THE PARENT PARTICIPATION DISCOURSE OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL: DIVERSE IDEAS AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AT AN INNER CITY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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Despite the widespread recommendation that schools “collaborate” with parents, little is
found in the literature to elaborate on what this term or the common synonym “partnership”
means, and further, how schools can invite diverse parental contributions to the table of
educational discourse. The current study looks to contribute to the literature by analyzing the
parent participation discourse in one community elementary school, utilizing critical discourse
analysis and ethnographic observations. The findings reveal both school and parents’
conceptions of the parents’ partnership role as ancillary to that of the school’s and the subsequent
lack of true collaboration so advocated by the literature. Implications arise from this analysis
which calls into question the examples of “collaboration” found in the literature, given the lack
of theorizing regarding what collaboration inside of parent participation means. Contributions
may shed light on the unintentional inequality of diverse parents in an effort toward true
collaboration utilizing both the European American, middle class contributions of the
educational institution alongside those of non-mainstream parents in creating an authentic
educational atmosphere for diverse students.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In an ideal learning setting, parents, school personnel and the community join together in an effort to provide each student motivation and opportunity to excel in the educational process. A common thread in the literature regarding this joint effort is the importance and impact of parent participation on student achievement. Philosophies, methods and opinions vary as to how parent participation should be implemented in school environments. Parent role, as found in the literature, ranges from participant to collaborator. This study explored parental involvement as it is defined by both the personnel and parents within a predominately Hispanic urban elementary school, and to identify issues of collaboration and/or cooperation in relation to the culturally diverse. How is the parent participation role defined, who defines it, and what are the implications for the recipients, our students? Identification of such illuminates issues of power, which may or may not hinder support of the culturally diverse parent toward successful educational process of their child.

Parent Participation Defined

Parent participation in children's education has long been lauded as a means of improving academic achievement, self-esteem, and the confidence of children (Rodriguez-Brown, 2001; Sanders & Herting, 2000; Epstein, 2001). Joyce Epstein (1995) defined parent participation as the active role taken by families toward creating a caring educational environment. Sheldon (2002) defined participation as the parents’ investment of resources in their children. Coleman and Churchill (1997) elaborate saying it is involvement of parents through emotional support and contribution of their own skills and knowledge as resources for children to draw upon educationally, while McBride et al. (2002) described it as an exchange between schools and
families which enhances the learning environment for children. Such definitions could be considered overly expansive. In fact, an annual synthesis conducted by Jordan, Orozco & Averett (2001) for the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) noted the need for clarification of this concept called parent participation in support of its practical application. The authors believe that clarity in the area of parent participation would provide improved identification of models in the literature, which hold the greatest potential for supporting practical application. In essence, the lack of theorization as related to practice surrounding the definition of parent participation and roles played by specific individuals, have left the schools to guess which solutions are best.

While many authors agree that the notions surrounding involvement of parents are in fact vague, some go further suggesting that under theorization has led to reproduction of existing unequal structures within the educational institution (Auerbach, 2000; Lareau 1987, & Pariofsky, 2000). Without well-defined theory the literature cannot address demographic changes in the parent and student populations of schools (i.e. cultural elements) and thus truly define the contextual role parents should play towards creation of a successful learning environment for students. For the purposes of equity and relevance the field demands theory, which addresses a holistic picture of parent participation for use in specific settings (Rous et al., 2003 & Jordan et al., 2001). The issues that require exploration toward such a goal are: what is parent participation, what makes it effective, where is it effective, when it is effective, is it the same in all contexts, how it is effectively implemented and why are particular methods implemented in certain contexts? The connection between theory and practice is not sufficiently addressed in the literature to allow for context specific application (Jordan et al., 2001). This additionally illuminates a top-down approach to parent participation implementation, leaving the parents out
of the process of defining their role. In an effort to unpack and answer these questions the common forms of parent participation advocated by the literature will be explored next.

**Forms of Parent Participation**

What has become known as parent participation will first be examined through the use of a widely accepted model of parent participation. Joyce Epstein's model (1995) encompasses a broad perspective of parent involvement, which includes many of the white, middle class ideas regarding parent participation (Auerbach, 2007; Lareau, 1987; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Ream & Palardy, 2008; Valdez, and Dowrick & Maynard, 2007). In 1998 the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) also adopted Epstein’s model of parent participation as its suggested parameters for parent involvement (Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2001). In light of the broad ranging acceptance of Epstein’s model by many in the literature and also by the national PTA, the following discussion will reveal a picture of common parent participation methods encouraged widely in policy and practice based on Epstein’s model.

Epstein proposes that ideal parent involvement is within a model where school, parents and community work together to create an ideal learning environment for children (Epstein, 1983; Epstein, Clark, & Van Voorhis, 2000; Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997; Epstein, Sanders, Clark, & Van Voorhis, 1999; & Newmann & Sconzert, 2000). The model advocates six forms of involvement for the school, parent and community partnership, of which five are directly related to parent participation. These five forms of involvement advocated by Epstein are: parenting, communication, volunteering, home learning, and involvement in policy formation.

The literature supports parent participation in Epstein’s recommended strategies alongside institutional agents and school personnel to facilitate student achievement (Chrispeels
and Rivero, 2001; Comer, 1980; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Epstein, 1992; Fan and Chen, 1999; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997). Increases in amount of parent participation in particular forms such as reading to a child at home, exposing children to societal institutions, helping with homework, and participating in parent-teacher conferences among others, have been found to bolster student performance (Epstein, 2004; Sar & Wulff, 2003; Brener, Dittus & Hayes, 2001; Epstein, 2001; and Pong 1998). In fact, these studies have found that parents who align themselves with the school as a willing assistant to its educational goals aid high student performance. Policies which stemmed out of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have also advocated for the positioning of parents as the primary educators, through a strong home/school approach to education. (de Carvalho, 2000; Nakagawa, 2000; and Schlossman, 1978 & 1983). The literature suggests parents and schools who hold congruent ideas regarding learning have been found to facilitate greater amounts of participation (Goldenberg, 1993; Perez, 2001), and greater student achievement has been found to follow (Epstein, 2001; Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van voorhis, 2002; Adger, 2001; and Sheldon, 2003).

Others argue when the parent and school diverge in their ideology regarding educational advancement, the parents are seen as outsiders with little to contribute to the discourse on parent involvement in children’s education (Singleton & Linton, 2006; Ramirez, 2003; Knight, Norton, Bentley, & Dixon, 2004). Some argue further that parents' funds of knowledge are not recognized by the educational community (Moll, Armanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992; Flecha, 2000; Leistyna, 2002, and Civil & Andrade, 2003). In light of such arguments, questions regarding the partnership status of parents whose expectations differ from those of school personnel begin to surface. Are such parents considered helpful to the education process of their children by the educational institutions they find themselves within? Different ideas about what is best for a
child’s educational environment can illuminate power issues when such parents are seen as a hindrance or a trouble-maker instead of a contributor.

Differing Views of Parent Participation

Researchers have found parent participation often focuses on school-centered conceptions of parental roles, specifically where the discourses of the families and school do not align (Jordan et al., 2001; Delpit, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999). Some researchers argue that participation of parents in educational spheres has been socially constructed over time by educators and policy makers through the lens of privileged white, middle class norms (Kozol, 1991; Auerbach, 2001; Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2002). While Epstein's model (2002) gives voice to parents in the school discourse, only one component explicitly suggests giving the parent power toward change in the practices of the school. While each prong of the method holds potential for equitable partnership, the model seems to place onus either on school as facilitator of discourse and/or parents as participants via agreement with the school's initiatives. School-centered conceptions of parent role without the benefit of culturally diverse parent perspectives may contribute to the academic disparity between those of European-American, middle class background and those outside of this category.

The literature suggests the diversity of parents’ home cultures conflicts with the dominant school culture (European-American, middle class) creating misunderstandings between school personnel and parents (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994b; Fordham, 1996; Valdes, 1996; and Valenzuela, 1999). Additionally, some researchers have found the educational values of parents outside of the dominant discourse have often been misinterpreted due to these cultural differences (Deutsch, 1967; Strodbeck, 1958; and Ream & Palardy, 2008). The literature indicates that many non-white or non-middle class parents can be found as resigned silent partners following
the status quo, not-participating or seeming not to participate in their children's academic pursuits (Cahmann, 2004; and Auerbach, 2007).

Methods for parental involvement, which emphasize school based parent involvement often assume that all parents start with congruent forms of resources and share the same goals the school has set (Auerbach, 2007). Many researchers have found, despite diverse forms of economic, cultural and social capital of parents, that the system negates diverse capital through limited definition of parental involvement, thereby limiting such participation by these parents, and alienating them from the school and students from added resources (Auerach, 2001, 2007; Lareau, 1989, 2003; and Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Lareau (1989) who addressed the disparity stated, “the level of parental involvement is linked to the class position of the parents and to the social and cultural resources that social class yields in American society” (p. 81). In her study she compared parents with economic and social resources that aligned with the norms of current educational discourse with those who did not, and concluded,

If the schools were to promote a different type of family-school relationship, the class culture of middle class parents might not yield a social profit. The data (of this study) do not reveal that the social relations of the middle-class culture are intrinsically better than the social relations of the working-class culture. Nor can it be said that the family-school relationships in the middle class are objectively better for children than those in the working class. Instead, the social profitability of middle-class arrangements is tied to the schools’ definition of the proper family-school relationship. (p. 82)

Alienation due to socioeconomic differences can be seen in another study conducted by Lareau (1987) which focused on two very different schools: one from a middle class area and another found within a lower socioeconomic area. Findings indicated that the teachers in both schools gauged the parents’ desire for their children’s educational success as directly correlated with the degree in which the parents responded to the school’s expected parent participation
methods. The schools’ methodologies of participation (i.e. parent helping with homework, reading to their children, attendance at parent/teacher conferences) birthed out of the European American, middle class frame of mind did nothing to temper the educators’ final judgments of the ideal parental efforts. Such a study identifies the potential for a deficit mentality within the school systems based on socioeconomic class.

The findings Lareau presents parallel similar results which highlight institutional perceptions terming minority parents as uncaring and uninvolved by schools (Valenzuela, 1999; Valdes, 1996; and Valencia & Black, 2002). Interestingly, Ceballo (2004) found typical predictors of white students’ scholarly achievement (such as parent income, education and family structure) were not dependable predictors among minority students (Maton, Heabowski & Grief 1998, and Gonzales, Causce, Friedman & Mason, 1996). Also, Arellano and Padilla (1996) found nontraditional parental support, such as encouragement of educational pursuits was cited as a critical factor in the Latino student’s success at one Ivy League college. These findings suggest there may be a legitimization process of parent participation forms dependent on alignment with school ideology. The diversity of the community school requires analysis to identify if deficit mentalities are present and, if so, in what ways they hinder parent participation in this environment and therefore student achievement.

