtain legal entry into the United States and the promise of more opportunities has prompted many to enter the country illegally (Salas, Ayon, &

Gurrola, 2013). As a result of the unauthorized entry to the United States, immigrant issues have led to court decisions that continue to impact people today.

**Plyer vs. Doe.** In 1982, the United States Supreme Court ruled in Plyer vs. Doe that immigrant students, regardless of their legal status, were entitled to public education in the United States without having to reveal their immigration status (Gildersleeve, Rumann, & Mondragon, 2010). The court cited the Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment to the United States Constitution and determined that Texas could not deny free public education to undocumented immigrants (Ruge & Iza, 2005). Despite the profound impact that Plyer vs. Doe had on the education of undocumented immigrants, the ruling did not provide much of an explanation of their rights and only addressed the issue that undocumented students could go to school (Hogan & Hartson, 2009). However, despite the popular belief that undocumented students are not entitled to a public education, Plyer vs. Doe created the opportunity for such students to benefit from schooling.

### **Special Education for Undocumented Mexican Immigrants**

For undocumented Mexican immigrants, participating in the education of their children with special needs can be a difficult undertaking, as they may have other concerns needing to be addressed. Providing for basic needs often becomes a priority for recent immigrant families and at times, the resources needed to participate in the education of their child with special needs are not available. This lack of ability to participate can have a negative effect on how undocumented Mexican immigrant families are perceived to value the education of their children. According to Orozco

(2008), the perception that Mexican immigrant families do not value education is not accurate. The researcher found that parents have high hopes for their children and want to be involved in their school experiences. Accessing their child's school is made more difficult when undocumented Mexican immigrant families are facing the barriers associated with their legal status, as well as the added challenges they encounter by professionals at schools.

In order to explain the complexities that recent undocumented Mexican immigrant families face when working with educators, this phenomenon needs further research in order to fill gaps in the literature. Understanding the issue and the effects of immigration can have an impact on how educators perceive and work with recent Mexican immigrant families and their children with special needs. Recognizing the legal issues and the experiences of the immigrant family will enhance the ability of educators in their work providing services to children with special needs.

**Barriers.** Family involvement has been an issue for educators and one that has its fair share of challenges. Recent immigration and legal status of one or more family members places additional challenges. The added stress of immigrating illegally to the United States causes strain to the resources available and to the ability of families and educators to form meaningful relationships.

The barriers that stand in the way of family involvement by undocumented Mexican families will undermine the efforts of educators and at the least minimize the benefits to children. Despite the attention that the barriers to family involvement

have been given, it remains an area that is in need of further research. The literature describes fear of deportation, discrimination, and cultural assimilation as factors that stand in the way of family involvement.

***Fear of deportation.*** The fear of deportation is a substantial obstacle that families and educators will have to address in order to increase the amount and quality of family involvement. The fear held by adult undocumented Mexican immigrants has an impact on the level of meaningful participation not only in education, but in all aspects of their lives. Undocumented Mexican immigrants are less likely to visit doctors than immigrants with legal status (Ortega et al., 2007), and experience more pre and post migration trauma, acculturative stress, mental health issues, and anxiety related to job security and low wages (Gonzales, Suarez-Orozco, & Dedio-Sanguineti, 2013).

According to Abrego (2011), immigrants are dealing with their fears of deportation in different ways according to their age. Younger undocumented Mexican immigrants, those who entered the country as children, are not hiding in the shadows and are more likely to speak out against policies that keep them marginalized. Media coverage has shown an increase in the presence of undocumented Mexican Immigrant youth (Bazar, 2009). The increased visibility and political claims made by youth is important as a path to greater inclusion and legal protections (Abrego, 2011). In contrast to the younger generation of undocumented Mexican immigrants, older population are less likely to confront authorities to express their opinion for fear of deportation. Barker's (2012) article in the New York



Amsterdam News supports the notion that undocumented Mexican immigrants are less likely to seek out assistance. In his report, Barker tells the story of undocumented immigrants that are fearful of seeking relief from Sandy, a category 3 hurricane that was the deadliest and most destructive of the 2012 hurricane season. The differences in perception and participation held by adult undocumented Mexican immigrants may stem from their experiences with authorities in the United States (Abrego, 2011).

***Discrimination.*** The history of the United States is tainted with unfortunate acts of discrimination that has prompted people to protest and lawmakers to respond with legislation. Despite the efforts of the people of the United States to prevent acts of discrimination, the practice has continued to plague the country. Discrimination is the treatment in favor of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person or thing belongs rather than on individual merit. Undocumented Mexican immigrants are not exempt from experiencing or perceiving instances of discrimination. According to Perez et al., (2007) a significant percentage of Latinos have reported experiencing, perceiving, or knowing someone who has been the target of racial or ethnic discrimination. As part of the Latino group, undocumented Mexican immigrants are exposed to these negative circumstances and as a result are at higher risk of mental health problems (Torres, Driscoll, & Voell, 2012). Exposure to discrimination has an immediate impact on the mental health of undocumented Mexican immigrants and has the potential to remain with them long

after the discrimination has concluded, leaving them vulnerable to depressive symptoms (Torres & Ong, 2010).

***Cultural assimilation.*** Once in the country, Mexican undocumented immigrants face a new challenge. The task of assimilating in a country that has a growing anti-immigrant sentiment is difficult and can even have traumatic consequences (Salas et al., 2013). Latinos are at risk of experiencing mental health problems due to the challenges of navigating between different cultures and facing discrimination. As a result, undocumented Mexican immigrant families often face challenges with family involvement in the schools. These families may struggle raising a child in a bicultural environment (Hughes, Valle-Riestra, & Arguelles, 2008).

Anti-immigrant groups have bolstered the idea that undocumented Mexican immigrant workers place a burden on the United States economy, as well as add to crime rates and taking jobs from Americans (Correa-Cabrera & Rojas-Arenaza, 2012). The stigma that has been placed on immigrants from Mexico has negatively impacted any progress towards immigration reform and led to anti-immigrant legislation in many states. According to Bacallao and Smokowski (2013), many Mexican immigrants report feeling pressure to assimilate to the mainstream culture and have experienced discrimination, which led to feelings of anxiety, anger, and depression.

Conflicting perceptions in the United States as to how immigrants will impact the country is divided between those that feel that immigrants add to the strength of

the country, and those who feel that they will weaken the American way of life (Zarate & Shaw, 2010). Much of the debate on how they will impact the United States is fueled by the way in which immigrants will contribute to or threaten the way of life. Cultural assimilation is the process that involves the immigrant learning the language, cultural norms, and role expectations of the absorbing society (Su, Richardson, & Wang, 2010). This definition places the responsibility of learning and participating in a new culture on the immigrants and is challenging in areas where there is a high population of immigrants with similar backgrounds. Newly arrived Mexican immigrants have the tendency to spend some time in high poverty barrios (Jargowsky, 2009). A barrio is a primarily Hispanic neighborhood. The analysis conducted by Jargowsky reported that barrios may be a benefit for Mexican immigrants in that they are surrounded by people with familiar backgrounds, who may serve to support each other. The analysis also suggested that these barrios may hinder the ability of the Mexican immigrant to assimilate into the mainstream culture, due to the similarity of the barrio to their native country.

Historically, cultural assimilation has occurred quickly in the United States, and much of the burden to change has been placed on the immigrant group. Most of the pressure to assimilate begins with language, as it is an indication that the person is an immigrant (Dovidio, Gluszek, John, Ditleman, & Lagunes, 2010). The strain of assimilating into the United States culture can have a negative impact on the lives of undocumented Mexican immigrants, and research is limited on the topic (Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). Immigration to a new country is associated with many stressors

including, the separation from family and support systems and acculturative stress (Arbona et al., 2010). Acculturative stress refers to the degree that one struggles with negotiating the cultural differences, as well as facing instances of discrimination and prejudice (Sirin, Ryce, Gupta, & Rogers-Sirin, 2013). Undocumented Mexican immigrants face increased levels of acculturative stress when trying to adapt to a new environment in which they are lacking their support systems, trying to learn new languages and new cultural expectations, experiencing racism and discrimination, fear of deportation, and providing for their basic needs.

Undocumented Mexican immigrants struggle to raise a child in a bicultural environment (Hughes, et al., 2008). Blending into the mainstream becomes an issue that families struggle to accomplish, and as a result, are at risk of experiencing mental health problems due to the challenges of navigating between different cultures and facing discrimination. As a result, undocumented Mexican immigrant families often face challenges with family involvement in the schools.

***Undocumented immigrants raising a child with a special need.*** Raising a child with a special need is a challenging endeavor due to the stress that it places on parenting responsibilities and the difficulties that are encountered to manage the daily living demands. The demands and stress that rise from parenting a child with a disability can create difficulties for families to participate in the education. Families raising a child with a special need can experience increased levels of stress and a breakdown in the family routine (Hughes et al., 2008). Consequently, parents can be at higher risks of personal distress, which will have an impact on the well-being of the

child and the entire family unit (Plant & Sanders, 2007). The responsibilities for parents of children with special needs often demands a significant amount of attention that can have a draining effect on resources such as time and physical demands, and can create a disruption to family, social relationships, and employment (Altiere & Von Kluge, 2009). The accumulated stress experienced from raising a child with a special need places families at increased risk for physical health problems, decreased quality of life, and mental health issues (Feldman et al., 2007).

Raising a child with a disability is a venture filled with emotions that completely change a person's life. According to Wilde (2011) a person experiences a barrage of emotions that include anger towards a partner, the child, the medical system or the educational system, fear over what may happen to the child, depression or feelings of isolation, grief at the loss of a "normal child," guilt for not having protected the child, and resentment towards others with "normal children." The compounding effect of all these emotions can be overwhelming to parents and families, and can have an adverse effect on their ability to raise a child with a special need. In order for families to successfully adapt to raising a child with special needs, families must adopt coping strategies to deal with the compounding stress (Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010). Building on a previous coping model, McCubbin and Patterson (1983) developed the Double ABCX model of family adaptation, which would serve as an instrument to predict a family's ability to cope with a crisis, taking into account the resources available and the stressors already impacting the family. In order for families to successfully cope with raising a child with a special need, they

must utilize the three basic types of resources (Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010). The three basic types of resources include the personal resources of family members, internal resources of the family system, and support from resources external to the family.

The experience of raising a child with a special need can be an emotional rollercoaster with highs that validate the effort exerted and lows that overwhelm and question a parent's and family's abilities. The strain on resources can have a crushing effect on the capacity of family members to perform the functions necessary to provide the best services and basic needs for their child with a special need. Compounding stress may further restrain parents from participating in the education of their child.

***Lack of resources.*** The stress that undocumented Mexican families face due to lack of resources, support, and the fear of authorities, as well as those stressors associated with raising a child with a special need, may hinder their ability to participate in the education of the student, despite the mandated participation by the program. The challenge that poverty presents may undermine the ability of parents to participate in the education of their child (Hayes, Jones, Silverstein, & Auerbach, 2010). When families are struggling to make ends meet, participating in their child's education is placed on the back burner.

***Language Barriers.*** The diversity of the languages spoken in the United States has changed rapidly, and the use of a language other than English has increased by 148 percent from 1980 to 2009 (Shin & Ortman, 2011). According to Kominski, Shin, & Marotz (2008), 20.2 percent of school aged children spoke a language other

than English at home, and 11.2 percent of teachers in the United States speak a language other than English fluently. Undocumented Mexican immigrant families are among the most affected by the lack of communication. Currently the majority of Latino immigrants living in the United States are of Mexican origin, comprising 64 percent of that population (Dotson-Blake, 2010).

Undocumented Mexican immigrant families may have difficulties understanding the language of the school, which can limit their ability to participate in the education of their child (Rivera & Lavan, 2012). The majority of school personnel do not speak a foreign language and the lack of ability to communicate leaves parents feeling uncomfortable participating in activities. The differences in languages by families and educators gives rise to a barrier for meaningful participation and is draining on the benefits that can come from family involvement (Plata-Potter & T. de Guzman, 2012). The language barrier is an issue in almost any type of parental involvement, such as information sent home written in English which will not be understood by a Spanish speaking parent. This will only increase the feeling of not being welcomed to participate. According to Plata-Potter & T. de Guzman, any attempt to find a solution to the language barriers is sure to bring about more issues that will need to be addressed. For example, the use of translators is a solution to the language barrier, but can often bring about a perception that confidentiality is lost or the translation was lacking, and what was being said was not expressing the concerns or opinions of those involved.

Mexican immigrant families face a number of stressors and struggle to help their children obtain academic success (Dotson-Blake, 2010). Mexican immigrant families enter the United States brimming with hope and positive expectations for the educational opportunities that their children will have. The hope and positive expectations can be shattered by the hard hitting reality that engaging with educators is often a difficult obstacle to traverse and will often lead to a disheartening feeling and a disconnect.

### **Summary**

The undocumented Mexican immigrant family with a student with special needs will likely have faced many challenges on their journey from their native country to the United States. These challenges are sometimes difficult to surmount and many have fallen victim to the numerous obstacles and barriers that are placed in their path. Taking advantage of special education services should be a path free of any obstacles and should be a means for a better life for children with special needs and a road to enhanced understanding of the disability for the family. The family should find the support in the teachers that surround their child and the administrators that are working towards improved resources and services. Barriers related to undocumented status, having a child with a disability, and lack of resources often impede parents' ability to be involved in the education of their child.

Chapter 2 reviewed literature relevant to the proposed study, and focusing on undocumented Mexican immigrant families, special education, family involvement, and barriers to family involvement. Chapter 3 will examine the methodology of this



qualitative study. The chapter will discuss the organizational statement, research question, research design, participants, data collection and preparation of the data for analysis.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Organizational Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, grounded theory study was to better understand and evaluate the perspective of undocumented Mexican families with children receiving special education services in order to develop a theory associated with barriers that may be undermining family involvement with school functions and events. Researchers engage in qualitative studies as a means to maintain the commitment to understanding relationships, dialogue, and enabling disparate voices to be heard despite the emphasis being on describing a phenomenon quantitatively (Cox, Geisen, & Green, 2008). It was the objective of this study to give voice to and explore the experiences and perceptions of undocumented Mexican families with children receiving special education services. Therefore, a qualitative approach was a most appropriate means of collecting and reflecting on these voices. The process developed a practical theory of family involvement within this specific population.

The following chapter outlines the research design of grounded theory in detail, as well as the selection of participants and the measures for the study. Data collection is also described in this chapter including any threats to the study from researcher bias and expectations. The chapter provides a detailed description of how the data was prepared for analysis, and how a coding system was utilized to analyze the data.

## **Research Question**

Grounded theory studies typically do not require a research question; however, it is useful to begin with a central question that guides the research (Creswell, 2009). This study was conducted to answer the research question “What barriers undermine family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families in the education of children receiving special education services?” The research question was the central theme used for the study and subsequent open-ended questions were constructed to develop dialogue from which categories could be identified and saturated for further analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

## **Research Design/Paradigm**

Sociologist Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss developed grounded theory in the 1960s (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory advocates the development of theories from research grounded in the data versus deducing hypotheses from theory. By applying grounded theory as a qualitative methodology, the researcher is able to allow the theory to emerge from the people who are experiencing the phenomenon. By engaging in grounded theory, the researcher’s aim is to identify what the main concern or problem is for a group of people facing a particular phenomenon (Glaser, 1992). Glaser and Strauss (1967) outlined the defining components of grounded theory to include: simultaneous data collection and analysis, developing codes and categories from data, constant comparison, theory development at each stage of data collection, memo-writing to saturate categories, and purposeful sampling. An important characteristic of grounded theory is to set

aside any preconception or hypotheses that the research may have; but rather, allow the theory to be grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2006). The purpose of this study was not to discredit previous theories; rather, it was an effort to move towards a higher level of focus on a specific population and family dynamic. In this particular study, the aim was to identify the possible barriers to family involvement for undocumented Mexican immigrant families with children receiving special education services.

The aim of grounded theory is to gather data that is as rich as possible (Rintala, 2014). The data can be obtained through interviews, observations, videos, drawings, biographies, and written documents (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In grounded theory, the researcher is simultaneously collecting and analyzing the data.

**Coding.** The grounded theory researcher analyzes the data collected through a coding system. Open, axial, and selective coding is used to compare and analyze the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Open coding is an examination of the data line by line to identify actions or events that will be sifted into smaller categories (Rintala, 2014). Axial coding is a further examination of the categories created by the open coding to identify how they are interconnected (Creswell, 2007). In selective coding, the core variable emerges from the constant comparative coding (Glaser, 1992). The data is then related to the selected code that has emerged.

**Memo-writing.** An important characteristic of grounded theory is memoing. Memoing are the written records of analysis that relate to the theory or formulation of a theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). During memo-writing, thoughts are converted into comparisons and connections made by the researcher, and facilitate

the development of questions and directions to pursue (Charmaz, 2006). Memo-writing allows the researcher to measure the amount of data that is gathered and needed to develop categories that are well-saturated with solid data that will stand on its own.

**Theoretical sampling.** A goal for the grounded theory researcher is to saturate a category that has emerged from the data collected. Theoretical sampling is used to elaborate and refine categories that will help strengthen a theory (Charmaz, 2006). Theoretical sampling allows the researcher to review codings and memos to identify and strengthen categories that are emerging theories. The researcher can strengthen the data previously collected by collecting additional data in order to refine and saturate the category.

### **Participants**

**Population.** The barriers that undocumented Mexican immigrants face are a phenomenon that is experienced throughout the United States. The current study was conducted in a Southwestern United States city located on the border with Mexico. The proximity to the border has made the city a common pathway for Mexican immigrants, both undocumented and documented, to enter into the United States. As a result the city has a diverse population that made it an ideal location for the study.

The five parent participants in the current study consisted of undocumented Mexican immigrants who had a child with a special need. The group participating in the study was comprised of one male and four female participants. Three of the parent participants were homemakers, one was employed as a child daycare worker,

and one was a construction worker. The parent participants also varied in the amount of time they had been in the United States. One of the parent participants had been in the United States for less than two years, two for three years, and lastly two had been living in the country for more than five years. Table 1 below provides a breakdown of parent participant demographics.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u># Years in United States</u>
Antonio	M	Construction Worker	3
Laura	F	Homemaker	3
Maria	F	Home maker	>5
Ofelia	F	Day Care Worker	>5
Paula	F	Homemaker	<2

Table 1

Data for the current study was obtained through face-to-face interviews with undocumented Mexican immigrant parents of five different families with children who are receiving special education services in a border community in Southwestern United States. Undocumented Mexican immigrant families with children at the elementary level were invited by written communication to participate in face-to-face interviews. The participants were initially contacted through two non-profit organizations that provide services to children with special needs and their families. The organizations consist of volunteers, parents, and professionals who provide services, training, and advocacy to children with disabilities and their families.



Families were notified via written invitations, which were distributed by staff from both participating organizations. All communication was conducted bilingually or in Spanish as needed.

**Sampling frame.** Informed decisions about sampling are vital to research and improve the quality of the study (Suri, 2011). Purposeful sampling is a form often used in qualitative research as a means of identifying subjects that can yield enough information for the research study (Palinkas, 2013). The justification for applying purposeful sampling to this research study is to maximize the opportunity to saturate the data, which would be difficult to obtain if a random sampling technique was employed. For this study, purposeful sampling was appropriate, because families were selected based on their legal status, child's participation in a special education program, and willingness to volunteer. Demographic characteristics were used to ensure that families met the criteria for the research study. The demographic information collected was only used to ensure they met the criteria and for no other purpose.