Much evidence points to the interwoven nature of race, socioeconomic status and the barriers which can be created between parents and schools who differ in ideologies due to such differences (Ortner, 2006; Kozol, 1992). If a deficit mentality is largely found, as in the aforementioned studies, the need arises for fresh consideration of the diverse parents’ strengths, insight, and capital resources, which could otherwise go unutilized.
Deficit Definition of Parent Participation

Numerous studies link particular forms of social and economic capital, those associated with the European American, middle class, to successful parental interaction (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; and Lareau, 2000, 2002, 2003). Studies on the local school level (Gayles, 2004; Lareau, 1987; and Cahman, 2004) and in the broader picture of policy (Anyon, 1997; Berliner, 2005; and Bolgatz, 2005), point to research findings suggesting a deficit mentality of schools toward those outside of this grouping. A deficit discourse views those methods different from ones own as lesser or inferior, and when held by an educational institution can impede and devalue diverse approaches to parent participation forms.

Potential of Unimpeded Parental Capital

Policy and assessment measures which affirm the European American, middle class values, attitudes and beliefs have been found to minimize diverse parent capital, even sending such capital into a dormant state (Lareau, 1987; and Valenzuela, 1999). On the other hand, connecting parents to their capital resources has been found to increase student academic achievement. Ream and Palardy (2008) found both social and economic capital enabled certain parents to prepare the way for their students’ educational journey. Their findings suggest the advancement of educational goals (i.e. pursuit of college) was dependent on the psychosocial processes and capital of the parent as found by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997). They theorized that parent role construction was a key predictor in self-efficacy and involvement of such parents. Should findings such as these be true, without advocates to recognize and facilitate the usage of diverse forms of capital, a deficit mentality on the part of the school and/or parent would serve to undermine the educational promotion of those outside of white, middleclass frame of thinking.
The importance of facilitating parent participation utilizing parent capital is highlighted by the findings of Bourdieu and Johnson (1993) who determined the social capital one holds was useful only when it was utilized. The mere possession of capital, however, does not guarantee it as a resource enabling parents to advocate for the student (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, the possibilities of parental capital in an educational partnership are contingent on the parent and school’s knowledge of diverse capital and agreement regarding suitable circumstance of use (Horvat et al., 2003; & Lareau, 2003).

According to Ream and Palardy (2008), those found fluent in the discourse of the school were said to be, “…better capable of activating network resources for educational benefit, perhaps as a consequence of differences in social skill, or of specific opportunities for using social capital, or of structural or subtle contextual features that vary among groups” (p. 242). This study [Ream and Palardy, 2008] looked at parental social capital and its availability to differing social classes of parents. The researchers found that differences between parent groups' forms of social capital were not equal within the educational system. Disproportionate advantage was allotted to students where parents had knowledge of the educational system through their educational experiences, income and desired occupations. Parents with the social advantage of belonging to recognized and validated groups passed on ‘know-how’ or ‘human capital’ to their children (p. 243). Those with the recognized social knowledge learn more, and those without such knowledge are left in the proverbial dust (Stanton-Salazar, 2004; Lin, 2001; and Baron, Field, & Schuller, 2000). Without recognition of diverse forms of capital by educators, researchers, policy makers and parents themselves, disparity in social capital discussed will continue to reproduce (Kozol, 1991; and Valenzuela, 1999).
In summary, the issues in the literature which will be addressed in the present study include: the lack of theory/definition surrounding parent participation; collaboration versus cooperation with the parent; the European American, middle-class education system and the effect it has on collaboration versus cooperation of diverse parents; and finally how theory applied in light of diverse parent populations may increase a collaborative effort in creating an effective learning environment.

Statement of the Problem

The origin of the problem is with the narrow view of “best practices” within parent participation. Many studies have found a wide range of support diverse parents provide to their children empowering them academically (Cahmann, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994b; Fordham, 1996; Valdes, 1996), but many researchers claim that school-based parent involvement practices sustain a deficit model when it comes to those who are not white, middle class parents. These practices under-utilize the authentic capital of these parents within schools. This study focuses on whether and how authentic capital of parents who are not European American, middle class is developed and utilized in school activities intended to increase parent participation.

Specifically lacking in the body of literature is the juxtaposing of the perceptions of parental capital perpetuated by the educational institution and perceptions of the diverse parents themselves. While such research examining the varied contribution of diverse parents’ is available, continued work is also needed to develop theory and better inform educators about diverse parent roles, specifically the Hispanic parents’ potential (Lumina Foundation, 2007).

This study focuses on both the parental perspective and the school's parental expectation for involvement to determine if the parents and the school recognize and value the diverse forms of capital available from parents who fall outside European American, middle class frame of
thought. Utilizing critical discourse analysis (CDA) as theoretical framework and methodology, (further discussed in the methodological chapter), this research was designed to specifically explore the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions select parents have regarding their contributions at the school and at home toward student growth?

2. Do perceptions of select parents differ from the school’s perceptions of the parents’ role regarding their contributions at the school and home?

3. Do power structures exist which hinder a parent’s ability to contribute to the discourse of parent participation?

Definitions

The following definitions will help inform the reader in the coming chapters and findings of this study.

Parent participation/parent involvement: any contribution a parent makes which is intended to help a child’s educational advancement.

Capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic resources a person which one has access to for use in everyday life.

Mainstream: the commonly found normative thought/ways of the majority.

Nonmainstream: the uncommon normative thought/ways of those outside of the majority.

Critical discourse analysis: the analysis of discursive practices shaped by the discourse of power, and the effects such a discourse has upon individual identities and social relations’ knowledge and beliefs.

Deficit mentality: a mentality that begins with the perception of one group (or individual) starting in a disadvantaged position in relation to another group.
Collaboration: the mutual development and facilitation of consensus by two or more individuals.

Egalitarian dialog: the dialogue that is created when the contributions are considered by the soundness of their reasoning instead of by the position of power held by those who making them.

Open discourse: equal contribution in development of consensus surrounding shared meaning by any person involved in the discourse environment.
CHAPTER II

CONSIDERATIONS OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Previous research on parent participation to support student achievement is grounded primarily in various educational models and learning theories. In general, researchers have not included theoretical perspectives that acknowledge larger social and cultural systems or influences. For that reason this study attempts to integrate a sociocultural approach to learning and schooling with social theories that address both discourse and power. This calls for the use of critical discourse analysis as an analytical tool.

To unpack parent participation in the literature, and develop a framework to interpret the data, the term itself must be defined. In this study parent participation is identified as any contribution a parent makes which is intended to help a child’s educational advancement. The above definition allows for: a) analysis of school and parent perceptions of parent role, b) identification of power distributions in the educational community, and c) recognition of marginalized parent perceptions.

One issue addressed in this chapter focuses on the nature of parent participation present in the literature along with commonly corresponding terms like “collaboration” or “partnership” (Rodriguez-Brown, 2001; Sanders & Herting, 2000; and Epstein, 2001). The definitions of parent participation, cited in chapter one, reveal an emphasis on two-sided partnership between parent and school. Coleman and Churchill’s (1997) definition of parent participation revolves around the importance of parent as a resource of skill and knowledge. This description brings the parent into the academic process, thereby creating a partnership between school and home.

McBride et al. (2002) also emphasize the symbiotic relationship between parent and educator in
an effort toward creating the best possible learning environment for the children they share. Such definitions emphasize the importance of collaboration between these two entities, and serve to reveal a lack of such collaboration in the field.

Based on the definition of parent participation outlined earlier, this chapter initially explores parent participation as presented in sociocultural theory and discuss a current model and an approach utilizing these theories. This exploration provides a platform from which to consider *parent participation or collaboration* in light of mainstream parent participation strategies with those outside of the European American, middle class.

In order to develop parent participation theory and a template for analyzing parent/school partnerships for practical application called for by Jordan, Orozco & Averett (2001), Habermas’ theory of communicative action are explored. It suggests a methodology utilizable for analysis of educational environment discourse, allowing for identification of the nature of collaboration. Finally, critical questions are posed regarding assessment, implementation and ability of the methodology to differentiate collaborative versus ancillary parental roles with marginalized populations in education.

*Parent Participation within Sociocultural Theory*

Parent participation approaches are dependent on the view of student development held by individual schools. If a school ascribes to behavioral or cognitive theories of development, it follows that parent participation methods would be based on such accepted theory. In light of both the parent participation model and approach reviewed, which attributes suggested practices to sociocultural theory, and parent participation methods in use at the research site, this review focused on a sociocultural theoretical lens. Other theories were be bracketed for the duration of the current study.
Lev Vygotsky (1978) is credited with the introduction and initial development of sociocultural theory. He maintained in this theory that knowledge construction is negotiated socially through the culture one is within (Vygotsky, 1987). According to González, Moll, & Amanti (2005) sociocultural theory focuses on the role culture plays in providing the tools and/or resources by which one mediates their thinking. Barbara Rogoff (2003) discusses sociocultural theory in light of a child’s development, describing it as a process, which defines and redefines both the individual and the culture they are situated within. Cole (1996) similarly states, “the structure and development of human psychological processes emerge through culturally mediated, historically developing, practical activity” (p. 108). On one side of sociocultural theory, the macro culture trains and develops its participants in the utilization of cultural ways. On the other, individuals continuously contribute to changes within their culture. Societal and individual development is, therefore, interdependent, a notion which is also shared by Dewey (1938), Javis (2006) and Mezirow (2003).

Sociocultural theory, therefore, views human development through the lens of interdependence of both individual and culture. Those within education who utilize this theory see a student’s development based on the cultural context the student is raised within, endeavoring to take both context and individual into consideration while facilitating student development (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005 and Rogoff, 2003).

Another component of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Sociocultural concepts, particularly the ZPD, are often used to support the necessity of parent participation (Lambert, 1991; and Matusov & Rogoff, 2002). The ZPD speaks to student capabilities individually compared to student ability with assistance (see Figure 1) stating,
The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peer. (1978, p. 86)

*Figure 1. Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD).*

In an educational context, the outcome identifies what a student can do with help compared to their potential without such help from more informed peers or other adults. Based on this line of thought some parent participation advocates utilize this theory as the basis for parental inclusion in education. In essence reasoning that the more individuals a learner has to draw upon, the greater potential a student has to attain their zone of proximal development. Joyce Epstein’s overlapping spheres of influence model (2001) and approaches such as Reggio Emilia utilize parent participation alongside of the school and community to utilize multiple forms of help toward greater student potential. The following sections will explore Epstein’s theoretical model, and the Reggio Emilia approach (or model in practice), highlighting the sociocultural basis of each to provide a context from which to critically examine each.

*Epstein and emphasis on multiple contributors.* In her writings on parent participation, Epstein highlights the importance of partnership between school, parent and community, and open communication between each toward development of the ideal learning environment for children to reach their full potential (1995). The model’s fullest potential requires overlapping responsibilities between parent, school and community, and as such is best facilitated when each of these players implements what Epstein refers to as a shared responsibility perspective.
According to Joyce Epstein, three major viewpoints that guide parents’ and educators’ perspectives regarding parental roles: “a) Separate responsibilities of families and schools; b) shared responsibilities of families and schools; and c) sequential responsibilities of families and schools” (2001, p. 22). Each of these perspectives affects the amount and type of interaction the school and parent have in pursuing the best education for their children.

**Separate responsibilities.** A separate responsibilities perspective is one in which each player fulfills their role with little to no need for interaction between the two institutions (school and family). A separate responsibility perspective has been found within both parent and school populations (Delpit, 2006; Lareau, 1987; and Ostrow, 2002).

**Sequential responsibilities.** A less predominant frame of mind is the sequential responsibilities of families and schools, which places heavier importance on one institution over the other at different phases of a child’s developmental process. The sequential frame of mind still, by and large, separates the institutions roles from each other (Epstein, 2001).

**Shared responsibilities.** Predominately, however, the literature, policy and theory focus on a shared responsibilities perspective between both institutions (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Epstein, 1983; and Epstein, Clark, & Van Voorhis, 2000; Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997; and Newmann & Sconzert, 2000). As the name implies, such thought utilizes both institutions in tandem toward the academic achievement of children. Epstein’s model, which employs the perspective of shared responsibilities, is the overlapping spheres of influence model.

**Overlapping Spheres of Influence**

The overlapping spheres of influence (OSI) model, developed by Epstein (1987), focuses on the shared responsibilities of parent and school, recognizing the influence and
interdisciplinary nature of partners in the school learning community. The theoretical perspective was developed when data collected did not fit into preexisting sociological theories which, according to Epstein et al. (2001),

stressed that social organizations would be most effective if they set separate goals and worked efficiently and effectively on unique missions. Rather, a social organizational perspective was needed that posited that the most effective families and schools had overlapping, shared goals and missions concerning children, and conducted some work collaboratively. (p.42)

This theory places emphasis on the need for mutual interactions of the school, the parent and the community in an effort to establish goals for students and is supported by others in the literature (Epstein, 1991; and Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Additionally, these interactions are believed to foster appreciation for the contributions each member provides toward student achievement of their ZPD. Figure 2 shows each player (parent, school and community) as a different sphere overlapping the student. The greater the degree of inward movement, and increase in shared responsibility, yields greater overlapping spheres and therefore potential for student success according to Epstein’s research (2001).

*Epstein’s Involvement Strategies for Increased OSI Overlap (1997)*

Six widely accepted involvement strategies are suggested by Epstein et al. (2001) that leads to the greatest overlap of school, parent and community roles. As sited in the literature, Epstein’s methods for parent participation have been widely accepted by educators (Auerbach, 2007; Lareau, 1987; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Ream & Palardy, 2008; and Valdez, Dowrick & Maynard, 2007). These suggested strategies include: parenting, communication, volunteering, facilitation of a home learning environment, participation in policy development and finally, community involvement. The last form of involvement is geared toward the community’s role in the process while the prior five focuses on parent and school roles in the OSI development. The
community component of Epstein’s theory will be bracketed in the following discussion to focus on the parent and school interaction due to focus of the current study. Elaboration of the five forms of involvement, which speaks directly to the parent and school roles, follows.

**Parenting.** Epstein et al. (2001) defines the first involvement method as "parenting." In this component schools facilitate development of parenting skills by educating the parent about child development. The parent learns from the school how to create a supportive home environment for academic work through school mentoring of child developmental stages. Parents participate by helping the school understand both the children’s home culture and personal goals for their children. Others in the literature concur regarding the importance of a supportive home environment described in Epstein's model (Shumow, 2001 and Xu, 2001).

**Communication.** Communication, another form of involvement suggested by Epstein et al. (2001), emphasizes school to family communication placing importance of student achievement and school programs and "two-way communication between the school and parent" (Epstein & Salinas, 2002, p. 17). Chrispeels and Rivero (2000) also stress the importance of communication to parent participation, specifically through parent teacher conferences along with parent initiated meetings designed to track student performance. Miedel & Reynolds (1999) identified communication between school and parent as an indicator of increased retention rates of students in their research.

**Parent volunteering.** Parental volunteering at or on behalf of the school is another prong of Epstein's model (2002). Forms of volunteering are wide-ranging including, but not limited to: Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) involvement, classroom volunteering, and participation in a site-based decision-making teams (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2001). Many researchers confirm
that volunteering, as a parent participation method, bolsters children's academic achievement (Catsambis, 2001; Brent, 2000; Epstein & Dauber, 1995; and Bernard, 1990).

Home learning environment. School facilitation of home learning environments and subsequent parental participation with students within the created environment is the fourth method advocated by Epstein & Salinas (2002). Parent involvement is utilized in both homework and school. Support strategies that include resources and tools to facilitate an effective home learning environment are an involvement method advocated by many in the field of parent participation (Cooper, Lindsay & Nye, 2000; Epstein & VanVoorhis, 2001; and Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow & Fendrich, 1999).

Decision-making. Finally, Epstein and Salinas (2002) suggests decision making as a form of parent participation that incorporates the parent into school decisions and policy. Decision making here is in reference to parent involvement in local school reform and has additionally been defined as a pertinent participation form for parents by Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, & Henrich (2000) and Dodd & Konzal (1999).

The OSI strategies are built upon theory of how social organizations, such as the school and family unit, connect toward the goal of student achievement (Epstein et al., 2001). To that end, the above strategies were developed to promote mutual respect, trust, appreciation, and collaboration between and among all social organizations (specifically the family and school) that influence children’s lives (Epstein et al., 2001). According to Epstein (1995), collaboration among these adults requires the development of a family-like school and a school-like family. In this scenario, both institutions become more like the other creating overlap in roles (OSI) and, theoretically, increased achievement of what students, in themselves, may not be able to attain (ZPD). What is seemingly absent from the OSI work, however, is critical reflection regarding
what group is defining beneficial student achievement. The literature suggests the successful use of OSI model is based on European American, middle class perceptions of desirable student achievement (Darley, 2008 and de Carvalho, 2001).

Literature supporting mutual parent and school desire for student achievement abounds (Diamond and Gomez, 2004; Henderson & Berla, 1994; and Kelleghan et al., 1993), yet others suggest diverse perspectives surrounding achievement have not been given access into the partnership discourse (Aronson & Steele, 2005). Powell (2004) found that low socioeconomic African American and Latino students did not have access to the discourse surrounding achievement within mathematics for challenging or purposes of change to more equitable definitions of achievement. These findings require reflection on whose goals are being embraced and pursued in the schooling process and if one-sided goal pursuit can facilitate a collaborative partnership between school and parent.

Reggio Emilia, a Model in Action

The Reggio Emilia approach, a model in action, employs many of the same involvement strategies recommended for OSI attainment. The approach has attained international notoriety as an exemplary early childhood program, and many schools around the world have patterned themselves after the approach (New, 2007; and Strong-Wilson, 2007). While similar in parent participation forms, the Reggio Emilia approach has some marked differences effecting the implementation of parent participation strategies. First and foremost, the choice of founder Loris Malaguzzi to develop the Reggio Emilia as an approach and not a formalized/structured model which would prescribe “cookie cutter” model applicable for any context (Gandini, 1993). The approach focuses on the need for flexibility in approaches and thought and therefore is more of a philosophy for which diversity is celebrated and a pedagogy continually in process according to
the children of the environment (Hughes, 2007; Gandini, 1993; New, 2007; and Strong-Wilson, 2007). The founder is quoted on the Renaissance School in Amherst saying,

> Our expectations of the child must be very flexible and varied. We must be able to be amazed and enjoy like the children often do. We must be able to catch the ball that the children throw us, and toss it back to them in ways that make the children want to continue the game with us, developing, perhaps, other games as we go along. (as cited May 10, 2009 at http://www.renaissanceschoolamherst.com/projects/reggio_emilia.html)

This perspective is meant to keep the approach just that, an approach that varies according to the children’s unique sociocultural context.

While the Reggio Emilia approach is built directly upon Vygotsky’s ZPD theory in its approach to interwoven participation between the parent, school and community, the community and parents are seen as those accountable for the educational welfare of the community’s children (New, 2007). Epstein et al. (2001) place the school as the principal responsibility-bearer. The focus of Reggio Emilia is therefore a sociocultural mentality (New, 2007; and Strong-Wilson, 2007), while the OSI model builds on a school-centered mentality.

The Reggio Emilia approach also identifies parents as the student’s first teacher and encourages parent involvement at all levels of curriculum development in day-to-day practices of the school (Gandini, 1993 and New, 2007). Within this approach, the philosophies between school and home are interwoven with emphasis on the home culture of the child (Fraser, 2007). The literature suggests this emphasis keeps the focus of the school on the child as the central object of attention, basing the educational facilitation on the social and cultural resources of the children (Fraser, 2007; Hughes, 2007; New, 2007; and Strong-Wilson, 2007). The Reggio Emilia approach places the school as submitted to the surrounding culture, aligning with a sociocultural framework (New, 2007).
The OSI model’s suggested strategies are based on an approach focusing on the responsibility of the school to educate children. According to Epstein et al. (2001), “At the time of children’s formal entry into school, the teacher assumes the major responsibility for educating them” (2001, p. 23). The Reggio Emilia approach conversely has educators consciously place themselves in the role of learner (Fraser, 2007 and New, 2007). In essence the student is put in the position of curriculum developer as the teacher utilizes students’ development to guide the classroom process (Hughes, 2007). This approach also places greater emphasis on sociocultural theory, or emphasis on the child’s social and cultural resources, to facilitate student development and therefore gives greater importance to the role of the parent, community and child in appropriate direction and facilitation of the learning community. Epstein’s involvement strategies toward OSI attainment hinge on the school as facilitator of the participation methodologies by parents and community. Also, the OSI model does not address specific roles students have in their learning. González et al. (1993) reflect on the school centered mentality surrounding those outside of the status quo saying,

Rather than focusing on the knowledge these students [non-European American, middle class students] bring to school and using it as a foundation for learning, schools have emphasized what these students lack in terms of the forms of language and knowledge sanctioned by the schools. This emphasis on so-called disadvantages has provided justification for lowered academic expectations and inaccurate portrayals of these children and their families (p. 2).

While Epstein’s model builds, in part, off of sociocultural theory (specifically ZPD through OSI development), it is dependent on school-centeredness to define the developmental goals and therefore achievement of students. The facilitation of both parent and community involvement includes each partner toward school-centered goals, however, it is not based on cultural context of the student as in sociocultural theory. The focus is on adult, and specifically school, as
discerner and decision-maker leaving the student (the focus of the attention) outside of the process.