Patton (2002) described 16 strategies for purposeful sampling that can be applied to qualitative research, each with a different outcome. For this research study one of Patton's purposeful sampling strategies was utilized. Criterion-i sampling is a strategy that is used to identify and select participants in order to meet a predetermined criterion of importance (Palinkas, 2013). In Criterion-i sampling, participants are selected based on a predetermined criteria that is of importance to the study. The present research study was aimed at locating and studying families who

had children receiving special education services, had an undocumented legal status, had immigrated from Mexico, and who were residing in Southwestern United States.

**Sample size.** The participants for the current study were selected from those who responded to the request for participation and showed willingness to volunteer for the research study. Five participants, that meet the predetermined criterion constituted the sample population. According to Creswell (2007) data should be collected from a minimum of 20 interviews in order to fully saturate the model. The sample size is determined to be of sufficient size to yield the amount of data needed to saturate each category identified. When necessary to fully develop the information, the researcher increased the number of interviews conducted.

**Informed consent.** Potential participants for the current research study were provided information regarding the study and given contact information of the researcher in written format and can be seen in Appendix G and H. Participant rights and expectations for the study, as well as the nature, purpose, risks, and request for participation were outlined in the information provided to subjects in both English and Spanish. Written informed consent was not obtained prior to any participation in the study due to the nature of the study. The current research study was able to obtain approval to waive written informed consent through the institutional review board (IRB) at New Mexico State University in order to protect the identification of the undocumented Mexican families involved. A copy of the approval from the IRB is located in Appendix F. Parent participants were made aware that at any point, if they did not want to proceed, they could withdraw without any penalty.



**Confidentiality.** Demographic information and transcripts collected by the researchers have remained confidential and inaccessible to all, with the exception of the researcher. Participants of the study were assigned a pseudonym in order to protect their identity. At no time was the demographic information used in the study.

Data collected during the research study was saved to a storage device not located on a computer, and stored in a locked file cabinet when not being used by the researcher. The information gathered will be kept on file for a period of 3 years, after which it will be disposed of properly. Any information on hard copy will be stored in a locked file cabinet when not being used by the researcher. The information on hard copy will be stored for a period of 3 years. Information on hard copy will be destroyed via shredder after the 3-year period has concluded.

### **Data Collection**

Recruitment for the current study consisted of approaching two non-profit organizations in Southwestern United States that provide services to families of children with special needs. The organizations hold regular training sessions for families of children with disabilities on a variety of topics. The researcher provided training to the staff of both organizations on the nature of the study in order for trainers to accurately relay the information to the potential participants. This method was utilized as both organizations prepared to make initial contact with families. During regular training sessions, families received a brief explanation of the study and were provided with written documentation describing the nature of the study as well as the researcher's contact information. Families were provided with an

informed consent page that was required to be filled out prior to continuing on with the study. Upon confirmation of written consent, the participant was assigned an identification number and demographic information was secured and only used to describe the study's population.

A cornerstone to a grounded theory research study is that the relevance of any data cannot be presumed; but rather, concepts must be derived from the stories of the participants (Glaser, 2004). The story of the participant is a vital component of the grounded theory research study, and it was the intention of this study to facilitate the voice of undocumented Mexican immigrant families and create a greater understanding of barriers to family involvement. The research study consisted of data collected and analyzed from the in-depth interviews of selected undocumented Mexican immigrant families with children receiving special education services. Face-to-face interviews were appropriate to the study, because it created the opportunity to examine the link between undocumented Mexican immigrant families and the school staff and administration that serve their children with an identified disability.

The research study began with interviews conducted with an initial participant pool of 5 family members from different families. Each parent participant was interviewed individually. The interviews opened with the presentation of a grand tour question, or open-ended question that generated new interview questions that were asked by the researcher. The interviews were audio-taped with prior consent being provided by each participant. The recorded dialogue was transcribed and added to a

matrix that allowed a visual representation of the data and facilitated the identification of codes. Memo-writing was consistently utilized throughout the grounded theory study and used to completely saturate a category. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe saturation of a category as the point in the study where no new properties or dimensions emerge. The researcher constantly compared and analyzed the data derived from interviews to identify differences and similarities of the perceptions of undocumented Mexican immigrants until a theory could be formulated.

### **Data Analysis**

The desired outcome of a grounded theory study surpasses the description of a phenomenon by creating a theory that explains the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In grounded theory, a theory is generated from the data that is collected and analyzed. Data analysis occurs from the onset of the data collection and continues until the research study is concluded. Only after a sufficient amount of data has been collected, it possible to develop a theory with enough supporting evidence that it is strong enough to be considered complete.

Face-to-face interviews were audio taped, transcribed and analyzed. Indexing of the initial data was conducted to develop the first stage of codings, which helped the researcher determine follow up questions. Follow up questions were used to saturate categories created as well as helped to identify new categories. The following grand tour questions were used to initiate open-ended responses by participants:

- Tell me about your recollections and experiences of participating in school activities and meetings related to your child?

- Tell me how your legal status effects your participation in school activities?
- Tell me about any negative experiences at your child's school that made you cautious about your participation?
- Tell me about any attempts to build a partnership with your child's school?
- Tell me about how you feel that administrators and teachers feel about you?
- Tell me about the expectations that the school has about your participation in your child's educational program?
- Tell me what are the steps that could be taken in order to develop a stronger partnership between yourself and the school?

The responses to these questions shed light on the barriers perceived by undocumented Mexican immigrant families. With a better understanding of these barriers, educators will have the opportunity to develop and cultivate a stronger relationship with undocumented Mexican immigrant families that will eventually lead to enhanced services and family involvement.

The responses recorded by the grand tour questions were categorized and comparisons between participant responses were examined. Comparisons across participants were made to identify similarities in experiences and beliefs towards family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families with children receiving special education services. Similarities in experiences and beliefs were

studied to identify and fully saturate categories that would further explain barriers to family involvement that were perceived by participants.

Once categories were saturated to the point that no further information or new category was to be identified, the research study moved onto the next phase, the development of a theory. Theory development was grounded in the data that was generated by the participants who experienced the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is through the shared lived experiences and perceptions of participants that theory emerged to shed light on the current understandings that undocumented Mexican immigrant families have towards family involvement.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 3 an overview of the methods employed in this study was presented. The study employed a qualitative grounded theory research design. This approach was deemed appropriate for the current study over a quantitative design in order to ensure that in-depth information about the perceptions of undocumented Mexican immigrant families could be accurately explored. Thus, the aim of the study was to allow for undocumented Mexican immigrant families with children who are receiving special education services to have a voice in shaping future practices of educators working with this unique population.

The population consisted of undocumented Mexican immigrant families who have children receiving special education services. All of the participants resided in Southwestern United States at the time of the study. Purposeful sampling was used for the study and followed the Criterion-i sampling strategy described by Patton

(2002). A description of the recruitment process was also described in Chapter 3, as well as a description of confidentiality and consent procedures. Face-to-face interviews and document collection procedures were described along with the process for data analysis.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study, using a grounded theory design, was to examine the experiences of five parent participants, who were residing in the Southwestern United States. The study explores the perceived barriers among undocumented Mexican immigrant families whose children received special education services. The participants had each experienced the identification process of special education, and each have attended more than one Individualized Education Plan (IEP) committee meeting. Interviews were guided by the researcher's grand tour question, "What barriers undermine family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families in the education of children receiving special education services?" Follow up questions were developed during interviews by the researcher to further probe and saturate themes that developed during the interview. The results are discussed according to the themes that emerged from each participant interview. The results are further explored by extracting the themes that all participants in the study have expressed. Cross-participant themes were reviewed to identify those that had the strongest impact on the family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families. The strongest theme was examined until a theory emerged, one that could be utilized to explain the perceptions and behaviors of undocumented Mexican immigrant families and their interactions with the special education process. Participants of the study were all native Spanish speakers and required all of the interviews to be conducted in Spanish.

The data revealed a pattern of identified barriers that were experienced or perceived, and that emerged from the interviews with five parent participants during the grounded theory study. This pattern targets an area of concern that may play a role in the diminished family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the education of their child with special needs (Lopez, Sanchez, & Hamilton, 2000). The concepts in the interviews and the data collected guided the interview. They also helped to unveil a subtle social structure and practice that is in place and effective in curtailing family involvement by undocumented Mexican immigrants, and in preventing the development of true partnerships.

### **Participation in the Research**

The aim of this study was to interview five undocumented Mexican immigrant parent participants with children identified and receiving special education services. The nature of the study required the researcher to take precaution in order to further protect the confidentiality of the participants. In order to provide participants with extended safeguards, with IRB approval, the study was able to waive signed consent in order to eliminate the need for participants to reveal their names. Several additional parents were contacted, and at least five of those contacted expressed interest, however, they eventually refused to participate when the nature of the study was explained in detail. The parents that did participate in the study expressed some fear with their involvement; specifically, they feared that the information they shared with the researcher would end up reaching their child's school or other authorities. One parent shared with the researcher that she and her husband were risking a great



deal by her participation in the study. However, they also believed in the importance of giving a voice to other families in similar situations.

The grand tour of this grounded theory study was presented to five parents that who met the criteria of the study. The five parent participants who were interviewed consisted of four mothers and one father. The occupation of the participants varied. One participant was a construction worker, one was a day-care teacher, and three were homemakers. The duration of time in this country for the participants also varied. At the time of the interview, one of the parent participants had been in the United States less than two years. Two parent participants had been in the country for three years, and two have been in the country for more than five years. Each of the parent participants had a child identified as needing special education services and has participated in at least one individualized education plan committee meeting. At the initiation of the interviews, parent participants appeared to be apprehensive; however, after the interview began the participants appeared increasingly comfortable. They then began to share an abundant amount of information with the researcher.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, each participant's identification was further protected with the use of a pseudonym. The parent participants will be referred to as Antonio, Laura, Maria, Ofelia, and Paula.

### **Open Coding**

According to Rintala (2014), during open coding in a grounded theory research study, the researcher analyzed the data line by line in order to identify

actions or events that might sift into smaller categories during the later stages of analysis. During this study the interviews were audio taped by the researcher and were then transcribed and analyzed. Each of the participant interviews was transcribed. Events or actions that indicated a participant had experienced or perceived a barrier to their involvement in the education of their child with a special need was recorded.

**Line by line analysis.** The interviews conducted with the parent participants yielded 61 pages and 22,068 words that were transcribed for the study. The initial analysis during the open coding identified a total of 149 instances where a parent participant expressed experiencing or perceiving a barrier to their involvement in the education of their child with special needs. A numerical description follows this section, then examples utilizing the parents' own words are presented.

**Antonio.** The only male participant in the study recorded 17 instances during the interview that indicated that he had experienced or perceived a barrier towards his participation in the education of his child. Antonio expressed frustration towards school personnel, particularly the teacher when he said “incluso cuando la maestra dice algo positivo siempre es de algún modo negativo o seguido de algo negativo. (“even when the teacher says something positive it is always some way negative or followed by something negative.”) Antonio also showed his dissatisfaction towards an incident with a diagnostician when he said “Trataron de hacer que las cosas se ven de otra manera, o para hacer las cosas complicadas con el fin de evitar que el padre comprenda. (“They tried to make things look differently, or to make things

complicated in order to prevent the parent from understanding.”) He also expressed his distrust towards an interaction with the school’s principal when he said “siempre hablan con usted como un amigo, pero para mí la razón es para que se les percibe de una manera y no nos demos cuenta de sus motivos. (“They also always talk to you like a friend, but to me the reason for that is to may you perceive them one way and not pick up on their motives.”) Antonio’s experience has led him to change his son’s school. (Appendix E)

**Laura.** In this participant’s interview there were 35 expressions of experienced or perceived barrier. Laura’s experience with schools had led her to change schools several times. Laura was discouraged with working with her child’s teacher when she said “muchos de estos maestros estan ciegos y no están abiertos a sugerencias y colaboraciones (“many of these teachers become blind and are not open to suggestions and partnerships.”) Laura expressed that her biggest challenges was with diagnosticians and principals when she was recorded as saying “Siempre tengo problemas con los diagnostas y directores. Yo lucho con ellos mucho más que con los profesores. (“I always have trouble with diagnosticians and principals. I struggle with them much more than with the teachers.”) Laura had made several attempts to collaborate with the school, but remained frustrated and feeling that she had not made any gains. (Appendix C)

**Maria.** This parent participant experienced many instances of aggression and insults towards her, her son, and others in her interactions with the school. As a result 29 barriers were recorded during her interview. Maria had experienced or perceived

barriers from different staff, faculty, and administration. She recalled an incident where a secretary in the front office told another secretary who was speaking with Maria “ahhh, no hagas caso a ella, ella es la madre del tonto. (“ahhh, don’t listen to her, she is the dummy’s mom.”) After this incident, Maria felt it necessary to confront the staff and ultimately speaking with the principal to make him aware of the situation. During her interview, Maria also shared information about an incident with a diagnostician prior to an admission, review, and dismissal meeting. She described the diagnostician as “racista, grosera, y una persona fea (“racist, rude, and an ugly person,”) after this person had requested to know what the status of her citizenship. When asked about her interactions with the principals at her son’s schools, she said “el director me dijo una vez, no otra mamá con un niño con necesidades especiales. (“the principal once told me not another mom with a special needs child.”) Maria shared that the initial encounter with the principal prompted her to seek out help. (Appendix A)

**Ofelia.** Through her participation, Ofelia expressed 38 barriers during her attempts to work through a difficult situation with her son’s school. Ofelia shared some of the difficulties she encountered with her son’s teacher, in one example she reported “La maestra se frustraba conmigo, ella no sabe cómo hablar conmigo sobre cualquier cosa sobre mi hijo. Así que ella me envía al director. (The teacher would get very frustrated with me, she doesn’t know how to talk to me about anything about my son. So she sends me to the principal.”) After experiencing a difficult situation at her son’s school, one which had many parents asking school staff to share

information, she reported the following: “Me enteré a través de algunos de los padres de los niños con los que trabajo y que tienen hijos en la misma escuela. Dicen que los maestros de la escuela les dicen que no era cierto, que no sucedió en la escuela, que es una mentira, y que la señora es una mentirosa. (“I found out through some of the parents of the children that I work with and that have children at the same school. They say that the teachers at the school tell them that it was not true, that it did not happen at the school, that it is a lie, and that the lady is a liar.”) Ofelia’s son was eventually transferred to a different elementary, only to find that the knowledge of the issue at her previous school had led to difficulties at her son’s new campus.

(Appendix B)

**Paula.** The most recent immigrant to the United States, Paula felt that she was a victim of intimidation tactics employed by the school faculty and staff. She recorded 30 barriers experienced or perceived. Paula had established a routine with her daughter and teaching staff at her school. Paula explained that she routinely would accompany her daughter into the school and drop her off at her classroom. She would then take her daughter’s lunch and place it in a refrigerator. The routine went on throughout most of the school year, but was then abruptly ended with two months left. According to Paula, this sudden change was due to an inquiry that she made about a student that had been taken out of school on an ambulance. According to Paula, her concern brought on unwanted attention. Paula said “Un monitor, que cuida los niños, me dijo que al día siguiente no iban a permitir me entrar en la escuela para dejar a mi hija. (“A monitor, they take care of the children, and she told me that

tomorrow I was not going to be allowed to enter the school to drop off my daughter.”)

She decided to address the issue with the principal. Paula reported “Todo estaba en su tono de voz. Se pasó de un tono normal a un tono más agresivo, y dijo algo en el sentido de que tendría que llamar a alguien si seguía exigiendo cosas en su oficina. (“It was all in his tone of voice. It went from a normal tone to a more aggressive tone, and he said something to the effect that he would have to call in someone if I continued to demand things in his office.”) At the time the interview was conducted, Paula was not sure how to proceed with this issue. Her biggest fear was that this would lead to retaliation, and that her daughter would have negative experiences because of her actions. (Appendix D)

Table 2

*Number of Barriers Reported by Participants*

	<u>Antonio</u>	<u>Laura</u>	<u>Maria</u>	<u>Ofelia</u>	<u>Paula</u>	<u>Total</u>
Number of Recorded Barriers	17	35	29	38	30	149

Table 2

Open coding of the data revealed that parent participants each had experienced or perceived several barriers to their participation in the education of their child. The subsequent phase of open coding further examines the data to identify important commonalities.

**Categorization.** The next step in open coding is to further analyze the data to identify categories. The analysis of the interview transcriptions exposed a variety of barriers reported by parent participants resulting in diminished family involvement. The barriers identified were as follows:

***English language barrier.*** All of the participants felt that the lack of English had limited their ability to participate fully or appropriately in the education of their child.

Laura stated during her interview:

“Ahora sé que legalmente deberían darme una copia de todo el papeleo en mi lengua natal pero no me lo dan. Me lo dan en inglés, a menos de que yo lo pida en español, y aún así puede que no me lo den. (“I know now that I am legally supposed to get a copy of all the paperwork in my native language but they don't give it to me. They give it to me in English, unless I request for to be given to me in Spanish, but even then I might not get them.”) (Appendix C)

***Intimidation barrier.*** All of the participants had expressed that at some point a school district personal had attempted to cause them to feel fear or believe that harm would come to them.

Intimidation was experienced by Maria, who shared:

“Igual con la diagnosticadora, Mrs. X, ella era grosera y me preguntaba por mi estado y me pedía mi identificación. Esto fue al comienzo del ARD. Ella era racista, grosera, y mala persona. (“The same with the diagnostician, Mrs. X,

she was rude she asked me for my status and asked me for my identification. That was at the start of the ARD what is this?. She was a racist, rude, and an ugly person.”) (Appendix A)

***Disrespectful behavior barrier.*** All of the participants in the study had on several occasions experienced disrespectful behavior towards them, their children, or others while in their presence.

Maria was upset when recalling an event with a teacher at her child’s school. She stated the following:

“No soy una persona agresiva o irrespetuosa, pero cuando ofenden a tu hijo y le dan apodos feos, duele. De hecho, le tenían un apodo horrible, me enteré por una maestro en la escuela. (“I am not an aggressive person or disrespectful, but when they offend your child or give him ugly nickname, it hurts. In fact they had a horrible nickname for my child, I found out from a teacher at the school.”) (Appendix A)

***Erroneous information barrier.*** Participants who reported this barrier perceived that they were being misguided, either intentionally or due to the school representatives’ own lack of knowledge, during information sharing regarding their child or special education.

Again Laura reported being misguided when she said:

“El segundo problema que he visto, es que muchas veces como padres que no sabemos o no tenemos experiencia, intentan manipularnos y decirnos que firmemos aquí y pongamos fecha acá, sin darno alguna explicación sobre lo



que estamos firmando. (“The second problem that I have seen, is that many times as parents who are not knowledgeable or don't have the experience, they try to manipulate you and tell you to sign here and date here without ever giving you any explanation of what is being signed.”) (Appendix C)

***Discrimination barrier.*** All of the participants reported that a distinction against them, based on their ethnicity, had been made at some point during their interaction with the school faculty and staff.

Ofelia shared her experience when she stated “Yo pienso que tomaron ventaja de mi ignorancia y por mi color. Dijeron que la razón por la que hacía esto era porque yo quería papeles. (“I think that they took advantage of my ignorance and maybe because of color. They did say that the reason I was doing this was because I want papers.”) (Appendix B)

***Direct denial barrier.*** Participants reported that staff at their child’s school have denied any access to the school, which includes the scheduling of meetings with administration or faculty and routine access such as walking their child to the classroom or cafeteria.

Paula said “Me dijo que mañana no me iban a permitir dejar a mi hija en la escuela. (“She told me that tomorrow I was not going to be allowed to enter the school to drop off my daughter.”) when describing what she was told about dropping off her daughter like she had done for most of the school year. (Appendix D)

**ARD (Admission, Review, and Dismissal) Paperwork.** The complexity of the paperwork involved during the admission, review, and dismissal committee meetings was also cited as a barrier that was intentionally placed to deny parents the opportunity to fully participate in the development of an educational program for their child.

Antonio described the ARD paperwork as follows “intentaron hacer ver las cosas diferentes, o complicadas para que el padre no pudiera entender. (“They tried to make things look differently, or to make things complicated in order to prevent the parent from understanding.”) (Appendix E)

**Lack of potential barrier.** All of the parents experienced the belief that the faculty and staff at their child’s school did not believe that their child or parents were capable of achieving success or meeting goals.

Laura believed that the school personnel did not believe in her son’s potential when she stated: “Nos decían que nuestro hijo no pertenecía aquí porque no entendía y que no podría aprender, porque querían que nuestro hijo haga exactamente lo que los otros estudiantes de kinder hacían sin tomar en cuenta que nuestro hijo tenía una discapacidad. (“They would tell us that our son did not belong there because he did not understand and he couldn't learn, because they wanted our son to do exactly what the other students in kindergarten are doing without taking into consideration that our son had a disability.”)

(Appendix C)

***Domineering barrier.*** Parents perceived that school faculty and staff, including district personnel, provide limited parent participation and family involvement in events and activities that were beneficial to the school. The schools also have outlined activities to meet their own expectations rather than having developed a true collaboration with families.

Antonio declared: “A veces quieren trabajar contigo pero siempre a su propio beneficio y no quieren batallar. Quieren que las cosas salgan bien para ellos. (“They do sometimes want to work with you but it is always to their benefit and they do not want to struggle. They want things to come out good for them.”) (Appendix E)

***Lack of preparation barrier.*** Parents experienced and perceived that school faculty and parents alike encountered situations that they are not prepared to handle. The result was an unproductive situation and in many cases may have helped to foster a growing resistance to family involvement.

Laura indicated that parents are unprepared when she said “Porque las personas no estan preparadas. La mayoría de las personas que vienen aquí no saben cómo trabaja el sistema. En México el sistema es muy diferente. (“Because the people are not prepared. The majority of the people that come here do not know how the system works. In Mexico the system is very different.”) (Appendix C)

### **Axial coding**

During the axial coding phase of this grounded theory study, the researcher identified the commonalities between participants and the categories that surfaced during the open coding phase. In this phase the data is examined to find how categories are interconnected (Creswell, 2007). Participants shared many experiences and perceived instances where they felt a barrier was impeding their participation in the education of their children. The data gathered revealed some categories of barriers were experienced or perceived by all of the participants. When the information is scrutinized even further it shows that some categories are experienced or perceived more than others. As shown in Table 3, participants were more likely to experience or perceive disrespectful behavior, followed by the English language barrier, discrimination, intimidation, ARD paperwork, erroneous information, and direct denial.

Table 3

*Barriers by Category and Participant*

<u>Categories Identified</u>	<u>Antonio</u>	<u>Laura</u>	<u>Maria</u>	<u>Ofelia</u>	<u>Paula</u>	<u>Total</u>
Disrespectful Behavior	4	1	14	10	8	37
English Language	1	11	1	7	6	26
Discrimination	1	2	5	5	2	15
Intimidation	1	2	6	3	2	14
ARD	2	6		3		11
Information	1	7	1			9
Direct Denial		1		3	5	9

Table 3

With the exception of Laura, who felt that the biggest barrier she encountered was the English language barrier, the participants all cited more instances where they

felt that the disrespect they encountered from the school was the most difficult hurdle they had to overcome in order to participate in the education of their children.

### **Selective coding**

In selective coding, the core variable emerges from having analyzed and compared the data gathered (Glaser, 1992). Looking deeper into the most commonly reported theme, disrespect, it was found that participants reported experiencing or perceiving this barrier from a variety of different staff at their child's school. As such, a Gauntlet Theory is created with parents having to navigate carefully or face a difficult confrontation with school faculty and staff. The Free Dictionary (2011) defines a "Gauntlet Theory" as menacing or demanding people or things through which one must pass. The participants expressed having encountered negative reactions when making attempts to approach the school and attempting to make contact with front office staff. They met resistance with teachers, diagnosticians, and principals as well as those that work in the front office. The perception of parents is that much of the faculty and staff at their child's school views them as less for a variety of reasons. The perceived discrimination is the reason that many of the parents are hesitant to approach the school and to participate in their child's education. Parents indicated that they wish to be a part of their child's education; however, their experiences with faculty and staff have made them weary and careful in the way and how much they participate. This sentiment was captured by Paula, who stated "Ahora me preocupa que puedan tener cualquier frustración conmigo y lo usen contra mi hija. ("Now I am worried that they might take out any frustration they

have with me on my daughter.”)

### **Emergent Theme**

The data generated from the interviews provided the researcher the necessary information to identify an institutional barrier theory, the Gauntlet theory, which is affecting undocumented Mexican immigrant families and their ability to participate in the education of their children with special needs. By previously stated definition, a “gauntlet” can be “menacing or demanding people or things through which one must pass (Free Dictionary,2011). Various players exist that help give power to the Gauntlet theory, beginning with the front office staff, followed by teachers, diagnosticians, and principals. As parents attempt to participate in the education of their children with special needs they encounter many difficulties that are set in place to minimize the involvement of parents and further increase the divide between families and educational institutions. The many obstacles presented in this study indicate that a system has been established to allow for some families to participate while others are excluded. It is only through persistence and sometimes force, in the form of advocates, that the Gauntlet can be overcome.

### **Unexpected Results**

Despite the many barriers that undocumented Mexican immigrant families face, it was evident from the data that family involvement in their child’s education was a priority for all of the participants. All of the participants expressed having gone through one trial after another, and yet many continued to pursue the outcome that would allow them to participate in the education of their child with a special need. It

would not be difficult to believe that many parents may give up, or at the very least compromise the outcome, after encountering barrier after barrier. Parents are left in a state of uncertainty on how to proceed. This sentiment was captured by Ofelia who said “Como padre, no sé hasta dónde puedo ir a proteger a mi hijo porque van a hacer que se vea como si él es un mentiroso. (“As a parent, I don't know how far I can go to protect my child because they will make him look like he is a liar.”) However, the parent participants in this study have continued to push for favorable outcomes, even reaching the decision to have their children change schools.

### **Summary**

The study shows those experiences and perceptions that contribute to diminished family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families who have children with special needs. The data collected and analyzed gave rise to several themes and a theory, that could be used to explain how an institutional barrier exists in the school system and is used to minimize family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families who have children with special needs.

Seven major themes emerged from the data that was found to be perceived as barrier to family involvement parent participants. The themes that surfaced include disrespectful behavior, English language, discrimination, intimidation, ARD paperwork, information barrier, and direct denial. The data revealed the voice of undocumented Mexican immigrant families and brought forward the existence of an institutional barrier that is referred to as the Gauntlet theory. It would seem that the known benefits to family involvement would encourage educators and families to

enhance their collaboration; however, multiple layers are in place that diminish the opportunities for such an alliance.



## Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a grounded theory regarding the barriers experienced or perceived by undocumented Mexican immigrant families during family involvement opportunities for their children with special needs. The study was necessary due to the lack of existing theory concerning the family involvement in this particular population. The current study focused on the experienced and perceived barriers of five undocumented Mexican immigrant parent participants who had a child with special needs. The study targeted families in a Southwestern city along the United States and Mexican border.

The “grand tour question” of the grounded theory study was: What barriers undermine family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families in the education of children receiving special education services? The question was designed to shed light on an overlooked population. Much has been studied on family involvement as well as immigrant issues; however, there is a paucity of research literature concerning how legal status impacts family involvement in special education.

Undocumented Mexican immigrant families face a gauntlet of challenges during their attempt to obtain services for their children with special needs. The data from this study examined the barriers that participants faced when they interacted with school faculty and staff, and the special education process. Many of the participants expressed that barriers were consistent and unending. Experiencing wave

after wave of barriers might leave parents weary and complacent, which may limit the effectiveness of individualized education plan committees.

Chapter 5 discusses the institutional barriers that emerged from the lived experience of the participants in the study. Chapter 5 also contains a review of the study, interpretation of findings, conclusion, significance, and recommendations.

### **Review of the Study**

The current study was designed to develop a grounded theory based on the analysis during open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Lastly, the data and analysis was utilized to extract a theory from the lived experiences of parent participants. In the open coding analysis, parent participant data revealed seven themes which were consistent between all of the participants. The axial coding phase exposed which of the themes identified during the open coding analysis were the most saturated, as they were most expressed by parent participants. The results of the axial coding phase identified parent participants who experienced or perceived that school personnel involved in the ARD (Admission, Review and Dismissal) were disrespectful. This was the most prominent perception and was singled out for further examination during the selective coding. While examining the theme that was the most reported by participants, a theory emerged. The theory describes the many hurdles that undocumented Mexican immigrant families face in order to participate in the education of their child with special needs.

Results of the current study unveiled a theory that identified an institutional barrier set in place to undermine the family involvement of undocumented Mexican

immigrants. The Gauntlet theory describes the conditions and confrontations that parent participants faced in their attempts to engage in their child's with special needs education. The conclusion section within this chapter will discuss the Gauntlet theory in further detail.

### **Literature Review**

The review of the literature included the examination of the special education process, family involvement, and undocumented Mexican immigrant families. The review goes on to probe how these topics intersect. Current research and findings focus on family involvement as it pertains to the population in general and those that do focus on Latinos often do not make a distinction between those that are in the United States legally versus those that are not. Barriers were identified in the literature; however, the barriers were often tied to general education and not to those encountered by families who have a child with a special need. The following barriers were identified in the literature: (a) fear of deportation, (b) discrimination, (c) assimilation, and (d) lack of resources.

**Fear of deportation.** One barrier is a fear of deportation, in which immigrants refrain from family involvement opportunities because of the possibility of being identified, detained, and deported (Abrego, 2011). During the attempts to recruit parent participants, two declined to be interviewed due to their fear that their participation would result in detection by the authorities. With exception to the two potential participants that refused to be interviewed, the current study did not find this

to be a concern of parent participants. Instead, participants were very active in attempting to make a connection with schools.

**Discrimination.** Discrimination was also a barrier identified by the literature. According to Perez et al., (2007) Latinos perceive or experience racial or ethnic discrimination at a significant percentage. Discrimination was perceived or experienced by all of the parent participants in the current study. Overall, discrimination was the third most reported or identified barrier.

**Assimilation.** Latinos also face the burden of assimilating to a country that has an increasing anti-immigrant sentiment (Salas et al., 2013). The difficulty assimilating to a new country has a negative impact on involvement of families in their child's education. The literature review also exposed the difficulties associated with raising a child with a special need and how meeting such needs does not always include meeting the expectations of family involvement that are set by school faculty and staff (Altiere & Von Kluge, 2009).

**Lack of resources.** Stress placed on the family due to a lack of resources and support plays a role in the diminished ability of parents to fully participate in the education of their child with special needs (Hayes et al., 2010). The literature is saturated with research identifying language as a barrier in the ability of non-English speakers to participate in the education of their child with special needs. The lack of understanding and ability to express themselves serves as a barrier that reduces parent participation (Rivera & Lavan, 2012).

## **Methodology**

A grounded theory design was utilized in this study to identify the barriers to family involvement perceived or experienced by undocumented Mexican immigrant families who have a child with special needs. This methodology was the most appropriate as it would provide the participants an opportunity to share their lived experience and bring a voice to other families who experience the same phenomenon.

**Open coding.** Interviews were conducted with five parent participants. Interviews were conducted in Spanish or bilingually as needed. The interviews produced 149 instances where parent participants expressed experiencing or perceiving a barrier to their involvement in the education of their child with special needs. Findings of this phase of the grounded theory study were categorized during open coding into the following ten barriers: English language barrier, intimidation barrier, disrespectful behavior barrier, erroneous information barrier, discrimination barrier, direct denial barrier, ARD paperwork, lack of potential barrier, domineering barrier, and lack of preparation barrier. A summary of the different barriers identified in the study was provided in chapter 4.

**Axial coding.** The themes were examined and similarities were noted between the different parent participants. Through careful analysis it was discovered that some of the experienced or perceived barriers were more prevalent than others. Participants were more likely to experience or perceive disrespectful behavior, followed by the English language barrier, discrimination, intimidation, ARD paperwork, erroneous information, and lastly direct denial. Across all but one of the

participants, disrespectful behavior was the most common and most often recorded barrier.

**Selective coding.** The previous coding phase, axial coding identified the theme that was the most common and often reported across the parent participants of the study. Using the information generated from axial coding, the disrespectful behavior barrier was identified as the most saturated of the themes identified as well as being the barrier that most resonated with parent participants as a reason for not participating in the education of their child with special needs. Having selected disrespectful behavior as the target barrier, it was important to sift through the information from each participant until a theory began to emerge that would help to explain the presence of the particular phenomenon being examined. For this study, the phenomenon of impeded family involvement would now be described through a lens that would pay closer attention to the inner workings of the disrespectful behavior barrier that parent participants were experiencing or perceiving.

Looking closer at the instances of disrespectful behavior barrier between parent participants a pattern began to emerge and with it a theory began to develop. With most of the parent participants, the same players were mentioned as perpetrating the instances of disrespectful behavior toward them, their children, or their efforts to participate in family involvement opportunities.

**Theory.** The Gauntlet theory that was generated from the lived experiences of parent participants describes the institutional barriers that diminish family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrants. The Gauntlet theory shows how

disrespectful behavior is experienced or perceived by parent participants beginning with front office staff, faculty, related service providers, and administrators, who will along the way create unpleasant circumstances which will serve to curtail family involvement. The Gauntlet theory explains an aspect to diminished family involvement by undocumented Mexican immigrant families, which has not been thoroughly studied nor present in the literature.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings of the current grounded theory study regarding barriers to family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families who have a child with special needs resulted in 149 barriers reported by five parent participants. Seven themes emerged from face-to-face interviews and simultaneous analysis that revolved around the grand tour question that guided the current study. The themes that resulted from the grand tour question, “What barriers undermine family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families in the education of children receiving special education services?” were (a) disrespectful behavior, (b) English language, (c) discrimination, (d) intimidation, (e) Admission, Review, and Dismissal process, (f) information, and (g) direct denial.

**Disrespectful behavior.** Parent participants reported having experienced disrespectful behavior towards them, their children, or about others. All of the parent participants reported instances of having experienced disrespectful behavior and overall this barrier was reported 37 times, making it the most recorded barrier. Parent participants revealed that disrespectful behavior was experienced at different levels.

including front office staff, teachers, diagnosticians, and administrators. The disrespectful behavior was mostly reported to be against the parent participant, but in some cases it was directed to other parents while the parent participant was present. Maria stated “ellos critican a otros padres que vino a un ARD, madres con niños con discapacidades. Dijeron: "Oh, aquí viene esa mamá", "esa mamá grita mucho”, “mira esa mamá le gusta pelear”, o “mira como esa mamá esta vistida. (“they would criticize other parents that would come to ARDs, moms with children with disabilities. They would say "Oh, here comes that mom", "that mom yells a lot", or "look at how that mom likes to fight", or "look at how that mom is dressed.”)

**English language barrier.** This barrier was also experienced by all of the participants and was recorded 26 times. They felt that their limited English abilities were impacting the amount of involvement they had in their child’s education. Some of the parent participants felt that this problem was compounded, due to the inability or lack of interest of educators to make efforts to bridge the language gap. Laura reported a lack of English as the biggest barrier to her participation in her child’s school. Laura said “Yo sé que debería legalmente recibir una copia de todaos los documentos en mi lengua maternal, perno no me lo dan. Lo dan en Inglés, A menos que yo lo pido en español, pero incluso puede ser que ni asi me lo den (“I know now that I am legally supposed to get a copy of all the paperwork in my native language, but they don't give it to me. They give it to me in English, unless I request for it to be given to me in Spanish, but even then I might not get them.”)



**Discrimination.** Parent participants also reported experiencing or perceiving discrimination by school staff, faculty, or administration. Discrimination was recorded 15 times throughout the interviews. Maria experienced being treated differently and attributed that the distinction was made due to her ethnicity. She said “Nosotros que somos morenos, que venimos de México, tienen eso contra nosotros y nos juzgan y nos tratan diferente. (“Those of us that are brown, that come from Mexico, they have that against us and they judge us and treat us differently.”)

**Intimidation.** The parent participants had all experienced intimidation from a school district personnel. This was reported by parents 14 times. Paula was attempting to make arrangements with the principal to become involved in her daughter’s school, when she experienced a feeling of intimidation. She explained that the principal was frustrated with her and threatened to call someone if she insisted on trying to gain access to her daughter’s class.

**Admission, Review, and Dismissal process.** Parents reported difficulties with the ARD process 11 times. Parent participants reported that the ARD process was difficult to understand, they were not prepared for the meetings, and that information would be altered from what was said in the meeting. Antonio remarked that “trataron de hacer que las cosas se ven de otra manera, o para hacer las cosas complicadas con el fin de evitar que el padre de la comprensión (they tried to make things look differently, or to make things complicated in order to prevent the parent from understanding.”)

**Information.** Some of the parent participants reported that misinformation was given to them. They explained that information was withheld or changed to suit the needs of the school. During an ARD, Laura stopped a meeting when she noticed that the information the translator was providing was the wrong information.

**Direct Denial.** Parent participants reported having been denied access to their child's school, or to information. They explained that school staff have refused to schedule meetings with administrators or faculty. Even routine access was denied by different faculty and staff. Paula experienced a direct denial when she was told she would no longer be allowed to walk her child to the classroom, which she had done the majority of the school year. She explained to administrators that she had established the routine with her daughter and that a change without preparing her would be stressful. Despite her efforts, Paula was no longer allowed to enter the building.

### **Significance**

The Gauntlet theory surfaced from the themes identified by the data collection and analysis phase of this grounded theory study. This theory shows the importance of developing training that might enhance the understanding of school faculty and staff who work with undocumented Mexican immigrant families. The United States currently attracts immigrants from around the world, with the majority coming from Mexico. This trend is contributing to students who are from Mexico. Many times these student's parent(s) do not have the appropriate legal status. These students enter into the United States education system and may require specialized attention from

educators and school personnel. This research is timely because of the importance of serving students with special needs regardless of legal status of their parents.

The United States has seen immigration issues take center stage, by way of executive orders, campaign platforms, and media coverage. The current study is important because educators need to prepare themselves in order to serve this population whose presence is felt throughout the United States. The preparation of educators is especially valuable to undocumented Mexican immigrant families. With the assistance of well-trained school personnel, parents might be able to better participate in their child's special education process and individualized education plan development.