Can effective parent participation and community involvement occur without conscience decisions to keep the child’s social and cultural resources at the center? Are the parents or community members being given equal access into the partnership when school-centered conceptions define student achievement? The OSI model defines achievement based on educational institutional norms citing theories, which focus on school-centered responsibility for defining and facilitation of achievement (Epstein, et al., 2001). Further the authors and proponents look to develop OSI as a theory of social structures and their interactions. By focusing, however, on standards of achievement based in European American, middle class standards, those social structures (or institutions, i.e. family, community) that differ are required to align with the status quo and not achievement based on social and cultural resources of the children the model looks to serve. This is further exemplified in Epstein (2001) wording of suggested participation methods, which creates room for diverse input, yet the school-centered basis sets the course for parent/community participation, contradicting the collaborative wording. Therefore, questions are raised regarding how and if collaboration with those from outside of the European-American, middle-class can be attained without a sociocultural framework. While the importance of collaboration between parents and schools is advocated across the board (Cairney, 2000; Hausman & Goldring, 2000; and Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000), many authors further suggest that respect, trust and appreciation must be present to facilitate effective collaboration between parents and schools (Gonzalez, Stoner & Jovel, 2003; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; and Delpit, 2006). Both Reggio Emilia and OSI advocate the suggested collaborative roles with the parent (and community). Will collaboration manifest with the other if both the culture and
individual within the culture are not utilized as the basis for facilitating development (and therefore the basis of parent participation methods chosen)? To answer the questions posed here further exploration of what it means to collaborate with those different from European American, middle class (or the other) needs to be explored.

Collaboration with the Other

In order to create an environment of collaboration (and mutual respect, trust and appreciation) broadly advocated, collaboration must be defined. Merriam-Webster dictionary identifies collaboration as joint work together with others, especially in an intellectual effort (May 13, 2009). Microsoft word lists the following synonyms for collaboration: teamwork, partnership, a group effort, and/or an alliance. Sosa (1997) uses collaboration interchangeably with empowerment and “a deficit posture” as an antonym for collaboration (p. 8). The extremes presented in Sosa’s definition swings from an empowerment (collaboration) mentality to a deficit one (marginalization of one or more partner). With these definitions in mind, collaboration will be defined as equal partnership, which empowers each partner to contribute to the establishment of group consensus of meaning, goals and the attainment of goals.

Collaboration between parents and school is dependent on the decided facilitation of such. Collaboration requires openness of each institution to different perspectives. As school environments serves a unique population of students, those who want to facilitate collaboration must work to include diversity of participants in strategy/consensus development for each student body. When considerations for the unique population are made, no pre-packaged program can be utilized. Goals such as these require consideration of the other or those who fall outside of the mainstream European-American, middle class culture.
The ‘Other’

The other is a person or persons different from oneself (Dyke, 2006). In the beginning stages of anthropologic study, researchers would venture to distant countries, where life was vastly different from the Western world. Questions began to arise regarding the perceptions of differing cultures, or the other, which the anthropologists were reporting. Concerns about the anthropologist’s own system of values and the effect these values had on objective data collection surfaced. Similar concerns arise in educational contexts when the other and the resources, or capital, they bring to the table remain unutilized in collaborative efforts due to ignorance or dismissal of their resources in favor of European American, middle class values (Laureau, 1987 and Delpit, 2006).

The other is a metanarrative defined by post-colonial studies. These studies identified the superior attitudes of European writers toward cultures in countries controlled or once controlled by them. The superior attitudes were held in every area of life and looked to reform all not of the same persuasion through the use of the power at their dispose. Nations conquered and/or colonialized were to be molded into similar colonial behaviors and thoughts. Beck (1992) speaks to the metanarratives, which value one experience and claim over another, by those who hold the powers to do so. Specifically, a metanarrative can be found in educational practices implemented for all, which centered around that which is effective for the European American, middle-class, despite studies that have proven such practices as less effective for the other (Cahmann, 2005; Delpit, 2006; Gayles, 2005; Gonzalez, Stoner & Jovel, 2003; and Kozol, 1991). Recognition of the other within our midst will increase the educational system’s capacity to collaborate with and educate a broader spectrum of people in a more effective manner. David Boud and his colleagues (1993) found that learning opportunities are constructed within social,
economic and cultural milieu. According to these researchers great value can be found in learning from those different from us, revealing ideas to the critical gaze of the other:

We need, as learners, appropriate support trust and challenge from others. … We also need to be challenged so that we do not fool ourselves with our own distorted assumptions or fail to consider new information which is outside our present range of experience… diversity and difference of experience is necessary to move beyond what is taken as given. (p. 15)

Everyone stands to benefit from knowing, interacting and discoursing with the other, especially our students.

_Capital of the ‘Other’_

The OSI theory endeavors to embrace the assets of each player (whether the school, the parent or the community). According to Sosa (1997) a school can facilitate an environment of collaboration, marginalization or somewhere in between. Collaboration demands the embrace of each player’s resources, especially those of the other that often are overlooked or ignored. One must know or learn about these diverse resources within their midst to increase potential student ZPD attainment.

Pierre Bourdieu in his studies recognized issues of status and power inherent in the cultural elements of class through social capital. These studies of class structures help us to consider all the forms of capital the other possesses. In his work Bourdieu coins the term habitus of an individual, as the way in which one was raised and interacted with others, then finally learning subconsciously to maneuver successfully in their culture (Bourdieu, 1991). Individuals learned how to utilize their “capital” subconsciously from those around them. Those with differing habitus do not bring the same resources to the table of education. Bourdieu (1977) discusses understanding the other’s diverse resources. Four types of capital are identified which
an individual can access in order to maneuver in the society they find themselves, and which should be taken into consideration towards collaborative efforts between the school and parents.

**Economic capital.** The first type of capital is termed *economic* and represents an individual’s access to monetary means or wealth. Many authors cite western education as geared toward the middle-class (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Payne, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999; and Willis, 1977) making this capital component pertinent to success of those whose habitus did not provide knowledge of middle class norms. An achievement gap between the low and middle socioeconomic students has materialized consistently in the standardized tests in the United States confirming the role economic capital plays in student achievement (Ceci & Papierno, 2005 and Evans 2004).

**Cultural capital.** The second form of capital that Bourdieu identifies is *cultural* capital. These assets are gained through knowledge of elements of a culture such as the tastes, language, and style associated with that culture. Such capital, however, can become a liability when it is not the currency utilized by the mainstream. In Lisa Delpit’s research (2006) of Alaskan tribal communities, she found that community members of Alaskan heritage were weary with the form education had taken, promoting the mainstream (white, middle-class) system as utilizable for any person regardless of culture and/or race. Cultural differences were overlooked in the implementation of the system creating a learning environment in which the Alaskan natives were unsuccessful. Ignoring the culture’s natural learning preferences (i.e. learning from elders in the community in a contextual setting) the schools favored decontextualized learning from texts advocated in mainstream U.S. education. Delpit maintained that this put the Alaskan students at a disadvantage as their cultural capital was not being utilized in the school. Students in this
environment begin disadvantaged instead of on a equal learning basis unless their capital is identified and validated by those in power.

Valenzuela (1999) identified similar findings in her study of a predominately Mexican student body subjected to white middle-class standards. Valenzuela elaborated on the mainstream system saying, “When goals, objectives, and strategies are systematically blind to the experiences of the ‘other’s’ history and culture, and especially their folk understandings of education, they are sure to meet with limited success” (1999, p. 263). Kozol’s (1991) study produced similar results. The diverse were placed at a disadvantaged place from the start in urban schools where minority students’ cultural capital was undervalued or unknown to school personnel.

Conversely, González et al. (1993) studied a group of teachers who spent time in Latino students’ homes. Findings indicated these teachers developed an appreciation for the cultural resources (or funds of knowledge) that students accessed. The teachers’ insight provided them with effective pathways of learning by utilizing student cultural capital or funds of knowledge as a springboard into new concepts.

Findings in Delpit’s research (2006) of the Vilis Tokples Schools in Papua New Guinea confirmed that the other could succeed in the western world without forfeiting their cultural capital. The schools in the study were developed to embrace both the native culture alongside the westernized culture. Delpit observed in this study that development of a policy by community members that affirms, “…rather than negates a people’s knowledge of its culture and heritage…[holds] no better prospect for its success” (2006, p. 90). The culturally relevant practice of valuing the other’s culture within the interaction of the mainstream school is strongly advocated by Delpit (2006) and Epstein (1995) toward effective collaboration of all involved.
Social capital. The Vilis Tokples school example highlights another form of capital according to Bourdieu, social capital. This form of capital represents the ability to network with others or the accessibility to institutions. Delpit (2006) found western trade that brought economic benefit to Papua New Guinea demanded the natives learn a different discourse, which increased economic and social gain. Instead of abandoning their own social discourse in favor of a western discourse, the students were taught to both.

Navigating different institutional discourses demands a multicultural discourse if one is coming from outside the Western habitus as these natives were. The formal policies and informal practices of the urban schools, studied by Kozol (1991), however, undercut the students’ social capital within the urban schools studied. For instance, school counselors’ responsibility to place students based on developmental level clashed with the logistical problems of limited space, which additionally monopolized the counselors’ time and prevented meaningful placement of students. Such practices did not put students in touch with the social capital they could have accessed through appropriate placement preventing greater chances for upward mobility. Add to this the impossibility of actually seeing, let alone being guided, by these counselors, and a system is created that does not allow students to network toward desired educational ends. The result is denied benefit of social capital in educational settings.

Symbolic capital. The last form of capital Bourdieu cites is symbolic capital. These resources are personal efficacy or perceived competence in different arenas. Jonathan Gayles (2005) studied three African American high school senior males, identified as successful in an urban inner city school, in order to define how these students developed resiliency and success in the public school system. I found that all three participants attributed hard work to the method of attaining freedom from their current impoverished surroundings. They did not attribute success
to interacting with those who excelled academically (i.e. honors students). Instead, their hard work was toward a goal. They were simply working the system with the goal of escaping the oppression of their socioeconomic status. One implication Gayles suggests is those who do not have the know-how (or symbolic capital) to work within the white middle-class system will not be “successful” academically. It is apparent that the other in this context is asked to fit the mold to be considered successful. Consideration of the diverse habitus of others needs to occur to expand the potential for success to a larger body of students.

The four forms of capital described above could occur in a myriad of ways and could easily elude a learning community not looking for it. Utilization of diverse resources promotes respect, trust and appreciation of all the partners in a collaborative effort. A parent’s capital can either be empowered to increase the potential of a learning community, or devalued (consciously and/or subconsciously) to the student’s detriment. For example, many Latino parents have to work long hours to give their students and families economic capital, a situation which can be held against such parents if these supportive contributions are not recognized and valued (Hu & St. John, 2001; Cebello, 2004; and Knight, Norton, Bently, & Dixon, 2004). Economic capital has also been observed in the form of encouragement of educational pursuits toward upward mobility despite lack of specific educational system knowledge (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Cebello, 2004; and Padilla, 2007). The American system of upward mobility demands education, a fact many of these parents know.

The cultural capital of many Hispanic parents includes specific cultural traditions, style and typically speaking a Spanish dialect. Spanish, however, is often devalued by the system that has been known to push English proficiency of its students despite the loss of the primary language (Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). Cummins (1980) discusses
the potential capital a first language can provide in regard to learning a second language arguing that much structural and symbolic overlap between languages is present which should serve as an asset. Non-English speaking parents are also often put in a position where they cannot advocate for their child (Valenzuela, 1999; Payne, 2003; and Olmedo, 2005).