In most organizations a chain of command is developed. The chain of command refers to the different levels of authority in the organization (Kelchner, 2015). The chain of command in an organization will be headed by the Chief Executive Officer and level down continuously until it reaches those in the front lines, the workers. The chain of command serves many purposes, including organizing employees, establishes responsibilities, facilitating communication, and provides support during times of crisis. School systems have also established a chain of command and have utilized it in much of the same way as other organizations

The established chain of command in the school system is the main vehicle for barriers to diminish family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families in the Gauntlet theory. Explaining the different and ongoing barriers that parent participants encountered requires a description of the chain of command that

was described by parent participants during interviews. The first rung in the hierarchy that undocumented Mexican immigrant families must scale is that of the front office staff. If parents are not discouraged and continue to seek out an acceptable outcome, they will have to face teachers. When appropriate participation in the education of their child with special needs is not reached, parents must again seek out another level of authority, which is often the diagnostician. Having not gained sufficient access to their child's education, participants approached the school administration followed by district personnel if the issue is not resolved. The chain of command described by this study's participants was a tool used to exhaust the resources, time, and energy of many undocumented Mexican immigrant families.

The diminished ability of parents to fully participate in the education of their child with special needs can leave undocumented Mexican immigrant families with little motivation and hope. Parent participants who have successfully managed to reach a favorable outcome have often had to employ the services of advocates and other professionals that guide or attend special education meetings. In some instances the use of advocates and other professionals has led to favorable outcomes, but it can also create greater issues for undocumented Mexican immigrant families. Those families that utilize outside assistance risk experiencing retaliation in the form of having developed a reputation as a difficult or aggressive parent.

### **Significance Implied by the Data**

The following section, regarding the significance of the current study, examines those areas that the data implied as being directly related to the barriers

identified. Such areas include (a) leadership, (b) collaboration, (c) family involvement, and (d) immigration policy.

**Leadership.** The current study's themes outline the importance for educational leaders, faculty, and staff to develop a better system and rapport with undocumented Mexican immigrant families who have children with special needs. According to parent participants, having to negotiate disrespectful behavior at the different levels of the school chain of command is the most common and difficult barrier to overcome when attempting to gain access to their child's education. The parent participants involved in the study all expressed a willingness and eagerness to participate in family involvement opportunities, but have met resistance and confrontational school personnel. Although the current study unveiled that undocumented Mexican immigrant families who attempt to participate in their child's education have encountered disrespectful behaviors towards them, all have continued to pursue avenues which would allow them to have a favorable outcome. Despite the institutional barriers that are in place, which diminish family involvement, an opportunity exists to improve the collaboration between educators and undocumented Mexican families who have children with special needs. These findings indicate a need for educators to utilize opportunities to increase family involvement, develop training opportunities for staff and faculty, and to enhance collaboration with undocumented Mexican families.

**Collaboration.** According to Smith et al. (2011), family involvement has a positive impact on a student's academic outcomes as well as behavior. Although

many parents may not be trained or prepared to fully and effectively participate in the special education process, increasing family involvement and developing better rapport with parents is the first step to reaching higher levels of collaboration which might result in better services for children with special needs. The increased collaboration and enhanced quality of family involvement between undocumented Mexican immigrant families and educators might result in the development of a more effective individualized education plan and services of higher quality for students with special needs. Therefore, it is the responsibility of educational leaders to increase their understanding of such issues in order to bring into effect services that meet the needs of the students with special needs that they serve.

**Family involvement.** The Gauntlet theory unveiled by this study is important for educational leaders to consider when planning ways to increase family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families who have children with special needs served in special education programs. Most of the literature reviewed during the process of this study was focused on family involvement with respect to the general public. A limited amount of literature on the topic of family involvement was focused on the Latino community. Further, literature that examined the issue through the perspective of undocumented Mexican immigrant families who have children with special needs was almost nonexistent. The institutional barriers that surfaced and were described in this study were not consistent with the literature. This indicates that the undocumented status of families coupled with the special education process adds an aspect that has not been examined sufficiently. The objective of this

qualitative study using a grounded theory design was to allow a theory to emerge from the lived experiences of parent participants concerning family involvement in their child's school. Evidence was exposed that identifies the need for providing better circumstances for undocumented Mexican immigrant families to participate in family involvement opportunities.

**Immigration Policy.** The themes identified by the current study show the importance of gaining a better understanding of the immigration policy of the United States. The 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyer vs. Doe* allowed for undocumented immigrants to receive an education in the United States. Despite the decision in favor of educating undocumented immigrant students, the ruling was vague in how it should be implemented. The limited information regarding the education of undocumented students has trickled down to the school systems and educators, who may be at a loss when they encounter such students. The lack of proper guidance from the Supreme Court decision and the lack of awareness of undocumented student rights by educators, creates a difficult situation for undocumented Mexican immigrants. Undocumented Mexican immigrant families must find ways to access the education their children are entitled to while at the same time coping with the barriers they encounter.

### **Recommendations**

Through the lived experiences of the parent participants an understanding of the barriers that undocumented Mexican immigrant families face was gained. Through such knowledge recommendations can be developed in order to have a

positive impact on the family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families, as well as future research, and immigration policy.

**Educational leadership.** The identification of the Gauntlet theory in the current study was developed from the collection and analysis of data using a grounded theory design. The lived experiences of undocumented Mexican immigrant families allowed insight to their interactions with school personnel. The findings of the study point to the need for educational leaders to take steps to address issues that are having a harmful effect on family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrants.

According to Meister (2010), teachers report that their abilities to educate are enhanced by a supportive and understanding administrator. Administrators must therefore be the first to understand and adopt change. Educating themselves on the rights and issues surrounding undocumented immigrants would stretch not only their abilities to embrace the population but also to enhance the abilities of the teachers they guide.

Educational leaders who are well informed of the rights and issues that are faced by undocumented immigrants are in a position to create opportunities that will develop trust and opportunities for family involvement. Family involvement brings a variety of benefits for students, families, schools, and communities. Creating opportunities to increase the quality and number of family involvement events will have a positive impact and allow for students of all ability level and immigration status to benefit.



**Future research.** The findings of this study indicate that further study is needed regarding the perceived or experienced barriers to family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families who have children with special needs. The aim of grounded theory is to develop a theory that will explain a phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). The current grounded theory study identified the Gauntlet theory, an institutional barrier that is in place and diminishes the family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families. Future qualitative studies may use the information from this work to expand on the impact and extent to which family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families is affected by institutional barriers. Future studies may also examine the extent to which institutional barriers are consciously implemented by educators who wish to intentionally exclude undocumented Mexican immigrant families.

Five parent participants were used for the study; future studies may benefit from interviews from more participants. The study interviewed parents without any follow up meetings. Future grounded theory studies could be enhanced by allowing follow up interviews with parent participants. Increasing the number of participants and the number of times each participant is interviewed would help to fully saturate themes with information.

Future studies to investigate the identified themes should be expanded to include interviews with parent participants who have been in the United States for a longer range of times in order to compare the results from those that have recently immigrated to those that have been in the country for a longer period.

**Immigration policy.** The findings of the current study indicate a need to examine the United States immigration policy. In the United States, undocumented immigrants are afforded the right to an education; however, a conflict arises when a student taking advantage of this right has an identified disability. Undocumented students who are identified through IDEA and provided the right to an education regardless of immigration status cannot receive the full benefits of special education. IDEA mandates that parents be a part of the special education process. While undocumented students are protected in public schools, their families may not be granted the same rights. This lack of protection for undocumented parents must be addressed if they are to fully participate in the special education process as mandated by IDEA. Immigration policy must be reformed to allow for undocumented parents of students with a special need to participate in the special education process without limiting their role due to their immigration status.

### **Conclusion**

The researcher's aim in a grounded theory study is to identify what the main concerns or problems a group of people is facing (Glaser, 1992). In grounded theory, as data is collected it is also being analyzed, coded, categorized, and compared. The data collection gives rise to categories that can be inspected and used to determine which issue is imposing the most on the phenomenon. The selection and deeper examination of a chosen category will allow a theory to materialize.

In this study, seven themes surfaced from the analyzed data. The themes were generated in response to the study's grand tour question, "What barriers undermine

family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families in the education of children receiving special education services?” The theory was constructed through the simultaneous collection and analysis during interviews and the deeper examination of the selected theme.

The grand tour question of this grounded theory study was developed in order to acquire a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions which decrease family involvement of undocumented Mexican immigrant families of children with special needs. The seven themes derived from the data and analysis brought to light barriers that hinder family involvement. All of the themes are important to address; however, one theory, earlier labeled as the Gauntlet theory, was developed from the theme that was most saturated with parent participant experiences and perceptions. The Gauntlet theory emerged from the study and presents a clear pattern of obstacles for undocumented Mexican immigrant families to pursue family involvement opportunities. The barriers placed in front of the parent participants in essence became the Gauntlet they were required to “run” in order to be involved in their child’s education.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTS

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY  
2015  
TRANSCRIPTION  
Santiago Morales

**Primary Investigator = PI**  
**Parent Participant = S**

**Date: 4/21/2015      Time: 3:45 pm**

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PI: Hello, Thank you for participating in my study today.

S: Your Welcome, I'm glad I can help.

PI: I will begin by explaining the purpose of the study. I am looking to find information about the interactions that you have experienced that may help family involvement in their children's special education program. I will be interviewing you for approximately one hour, I will record the interview, and I will ask you a general question and guide you with more questions as we may need them. The purpose of the study is to identify the barriers that are preventing them from participating in the special education program of their children. If you could elaborate as much as you can and I will ask questions as I need things clarified.

S: Ok

PI: Also as I explained earlier, at any time you may withdrawal from the study. We will stop the interview and none of the information will be used for the study. I will not be reporting any information discussed here with any agency or school district. I will only use the information for the purpose of the study.

S: Ok

PI: So. Would you like to continue and participate in the study?

S: Yes, let's get started, ha-ha.

PI: Yes, Let's get started. Please tell me a little about your son.

S: What would you like to know, you need to tell me cause then I will talk all night?

PI: Whatever you would like to tell me.

S: My son started off on the wrong foot because of a problem he had in Head Start. I don't know if, I remember the first time I went with the neurologist and she told me that my son has Autism. I said ok, what do you eat that with? In other words I didn't know anything about Autism. She told me to not worry, that my job was to find him the right therapy and if he was going to break out of his bubble and he doesn't he will not. So I began to read. He did talk late, not until about five years old. He is a sensitive child, but everyone told me that children with Autism are not sensitive that they do not show people their emotions or affection. It's true they don't show it, but if you set the example they will learn how to show their emotions. My son never made eye contact, he would turn or walk away. They would tell me that it wasn't right to tell him to look me in my eyes when we would talk, but I would do it and soon after whenever I would be talking to him and I wasn't looking at him he would remind me to look at him when we were speaking. But all that has help him. I gave myself a goal, I have a friend who has a child with Autism. Both of our kids had the same behaviors, they would yell, bite themselves, hit themselves and other things. Right

now my son doesn't do that stuff, he doesn't bite himself, and he doesn't yell well not a lot. He has progressed so much.

PI: Thank you for sharing about your son. Now we are going to talk a little bit about how you work with the school regarding your son and how you feel about the people that you interact with. The general question I want to ask is "what are the issues surrounding your participation in your child's education?"

S: What are the things that ...

PI: Yes, what are the things that have happened that are examples of something that has caused you fear or discomfort with participating in the education of your child.

S: Well up until this point I haven't felt any fear, but rather with a lot of anger and frustration, but that they try to intimidate me and give me wrong information

PI: What do you mean the wrong information?

S: Hmm. That they don't give you enough information of what is happening, they don't always tell you what is happening do you know what I mean. They hide information, hmm, that they are rude, especially the people in the front of the office.

PI: So, please tell me a time when you have felt this way.

S: One time I arrived at my son's school, it was XXXX school. And I asked to speak to the diagnostician and one secretary told the other "Ahh, don't listen to her, she is "the dummy's mom. They are Mrs..." I don't remember the name of the teacher "and you know how those moms are". I walked around the counter and I told her "you know what I do not show you a lack of respect and you will show me a lack of respect and you will definitely not show a lack of respect to my son. If you do not



have the ethics to be here, I am sorry, but I have every right to be hear. Call someone for me or at this moment I will contact someone from the district and will have some problems". I did feel bad with a lot of embarrassment and frustration but if I don't defend him who is going to defend him. And if I let myself from those people, of which they are tons of, those insults will continue.

PI: What was the result of that interaction?

S: The principal came out and we began to talk and he scolded them right there and from that point on they began to change their behavior. The same with the diagnostician, Mrs. XXXX, she was rude she asked me for my status and asked me for my identification. That was at the start of the ARD. She was a racist, rude, and an ugly person.

PI: When you say that she asked you for your identification and status, what happened?

S: This was at the beginning of the ARD, we were waiting for the rest of the members to come into the classroom and we were by ourselves. I remember she was already upset because I had asked her for daily notes, reports of the therapy my child was receiving. I was asking her for a variety of things and she didn't like that, understand, like she didn't like to work. It was her way of unloading before the rest of the members arrived. I didn't show her my identification and I told her that I was within my rights not to show her anything and she had no right to ask me for my identification in the first place, and it went worse for me cause I had to struggle with

her for two years until my lawyer became involved, which was when she started to calm down. They eventually changed her from that school.

PI: You said that she was a racist, why do you feel that she is a racist?

S: Because I saw how she treated people who looked American, White versus those who had brown skin or blacks.

PI: Ok, you said you had to use a lawyer?

S: Yes

PI: And what is what happened?

S: They changed completely and they gave my child the treatment that he needed. They changed their behavior towards me 100%.

PI: And it was the same diagnostician?

S: It was the same one, but she could handle the pressure and I don't know if they moved her, fired her, I don't know how it went but I think they fired her. They moved her.

PI: Has there been another occasion where you felt they did not treat you right?

S: In head start

PI: What happened?

S: In head start I had a problem because a teacher hit my child. I ended up talking with XXXX but there was always a person with her. She behaved very well, but the minute you stepped away a little and she would make comments so that you could hear them. I used to go to policy meetings and trainings. One time she came up to me and asked me why I was getting training if I didn't have a change of getting hired.

I remember that Mr. XXXX came out and explained that I was having trouble with one of the teachers. It seemed that she and the teacher that was let go because of the incident had been friends. What I did, I asked her at a meeting if I could talk to her. I asked her what was her problem with me, I told her that if she thought it was okay for teachers to hit their students then maybe she should not be working there. I also told her that she didn't know my status, that my file may say something but that she did not know. She said "Ok, if you can fix things quickly then we can find a position for you". From that point on she changed her behavior, and she was good from then on, but the damage was done.

PI: In the public schools, the school has invited you to participate in ARDs, how has that gone for you?

S: Since I got the right information from different sources, the school, the dr. the neurologist. I think that they have been, after two, three years, the way they are supposed to be.

PI: And how about before that?

S: It was nothing but arguments, getting up in the middle of the ARD. the principal or who was in charge of the school and leave, or not all the members would show up. But I also learned that I could do the same thing and cancel ARDs and to get up and leave.

PI: And do you think it was the same for others?

S: No, for others it was worse.

PI: Why

S: For others it was worse

PI: Why

S: They seem to know who the weaker parents are and that don't know what they are doing. And the school staff will do what they want, not what they are legally supposed to do. The faculty is not trained the assistants are not either, in other words it's...

R: You explained that the information they gave you was incorrect, what did you mean?

S: One example is when I didn't know what an ARD was, I knew what it was but I didn't know the process of an ARD. The first ARD meeting I had, it was only the diagnostician and me. The diagnostician did not speak any English and there was nobody there to interpret for us and there were only two pages of ARD. In other words, she didn't explain anything to me, but I started to get information outside of the school and things started to change. I'm going to start to get sentimental. I'm starting to remember everything that has happened.

PI: Why? What are you remembering?

S: Because I think they should respect the children and they don't do it. Why are they like that? Why are they in that position if they don't want to be there? I don't know... for example. I go to take my older son lunch to his school. There is a child with Autism, at least I think it looks like a severe Autism. Every day I get there at 11:55 and that boy is outside walking around. He has lasted outside for more than 25 minutes in the cold, the sun, and nobody tells him anything. In other words there is

no supervision, like I have seen children from first and second grade taken out to the bus, with whatever disability and the teachers are nowhere to be seen and they let them walk out to the bus by themselves. I don't think they have the ethics to be holding that position. No I don't think so. They are lacking a lot of education.

PI: At any time has the school tried to work with you? To establish a partnership or collaboration?

S: Yes

PI: How was that?

S: This was after all the problems, to begin with I always addressed them with respect, I never lacked in respect, I never yelled, I never fought with them, I knew I had to talk with them and that made a big difference. That was, let's see my son is in fourth so let's say that in second grade things started to change. They started to invite me to be a part of committees, to help in the office, to help, and they started to include me more.

PI: This was all after the lawyer was taken to the school?

S: In fact they began to give me training. They paid for class of CPR. They sent me to meeting, in other words they changed completely. Later they themselves told me what I should be doing there at the school.

PI: What do you mean?

S: For example, if my son, right now he has 10 years, when he was 8 1/2 he stopped having accidents of having bowel movements. What they would do, is if he had an accident, they would send him to the restroom and they would call my younger son to

come and help him in the restroom. They explained to me that there is a law that prevents them from touching the children, but I would prefer that they call me instead they would call my other son so that he could help him. My son was six years old and they would pull him out of class in order to come help his brother. Well, I found out and I moved to fix the problem. What do you think happened? Well they would call me all the time, up to three times per day. But...

PI: Why do you think they would call you so much to do that?

S: I think it was to insist that I do what is expected of me. To see if I was going to follow through with their maximum expectation. Because I insisted on a lot, to see if I too could keep up with what they told me to do and to see if it's true that I do care about my son. That is how I perceived what they were doing.

PI: Why do you think the school changed their attitude with you after the lawyer became involved? In other words, before the lawyer the school say you a certain way. They thought they could do this or that but once they saw that you would defend yourself with a lawyer they changed. Why do you think they changed?

S: That I was not going to let myself. That I was not going to keep myself quiet. In fact the day after I showed up to the ARD with my lawyer, the next day the ladies in the front office would never greet me with the exception of one. That following day they all kept telling me good morning, and good morning. The moment the lawyer went with me their facial expressions changed, they even memorized my child's name. My son would pass by the office, because I would sometimes sit in front of the office and I would check on what my son was doing, and things changed so much

they would say "Hi XXXX, Bye XXXX, where are you going XXXX". Ok, the next day I remember I showed up and the front office staff said "Hi Mrs. XXXX, how are you today? I saw that you came yesterday, how did it go? Good for you for defending yourself". That's how it started, in other words everything changed 100%

PI: Do you think that only because you were willing to defend yourself that their attitudes changed?

S: Yes

PI: What, in your opinion, what do they see in someone that doesn't defend themselves? Why is it easier to treat them badly?

S: Because they are ugly. It is easy to intimidate someone. I lasted five years, four years taking my children twice a week to therapy. They always would ask me for identification. Before I took the lawyer, I remember, they would ask me for my identification and another form of identification. In fact one time I was told that it was a shame that I wasn't a resident and I said "no unfortunately I'm really Mexican, ha-ha". And she stayed quiet she never said anything. From that point on she began to change, in fact the front office staff have apologized to me. I don't understand why they act that way with people for I think that they don't defend themselves and two because they are undocumented. In other words, if the child is a citizen, a resident, even if they don't have papers they should be treating them equally. I don't know why that discrimination exist and it exist in all of the schools. Equally, they discriminate and quick to talk badly about people. I noticed this a lot at my child's school. At that school there were several people that went to the same therapy as my child. I would

be in the front office and the secretary would comment on the other parents that would come in to pick up their child. Questioning their dedication to their children because of the way they looked. I would not say anything, and I think that helped me win them over because they saw that I would not join in their games. I never talked negatively, even when I wanted to tell them something but I never did. Same at this new school, but I joined the PTA, I volunteer, I speak with the principal regularly and same thing "Hi XXXX, Bye XXX"

PI: So do you think that the way that they treat you and your son now, do you think it is sincere?

S: I think that still after a year after I took the lawyer they were still acting hypocrites and they didn't feel it. I think that as they started to get to know my child, to get to know me, that it helped them to become a little better.

PI: Why, because they got to know you better?

S: Yes, because they would criticize other parents that would come to ARD, moms with children with disabilities. They would say "Oh, here comes that Mom", "That mom yells a lot" or "Look at how that mom likes to fight" or "Look at how that mom is dressed". And I think that what helped me is that I never gave in and if I ever made a disagreeable facial gesture I would feel badly. But instead of feeling badly and staying home, I would dress up the next day and show up at the school. I think it was that attitude that changed things and that they tried to intimidate me but since I didn't let myself, I think that it was that they couldn't walk all over me. That's what I think.

PI: You said that you felt bad. How did you feel bad?



S: Frustration, Wanting to cry, wanting to tell them to step outside even though I am not an aggressive person or disrespectful, but when they offend your child or give him ugly nickname, it hurts. In fact they had a horrible nickname for my child, I found out from a teacher at the school. I called my lawyer, I told her what was happening and I had hear it before, I heard it myself. I told the lawyer that if she doesn't answer pick up or answer me that I was not sure what I was about to do to that teacher. I remember the lawyer said to control myself and schedule an urgent meeting and she would go with me. And yes a week later I had a meeting and I asked to have the teacher attend another teacher that would do the same. I told them the horrible name they would call my son and explained that I had written a letter that explained that the teacher was not showing one of her students a horrible nickname despite knowing that my son had special needs and that his behavior was not entirely in his control. I also explained that what my son was doing was not to bother anyone but was a necessity and instead of using that time to show disrespect she should use her time to teach my son. I had them sign it, the teacher signed it, the principal signed it, I did and so did my lawyer. I took the letter to the district office, which doesn't do anything either, but at least I kept a copy of the letter with their signatures on it.

PI: With everything that happened, did the district office ever get involved?

S: I have spoken with the superintendent, but all he does is wash his hands of the situation. About three years ago my son left campus through an opening in the fence outside. And I remember that I showed up because a lady had told me what had

happened. I had gone to the superintendent twice before because of the same thing. I showed up and I filed a police report. I said please inform the police because I wanted a report to be filed and I asked to speak to the superintendent. I spoke to a very good policeman because the policeman began to quote laws and he appeared more like a lawyer than a policeman. On Monday they had covered the opening in the fence, in two days. I don't know if it was the superintendent or the school.

PI: How do you feel that the principle and teachers feel about you?

S: Which school the old one or the new one?

PI: Let's start with his old school and we will move to the new one.

S: At the beginning, bad. In fact, the principal once told me "not another mom with a special needs child". That's how it started, which is when I needed to look for help. They would make many comments right in front of me. Towards the end they fired him, but before he left I was helping out with him, in fact he mention that because of me he had changed his way of seeing me and that I was not the person he thought I was. I don't know if they thought I was going to be disrespectful like a lot of moms do at the ARDs. And I think that it was because of that that the principle would ask me that if he said something the right way. I think he was the only one who expected me to be different, because the vice principal was different. I never had any problems with her, in fact I would speak with her well, I never had any problems with her. She would invite me to the school, we would talk. She would say that she admired me. She never said anything or gave me a bad look or gesture. In fact the last day that my children went to that school she hugged me and cried. She said that she was going to

miss her students but also their mom. Now, I'm the new mom ever since I moved, but the principal treats me well. I think because we are both moms, and I think that she treats me well her and her assistant. It's because I'm not problematic. The problems have always been because of them. It's usually the front office staff that is the source of problems because they don't know you.

PI: Why? How do you know that?

S: It's because I don't know why they are like that, they are all like that ever since Head Start. They judge people from the very beginning. From the beginning. I have always like to try and go as well dressed as possible. They see me, and I think that it bothers them that I am not the person that they think I should be and they begin to behave badly, not all of them but some do.

PI: How do you think they expect you to be?

S: They expect moms to be submissive and they expect to treat moms how they want to and when they see a mom that does not let herself and is trying to be involved in the school, that they don't like that.

S: And even though someone doesn't try to intimidate them, they themselves become intimidated.

PI: How do you think they want you to be?

S: Submissive. For example I remember when I first separated from my husband. He didn't accompany me to the ARD, well he never accompanied me but I imagine that my son made some comments at school and the teacher approached and said "Mrs. is it true that your husband is no longer at the home" I said "Really, I don't have

to be giving you any explanation" She said my son told her that my husband wasn't at home anymore. I told her we had separated and she said that she was asking in order to give my son more attention. The following day I went into the front office and it appeared intentional that the secretaries began to make comments such as "There is nothing that compares to families that are united" and "You know that when parents separate that their children will not be good kids". I didn't listen to the comments and ignored them and soon they stopped making those comments. I never let myself, but to start, I never understood how things got so mixed together. I could understand that they would want to know in order to give more attention to my son during a difficult time. The same with the teacher she said "don't you care?" I asked "don't I care about what?" "Getting separated?" I said "Of course I cared, but just because I cared it doesn't mean that I'm going to come here to cry to you about it" and that's what they want. They want to see you suffering, see you letting yourself, putting up with anything they tell you.

PI: Do you think it is the same for everyone?

S: I don't think it is the same for everyone.

PI: Why

S: To start with they see someone who is white, not all white people have papers but they are not going to be judging them they are not going to question her because she is white. But those of us that are brown, that come from Mexico, they have that against us and they judge us and treat us differently. I think we are not treated the same.

PI: We talked about this a little but, the school, the teachers, and the administration.

What do you think they expect from you in the education of your child?

S: Like?

PI: What do you think the teacher is expecting you to be doing in the education of your child with a special need?

S: Well I can imagine that they expect a lot of thing, especially now at the new school my son is attending. The teacher will ask me for help. For example, she will say "will you talk to the parents" She has invited me to the monthly meetings, to talk with parents to get closer with their children, that many of them have a child and they feel frustrated. She said "look how many children you have and you do not struggle with them and you don't get frustrated with them and you don't complain" Well to start off if I complain I'm not going to complain to her and second I will not complain at all, understand? I think that that will change everything, that it will change her perspective of me.

PI: In general what is it that the school expects from you?

S: To do their job for them. It's that simple.

PI: Why do you say that?

S: Cause my son right now is learning how to read and the teacher will sometimes ask me to teach him how to read at home or he struggles with something else and she says that I should be teaching him that at home. I do teach him at home but I won't be telling her either. It's like they don't want to work like they want to do the least amount possible. I have for many years tried to teach him a lot and I have never

received any support from them and if they do say they will support you its only empty promises. I am giving serious thought to home schooling my son, but that is a different story.

PI: Why is that another story?

S: Because from what I see right now my sons teacher has sixteen students in her class and one assistant, there are six students with autism, one in a wheelchair, one with down's syndrome and the others I don't know. To start with that is too many children. As much as she would want to she will not be able to give them the adequate attention. Let's be realistic. She is not a magician. A group with students with disabilities it's not possible. But what can I do, I have to adopt the system and try to help him the most I can. I think that will work the best.

PI: Do you think that there are a lot of parents that have gone through similar experiences that you have gone through at their schools?

S: Yes

PI: What do you think that the schools could do to better that for parents?

S: More training

PI: For who?

S: For the teachers, the assistants, but to start with the principal and the secretaries in the front office. In other words all the staff.

PI: What kind of training?

S: How to treat children with special needs? What to do in difficult situations?

PI: Explain a little about what you would like to see in the treating children with special needs training?

S: For example a child with autism gets frustrated very easily. In my son's case thankfully he does not yell, he no longer hits himself in the head, for example he had a peer that was more involved and would yell sometimes. The teachers would leave him alone, they would get him as far away as possible and let him yell. I understand they can't get near him, but they could have tried to talk with him, but instead they call the parents or call the police.

PI: Why do you say they will call the police?

S: I have an acquaintance in another school district, whose son has severe autism. Her son is eleven years-old. Her son became aggressive with the teacher and they called the police then her. They told her that her son was being very rebellious. I don't think they know. It's easier for them to call all students Autistic and treat them the same way. For example, my son who did not wear a diaper. I worked with him at home and if the school would have supported me at school then he would have reached that goal sooner. Instead of reinforcing him letting someone know that he needed to use the restroom, they did nothing. Let's take a student with Down's syndrome. What do most of the schools do? They sit them in front of a computer, give them toys, or let them color. I have seen it. I don't even think that the teachers are prepared to work with students with Down's syndrome. A teacher calls themselves a special education teacher because they have a child in a wheelchair in their classroom, but they have no real idea of how to work with that child. I have

experienced at the other school that the teacher would ask me "What is Autism? Can you explain it to me?" If she doesn't understand it, can you imagine if my son starts to cry or wants to leave. That same teacher would say that they don't send them to training or tell them anything except that they are getting a student with Autism. Whose fault is that? It starts from the top and the ones on top all they do is sit back and scratch their stomachs.

PI: If you were to give the training how would you do it?

S: I think that I would start from the top. Starting from the superintendent, to the principals. I would start them in getting familiar with each category of disability, and it might be too much to ask but they should be trained in psychology to help children with problems, with behavior, with Autism, or whatever they need. But they don't get it or if they do they don't apply it.

PI: What are some other things, like the training, that the school could do to make a better partnership?

S: The school? In order to accomplish what?

PI: To encourage the parents to participate and feel more comfortable working with the school and being an advocate for their children.

S: I think that this is something that again training can help the staff get closer to the parents. To start with I think that there might be some teachers that might have more problems than those that they say have problems and they have them guiding children. For example, my son had a substitute teacher last year, and I remember her well because I got to the classroom and the principal was there and he introduced her



to me. I guess she felt comfortable with me because when I was leaving she told me that she needed to go out back to smoke a cigarette and to take some pills that she needs for her nerves. I asked her if she smoked there at school. She replied that she does but that she was going to stop. She said she would be right back. I didn't say anything. I spoke to the principal and asked if he was aware that she smoked and took pills. He said he didn't know. I told him that she might not be a good person to have around the kids. His reply was that at that time of day he would not be able to get another substitute. So I asked him what he planned to do and his solution was to distribute the kids from that classroom to the other classrooms. My son spent the next few days in a different classroom but the other students remained in the same room. The parents of the other children never knew that this was going on. Its cases like this that I start to get a feel for what people in the school think and care for our children with special needs.

PI: What is it that schools can do to enhance family involvement, in order to strengthen the collaboration with parents and the school?

S: They need to make an attempt to get closer to parents, and open up the lines of communication so that parents can become more familiar with the process and give them confidence, but I don't think that will ever happen.

APPENDIX B

TRANSCRIPTS

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY  
2015  
TRANSCRIPTION  
Santiago Morales

**Primary Investigator = PI**  
**Parent Participant = S**

**Date: 4/24/2015      Time: 3:30 pm**

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PI: Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

S: You're welcome

PI: To start I would like to explain that this study is looking to find information about your experiences with your child's school and his special education program. The interview will be about an hour, I will record it, and I will ask you different questions that will give us more information. The purpose of the study is to look for the barriers that stop parents from participating in the special education program of their child. At any time you can withdrawal from the study. I will stop the interview and none of the information that you have given will be used for the study. I will be recording the study and then I will transcribe it after we are done with the interview.

Would you like to continue and participate with the study?

S: Yes, I would

PI: Great, then the way this interview will be conducted is I will ask you a general question that will guide the rest of the questions and the study. The general question

is what are the barriers that you face as a parent of a child with a disability when trying to participate in the education of your child?

S: The principal and the teacher does not allow me to participate or even into the school. That is one of the barriers that they put in my way. Ever since my child was very young I have requested that they grant me access to the school but they never have. I have been given the excuse that no parents are allowed into the school. That because there are a lot of children and they need to protect their privacy, but its not that it is because of the way they treat them. The weights they put on them, the vest that they have them wear, when they shove them into the chairs. They don't want anybody to see that, how they treat the children to calm them. I can understand that but what interest me is what they are doing academically, because my son behaves well. He is not one of those kids that need the attention in order to behave. The only thing that I am asking them for is to get information regarding the academics they are working on in order to help my son at home and they don't allow me to.

PI: Lets take a step back. Can you describe your child to me, what should I know about your child?

S: My son is 10 years old. he knows how to read, write, add, multiply. Well my son is, according to them, he is intelligent even with his disability. I see him as a happy child, a dancer. He is Autistic. He was diagnosed at two, two and a half. He has been in school since he was three years old and ever since he was three they have never given me the opportunity to participate in the education of my child. And now that my son last year, since he has had the problem I have tried even harder to gain

access but have not been able to. I have not been able to find someone to help me. I am not asking anything that is out of this world, other than to observe my child during the school day in order to know what he is doing. I work during the day I can't be there all day, so I don't think I am asking for much. I want the opportunity to see how he socializes. How they get him to pay attention in class so that I could do the same here.

PI: What you are looking for is information regarding your child's special education program?

S: Yes, because they tell me to go to the classes, to the classes at the service center on Saturdays. But that's not what I want those classes are geared towards many children. I want them to tell me about my child to be more specific about him. I have all the information that they give.

PI: And the information that you are wanting, is that not in the ARD?

S: What information?

PI: The specifics about what you want to know how they are teaching your child?

S: Yes, they claim it is but they are the only ones who understand their paperwork, the codes, their times and schedules.

PI: Will you do me the favor to describe to me the ARD. What happened during the meeting?

S: First of all they are done in English. There is a woman that translates them but in broken Spanish and only half. I understand a little bit of English but I don't think that the meeting should be in English. For example here during the meeting you are

hearing me speak only Spanish, in this house we all speak Spanish. With my son it has been difficult, his whole life they have only taught him in English. What do you think of that? It is curious and illogical. I, when I came from Mexico I was enrolled in ESL classes to learn English, but they were teaching me in Spanish my native language. And my son whose native language is Spanish because we all speak Spanish has only received instruction in English. I don't know if that is good or bad, but know I think that it is a good thing that he knows English, but he doesn't know Spanish as well. It has lead to some trouble communicating. I have always asked them why it is all in English and they say that its because their whole program is only in English. I accepted it and it has been seven years that my son has been in school.

PI: What else can you tell me about how you were treated during the ARD?

S: The truth is I have never understood those meetings. They are the only ones who understand their percentages. Now that I have been more involved, I used to leave it all up to them, whatever they would suggest. It was because I was lazy, or whatever you might think, but now that I am more alert and attentive, they claim that they have a very structured program for my child but they don't. The times that I have wanted to go, and that I have shown up. They tell me that they don't know where he is or with which teacher he is with. How is that possible? They say they have a schedule. If that was true they would be able to tell me he is here or with this teacher right? It would be easy to tell me. They then tell me that someone didn't show up so the sent him to a different classroom. They don't understand my sons condition, he is Autistic. They base themselves on their words and they understand their routines, but

they change that around to much and that throws them off quite a bit. The teachers and everyone have always treated me with disrespect. His last teacher was an American lady and she would always talk to me in English. She would say its okay because I can understand her but I understood only a little. I would request that her assistant translate for me and then I would speak to her and she was even worse than the teacher. Her Spanish was broken and I would tell her what I was saying in order to correct the teacher and to communicate. That was the worse part the communication, the notes sent home were all in English. She would always send notes home in red ink, and in my experience in Mexico it was a negative thing to receive anything in ink other than black and blue. That was the teacher who would get very frustrated with me, she doesn't know how to talk to me about anything about my son. So she sends me to the principal. The principal knows even less than the teacher about my son. They are defensive with me. They are very careful about what they say to me.

PI: Why do you think they are so defensive with you?

S: Because of the problem my son had. They are at the defensive. They are completely defensive. If I say pink they say red. They are hypersensitive.

Everything I do they see it as bad.

PI: You mention that your son had a problem with them, can you tell me a little bit about that.

S: My son at school last February. He says, he alleges that a man abused him in the restroom at the school he used to go to. We took him to the hospital and there they

told me that he had in fact been abused. We called the police and CPS and they told me to not say anything to anyone for the next twenty four hours, because we could jeopardize the investigation. So we didn't, we kept it to ourselves. When we saw that everyone was carrying on like if nothing had happened, everyone smiling and laughing ha ha ha ji ji ji, and me with all the pain inside and seeing the teachers that nobody was doing anything. I work as a daycare provider in a home. If something happens to the children under my care I will end up in jail and I think that it is wrong to see the teachers laughing it up like if nothing and my son suffering. My son was incapacitated for two weeks because of his injuries. Who is going to lie? How do I explain? and they are all happy. My husband and I had enough we were angry and we decided to talk. We sought the help to people from the media. We explained to them what was going on and that is when everyone discovered what was happening.

PI: Why do you think that they were acting like if nothing had happened, laughing it up?

S: Because they wanted to send, now that I see things after some time has passed. They were protecting them. Through my attorney, I was able to see their statements that the so called private investigators from the school district. You would not imagine the things they said about my son. Nothing but lies. They say that what happened to my son happened to him because he was constipated. My son does not suffer from constipation. They said it was because he liked to eat quesadillas. And I asked, when have I ever sent my son with his lunch, when has the district or how often do they give the children cheese that they were able to determine that my child

likes cheese. They write, they have their stories. They gave the community wrong information. I found out through some of the parents of the children that I work with and that have children at the same school. They say that the teachers at the school tell them that it was not true that it did not happen at the school, that is a lie and that the lady is a liar. They say that everything I have is because I sue this place and that place. It is not true I have never sued anyone. Everything I have I have because we work hard not because we sue or steal anything. Everything that was said was the districts way to discredit me. They are monsters.

PI: Why do you think that they feel that they could do that to you?

S: It is their strategies, its their way to cover themselves.

PI: Do you think that everyone in that situation would be treated the same way?

S: No I think that they took advantage of my ignorance and maybe because of color. They did say that the reason I was doing this was because I want papers (legal status). Things like that, that don't make sense. They forgot the main issue, my son. I could be the worst parent but thats not what this is about. Many things that had nothing to do with what was going on they began to bring out to the public. It was very saddening.

PI: Would you like to take a break?

S: No I'm okay. This is how it is, my tears do not stop.

PI: I understand. I have a daughter and I don't know how this would impact me or what I would do.

S: Exactlly, there is so much I wish I could do but I prefer my freedom.



PI: Have you, like you mentioned you have been invited to classes...