Social capital, abundantly available in the typical Hispanic community, can serve to benefit an educational institution that enables such networking. Should a parent feel isolated on school grounds, however, such capital is nullified to the detriment of the learning community. If enabled, however, it could allow for greater networking to take place between school and community connections (Gonzalez, Stoner & Jovel, 2003 and Epstein & Salinas, 2004). It also follows that the symbolic capital of both the Hispanic parents and students could be enabled or disabled based on the allowance and/or recognition of their capital (Auerbach, 2004; and Gloria, Castellanos & Orozco, 2005).

Diverse Capital and Collaboration

The recognition of diverse capital forms mentioned above is a start, but not enough, to create atmospheres that facilitate the collaboration so strongly advocated in the literature. Such recognition must be followed by opportunities for participants to be active in the formation of policy and practices of an educational setting if their capital is to be utilized for the creation of an authentic educational environment (Epstein, 2001). Specifically within parent participation, the other should be a part of developing effective methods in order to embrace the widest array of capital and therefore potential attainment of student learning outcomes within ZPD.

Discourse Defined

With the collaboration necessary for the full effect of the OSI, a means of assessing where a school falls between Sosa’s extremes of collaboration and marginalization is necessary
Assessment to this end requires analysis of an environment’s discourse, or how the people in a space develop consensus, and the level of consensus contribution by the different players in an environment (Finlanyson, 2005). Jürgen Habermas, in his work the *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984 & 1987), defined discourse as a, “reflective form of speech that aims at reaching a rationally motivated consensus” (p. 42). Consensus is established though a person’s acknowledged validity of a communication or a challenge to it.

Discourse, however, is not limited to verbal language according to Habermas’ Pragmatic Theory of Meaning. The theory implies that an individual can extract more meaning than what has been verbally stated based on formerly established meanings which a communication exchange may then be built upon. Foundational to establishing discourse analysis as a methodology (and later critical discourse analysis that can reveal the presence or absence of collaboration in the community school environment) is the understanding how consensus is established in the community school discourse (Carspecken, 1996; Fairclough, 1992; and Habermas, 1984, 1987). To this end, an elaboration of Habermas’ pragmatic theory of meaning follows.

*Pragmatic Theory of Meaning*

Habermas proposed the analysis of language and the identification of action within language from the perspective of pragmatics (Habermas, 1998). Pragmatics, according to Habermas, is the ability of communicators to extrapolate more than what was literally stated from a language exchange. Pragmatics can be used to analyze meaning due to the shared connotations, which are established socially.

While many discourse analysis methods revolve around the relation of words and things alone, Habermas focuses on the interconnectedness of the natural world and philosophy that
comprises the social reality from which one communicates with another. Using Karl Bühler’s model of language, Habermas concludes that the cognitive aspect alone is not enough, in and of itself, to explain communication between individuals or the coordination of actions from such communication. The expressive (the speaker) and appeal (the hearer) functions are necessary to develop what language is not only saying (subconsciously and consciously), but also what it is doing or establishing (see figure 3). Habermas asserts that it is not only individuals within a social world, but concurrently that world within the individuals which develops deeper meaning than the literal spoken word. Kristeva termed this intertextuality or the “insertion of history [society] into a text and of this text into history” (1986a, p. 39), meaning communication is based on shared meanings two or more people hold. Micheal Foucault affirms the presence of intertextuality within communication stating, “there can be no statement that in one way or another does not reactualize others” (1972, p. 98).

Throughout the language process both speaker and hearer establish validity among each other bringing about consensus, or shared meaning, through dialog. Therefore it stands to reason that the analysis of validity statements can relay levels of consensus, or shared meaning a person perceives, when present. The establishment of validity through communication is at the heart of Habermas’ theory.

*Validity.* While the term validity has come to mean a wide variety of things in the world of research, within the framework of the pragmatic theory of meaning, validity is simply defined as the process of consensus within a group (Habermas, 1984; Carspecken, 1996; and Fairclough, 1994). The logic connecting validity and meaning in pragmatics is as follows: meaning is developed by reason, and reason is something that is shared with others; therefore, meaning is dependent on its validity or the “internal connection with reasons” that are made by a group
(Habermas, 1984, p. 9). This is not to say that validity and truth are synonymous, but rather that those things which are established as valid are done through group consensus. James Finlayson elaborates on Habermas’ ideas saying, “Meaning depends on validity, because to understand the meaning of an utterance, the hearer has to be able to bring to mind (and either accept or reject) the reasons germane to its justification” (2005, p. 37).

Validity established by the communicators’ consensus brings about the meaning behind the discourse. Habermas contends that one must consider different types of validity claims, which can be made in discourse toward understanding meaning if consensus is present. Specifically, this involves three types of validity claims that are identified by Habermas: a) truth; b) rightness and c) truthfulness. (These validity claims will be explored more in chapter 3.)

One or more of these three validity claims represents every communicative utterance. For clarification, it must be mentioned that, while a speaker may make validity claims, the listener must decide whether to reject or accept the assertion(s) made. If the listener leaves the statement unchallenged then the claim is accepted, however, the validity claim can be rejected or questioned thus producing discourse (or consensus). Meaning, therefore, is based on shared reason, and further, validity is dependent on shared reason/meaning. The word shared as used here implies a partnership toward the establishment of meaning. A question arises if partnership or collaboration toward consensus is not present, what conditions are limiting such consensus development? Habermas addresses this in his rules for open discourse or the creation of discourse by full collaboration among participants.

*Rules of discourse.* While one can reject a validity claim during discourse by challenging the claim, this is only possible if the rules of open discourse are being utilized according to Habermas in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (1990). These rules are important
to mention given this study’s focus, which sought to identify whether an open discourse is present in the community school environment. The rules set forth by Habermas (1990) are as follows:

1. Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in the discourse.
2. A) Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatsoever;  
   B) Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatsoever into the discourse;  
   C) Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires, and needs.
3. No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in 1 and 2 above (p. 89)

The first issue that arises when considering the above rules is the “competence” required initially for participation in open discourse. Participation in consensus development is contingent on the presence of necessary knowledge. If the basic knowledge base is not present a participant cannot challenge validity statements made. This is a common problem found in the literature for non-English speaking parents within the school context (Menard & Warick, 2007 and Valdés, 1996). Adding complexity to the issue includes parents who are unknowledgeable regarding educational jargon/reasoning used by school personnel and do not possess the “competence” to question the validity claims being made (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991 and Roderick, 2006).

Beyond the potential barriers of competence, rules of open discourse allow anyone the opportunity to challenge validity claims. For example, observance of the conditions under which one is allowed to challenge a claim: to assert anything, express one’s attitudes, desires and/or needs.

The last rule, and one that necessitated elaboration, refers to prevention of a challenge to a validity claim. Light is shed not only on how discourse analysis can be used to establish meaning, but also, toward identification of unbalanced power relations in the establishment of
consensus on a broader scale. Because this involves equity and social justice, discourse analysis of a critical nature becomes necessary.

*Critical Discourse Analysis*

Assessment of collaboration (or marginalization) levels present in a discourse requires critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is differentiated from discourse analysis because of its ability to illuminate elements of power that shape, “social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 12). Since researchers in the field concur regarding the necessity of open discourse (and therefore addressing distribution of power) for parent/school collaboration to exist, an analytical tool that can identify power distributions is necessary (Cairney, 2000; Hausman & Goldring, 2000; and Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000).

The recognition of diverse habitus is not enough to facilitate shared consensus. It must be followed by opportunities for parents to utilize personal capital through parent participation methods developed out of consensus, in which the parent contributed. Parental access to consensus development would enable the maximum utilization of their capital enriching the educational environment from which the students draw (Duranti and Ochs, 1996; Flecha, 2000; and Gutstein, 2006). When the power distributions are unequally disseminated, however, marginalization of parental contributions occurs, true consensus is not realized, and one view of someone's capital is taken as the ultimate authority.

The absence of consensus in educational settings between partners leads to a deterioration of consensus development, what Habermas refers to as the overtaking of the life world by the system.
The life world and system. Before continuing on in this manner (which leads to further discussions of power and the breaching of the rules of discourse), elaboration on Habermas’ social ontology is necessary in order to develop the context for action (or prevention of action) in the life world (Habermas, 1984 & 1987). The term life world, initially proposed by the philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), is the context for communication and action (Finlayson, 2005). The life world holds the shared assumptions, background knowledge and shared reason and meaning of a specific group. Participants in a life world coordinate their actions through shared validity claims. The interdependence of acting participants within this context proposed by Habermas establishes this world. While a life world can be altered through communication, action and discourse between actors, changes occur in small increments creating a context, which in effect resists, “fragmentation of meanings …preventing the eruption of conflicts of actions” (Finlayson, 2005, p. 53). In essence the life world has a built in protection mechanism from rapid social disintegration.

The system works alongside the life world. The system, as defined by Habermas, represents the structures and patterns of a society created by mechanisms of power (Habermas 1984 & 1987 and Finlayson, 2005). The system functions to provide goods and services while coordinating the action among participants in a society, which creates an integrating effect or what Habermas terms system integration. Norman Fairclough (1992) further proposed that the system doesn’t have to hold a dominant position of power. Speaking of the system he says, “Power does not work negatively by forcefully dominating those who are subject to it; it incorporates them, and is ‘productive’ in the sense that it shapes and ‘retools’ them to fit in with its needs” (p. 51). In the growth of a society the system is the component that initially helps to
ease the burden to communicate and/or discourse through establishing widely accepted validity claims (i.e. laws, procedures, plans), which therefore help hold a growing society together.

A delicate balance exists between the life world and the system. However, the system, as observed by Habermas, can slowly take the place of the life world in a colonization process when the system splits from the culture(s) it was meant to serve. Such a split disconnects individuals from contributions to continued consensus development. The system begins to function as the life world itself or may even take over the lifeworld removing open discourse (Habermas, 1987). “The transparency of the life world is gradually obscured and the basis of action and decision are withdrawn from public scrutiny and negative effects of markets on the non-market domains they colonize” (Finlayson, p. 56). The literature suggests the educational system meant to ease the burden and provide accountability has developed a life of its own and a discourse of power is created (Delpit, 2006 and Lareua, 2003). Questions should be posed surrounding to what extent the American education system has taken over the role of life world and open discourse. Further, what can be done to prevent and/or reverse the exclusion of the other from consensus formation (who the laws, procedures and policies did not have in mind), but who now are a part of the educational community? In light of the study at hand, analysis regarding the accessibility to open discourse as an integral element of collaboration between the parents and community as the other will reveal whether an equitable balance is being maintained between the life world and the system of this community school.

*Pathology of the ‘system’ left unchecked.* The replacement of Habermas’ life world (and subsequent denial of open communication between discourses) with the system has harsh implications for the society that allows this erosion according to Habermas. He found that the colonization of the life world had a certain pattern. Observed first in this pattern is a decrease in
the shared meanings, reason and understanding of a society followed by the corrosion of social
corrosion and alienation that Habermas found consequently ushered in an unwillingness to take responsibility
for one’s actions (demoralization). Finally a breakdown in social order occurs.

The pathology described by Habermas occurs due to the lack of the life world consensus
with breaching of the ‘rules of discourse’ proposed by Habermas earlier. The ability of an
individual to contribute or question validity statements is halted due to the transfer of consensus
(and therefore all power) to the system. When the system begins to absorb the function of the
life world, the silencing of the individual has been initiated and in the end results in oppression.

One does not have search far to find the colonization and the subsequent pathology
Habermas describes in education. Inequity (or the absence of open discourse among all
participants) produces a breakdown in social order in the nation’s school, particularly in inner-
city schools (Cahnmann, 2005; Delpit 2006; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Meador, 2005;
and Valenzuela 1999).

In *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*, Angela
Valenzuela (1999) identified issues of respect to be at the heart of the break down of social order
in the school she observed. In this ethnography Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans
were interviewed and observed within the context of an urban high school. She [Valensuela]
uncovered the school system’s lacking notions of caring and respect. The institutional staff saw
elements like dress and attitude as indicators of non-caring students who held no interest in their
own education causing a lack of care from the majority of teachers and counselors. The
mentality held by the educators, which did not consider the other, demanded that the students
express care in their education first (as defined by the school and its staff) in order to receive individualized care and connection toward upward mobility.

Additionally the ethnography identified subtractive policies, both formal and informal in the school, which devalued the Mexican heritage, language and other cultural elements. Such devaluing of these resources caused many of the Latino students to disengage from this portion of their identity. Valenzuela found that this loss produced student rebellion through non-participation, displayed attitudes that indicated indifference to authority and other actions, which conveyed rejection of the system and in essence rejected their funds of knowledge.

Valenzuela also found staff that addressed their own preconceived notions while taking individual notice of students in a caring and respectful manner. These staff members connected with and helped students build bridges toward achieving upward mobility. When old notions were abandoned, teachers were able to identify policies that worked against the Latinos and in some cases helped to work around them. When it was observed Valenzuela noted that, “In each instance, the pedagogy that informs their action and that secures the loyalty and commitment of their students reveals a profound respect and awareness of how the problems that students bring with them to school are symptomatic of broader, collective issues” (1999, p. 259).

Without such caring efforts, Valenzuela found, the status quo was not only maintained, but students also resisted education. Consequently many of the teachers in the study grew more opinionated and in turn disconnected from their Mexican-American and America-raised Mexican immigrant students. Observed overall was a downward spiral, perpetuated by the school and the students, which lead to the moral decay of their life world being overtaken by the system. Valenzuela predicted bleak future for the students who did not encounter staff members who embraced a caring and respectful mentality. In her concluding statements Valenzuela says, “…all
decision-making should be guided by the goal of narrowing the gap between teachers’ and students’ social and cultural differences” (p. 256). Valenzuela challenged the educational institutions to begin to view schooling through the other’s perspective toward creating a context of caring and respect. Schools must also utilize similar flexibility toward understanding the populations they serve and collaborate with them. An environment of open discourse, which reaches consensus about what is best for that community’s students, must be established to avoid the colonization or the replacement of the life world and open discourse by the system at the community school being studied.

Discourse of Power

Lisa Delpit (2006) also identifies systemic elements of the American system of education, which fail to identify and utilize the capital of the other creating the colonizing effect Habermas (1987) outlines. She found status quo practices marginalized the other, especially those who did not know how to operate within the spoken and unspoken expectations of the education system’s habitus (European-American, middle class). Delpit refers to these status quo practices as if it were a foreign language to the other, specifically terming the language the “discourse of power”. She proposed that those who have no knowledge of how to navigate the discourse of power are often separated from their capital, which by and large prevents success within the education system discouraging collaboration toward open discourse. Mutual understanding between all participants can create connectiveness and promote success for students in educational systems; however, mutual understanding (or meaning) still may not translate to appreciation or utilization of the other’s capital in the educational context (Cahnmann, 2005; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006; and Lareau, 1987).
Ethnocentric discourse of power. William Graham Sumner birthed the term ethnocentrism, in response to cultural relativism. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to see the world though one’s own beliefs, customs, and everyday life practices (Bannister, 1992). Unchecked, it imposes judgment on the other based on the predominately accepted habitus learned life world (societal) standards. In light of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism, researchers in the social sciences are challenged to identify their own cultural validity filters, which hinder their objectivity to reduce and expose the subjectivity in their reporting of the other.

Such ethnocentrism runs rampant in the nation’s system of education as reported by a number of educational researchers (Delpit, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; and McCarthy, 1988). The other in the system has not only educational preferences which stand in stark contrast to the Western ideals, but are often hit with double and triple jeopardy due to differing economic, cultural or linguistic frames of reference the educational system was built upon (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004).

Elizabeth Meador’s (2005) ethnographic study of Mexicanas found both a lack of deep understanding and valuing of the Mexican subgroup within the context of the school she studied. The seeming deficit lay in the teachers’ notions regarding characteristics of a “good” student whenever ethnocentric ideas initially placed the Latinas outside of this definition. The teachers’ found Latinas to be uninterested in academic growth or in integrating with the Anglo students. One teacher described the Latinas saying, “The social climate lends itself to their being second-class citizens.” Meador uncovered the instructors’ ethnocentric ideology in her summary of findings saying,

This ideal of the good student marginalized the attributes the Mexicanas brought to school… indeed their attributes (being female, speaking more than one language, and having strong ties to their cultural background) were seen as deficits and obstacles, and their lack of participation in intramural school sports teams was seen as a cultural
difference that was insurmountable for a girl who wanted to be considered a ‘good student’. (p. 155)

Similarly, Irma Olmedo (2005) looked at the institutional forces, which threatened Latino parents’ life world. Parents in the study felt conflict over that which attracted their children away from the normative directions their families considered acceptable. Findings indicated that important cultural values held by the parents were not honored or valued in the schools their children attended and consequently, funds of knowledge derived from these cultures were made seemingly invaluable to the children of these families. In response, Olmedo stated,

An important assumption in the funds of knowledge concept is that families in historically marginalized communities know many things and have many skills; however, those who are in control of institutions, especially schools, may not be cognizant of this knowledge or may systematically devalue it. p. 375.

In this scenario the educational system’s ethnocentric ideas about what was good for the Latino students in their midst neglected the cultural relevant perspective. Findings as in Meador’s and Olmedo’s study reveal the need for learning institutions to reflect on the potential devaluing of the other taking place within their walls and the barriers to collaboration being erected from it.

The level at which open discourse is present (or absent) can be utilized in this setting to identify overt and subliminal power structures in place, which may marginalize certain parents’ capital and therefore limit the potential of the particular learning environment for the students to achieve. If a discourse of power is found and one culture’s views serve as the basis for validity, Habermas’ rules for open discourse are broken. What follows, according to Habermas, is a system that superimposes the lifeworld, and unaware participants may submit to authority with no challenge. Without knowledge of presence and exercise of individual power the discourse of power's reign is challenged.
Individual power. Pointing out the choice free individuals have to align or disassociate from the system, Foucault (1982) goes a step further than the discourse of power's reign saying,

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free… slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains. (In this case it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint.)… At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. (The Subject and Power, p. 221-222)

Accordingly, an individual has a choice of whether to align with a discourse of power and therefore the opportunity to challenge validity claims despite the presence or absence of open discourse. In such circumstances an individual may not have direct access to contribute to open discourse, but through refusal to validate the claims via nonparticipation can indirectly contribute. In answer, the system tries to maintain control of the discourse of power subliminally through governmentality.

Governmentality. Given the freedom individuals hold, Foucault identifies a discreet form of control the government utilizes through policy to keep the population under its control (1991). Governmentality creates a mindset that sees the perspective of the system as right or natural. It should be noted that the usage of governmentality exists within a deficit mentality, which opens the risk that the other might contribute to an environment of open discourse as inferior to the system’s perspective. Such mindset management can be seen in many layers of the educational system throughout the literature (Delpit, 1997; Linn, 2000; and Pins & Wilson Toso, 2008).

Gibbs (1999) found such governmentality in the use of certain types of standardized assessment measures, which potentially produced internalization and acceptance of social norms by those outside the mainstream. Graham and Neu (2004) argue further that, “standardized testing programs, by rendering the participants visible and consequently subjecting them to public scrutiny, contribute to construction of governable persons” (p. 295). High test scores on
such measures hold affirmation from society reinforcing the “rightness” of the measure and the pressure to conform. Linn (2000) also points to assessment measures as being steeped in middle class, European-American values and exclusion of those outside this category.

Prins & Wilson Toso (2008) found the Parent Education Profile (PEP) assessment instrument advocated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and chosen for use by many states, to be value laden in its assessment of parental support. The PEP instrument, meant to help guide educators in facilitation of parent participation, was found to subconsciously set forth its definition of the “ideal parent.” The authors found the ideal parent, as defined by the PEP, to be those who exhibited European American, middle class practices at home and at school with their children, and were therefore identified by the instrument as the “most supportive” parents.

Similarly, the HOME or Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment Inventory (Caldwell & Bradley, 1979), a semi-structured interview, evaluates home and parental characteristics also. Ceballo (2004) stated that this instrument measures material and cultural resources commonly available to upper-middle class parents. High scores on this measure correlate to mothers with more education and greater family income (Baharudia & Luser, 1998).

These studies argue that a deficit mentality is present in both the PEP and the HOME assessment instruments for those outside of European-American, middle class status. Should such findings be generalizable, the achievement gap found between those who differ in race and/or class from the mainstream, (see Jencks & Phillips, 1998; and Valencia, 2002), could be exacerbated by biased assessment measures. If so, greater potential for success may be given to those, whether student or parent, of European American, middle class background (Ceballo, 2004; González et al., 1993; and Prins & Willson Toso, 2008). Assessment methodologies
geared to test knowledge or resources in a select group of the population could create a skewed picture of capabilities posed by those outside of such a population.

In terms of broadly accepted assessment instruments like PEP and HOME, those outside of the European American, middle class group, could be penalized by subtly conveying a deficit mentality to parents outside of this habitus. Prins and Willson Toso (2008) also discussed governmentality in the PEP assessment of parents. Assessment methodologies, courtesy of NCLB, state and local standards, place schools and parents on display before the community. According to Foucault (1991) this can create a conformist mentality without the use of overt force (Graham & Neu, 2004; and Prins & Willson Toso, 2008). If such conformity to assessment methodologies occurs, potential exists for devaluing of diversity within the other themselves. Such a reality may further alienate diverse parents from both their own forms of capital which could contribute to students’ educational paths, and even from general participation as suggested by Epstein (2001).

Deficit mentality within assessment instruments and/or potential governmentality created through policy and public display of nonconformists may inadvertently contribute to a broader picture of deficit thinking by educators. In light of these possibilities, questions arise regarding the participation forms of those who cannot, or do not desire to obtain these forms of capital associated with the European-American, middle class to align themselves with the educational system they are found within.