S: Yes, when I have asked "Teacher, I want to see, I want to know, I want to learn how you do this with my son" they reply "Mrs. XXXX" in a very harsh tone, that I don't feel I deserve. I am hurt they should be more respectful. "Mrs. XXX" in such harsh tones, I am not expecting them to kiss my feet, but I want them to be respectful. I don't treat them with disrespect. "Mrs. XXX, on such and such day there will be a program for the parents in the morning from eight to nine if you want help". And I go, I go because I want them to see that I am willing to help and want to learn, but I do not learn anything. Why, because the techniques that they use for children without disabilities are not the same as the techniques needed to help my son with a disability. I go only so that they can see that I want to learn, but I come back home blank not having learned anything. It is not the same. My son is different, just like all children are different. How am I supposed to get my child to be able to read four paragraphs and explain to me what one of the paragraphs says. My son will never be able to do that. They send me homework and I think to myself how on Earth am I supposed to do this with him. When they send home math problems, my son can read them but he doesn't understand what he is reading. I don't know if I can explaining myself. I want them to teach me how to teach my son, to share their strategies. And its not just me, it is a lot of mothers. We all used to be the same. We used to leave it all up to the teachers and the school and now that I am trying to be involved I am learning how they are. We need to change this. I spoke with a person from an advocacy group. I asked why it was like this. They told me that it was the law. Something has to be

done. For example in the classroom, each classroom door has a window. The window has blinds and on top of that they cover it with poster board. What are they hiding? That makes me think that something is weird, without thinking something bad, but what are they hiding. One time my son came home complaining that another child was hitting him. I asked the teacher about it and she said that yes, another child has his personal space and is very protective of his space. I understand, my son is very affectionate. He is very loving. I understand that my son must have gotten to close and the other boy hit him. But I know that when my son complains about it, it is because it was something that has been happening or was very severe. I asked the teacher not to sit my son next to the other boy, because I know my son and he is always going to be affectionate like that and the other boy is always going to hit him. The teacher said she was going to look into it. They brought in experts from the district to investigate and do you know what the conclusion was? They said that my son was lying, that he made up fantasies. Can you believe that? With something so simple. As a parent, I don't know how far I can go to protect my child because they will make him look like he is a liar. I didn't want anything other than to move my son in order to stop the hitting. That's it. I was not asking for a report or to call the police. That's what I mean, they are looking for any opportunity to make my son look bad. All because of the incident at the other school. To me they are monsters, and they are the first ones to dismiss our children, because they don't integrate them the way they should. Now that this has happened to my son, I demanded to know why our children were not being recognized like the other children. They do work, they struggle to

learn, they struggle to pronounce words correctly. They deserve recognition in front of the other children without disabilities. To show children how to respect children with disabilities. They don't they put our children in awards ceremonies. They are making changes and they have invited my son to participate but it has come at the expense of me putting up a fight for things.

PI: Why do you think you have had to fight so much?

S: I think that it is my fault that I didn't do this sooner. That I didn't open my eyes sooner. That I didn't fight for things sooner. I think that there is a great need for more education with teachers. There is a lot of bullying. I know that values are taught by parents at home, but there is a lot that schools should be doing. We need to teach the children, from a young age, that they need to get along with all the children, that God sent some children with different needs and everyone needs to learn to live together. To respect. But the teachers are the ones that don't have that respect. They do everything separated from the other children. Awards, recognitions, even lunch is done separate from the other children. Breaks are separated. Why, why so isolated. I also don't understand why other parents haven't done anything. They are like me, we are asleep to the issue.

PI: Why do you think that you are asleep?

S: I need time to keep fighting for these things because of my job. Other moms, well because they can be lazy, haha. Maybe they are like me asleep. Right now I don't have enough time to keep fighting for my son. I had to go to Austin to share my story. I think that my story concerned them. They are worried that they are failing,

that CPS as well as the school district are falling behind. I spoke to the committee, to congress men to share what is happening. It's not fair that my son is being segregated. My son's classroom is not in the school it is outside, the bathroom is not in the classroom. It is far away from the classroom. Now with what happened to my son the district began to build restrooms in all the classrooms with children with special needs. And above everything they need to take care of them, not because my son is semi-independent, he should not be left alone. That is a form of discrimination, but if my son was Anglo it would not have happened.

PI: Why do you think that way?

S: Because it's the truth, why should we deny it. It's not the same, simply the language. I have never been treated like I see the teachers treat other. She has never been as kind or talkative as she has been with the other moms who do speak English or come from a different background. It's the truth. They never have asked me how I was or even my child. I don't know if it's because of the language or what it is. That has been the biggest problems that I have had. That they don't give me access to the school or the language issue.

PI: Why do you think they are telling you that the only language of instruction is English?

S: Everything has always been done in English. Any agenda, letter, meeting has always been done in English. It doesn't make sense to me. I have always spoken Spanish and nothing has ever been translated for me. I am sure that if I spoke Chinese or French that more of an effort would be made to have a translator or

documents translated in my language. If I didn't understand something I usually get my son to translate for me. I let myself. I was being ignorant, a lot had to do with my ignorance.

PI: At the ARD meetings, prior to that were you ever given a booklet that described you rights as a parent.

S: Yes I have received them but the truth is that I never read them.

PI: Besides the classes held at the service center, have you ever been invited to a parent night or to an event that was held at the school?

S: The only time that I went to the school was during Thanksgiving. That has been the only time that I was allowed to visit the school. I had to purchase a ticket, you get your plate of food, and you are asked to go to your child's class to eat. That has been the only time that I have entered into the classroom. Any other time the teacher takes my child to the office for me to pick up.

PI: We have already talked a little bit about this but has there been a time when you have experienced something negative that has caused you to be more cautious in your participation at the school?

S: To start with all these problems started during the swimming classes that they would take my son to. First of all they do not wash off the chlorine so the children are itching from the chlorine. Second, I used to go to those classes. If I didn't go to those classes then my son would not go, because the teachers would not take care of the students the way they should. There were two children who would run and jump into the olympic pool. I had to tell the lifeguard because the teachers did nothing. It

used to be that there were around fifteen classes of children with disabilities at the pool at the same time. Thank God that, I think it was because I complained that now there are only three groups that go at any one time. It was too many children with disabilities and too few teachers. Somewhere drowning, some running, some wanting to jump into the Jacuzzi. How are you going to put children, like my son with kids from high school. Some of those high school kids are very strong. Do you see what I am saying? It was too dangerous. The restroom, because they didn't have many volunteers, they would ask us if we would be volunteers. Well I would go and I would wash my son. Those kids that didn't have someone there, well they would not get washed and they wouldn't get changed in the changing rooms they would change them out in the open. How is that? No. That is why, when my son had the bad experience, I took him after, because they were at the pool and when they came back I returned him to the teacher. That is when the tragedy began. If they had made the changes from the beginning maybe my son would not have been vulnerable to the situation that happened to him. They need... I don't know which university they graduated from but they need something more. Many of the kids at the pool would leave running to the parking lot. The teachers would run after them, they have kids that are very different and they know that but. That's why God gave us two hands so that we could get two at a time. They need to organize themselves so that they can take care of the kids.

PI: You mention that they need more training. What training do you think they need?

S: For the teachers, simply to develop their common sense. They do not prevent any accidents. They do not prevent. I have asked them several times who among them has had CPR training. They ask why do you ask. I tell them because my son tends to eat large chunks of food when he eats. I have been teaching him to chop up his food first. It is one of the fears that I have that my son may choke at school and one of these teachers will not what to do. One of them out of the four had the CPR training. I don't know about academics and I would not train them on that aspect, but I do know about common sense and prevention and I think that is what they would need training on. My job is to take care of my child and to prevent things from hurting my son.

PI: Why do you think that they do not use their common sense?

S: I think that many of them are tired of doing what they are doing.

PI: Let's talk a little about the relationship between the teachers and parents. What would you like to see different?

S: Well let's see, there is a Mexican saying that says "I'm not a gold coin that everyone needs to love". The only thing that I want is that I will always that ask is for them to give me access to my son's classroom. They can treat me however they want, I don't care. Well I do feel bad. They sometimes talk to me in harsh tones and I can accept that but what I do not understand is why they do not allow me to have access to my sons class. That makes me uneasy. I can overlook the other stuff, but what worries me is why they don't allow me.

PI: From what you know, are there any parents that are allowed to access the classroom?

S: I do not know, I wouldn't be able to answer that. I do not know any other parents from that class. I sometimes feel like I should be following the bus to their homes and introducing myself to the parents. It is a strategy by the school to keep us away from each other. It is their fear. I have noticed that they do not want anyone raising issues, or knowing who I am or that my son is who he is. For me what happened to my son is nothing embarrassing. I did not do something bad and I want the community to know that they need to demand protection for their kids and to prevent it from happening. For ten years I have taken care of children and the one that was hurt was my own son and it was because I left him in the care of inept people that don't have common sense.

PI: Prior to the incident, have you ever tried to collaborate with the school, administrators, teachers?

S: I collaborated with homework, if they needed me to go I would go, if they tell me there is a meeting I would go. If there is a program that they are teaching something I go, but I don't always understand because many times those meetings or classes don't have anything to do with my son.

PI: Have those meetings been in English or Spanish?

S: Lately, the ARD meetings have been in both English and Spanish. I think that it is due to them realizing that in my case they have been messing up a lot. Now that this has happened to me many things have changed. Before it was always just the



principal, teacher, and me. Now they have many many more people. I asked again for the teacher to show me how they work with my son and they arranged for me to be in a room with my son and the teacher and two people from the district observing. I was granted twenty minutes and once those were up they stopped the meeting and made me leave. The two ladies walked in front of me talking in English and I was following behind them. They were just taking care of me.

PI: How do you think that principal sees you?

S: I think that she sees me with anger. I don't blame her, she never had problems at her school and now I am there. She knows my story and why I was sent there. I speak a lot with a lady from the district, she is higher up. I explained to her what has happened and how I feel. She tells me that I need to understand that I have a legal case pending with the district and that is why they treat me the way they do. I said yes I do have a case but it is not against the teachers. These are new teachers, I don't know them and they don't know me but they are already very defensive with me. During the time of the incident they sent me to a different school for about two weeks. Nobody was supposed to know why I was there, but the teachers were excellent they treated me with such respect and even expressed that it was a privilege to have my son there. Things that I have never heard anywhere else when it came to my sons schools. They changed her teaching assignment and I was placed at the school where I am at now and it is so different. The principal is very aggressive towards me. I have asked to speak with the assistant principal because she is too rude with me. I can't speak with her, I can talk with the assistant much better, she

probably doesn't like me either but she is not as rude. One time my son was ill. My son does not take any medication orally. He will spit it out or gag until he vomits. Because of that we have to wait until he has a fever and we can give him an injection. The last time he was ill he was out of school for three days and I had taken him to Juarez to the doctor. When he returned to school I took the prescription and the note from the doctor to excuse the absence. They made such a fuss over the fact that the doctor was from Juarez and said that they would not be able to excuse the absences because of that. I have known other parents who do not give any note from the doctor and they do not get hassled like I was. I spoke with the person from the district and she investigated she said that the nurse said the medication prescribed was for an adult. It was not true. I came back and I defended the medication after speaking to a different nurse. This time the district person spoke to the principal and I was able to get the absences excused. The principal was very upset with me.

PI: What do you think the school expects from parents?

S: To be involved. I think that parents have always been expected to participate in the education of their children. Except for in my situation, that I have a child with a disability. I don't understand because I want to be involved but they don't let me. My job as a mom is to help my son at home, but I also want to know how they are doing things at school. I don't know what they are so scared of me but I think it is because they are afraid that I am going to see some wrong doing.

PI: What do you think should be done differently?

S: I think that they should allow me to be a part of my sons education. I think that if I want to be involved I should be allowed to be, I don't ask for a lot. That I feel I have been discriminated against, I have. Because of the language, cause of my color I think I have. From the beginning many things have changed and they have changed for the worse. I don't know what else, maybe some common sense and to learn how to treat people.

PI: Thank you, those are the questions that I needed to ask you. Thank you for sharing you story with me

S: You are welcome, anytime I can help.

APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPTS

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY  
2015  
TRANSCRIPTION  
Santiago Morales

**Primary Investigator = PI**  
**Parent Participant = S**

**Date: 4/28/2015      Time: 3:00 pm**

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PI: Hello how are you?

S: Hello I am doing well thank you. How are you?

PI: I am doing well thank you. I wanted to thank you for your interest in the study.

S: You are welcome, I hope that my participation can help, because our situation has caused us to have to move to a different school in order to find a better education for my son. Hopefully the information can help people down the line.

PI: The goal of the study is to learn from the experiences of people such as yourself and hopefully give voice to others who are experiencing similar situations and feelings as you are. What I would like to do is to conduct the interview, which will last approximately one hour. We will be talking about some sensitive issues, in particular those issues that prevent parents in your situation to participate in the education of their children with special needs. This interview is being used to develop my dissertation and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. If at anytime you feel uncomfortable or do not wish to continue please let me know

and we can stop the interview and any information I gather will not be used. If at this time you would like to continue we can begin the interview.

S: Yes, I would like to continue.

PI: The interview will be centered around a general question. The question is what are the issues surrounding family participation in the education of their children with special needs that stop you from being involved?

S: For example, like traps or taboos that are involved?

PI: Yes, what are some of your experiences with that.

S: Ok, my husband and I have had the experience of having to move our son several times from different schools. Because, in the first school that our son was at, I had thought that the districts were different, that the schools were different, but to start off I learned that if a child has a specific disability they automatically want to send them off to a particular school that deals with that specific disability. I know now that I am legally supposed to get a copy of all the paperwork in my native language but they don't give it to me. They give it to me in English, unless I request for to be given to me in Spanish, but even then I might not get them. Once you get to the school that they assigned your son or daughter to you start to get the feeling that they give everyone in that class the same treatment, which is ridiculous because not every child is the same and they need to treat them as individuals. You can't have all those kids in the same classroom, because then all you have is daycare. The second problem that I have seen, is that many times as parents who are not knowledgeable or don't have the experience, they try to manipulate you and tell you to sign here and date here without

ever giving any explanation of what is being signed. It is usually given in English, and not all the parents know a lot of English or even any English for that matter. So parents have no choice but to trust that the teacher knows what they are doing or they trust the people in the office that they are asking them to sign something that is in the best interest of our children. Those are two big problems that I see with the schools, but if you ask me to tell you some more I have a lot more to say.

S: We are going to be talking more about all the issues you are describing. To start with, the things that happen on a regular basis, such as events, teacher meetings, special education meetings. Have you ever gone to those events and have experienced that a barrier was put in place to prevent or discourage you to attend?

PI: My son is a child that has many special needs. He has multiple special needs, he has physical issues, speech issues, many things. I have felt a lot of discrimination, and that is the correct word to describe what I have felt as a mother of a child with a special need. Why? for example on Mother's Day just as they do on Christmas, they tell me that my child is not feeling comfortable, that he does not want to participate. In our case we are fortunate that my son is capable of speaking and he can tell us what he wants and what make him feel uncomfortable, he can tell us if they treated him badly, or good. We can find out how he is being treated. We have learned that they do not even try to teach him the things in order to participate, which is why we took the stand in requesting that our son participate at the event. The teacher quickly responded by saying "no, no, no, because your son quickly becomes stressed". Our son has many characteristics of Autism, when in front of a lot of people he will

become uncomfortable and begin to fidget, have a tantrum, maybe even try to hit someone who is close by. We knew that the teacher was aware of that and that she was going to begin to use that as an excuse for him not to participate in the event. They had no choice because I insisted that my son participate in the event. The teacher questioned my request but I responded that I did want him to participate. I told her to put him in front and if he has a crisis that it would be ok because I was sure that the other parents would understand. Thank God that my son has come a long way from those behaviors, but we did notice that the teacher goes out of her way to keep him from participating. It is the same for field trips, anything they can do to keep him in one spot. For example at the ARD, we had to have him changed from districts when he entered kindergarten, he was in XXX school district. We had researched the school and decided that it would be a good school for our son, but we immediately began to have problems. They would tell us that our son did not belong there because he did not understand and he couldn't learn, because they wanted our son to do exactly what the other students in kindergarten are doing without taking into consideration that our son had a disability. They would tell us that our son was not pronouncing things and he wasn't going to learn how to read. I said that there are other ways to teach my son, but they insisted and I had no choice but to find an attorney that would help me. We went with XXXX, she is an attorney and with her help the school began to give our son all the services that he was supposed to be getting. I was taken back, I noticed a huge difference in the people at the school from before I had taken the attorney compared to how they were treating me after. During

the ARDs I noticed a difference from the beginning. A difference in the teachers, but mostly with the diagnosticians. I always have trouble with the diagnosticians and the principals. I struggle with them much more than with the teachers. With the teachers there comes a point where they have to do what they are told. I have had to work with teachers that are very lazy and with teachers that are very good at what they do. The greatest problems that I have experienced have been with the diagnosticians and the principals. During this time, it took a lot of ARDs, like six or seven meetings and they would last from two to three hours each, because of all the needs that my son has. Finally, we reached an agreement and the following year my son had a good year with all the services that he needed. I began to notice that my son had begun to plateau, we had reached the limit to where he would advance with the teachers even if they said they were working with them more. The teachers would conveniently say that they were working with my son but that he refused to learn. That was their excuse to give him the same work for a long time. When I saw that it was not working, I began to question the teacher and ask them to look at what they were doing to see if it was all they could do. For example in my case, I found a book that is for kindergarten curriculum, I bought it and looked at it closely and I asked the teacher to take a look at it and I told her that I was working on these skills at home. I asked her to please reinforce the skills that we were working on at home in the classroom. The teacher could have evaluated his progress and used that information in the future when planning, that way my son wouldn't fall behind so much. I gave the teachers information regarding my son's condition. I have the understanding that



my son's condition is among the ten rarest syndromes in the world. I have to believe that the teacher has not had much experience with this syndrome and with children like my son. I know it is my job to better understand his syndrome and to help the teachers become more informed about his condition. Many of them did not know what it was. I showed them videos, I gave them literature about it, I sent them a thirty second video, and even like that many of them did not bother or were never interested. In the end, not everything ended up bad, we ended up leaving again because I believed that I had reached a limit. I have also discovered that the best attention and educational setting are in places with more money and for people that don't have money, who struggle with low paying jobs, it is difficult to access those services. Information regarding parent rights and other issues is not easily found. I have struggled looking for places I could go to learn about IDEA, or the services. I have known many parents who have children with disabilities that are now twelve or thirteen years old and have no knowledge of IDEA or the services that are available. They are handed paperwork in a different language and they believe that it is just additional paperwork never realizing that the information was regarding their rights and the rights of their children. People tend to talk in English but my English is not very good. I have learned a lot about the language, but I have seen many parents that have no clue what they are being told. Plus much of the paperwork is only given to parents in English. It is one of the biggest problems that I have encountered.

PI: The paperwork that you are given in the ARD are not explained to you?

S: Most of the time they are not explained, and if they are they are briefly explained at the end of the meeting, that occurs at about 90% of the ARDs that I have attended. They leave everything till the end and while you are being explained others begin to interrupt and then ask you to sign so they can finish quickly. They summarize briefly and in most cases it is not done correctly. I noticed now that I have started to learn more English that they are summarizing everything incorrectly. They do it at the end and to fast so they can finish quickly. They even hold on to the paperwork and shuffle through them without letting you stop to take a look at them. That is very common. Oh when I first started going to these meetings I struggled with my English very much. I was given a translator at one of the meetings. I have always been able to understand English but struggle when it comes time to speak it. I noticed that when they would read the summary about what was going to be done with my child they would change the wording which would change the meaning. They would write down the new meaning which was different from what it was supposed to be. They explain it one way during the ARD and then they change it to how they want it after it's done to something that is easier for them. This has happen to me many times. I began to ask them to write it down with me next to them that way I could follow along and be on the same page.

PI: Would you sign the paperwork?

S: At first I would sign, I was intimidated by the number of people in the meeting and the way they would become tense towards the end of the meeting wanting to hurry things up. After a while I began to take my time and when they would tell me

that they were in a hurry I would say "Don't worry, we can reconvene the meeting but please make sure to give me five days notice so I can make arrangements". They tried to pressure me and other parents in order to get us to sign without knowing so they could do what they want and not have any problems.

PI: And...

S: Another thing that gives us trouble is when the child has a disability that requires something that is going to cost the district. They become very difficult and the whole situation becomes more difficult. I have attended ARDs with some friends whose children needs technology devices, and they have had to struggle with the same problem. They make it impossible to get the services to the child.