The literature regarding the importance of parent participation along with consideration of collaboration and power relationships between European-American, middle class school habitus and the other within an educational context serve as a fundamental template in the research design and analysis of this study. Parents in the study were interviewed and observed to
determine their varying levels of participation in school consensus development and then categorized as collaborator, cooperator and/or a disassociater. A discussion of these categories will be elaborated on in the findings.

As it stands, utilizing the OSI model (and associated participation strategies) to facilitate collaboration without consideration of the school discourse could mislead well-meaning school administrators into thinking they are facilitating the collaboration advocated in the literature. To this end there is a need for an assessment method that differentiates between the categories of parent participants toward development of open discourse and true collaboration. Epstein highlights the importance of partnership between school, parent and community and open communication between each toward development of the ideal learning environment for children to reach their full potential (1995). This study builds on of the Pragmatic Theory of Meaning utilizing Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action to draw meaning out of the validity claims parents and the school make through their communication regarding parent participation.

Communicative Action

Habermas contended that the establishment of validity through everyday conversations makes communication active, continually changing the life world through the formation of consensus. The analysis of communication exchanges not only reveals what validity statements are being made or challenged in a situation, but what societal and cultural changes occur and how communication is the ultimate facilitator of the changes.

Figure 2 represents the life world shared by communicating individuals who draw from their culture and previous language exchanges in further communication according to Habermas (1987, p. 127). The communicators draw from their own personal subjective knowledge and experiences, objective elements of the lifeworld and socially established norms of the life world
to conduct further communication between each other. Changes established through open discourse between individuals change the lifeworld reality they share. Analysis of these changes and the communication exchange itself can illuminate the presence of open discourse.

Figure 2. Process of communicative action in the life world according to Habermas.

Note. Two-sided gray arrows represent the different views person (A or B) establishes in their communication with the other.

If it is present, to what extent, what level of balance exists between the lifeworld and system is revealed? Does it determine if the system has begun to overtake the lifeworld and consequently, reveal if authentic communication exchanges have been halted? Such determinations can
indicate whether collaboration (open discourse) between the parents and school in this study are present. If it is present to what extent, and if not, what are the significant influencing factors?

Summary

In light of the potentially unequal power roles at the community school being studied and the educational community model it ascribes to, questions must be asked in regard as to whether full discourse or access to democracy is being granted (i.e. Are parents being given equal access to discourse regarding this educational community?). If open communication is impeded at any level it would directly conflict with the rules of discourse and the goals of the educational community model which partners school, parent and community towards greater academic achievement for its students. The final outcome of this study should provide educators and policy makers with a new approach to accessing, planning and facilitating collaboration with parents utilizing critical discourse analysis.

The following chapter focuses on the specific utilization of critical discourse analysis employed in the present study. In addition, I will paint a picture of the study participants interviewed and the educational context they are participants within.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research conducted was motivated by a previous study, which highlighted the importance of parental emotional support in first generation college students’ journey through the world of academia (Núñez-Janes et al., 2007). These findings revealed my previously held perceptions by the researcher, and former classroom teacher, regarding the nature of parent involvement. These ideas of good parental support had revolved around school conceptions such as support of class assignments and projects, attending parent/teacher conferences, and grade monitoring with redirection as was necessary. The above findings (Núñez-Janes et al., 2007) illuminated the diverse ways parents could support student achievement. I sought to explore these findings further through this study.

The view of school as the sole source of enlightenment regarding the nature of parent contributions toward students’ academic achievement is not new (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; and Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Institutional perceptions have overwhelmingly been found to neglect or dismiss forms of support parents, who are not of European American descent, contribute (Gandara, 1999; Behnke, Piercy & Diversi, 2004; Ceballo, 2004; Knight, Norton, Bentley & Dixon, 2004; Perna & Titus, 2005; and Padilla, 2007). Such perceptions, in light of the first generation college student study (Núñez-Janes et al., 2007), need continued exposure to address deeper questions surrounding why these mentalities persist and how they are reproduced.

Focusing on neglected or dismissed forms of parental contributions from the other may be addressed through analysis of power structures present between the parent and school that may hinder potential parent contributions. Analysis of the discourse will reveal the potential
discontinuity between parental and institutional definitions of parent role. Given the everyday use of the words “collaboration” and “partnership” in parent participation literature and programs such an analysis will reveal if, where, when and whether open discourse or a discourse of power is present toward the creation of collaboration between parents and school. Insight of this nature, in this study and in future studies, can be utilized for the development of a theory base in the literature on parent participation (Jordan, Orozco & Averett 2001; and Padilla, 2007), laying the groundwork for practical and effective collaboration techniques between parent and school.

The present study juxtaposes the perceptions of parental roles (as gleaned from school-produced literature to the parent body) present at the Robinson School with the diverse parents’ perceptions of their roles (as presented in interviews and observations) utilizing critical ethnographic techniques nested within a critical discourse analysis of the parent participation component of the school. The study looks to answer the following questions: 1) What perceptions parents have about their contributions to student growth, both at home and at school; 2) If parent and school perceptions of the parents’ role differ regarding parent contributions at the school and home; and finally, 3) If power relations exist between the school and its parents? These questions will illuminate discrepancies between parent and school perceptions of parent role, if, where and when collaboration/partnership is present and potential power structures which may be hindering the goal of parent and school collaboration.

This chapter begins by looking at the research design (Textually Oriented Discourse Analysis or TODA and critical ethnography as a supportive tool). Then a description of the school setting and why the site was chosen will be discussed. These two sections will be followed by information about the data collection, and finally, a discussion surrounding researcher value orientations.
Choice of Research Design

The ultimate purpose of qualitative research in this study is to learn about diverse perceptions of parent participation from a unique group of parents, which may inform school who similarly look to embrace collaboration with a parent body outside of the status quo. The research design utilized here will identify the level of open discourse in relation to Habermas’ rules of discourse and the implications such findings have on theorizing parent participation as a partnership between school and parent and potential implications for practical analysis and implementation by educators.

Critical discourse analysis

The parent participation discourse of the school will be synthesized using critical discourse analysis (CDA) as an analytical tool. Critical discourse analysis varies from other forms of discourse analysis, according to Fairclough, due to its focus on,

…how the discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 12).

This chapter will be spent looking at how analyzing power structures at the community school environment (through textually oriented discourse analysis or TODA) will inform the study questions.

TODA

Fairclough (1992) proposes a critical discourse analysis method called textually oriented discourse analysis (TODA), which will be used in the study. The CDA approach utilizes everyday language (and the process of interpretation associated with the expressions) to
explore/reveal potential issues of power in a setting. Three dimensions of analysis are embraced in Fairclough’s TOD toward CDA are: the textual level, the discursive practices level and the social level. Each progressive level of analysis encompasses a larger scope of effect, which holds within it the previous level (see figure 3).

![Diagram of three-dimensional conception of discourse](image)

**Figure 3.** Three-dimensional conception of discourse (Fairclough, 1992, p. 10).

*Textual analysis.* At the first level (text), the language will be used to reveal: interactional control, cohesion, politeness, ethos, transitivity (active or passive voice), theme, modality, word meaning, wording and/or any metaphor usage (examples of each form of textual indicator can be found in appendix). The textual analysis is meant to help construct social relations, the ‘self’ and social reality, which will inform the production, distribution and consumption of text.

*Discursive practice analyses.* The analysis of a discursive practice focuses on the production of text, the distribution of text and the consumption of text. It is here where intertextuality (the process of new text being produced on based previous text) and power interplay. “The concept of intertextuality points to the productivity of texts, to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres, discourses) to generate new ones… [however] it is socially limited and constrained, and conditional upon relations of power”
Habermas’ rules for open discourse (or the ability to accept or reject validity claims openly) come into play at this level of analysis. Those granted access to open discourse are those who participate in the formation of new text from old text (intertextuality) and therefore production and distribution of text. Therefore analysis of text production, distribution and consumption reveals hegemonic conditions. Since power relations are explored in this study concerning collaboration of diverse parent populations and the school, this level of analysis has the potential to illuminate a great deal.

Social Practice. The social practice is the final level of analysis of TODA. At this level the nature of the social practice (of which the discourse is apart) is considered in an effort to explain development of the discourse and in turn how the discourse affects larger social practice, for example institutional perceptions of valid parent participation methods. Analysis of social practices requires Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action for examination of the local discourse, which molds the larger societal practices and conversely how the societal practices mold the local discourse (intertextuality).

TODA allows the user to recognize and utilize the intertwined nature of text, discursive practices and the larger social practices to reveal the often-unrecognized discourse present in a context. Further discussion of the textual level of analysis, specifically the analysis of validity claims (Habermas, 1984a), will be addressed next. Carspecken (1996) proposes the use of meaning fields toward such an effort. Meaning Fields

Meaning fields are used to clarify issues to be explored through reconstructions, observations and interviewing. Meaning fields identify meaning potential which people within a setting might themselves deduce, either implicitly or explicitly. One cannot know for certain
what another intended through an act or communication, or the meaning received by another
observing the act/communication, but possibilities can be identified. The possibility of meanings
is what Carspecken terms a meaning field. Carspecken uses Habermas’ validity claims to
identify the field of meaning potential.

Validity claims

Validity in qualitative research is dependent on the context. Statements of validity are
based on historical point in time and the social and/or cultural environment they occur within.
Statements of validity indicate “truth” as it is known within a culture at that time. Therefore,
“truth” in this sense is in a constant state of change.

Based on Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action, which contends that the
establishing of consensus (or validity) by participants occurs through everyday communication
and as such is the main agent of change for the lifeworld. The analysis of validity statements in
this study revealed the discursive practices of the community school (and subsequent power
structures), which were active between the parents and school.

Three types of validity claims were identified by Habermas and were used to analyze the
power structures at the Robinson School. These validity claims are: 1) objective claims, 2)
normative claims, and 3) subjective claims.

Objective validity claims. Carspecken states that these objective claims, or what
Habermas terms validity claims to truth, are perspectives viewed from a “the” world stance.
These are seemingly indisputable statements of fact such as, ‘Statistically, Caucasians
outperform Hispanic students in academics’, which occur in everyday conversation. One can see
that what can be established as an objective validity claim, even in research, is not synonymous
with truth.
Normative validity claims. Normative claims are moral assertions (often based out of societal standards) made during communication. Habermas refers to these as validity claims of rightness. These normative perspectives encompass an “our” worldview according to Carspecken (1996) or viewing the world the way it should be. Examples include statements like, ‘Supportive parents attend parent teacher conferences.’ or ‘Parents who care get involved at school.’

Subjective validity claims. Lastly, what Habermas refers to as validity claims to truthfulness refers to communications that convey subjective information. Truthfulness here is in reference to feelings, intentions, or state of awareness, which only that individual can know as valid or invalid. In keeping with the other descriptions this is a “my” world perspective (Carspecken, 1996). ‘I enjoy volunteering up at the school.’, is an example of this type of validity claim. The speaker might look unhappy about their participation, but the verbal claim is different and only that individual can know undoubtedly whether or not they enjoy their time volunteering.