PI: In your opinion do you think they do this with all the parents that they work with?

S: Yes, at least they do to the majority. I have been able to talk with some other people who are in a similar situation that I am and since we are in the same community I can speak with them about the ARD. We have all had the same experience.

PI: You mentioned that you are able to talk with people in your community, can you explain what your community looks like.

S: The majority of the people here are Spanish speaking.

PI: You mentioned that there are schools with more services because they are in wealthier neighborhoods, do you think they treat parents in the same way they have treated you?

S: Yes, well I think that if the parents are not prepared and if they don't speak the language they will take advantage of them. It is easier to manipulate them and have them do what they want them to do. In my personal experience, I had an ARD when my son first started the program and it was the diagnostician who didn't speak Spanish and it was the first time I notice that they would treat me differently because I didn't speak English. At the time I finally had the ARD because they kept on rescheduling it. I had gone in each time and they kept telling me that it wasn't on that day, that it had been rescheduled. I had already made the decision to take my child to Head Start. I had him in both Head Start and the school and they kept wasting my time with all the rescheduling. Head Start contacted someone from the school district and asked them to explain to me what the delay was and why I was getting the information in English when I only spoke Spanish even as I was asking for it in Spanish. I invited the teacher from Head Start to go with me to the meeting since she knew my son from the classroom. During the meeting she mentioned that the two speech therapist from the school district had been making fun of me and my lack of English. They didn't know that I could understand them but that my problem was speaking English. I stopped the meeting because I noticed that the translator was giving them the wrong information. I stopped them and in the best way I knew how I told them that I was going to try to explain to them in my own way because what was being said was not correct. The Head Start teacher was upset that in front of me they would be making fun of me. It was offensive and I learned that if I'm going to defend my son I would have to learn to defend myself. In fact the recording that I

was done at the meeting was never given to me. They said that they lost the recording that it had not worked properly. I have noticed that there is a lot of social discrimination. They have done things that helps them keep from doing very much. I think that there is a divide between those people that work at the schools who provide day to day services and those that deal with the more procedure and legal activities. There is more social discrimination among teachers and those that work with the child on a daily basis and more racial and discriminatory actions with those who work on the procedural and legal stuff.

PI: So how are the day to day people social discriminating?

S: Well, they are more concerned about how something will look. If they have an event they want everyone to look perfect and behave perfect. If one of the children has a tantrum then they will say it looks bad. They will find way to entertain them that is out of the way and small so that no one will notice them.

PI: The principals and administration are more racially discriminatory, why?

S: They try to do things in a way that is easier for them and that will cause less trouble for them. If it has something to do with any legal issue they will do it in English after all that is the language of the United States. They don't care about the services they are supposed to be providing to them it is about the laws and how to keep from getting into trouble. They don't see you as someone who needs services for their child they see you as someone who is looking to make trouble for them. They don't want any trouble in their schools or someone who will jeopardize their bonds.

PI: Why do you think that they believe they can treat people who don't speak English that way?

S: Because the people are not prepared. The majority of the people that come here do not know how the system works. In Mexico the system is very different. For me it has been an advantage that I was able to study in Mexico. But the majority of the people that come to the United States are very hard working but they do not get very far in their education. When it comes to an education most are not prepared to work with the system here, especially if their child has a special need. It is overwhelming for a parent and more so if you do not know the system, your world can shut down. I have known many parents who have no idea about the rights for their children and they end up having a very negative experience. I feel that it is, it's like someone who is coming in talking to someone who is coming out. The person coming in is going to believe the person coming out, why? Simply because they do not know yet how the system works. I think people think that it is the United States and that everything is going to function the right way, why wouldn't I believe the diagnostician she has the best interest of my child at heart. And that is a problem that people think that what they are being offered as services is the best that is out there but we do not know and we are never told of the complete list of services that our child could benefit from. The information is dispersed everywhere and is difficult for people to access, especially for Latinos. There are many people who give information but they do not speak Spanish and if they do it is not proper Spanish. It is a watered down version of

Spanish that only they can understand. There should be proper communication at the school districts.

PI: One of the things that we have touched upon is how the parents are not prepared. What are some of the things that the school can do in order to better prepare parents to participate in the ARD meeting?

S: Hmmm, that is a tough one because it's like going to a court to argue a contract and asking the opposition to help you with your argument. I think that in this case, in my opinion it would have to be an external organization separate from the school that could train parents prior to the ARD meeting and prepare them for what they may encounter. At the very least train parents to know what the words are and the different acronyms are that way they know what is being said. In my experience they have a tendency to talk that way and parents agree but they do not know what they are saying. I say it would have to be separate from the school district because it wouldn't be beneficial to have them train someone because they would manipulate the situation starting there. Another thing that is of concern is that they give you the rights but they do not give an explanation of what it is and a parent can study it but if they do not understand something they will not know. It is important that parents are trained about their rights as a parent and also on the procedure that they will be experiencing.

PI: Has there been a time that you have interacted with your child's school and had a negative experience?

S: The first time that I had my son at school he came home with some scratches on him. I noticed the scratches on him and I asked the teacher what had happened. She said another student had scratched him. I asked her where she and her staff were at the time of the scratching and she said that my son had gotten away from her and he got close to another student that scratched him. At that time my son was having trouble walking but the next day he didn't want to go to school anymore. My son never complained about anything more serious to me. The day after the scratching I decided to drop off my son at and I noticed that he was left in the same place that I had dropped him off. I noticed that he had become the segregated person of the segregated group. I turned around and spoke to the principal and told her what I had been seeing. She said that if I wanted to go to the classroom I could but I had to be registered with the district. I told her not to worry that I was going to go right then to go get registered but that I wanted us to go see him right then. She said fine but they would have to go call the teacher first to let her know that we were coming. I said no I wanted to see what was going on without the teacher knowing that we were going. She said that if I insisted on going to the classroom then they would have to call someone. I said to call the teacher then because I was going to take my son out of the classroom. The principal and the teacher didn't speak any English. It has been the most severe incident that I have allowed to happen.

PI: Have you or the school ever tried to establish a partnership? Do you have any example of an event that you have partnered with the school? I am trying to investigate any attempts to build a partnership.



S: I have noticed things that, I know I am always going to notice things that I think should be different. I noticed that at this school there is a lot of control. I have noticed that the diagnostician, therapist, or principal try to do things that will make their life easier. The teacher has suggested an idea that my son will earn stickers throughout the day if his behavior is good then at the end of the day he gets a happy face or sad face and he brings that home to me. That has worked well. Another example is when I approached the teacher. I know my son is in special education and he is in that program for a reason so if I want to get him into a regular education class one day then I have to push him and work with him as well as the teachers. I asked the teacher to give me homework and that at the end of the week to test my son to see if he is progressing and to take that into account. I know that it is more work for the teacher, but that is why they are in special education and it helps out the parent a lot. It also shows the parents that the teacher wants to work with their child and that in turn motivates the parent. But many of these teachers become blind and are not open to suggestions and partnerships. I had a teacher tell me she had been teaching in special education for many years and knew what she was doing. She didn't like to have someone suggest ideas on how to work with their child. But it is very motivating for a parent to see a teacher get excited about teaching their child and I imagine that the same is true for teachers when they see parents supporting them at home.

PI: How do you think that principals view you? What do they think of you?

S: As a parent?

PI: Yes

S: Well when they first meet me. I think that they see me as a little Mexican who doesn't speak English. After a while they get to know me and they see me and make faces of disgust or I have even had doors shut on me. Or they will be talking and do not acknowledge me or make any attempt to speak to me. After, the time I had to bring in an attorney, they become more cordial. I don't know if they are afraid of me or if I have gained some respect. I have also learned to accept certain things. It's a give and take and trial and error thing. As a parent you have to be flexible but the principal also has to be able to be flexible.

PI: Do you think that all parents have to fight as much, or experience as much discrimination? For example do you think that the attitude, to use your words, towards the little Mexican who can't speak English is experienced by all?

S: In general I think they do not struggle as much. I think that they see them that they will be able to access the information a lot easier. I have known some parents who are Anglo that have had to struggle quite a bit, but I think it is still not as much because they are able to access information a lot easier. The internet is very helpful, but it is not always. The language barrier is very difficult and even though someone tells you that something is a certain way no one can guarantee that it is what they are telling you.

PI: It seems that parents in general have to fight for their children. From what you believe is it the same fight for all parents regardless of their background?

S: No, I have noticed that there is a difference between parents and what they will have to fight for. In my background and many from the same background it is important to first show that we are willing to get the information, so that we are not being pushed around. That we will become informed and advocate for our children. It is then, once we have gained the respect for defending ourselves that we can begin the next fight, which is getting the services for our children.

PI: We are almost done.

S: That's fine don't worry.

PI: What do you think are the schools expectations for you as a parent?

S: That if they are doing something for my child, that I am doing something too at home. That if my child has a certain need that I am able to respond to those needs. I have experienced many comments that from the school that I am on top of what my son is doing. I want to know what he did that day and what he will be doing. I have noticed that the school staff works harder for some kids than they do for others. I thought it was that they had some connection with that student but I was told by a teacher that it is very frustrating putting so much effort into working with a child, and the child makes some gains but then it is lost during vacations, why because no one worked with him during the vacations. So teachers move on to the next child that they know will get the help from the parents at home. I have heard that a lot. It is true I can understand what the teachers are feeling. So I think I am expected to do my part with my son, everything from keeping up with doctor visits to helping out with he work at school.

PI: What would have to be done to improve the collaboration between schools and families?

S: I know that sometimes we, I know the IEP is done but I don't think many times that the families experience is not taken into account. They often told me that in my home it may be a certain way but that here at school it was different. I understand that but I also know my son does better in a different style. They need to open up and try things that the teacher is suggesting.

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPTS

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY  
2015  
TRANSCRIPTION  
Santiago Morales

**Primary Investigator = PI**  
**Parent Participant = S**

**Date: 5/4/2015      Time: 3:15 pm**

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PI: Hello. Thank you for taking the time to interview with me today.

S: You're welcome.

PI: I will begin by explaining the purpose of the study. I am looking to find information about the experiences that you have had when trying to be involved in the education of your child. The interview will be about an hour and with your permission I will be recording the interview. The interview will be centered on a general question and I will ask you more questions based on the responses that you give. The purpose of the study is to identify the barriers that are preventing families from participating in the special education program of their children.

S: Okay

PI: You may at any time withdraw from the study. If you want to continue we can if not none of the information that I have gathered will be used for the study. None of the information that you share today will be shared with any agency or school district. I will only use the information for the purpose of the study. Would you like to participate in the study?

S: Yes

PI: The question that the interview will be centered around is what are the barriers that prevent you as a parent of a child with a disability from participating in the education of your child?

S: Everything started when, I asked the teacher and she was bothered because she wanted my daughter to go from the gym to the classroom holding another little girls hand. I said no, no let each one go on their own, let her go first then her. It is not necessary for them to go holding hands. My daughter has poor immunity and they do not wash their hands before they go. That's what I told the teacher and she grabbed both girls and took them. I asked to speak to the principal but he wasn't there. I let it go. Then I went to check on my daughter, and the teacher said she was sorry for what had happened, because she had grabbed and pulled her away. At a meeting with the principal I mentioned the incident to him. A week later a little girl in the classroom, she is in a wheelchair, got sick. The ambulance came for her. About two days later I asked the teacher what had happened with the little girl I was concerned that they took her to the hospital. She said I needed to ask the other teacher in an upset manner. I said not to worry I was just curious if she was okay. When my daughter got out of school, there was one of the ladies that pick up the children outside. A guard, they take care of the children, and she told me that tomorrow I was not going to be allowed to enter the school to drop off my daughter. I asked her why. She replied that because of what I had been asking in regards to the other child in the classroom. I told her I was just curious that she was okay. She said that tomorrow she

would be there for me to take my daughter to her. The next day she was not there so I kept on with the normal routine and I took my daughter to her classroom. One day I went to pick up my daughter to go to therapy. She didn't want to leave the classroom because they were watching a movie. When they brought her to me and we were leaving the school she said Mom my arm hurts, the teacher pulled me from my arm. I didn't return to the school at that moment because we had to get to therapy. At the therapy the therapist came out and asked me what was going on with her because she was uncomfortable. I told him what had happened. He said I needed to talk with the principal or the teacher. The next day I went to drop off my daughter and I asked to speak to the teacher. I told her what my daughter said. She said it wasn't true. I said she needed to notice how my daughter was starting to act around her, she is scared. She said no look at her she is laughing. She said I did grab her arm but I never pulled her. I told her okay but that I didn't want anything like that to occur again. I told her that I am right outside and next time they could call me and I can go in and talk to her. At that time another teacher from a different classroom came in and started talking to us in English. I asked her to speak in Spanish because I don't speak English. Another teacher walked in and began to tell me that she could be in her class. The next day, I usually take my daughter to her class in the cafeteria, then I take her lunch to the classroom refrigerator. That day I asked the teacher assistant if I could do the same and she said no they were not going to take long and she would take them. I told her that the lunch was tamales with pork meat and it could go bad. I asked the teacher and before she could answer another teacher from a different

classroom jumped in and said no. She said that they have lost a lot of things by letting people into the room and she grabbed the bag from me. I said okay take it then. Ever since I asked about that child who had gotten sick they began to act that way with me. They say that my daughter is getting older and that she needs to be more independent. I said I understand but you can't expect her to do everything on her own all at once.

PI: Have you tried to talk to the principal about the situation?

S: The next day I spoke to the principal and I asked for a pass to go to the classroom. He denied me access to the classroom. I just wanted to drop off my daughter to her class, but the principal denied the request. I went into the office and the front office staff said that I could no longer have passes because it was getting close to the end of the school year. I asked for a meeting with the principal, but I have so much to talk to him about that I don't know where I am going to start. I don't know if they can deny access to parents. I know parents are allowed to ask for permission and they are given a badge to go in. That's all I wanted and when I asked I got it worse.

PI: How did it get worse?

S: I know I want my daughter to become more independent, but it shouldn't be so drastic like from one day to the next it's a completely different program. My daughter doesn't do well with changes to her routine. I did tell him that I wanted her to be more independent but that the change was too drastic for her. It is a goal in her program, but there was no preparation it was just a change. One day they told my



daughter she needed to go get her own food from the cafeteria. The teacher sent her to the cafeteria and she couldn't do it. All she ate that day was a small juice.

PI: What happened when you tried to gain access to the school?

S: They said that there is a policy at the school that doesn't allow other parents may enter the school. I told them that it wasn't true because there are a lot of other parents that are allowed to enter the school, and prior to me asking about the sick child I was one of those parents that was allowed to enter. I used to enter the school without even showing any identification.

PI: Have you gone back? And if so have they asked you for an identification?

S: No I haven't gone back. I don't want to have to go back but I have my daughter there and I am concerned that they are doing something to her. The time I told the teacher about what she had said about pulling her arm. The teacher said that it was not true and to look at her because she was smiling, but she said it in such a way that it made me worried about how they would be treating her when I left. I felt that they would be scolding her.

PI: Have there been any other incidents that make you feel uncomfortable about participating?

S: Well all this has happened this past school year. I am worried that things will continue the same way when school starts after the vacation.

PI: In regard to your previous participation at the school has there been another time when you have been made to feel uncomfortable?

S: Well not really, but I guess the ARD was uncomfortable.

PI: Why

S: Because it was in English and my English is non-existent. I was sitting at the table and I did not understand a single word that was being spoken to me. I kind of had an idea of what they were saying and there was a person there to attempted to translate, I'm not sure who she was, but her Spanish was not that good and when she leaned over to talk to the other person next to her she stopped translating for me so I missed some of the meeting. I remember that it seemed like everyone was upset or in a hurry. The principal stayed for a little while then left to his desk to answer phone calls, we were in his off office that had a table for the meeting. After I was asked to sign the paper work and I did, but I wasn't sure of everything that was in the meeting.

PI: Why do you think that it has been a difficult process for you to participate at the school?

S: Well, I think that I have had difficulty because of the language. I think that if I was more American with good English I might not be treated the same. It is hard to defend yourself when you feel out of place. I am not a confrontational person that is something that I need to work on to be able to defend myself at the school, but the teachers and principal should not take advantage that I am like that. I think they do whatever they want to make it easier on themselves.

PI: You mentioned that the teachers and principal should not take advantage of your nature, why do you think they feel they can take advantage?

S: Well because I don't defend myself at the meetings, but it is not because I am not capable it is difficult when you don't know the language or the process. The times

that I have demanded to gain access to the classroom, I felt the principal change completely his tone of voice even to make subtle threats, so I decided to back off and just try to find a different way to help my daughter.

PI: You say you have experienced subtle threats, what were the threats?

S: I don't know, it was all in his tone of voice it went from a normal tone to a more aggressive tone, and he said something to the effect that he would have to call in someone if I continued to demand things in his office. I don't want to cause problems but I do worry that from something as innocent as me being concerned for another child that the school has changed so much with me.

PI: Do you think that all parents are treated this way?

S: Of course not, I see parents come in all the time and they are treated very differently. It is probably because I am not from here. I see other parents that don't speak English all that well, but they are not treated the same. I know it is because of the way they dress or the car that they pull up in. I work very hard for what we have, but it is different from someone who grew up here.

PI: How do you think that you are perceived by the teachers and the principal?

S: Well in the beginning I didn't have a problem with any of them. We had a routine that would allow me to enter the school do what I had to do and leave comfortable. I knew my daughter was going to be taken care of and that I had done my part in helping teachers with the lunch and anything else. It was a good relationship. Then once I asked something that I thought was not a big deal, they all changed. Now I am worried that they might take out any frustration they have with me on my daughter.

On top of that I have experienced many things that make me feel uncomfortable. So, as far as the principal I think he sees me as an undocumented, uneducated person that has nothing better to do than to cause problems for him. I say uneducated because at ARD's they never try to explain anything to me, they just assume I am on board and that I won't question anything, to which they are correct I have not questioned anything but I need to start.

PI: Why do they see you as undocumented?

S: Well because I am.

PI: Have you ever told anyone at the school that you were undocumented?

S: No, but I know they know. When all this started getting worse, all of the sudden they began to ask me for my identification. The principal, like I was telling you, said he was going to call someone. Even the ladies in the office begin to whisper now when I walk into the office. Everything has me worried that I am digging myself into something that is going to have serious repercussion for my family, but what am I supposed to do? I need to protect my daughter.

PI: What do you think they expect from you?

S: I don't know. Everything was fine, but now I think they really want me to just stay quiet and accept everything that they say. I don't know if I can do that now that my daughter has told me some of the things that I shared with you.

PI: How about in general, what do you think that the school expects from its parents?

S: Well as long as they are not like me, the unwanted Mexican, I think that they want parents to be a part of the school. I have heard some parents in the office having it

out with the principal. Some parents come out of his office and they look like they just ate the principal alive. The principal seems to be okay with that and if I make a simple request they are ready to call the FBI on me.

PI: What do you think the schools could do to better work with parents?

S: I think that they need to forget any grudges they have and get to know parents. They need to understand that not everyone is going to be cut from the same mold and that they will have parents from different backgrounds and experiences. I think many times they forget that all parents really want is to know that their children are being challenged and taken care of. It should be what they want too, that is why they became teachers. Don't you think? I know it would be a different place if we could focus on that and not on "Oh, how can this person get me into trouble? Or how can I make sure that this person doesn't give me a difficult time?" I am not there to hurt anyone, but I think that I could offer a lot to the school and teachers. If they were to include parents more I think that they would have a better program.

PI: How would the program be better?

S: I think that the program would be something that is made better because as a mom I know my daughter and as a teacher they know what my daughter needs to know. If we were to work together I can tell them yes this will work or no she won't do that. I would know what they are doing at school and maybe I can help out.

PI: You mentioned that you need to defend your daughter more. How do you think that will work out once you go back after summer vacation?

S: That I do not know and it is something that scares me. I want to be able to go in there and not come out until I am comfortable with what has happened.

Unfortunately, I have to be realistic and I have a feeling that they will not even listen to me and what is bothering me or what I am asking for. I think that I will be pushed around because first they will take advantage of my lack of English, but also because they know my status here. I have never given them a hard time and I don't know if they will see it as an act of war when I show up and express my concerns.

PI: Okay, those are all the questions I have right now. Thank you very much for taking the time to interview with me. I know that this information will be valuable in my study.

S: You are welcome. Anytime I can help.

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPTS

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY  
2015  
TRANSCRIPTION  
Santiago Morales

**Primary Investigator = PI**  
**Parent Participant = S**

**Date: 5/7/2015      Time: 4:00 pm**

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PI: Hello, Thank you for assisting me with this interview.

S: Thank you I am happy I can help.

PI: To begin I will explain the purpose of the study. I am looking to find information about the interactions that you have had with trying to be involved in your child's school. I will be interviewing you for approximately one hour, I will record the interview, and I will ask you a general question and guide you with more questions as necessary. The purpose of the study is to identify the barriers that are preventing families from participating in the special education program of their children. At any time during the study you can withdraw and none of the information that I have gathered will be used for the study. I will not share any of your answers with any agency or school district. I will only use the information for the study. Would you like to continue?

S: Yes, I'm ready.

PI: To begin I will be interviewing you and asking you some questions regarding your experience and interactions with the school that your child attends. The



interview will be centered on a general question and from there I will ask questions based on what your responses. If you are ready to begin I will ask the general question.

S: Yes I'm ready.

PI: Okay, the general question is what are the barriers that prevent you as a parent of a child with a disability from participating in the education of your child?

S: Okay, well some of the barriers that me and my wife have encountered are that they do not believe in your child with a disability and doing the work together as a school and parents you get to the point that it all stops because if something inconvenient happens with that child at that moment they stop believing in the child. So, as a father who is working with their child I see that they do not believe in my son. That is why I think that we learn as a family and we try to make sure that as a family we try to prevent those inconvenient situations that will lead them to think the way they do, but in the end they are the school district and they will do everything possible to prevent certain things.

PI: When you say they, who are you referring to?

S: In this situation the teachers, diagnosticians, principal, all the way up to the district office. It all depends, I guess on the school and teacher that you get. Not everyone is the same but at certain times you get a certain type of teacher. That's who I mean when I say they.

PI: When you have to go to the school when there is an event or a meeting, who is the first person that you encounter that creates a barrier for you?



S: It all depends, mostly the teacher because that is who we deal with the most because he works with our son. There are situation where our son is placed in the background, not that we need him to be the center of attention each time but we noticed that he is always left out of the way. They are more focused, to a certain level, for example my son was put in the back of a group and he wanted to be out in front but he was not given the opportunity. They would give us the excuse that he did not do well enough in practice, but during the event he did very well, but because they don't allow him to practice or they make certain comments that he takes negatively. At our new school they have everyone participating equally, whatever type of event all the students participate equally. All the parents are there, not just the ones whose children have a disability or don't have a disability. We are all together, and if you were to see it you would be surprised at how united parents are at this new school.

PI: Has there been any other situation when you have felt uncomfortable attending a school event or meeting?

S: Yes, at an ARD. The ARDs are always uncomfortable due to the nature of the meeting. There are several people, teachers, diagnosticians, principals. So many people giving so much information, bombarding the parent. If you are not prepared it will make you feel uncomfortable. The paperwork is a barrier, the amount of paperwork is a lot, everything they write. Things that as parents we do not understand what some of the repercussions of some of the things they are writing. It is uncomfortable and can be a barrier to some extent. They also always talk to you

like a friend but to me the reason for that is to make you perceive them one way and not pick up on their motives.

PI: Have you had negative experiences with any of the people working at the school?

S: I personally have not had to experience that, but I know that my wife has had many experiences with that. She has experienced comments from others that do not have anything to do with our son. In this particular case it was a teacher that was talking and as a parent it makes you worry about the kind of things that may be happening. But I have not experienced that, instead they have been nice to me and even say hi when I go to the school, but my wife has said that the same teacher will not even say hi to our son most of the time. I imagine that they do not make those kinds of comments when I am around because they might be a little more intimidated because I am the father. I don't think that is why they do not make those comments around me.

PI: Besides the teachers has there been someone at the school that has made you feel uncomfortable?

S: There have been on occasion, like the principal but it is not something that I have experienced very much.

PI: Has there been any experience that has caused you to refrain or be more cautious about participating in the school?

S: For me much of what I have experienced is other students that make my child feel bad, like things that are bullying. Those things are things that should be handled by the teacher, and if a teacher does not stop it then the bully will continue. The teacher

doesn't care because to them it is extra work to have to deal with those kinds of problems. I think that the most negative case that we have experienced is when my son began to go to school and at the time he had been potty trained but when he started school he regressed a lot. It was one of the reasons we decided to change him from school. We saw that he regressed quite a bit in a short period of time because of the way he was treated. The way they wanted to handle things did make us feel bad because at the ARD, they tried to make things look differently, or to make things complicated in order to prevent the parent from understanding. My wife had been becoming familiar with the process and she was able to catch some of the things they were doing and we were able to defend ourselves a little. It was the first time we had to deal with a negative issue at the school because in reality our son was not the only one to experience these things. They would treat all the kids like that, they would exclude our children. At lunch our son was excluded, they would put him in a chair and he would have to wait there. They never pulled him over to the table to join the group. I think that the school was probably never prepared. The day that we had a major problem we decided to not send our child to the school again.

PI: When you say you had a major problem, what was that?

S: In reality, it was something that bothered us and it made us angry. We had an expectation of what was going to happen with our son and it didn't happen. We tried different things and after following the different steps we reached the point that we decided to move to a different school.

PI: During the problem you were having, how were you being treated by the school staff?

S: They were rude, they wanted us to accept what they said as correct and right. Even after my wife caught them doing wrong. She saw the situation and how the staff handled it. The principal claimed that her teachers never did anything wrong and that the problem was that we were not prepared to send our child to school at that time. That is what they had tried to cover themselves with and the minute you tell them something they become defensive and begin to prepare themselves for anything that might arise from the situation.

PI: Do you think that they treated you the way that they would have treated any other parent?

S: No, No I don't think they would.

PI: Why?

S: In this case I think it was an issue of ethnicity. Anglos, Americans, Mexicans there is a change. Many think that parents will be prepared for these cases. My wife tried to always be prepared and she always looked for solutions because she knew that it would be a difficult situation. I did come to learn of many things that were due to ethnicity. I think that a change is experienced based on that during ARDs. So I do think that a lot has to do with our race.

PI: Some parents are ready and prepared for ARDs and some are not, some go to ARDs and defend and advocate for themselves and their children others do not. Why do you think that there is that difference in parents?

S: I think that it is fear. I think that they are afraid of what might happen to their children. I think that is what is the big difference, the fear. Yes, that they tell you or ask you something and you do not know how to respond correctly to it.

PI: Have you experienced that the school has attempted to collaborate with you in a positive way?

S: Yes and no. They do sometimes want to work with you but it is always to their benefit and they do not want to struggle. They want things to come out good for them. Even that happens very little. The school want you to help them the way they want and don't want true collaboration. My wife would take them information regarding our son. He has a rare condition and my wife tried to inform them about it, she even took videos for them to watch and not one of them ever did, none of them did not care. They never made any attempt to learn and modify anything for our son.

PI: How do you think that the principal of the school sees you? What do they think of you? Or what are their beliefs about a parent like you?

S: You know, I don't think they know because they do not know what it is like to have a child with a disability. They think of the school not in how a parent might feel. I have never asked a principal or spoken to one long enough to know, but I do think they feel the same with everyone. The principal that I spoke to a little bit more would say one or two things about my son but for the most part it was about what was going on in the school. They focus only on what they need to do and nothing else, there is no connection with the principal and there should be.

PI: Why should there be that connection?

S: Because if that person cares there would be many changes. In everything from academics to the relationship with the parents but when you noticed that they don't care you stop expecting that.

PI: How about teachers? Have you had much communication with them?

S: Yes, they tell me about what happened during the day, but they would often only focus on the negative things. They would tell me that my son did this or that. If as a parent I reinforce that communication I will expect it and the teacher will do it, but even when the teacher says something positive it is always somehow negative or followed by something negative. It is important to know, but many of the positive things they do not tell you or take the time to explain it correctly.

PI: What do you think that the school is expecting from you?

S: I think that the school expects us to teach our son the basics, the values, to reinforce what is happening at school. I think that they expect us to do things as if our child did not have a disability.

PI: Have you been asked to do something at the school?

S: I have noticed that if I showed interest in helping out with something at the school and I have requested information or work to help my son here at home, then for example at parent teacher meetings they would show us four sheets of work that my son had done during the six weeks, my wife would then take out three or four times the amount of work that he has done at home during the same time. At that point they got the idea that they could send home more work and we would do it. We

experienced that a lot, so what is the point of what they are doing at school? They start to take some of the load off of themselves and send it home.

PI: We have talks some of the problems that occur between the teachers, principals, and parents. What are some of the things that would need to be done to change that?

S: I think that the work should be equal at school and at home. That way the teachers and the parents can see that there is progress with your child. That way you can show that the program is working.

PI: What are some of the things that schools can do to make the school more inviting and to encourage participation at schools?

S: I would say that if the school would invite you with more time to a pre-ARD or something like that. It would help parents prepare and it would give you more time to learn what is being planned or what is going to happen. I think that would make parents more confident and with less fear about what is going to happen. I think the ARD should me longer across more days. That way we have a better explanation about the program. I think that attending with one other person would work but it would be better if everyone who was going to attend the ARD that way we could be more prepared.

PI: Do you think that these pre-ARD would be only for the first ARD or all of them?

S: I think that it would be better to have them for all the ARDs because that way you will always be prepared.

PI: Okay, those are all the questions that I have for you. I want to thank you again for your participation and for sharing all this information with me.

S: You are welcome, I hope that this information helps you and will help teachers and other parents.



APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

APPROVAL MEMO



**Office of the Vice President for  
Research**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
(IRB)  
Dr. Rolston St. Hilaire, Chair**

MSC 3 RES-PSL New Mexico State University P.O. Box  
3001 Las Cruces, NM 88003-8001 Phone: 575-646-7177  
Fax: 575-646-2480 Email: ovpr@nmsu.edu

DATE: April 17, 2015

FROM: The Office of Research Compliance

TO: Santiago Morales

Department Head: Marlene Salas-Provance  
Faculty Advisor: Anne Gallegos  
Other: Santiago Morales

SUBJECT: Decision Memo for Application 11813  
Project Title: (11813-A) NUESTRAS ESCUELAS: A GROUNDED THEORY  
STUDY OF THE BARRIERS TO FAMI Application Type: Expedited  
Review Type: Expedited  
Approval Period: April 17, 2015 - April 17, 2016  
Category: 7

The NMSU Institutional Review Board Chair, Dr. Rolston St. Hilaire, has reviewed and approved the above application for the conduct of research involving human subjects.

The application was reviewed in accordance with the review process outlined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) - Category 7.

The research must be conducted according to the proposal/protocol that was approved by the IRB. Any changes in the research, instruments, or the consent document(s) must be submitted to the IRB prior to implementation. Additionally, any unexpected hazards or adverse events involving risk to the subjects or others must be reported immediately to the IRB, using the appropriate form, within the time frame specified in the NMSU Principles and Procedures for the Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects.

Please note that the IRB approval is valid for only one (1) year. Pursuant to federal regulations, the IRB must review and approve all research protocols involving human subjects at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but no less than once per year. Therefore, in order to continue your project after the above approved period, you must submit a request for continuation 45 days prior to the above referenced expiration date.

Note: Data collected during a period of lapsed approval is unapproved research and can never be reported or published as research data.

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 646-7177 or via e-mail at [ovpr@nmsu.edu](mailto:ovpr@nmsu.edu).

## APPENDIX G

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (ENGLISH)

New Mexico State University  
**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**Nuestras Escuelas: A Grounded Theory Study of the Barriers to Family Involvement in Special Education Faced by Undocumented Mexican Immigrant Families**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Santiago Morales, M.Ed., a doctoral candidate in the College of Education at New Mexico State University, as a part of his dissertation study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have a child receiving special education services in the public schools and because you have the opportunity to interact with school faculty and staff. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

This project is designed to look at the interactions between Mexican immigrant families and school faculty and staff. The nature of the study will gather data from your interviews to determine what are the underlying issues that facilitate or discourage family involvement. It is the hope of this study that the final theory developed will help enhance services to families and increase educator's knowledge and skills.

#### **Procedures**

If you volunteer for this study, you will be interviewed with follow up interview will be conducted as needed. The interview will consist of questions regarding your experiences with school districts and perceptions that you have with your child's education, and participation at your child's school. The interviews will be confidential. The interviews will be conducted at Las Americas. The approximate interview time is one hour. All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed after. Information gathered from you and the interviews will solely be utilized for the purpose of the study and will be kept confidential.

#### **Potential Risks and Discomforts**

Depending on your experiences with educators, a potential risk of the interview is that you may feel some frustration with the interview questions as they will be focusing on the topic of legal status and the interactions between your child's educators and yourself. If at any time during the interview you are uncomfortable or upset, the interview will be stopped immediately. There are no other foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

## Potential Benefits to Subjects and/or Society

The major benefit of this study is that it will provide information about perceptions and challenges that are perceived between Mexican immigrant families and educators. Understanding the perceptions and challenges to family involvement will allow educators to become more culturally sensitive in their approach to their work with Mexican immigrant families in order to enhance collaboration. Through better understanding and collaborations, Mexican immigrant families will become better advocates for their children with special needs during the identification, planning, and intervention process of special education.

## Confidentiality

Any information that is obtained in connection with the study and that can be identified with you or your family will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Specific information will not be disclosed and your interview responses will not be reported to your child's school or other agency. On all records kept for this study, you will be identified with a pseudonym, not by your actual name. All study records will be kept in a locked file cabinet and audio data will be destroyed once transcribed.

## Participation and Withdrawal

If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind and any data gathered will not be utilized for the study. If you have any questions or comments regarding the conduct of your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at:

Office of Institutional Review  
(575) 646-7177  
[OVPR@nmsu.edu](mailto:OVPR@nmsu.edu)

If you have any questions or comments regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the researcher at:

Santiago Morales (915) 238-4132 [smoral20@nmsu.edu](mailto:smoral20@nmsu.edu)

## Contact Information

If you have any questions or desire additional information you may contact the principal investigator, Santiago Morales at (915) 238-4132 or by email at [smoral20@nmsu.edu](mailto:smoral20@nmsu.edu).

## CONSENT OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

By agreeing to be interviewed you are implying that you understand and consent to participate in the research study.

## APPENDIX F

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (SPANISH)

New Mexico State University

### CONSENTIMIENTO PARA PARTICIPAR EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN

**Nuestras Escuelas: Un Estudio de la Teoría Fundamentada en las Barreras Que Enfrentan las Familias De Indocumentados Inmigrantes Mexicanos a la Participación en Educación Especial**

Usted está invitado a participar en un estudio de investigación realizado por Santiago Morales, M. Ed, un estudiante de doctorado en la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad Estatal de Nuevo México. Usted fue seleccionado como posible participante en este estudio porque usted tiene un niño(a) que recibe servicios de educación especial en las escuelas públicas y porque usted tiene la oportunidad de interactuar con el personal administrativo escolar. En esta investigación se necesitan aproximadamente 5 participantes. Su participación en este estudio de investigación es voluntaria y usted puede retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento.

#### Propósito del estudio

Este proyecto está diseñado para analizar las interacciones entre las familias indocumentadas mexicanas inmigrantes y los profesores y el personal. La naturaleza del estudio recopilará datos de sus entrevistas para determinar cuáles son los temas que facilitan o desalientan la participación de la familia. La expectativa de este estudio es que la teoría final desarrollada ayude a mejorar los servicios a las familias y aumentar los conocimientos y habilidades de los educadores.

#### Procedimientos

Si usted es voluntario para este estudio, usted será entrevistado con entrevistas de seguimiento según sea necesario. Las entrevistas se centrarán en las experiencias y percepciones que tienen en lo que respecta a la educación de su hijo, y la participación en la escuela de su hijo. Las entrevistas se llevarán a cabo en 1500 E. Yandell, El Paso, TX 79902. El tiempo de la entrevista aproximado es de una hora. Todas las entrevistas serán grabadas en audio y transcritas después. La información recopilada será utilizada para el propósito del estudio y se mantendrá confidencial.

#### Posibles riesgos y Molestias

Un riesgo potencial de este estudio es que se puede sentir un poco de frustración con las preguntas de la entrevista, ya que se centrará en el tema de la situación jurídica y las interacciones entre educadores de sus hijos y usted mismo. Si en cualquier momento durante el estudio de investigación se siente incómodo o molesto, la entrevista se detendrá inmediatamente. Si desea continuar con la entrevista y dar su consentimiento verbal para hacerlo, la sesión de la entrevista se reanudará.

No existen otros riesgos previsibles a participar en este estudio.

## Posibles Beneficios para los Participantes y / o Sociedad

La ventaja principal de este estudio es que se proporcionará información acerca de las barreras que se perciben entre las familias de inmigrantes mexicanos indocumentados y educadores. La comprensión de las barreras percibidas para la participación familiar permitirá a los educadores para ajustar su enfoque a las interacciones con las familias de inmigrantes mexicanos indocumentados a fin de mejorar la colaboración. A través de una mejor comprensión y colaboración, las familias de inmigrantes mexicanos indocumentados serán mejores defensores de sus hijos con necesidades especiales durante la identificación, planificación y proceso de intervención de la educación especial.

## Confidencialidad

Cualquier información que se obtiene en relación con el estudio y que puede identificarse con usted o su familia se mantendrá confidencial y será compartida únicamente con su consentimiento. Información específica no será compartida y sus respuestas de la entrevista no serán reportadas a la escuela de su hijo o de otra agencia. En todos los registros mantenidos para este estudio, se le identificara con un seudónimo, no por su nombre. Todos los registros del estudio se mantendrán en un archivador cerrado.

## Participación y Retiro

Usted puede elegir si estar en este estudio o no. Si usted es voluntario para participar en este estudio, puede retirarse en cualquier momento sin consecuencias de ningún tipo. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o comentario acerca de la realización de esta investigación o de sus derechos como sujeto de investigación, por favor comuníquese con la Oficina de Cumplimiento de Investigación en:

Office of Institutional Review Board  
(575) 646-7177  
[OVPR@nmsu.edu](mailto:OVPR@nmsu.edu)

## Información del contacto

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o desea información adicional, puede ponerse en contacto con el investigador principal, Santiago Morales al (915) 238-4132 o por correo electrónico a [smoral20@nmsu.edu](mailto:smoral20@nmsu.edu).

## CONSENTIMIENTO DEL PARTICIPANTE DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Al aceptar ser entrevistado le está dando a entender que entienda y el consentimiento para participar en el estudio de investigación.