One or more of these three validity claims represents every communicative utterance. While a speaker may make validity claims, the listener must decide whether to reject or accept the assertion(s) made. If left unchallenged the claim is accepted; however, rejection or questioning of a validity claim by a listener produces discourse (or the communication about communication), which expects valid or shared reasoning behind the validity claim which has been established by consensus. Meaning, therefore, is based on shared reason, and further, validity is dependent on shared reason/meaning. One can see how consensus cannot be reached if a participant within a system is denied access in the development of consensus. Collaboration
or partnership between school and parent would allow both partners to access the discourse equally.

Analysis of the validity claims to establish meaning fields within Fairclough’s three-dimensional method provided a look at the community school’s discourse. To illuminate if, where, and/or when collaboration was present between the school and its parents. The methodology also lent insight into the broader social context and its effect on the community school parent participation discourse (and conversely what the Robinson School contribute to the larger picture in terms of communicative action within parent participation).

Data collection in terms of ethnographic context construction will be discussed next. Such context building was necessary in order to conduct the CDA analysis and situate the findings appropriately in the local and broader context. Therefore what follows is a discussion of Phil Carpecken’s critical ethnographic method used for the purposes of the study.

**Critical Ethnography**

The initial stage of critical ethnographic study revolves around what Carspecken (1996) terms building a primary record. I compiled a primary record using thick descriptions and other general notes. The thick descriptions were reserved for intense observations of parent participation at the school and instances of home observations. The general field notes were used to record observations made about the school, personnel, organizational structures, local geographic area and culture, and other elements that could contribute to the larger school context the parents of the community are housed within.

The reconstructive stage follows the compilation of the primary record. Here the primary record was analyzed for interaction patterns, power roles, roles in general, interaction sequences, and intersubjective structures, which emerged. According to Carspecken, this stage takes
...conditions of action constructed by people on non-discursive levels of awareness and reconstructs them linguistically (1996, p. 42).

The voice of the other, the major focus of the data collection, represented another stage of the critical ethnographic methodology. I have included this voice through ethnographic interviews of the parents.

Discovery of system relations (Carspecken, 1996) is an additional component of critical ethnography that uses findings from the field to connect the dots between the study group and social structures. The discovery of system relations is also a major component of TODA. Examination of validity claims made in an environment help TODA develop for interpretation of the data. Such system relation analysis was constructed from the field notes, thick descriptions, analysis of the interview transcripts, and school literature.

The combination of Fairclough’s TODA (CDA analysis method) alongside Carspecken’s meaning field analysis and critical ethnographic method ensured the context was reconstructed and analysis of the text, discourse and broader social levels occurred in the community school context. The following is a description of the study site, parent participation requirements and why the setting was chosen as pertinent for the questions being asked in this work.

The Robinson Community School

The Robinson Community School is an elementary school situated in a southern urban area. The school serves a student population which is 96.7% Hispanic, 2.9% Caucasian and 1% African American. The vast majority of these students are recipients of the federal free and reduced lunch program. The Robinson school is a privately funded community school and admits students on a first come, first serve basis with preference to those with lesser economic means until enrollment is closed. Tuition is required but assigned on a sliding scale, cost which
are minor and recovered quickly given the provisions made by the school. The costs were not observed to be a deterrent for the parents at the school who varied in income level.

Turnover and absences at the Robinson school are rare. The high school graduation rate for students who attend the elementary school is over 99% with only one student to date who has not completed the requirements for high school graduation. The urban school district this community school is within has a 68.8% general graduation rate (TEA, 2006) and the district is rated the 7th worst for dropouts in the nation (The Local Daily, April, 2008). The student population is 65.3% Latino, and a disproportionate number of the students dropout, as found in many other urban areas according to LULAC (2008).

The Robinson School also has a passing rate on the state elementary level examinations which is well beyond the district averages and comparable with the scores of surrounding middle-class, suburban neighborhoods. Given the nationally reported achievement gap between Caucasians and Hispanic students, specific consideration of what this educational community is doing to support its students was one reason for the study site selection.

Parent Responsibilities

In addition to graduation rates and test scores, the Robinson School has a high level of parent participation. When first introduced to the research site, I noticed the large amount of parent participation occurring at the community school. Later she was informed that parents, as required for student admission to the school, had to commit to a high level of involvement. Among these were commitments to: reading and working with their children at home daily, volunteering a minimum of 12 meals in the cafeteria a year, attending three to five parent/teacher conferences yearly, hosting a teacher home visit at the beginning of the year, and participating in on-going research long after the student’s last grade for completion at the school.
Parents of three year olds’ are asked to use educational modules developed by the school at home with their students. These parents received a new module every month, working with a total of 12 modules throughout the year. The modules are brought to the home by the school liaison to demonstrate and instruct the parent in the use of the module. The three year old and pre-k parents are also asked to contribute to their student’s portfolio, in addition to teacher contributions, which highlight the student’s growth. These contributions are discussed at parent teacher conferences in relation to student development. Parents at the school are responsible for transportation of their student(s) to and from the school, which for three year olds either finishes or begins in the middle of the day.

_The Robinson School for a Parent Participation Study_

While not specifically articulated, the Robinson school operates within a community model like Epstein’s (2001) in mind. Information is provided to parents regarding student developmental level in the early childhood years. Communication is outwardly present given the participation rate for parent teacher conferences (97%). Also, volunteering on campus, as recommended by Epstein (2001), is a required component for attendance. Learning at home is facilitated through home kits for three-year old students and reading to and/or with students of all grades is strongly encouraged. The school has incorporated the community with different celebrations, the provision of an on-site community family counseling clinic and its participation in community events. Preliminary observations before the study began did not indicate significant levels of parent participation in school decisions. This was the only component of Epstein’s (2001) strategies that were not employed at the Robinson School.

With the picture perfect results, as defined by the No Child Left Behind policy and the Texas Education Agency goals of accountability (Texas Assessment Knowledge and Skills or
TAKS for NCLB attainment), one could brush past without another look. However, in light of the results of an earlier first generation college student study, which documented previously dismissed forms of parental support which empowered students (Núñez-Janes et al., 2007), Pandora’s Box lay opened with the hope of deeper understanding of parent contributions and perceptions toward increased academic success for diverse students. Unanswered questions evolved around unseen, unstated and unexamined elements that contributed to student success in light of both the school and society definition. These questions needed to be answered in order to identify and describe both success and limitations of parent collaborative effort in this community.

Given the mainstream educational achievement standards produced by the school, it makes sense to look further at parent participation in this context and analyze further what are the school is doing to facilitate an environment of collaboration and/or how they might be hindering this level of partnership with their parents. Among the more obvious reasons to conduct the study in this context was the goal of pushing past societal definitions of “good” schooling to focus on what the Latino parent brings or could bring toward a broader definition of school success. Such insight may inform other ethnically diverse schools regarding parent partnership policy and potential power structures, which could hinder greater success of such diverse students. What follows is how the data collection was conducted for this study.

Data Collection

Access to the Robinson School

I gained access to the Robinson school through working with the Robinson School as a substitute teacher for two years prior to and during this research work. The head of research,
school principal and assistant principal approved the study of the Robinson School. I was free to observe during school hours in the school parent center, cafeteria, general school areas and early childhood classrooms (pending individual classroom teacher approval). I was allowed to accompany the school liaison on home visits, which introduced the parents of three-year-olds to the different home kits, the portfolio requirement, and guidance on how to interact with their children utilizing these tools in the home. Accessibility was provided to after hours events (for instance music programs, parent portfolio parties, open houses). The school administrators and teachers never denied me access at any point in the study, but were very open to the research process and indicated interest in the results.

One potential reason for the openness I encountered at the Robinson School was the personnel’s familiarity with research. The school has a research department that includes a director, two full time researchers and two support staff. The research department analyzes the school outcomes tracking short and long-term academic progress of each student. These studies go well beyond the student’s time at the Robinson School, tracking middle and high school performance and college attendance. The goal of the research department is to take successful attributes, which can be traced to the efforts of the school, into surrounding urban schools.

*Study Participant Selection and Description*

Eight interviews were conducted with consenting parents of 3 to 6 year olds from the community school. The parents of early childhood students were chosen as the specific study population given a) the heavier requirements of participation for this group of parents at the school; b) the potential for these parents to be experiencing interaction with an educational institution for the first time; and c) the administrators’ specific interest in this group of parents within the school body.
Both predominately English and Spanish speaking parents were interviewed for the study. The predominate language, as a selection variable, was used given the two primary home languages represented by the parent body of the school. Ninety-three parents were identified as predominately Spanish speakers and forty-six fluent English speakers were identified on a phone list provided by the school (2007-2008 school year). In keeping with this finding the study recruited 5 predominate Spanish speakers and 3 fluent English speakers. This provided the best possible representation of the early childhood parent population in reference to predominate language (Spanish), which helped ensure the voice of the parent body is heard. Participants were required to have a working knowledge of English to ensure accurate communication and interpretation of data since my predominant language is English.

Specifically, the first willing participants with working English from each identified language preference were selected until a representative sampling of the school was attained. Initial contact with potential participants was made by phone using a school-produced list of all the parents with children in the early childhood portion of the school.

While calls were made to both mothers and fathers on the calling list, all eight participants recruited for the study were mothers. Seven of the interviewees were Hispanic and six of these participants were fluent in Spanish. Two participants were monolingual English speakers, one of which was African American. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 41, six were in their mid-thirties, two were in their early twenties, and one participant who was 41.

Participants had a wide variety of educational experience. One participant had no formal education after middle school and another finished formal school after her junior year of high school. Three participants had completed work toward an associate degree, and another participant, a former public school teacher within two miles of the Robinson School, had attained
a bachelor’s degree in education. Another interviewee lacked one semester toward attainment of a law degree in Mexico, and the last participant had finished the requirements for a master’s degree except for her a thesis project.

Five of the eight interview participants were from Mexico. One interviewee came to the United States in her elementary school years, three arrived in their high school years and one who arrived just before attaining a college degree in Mexico. The other three participants were born and raised in the U.S. and received public school educations.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with these participants on the school grounds as per individual participant choice (See appendix for interview domains and prompts). After contact was made and participation agreed upon parents were asked where they would like to conduct the interview. Selection for interview location was made to set the tone for interview by placing the informant in the position of power as the decision maker.

All participant interviews were recorded with the participants’ permission and then transcribed for later analysis. The coding and analysis of the parent interviews, observations of parent participation (home and school based) and school literature written to parents were used as data sources from which knowledge about discursive practices surrounding parent participation in this educational community were assessed (Fairclough, 1992; Carspecken, 1996).

Interviews and school-produced literature were analyzed using TODA. Then critical ethnography was used as a tool to further inform the research about the parent participation discourse at the school. The table 1 elaborates on the details of the observations made.
Table 1

Ethnographic Observation Details of the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Observation period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home visits</td>
<td>Families homes</td>
<td>During the day</td>
<td>Parent(s), child, &amp; family guidance coordinator</td>
<td>Participant &amp; non-participant observations</td>
<td>20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student drop-off</td>
<td>3 year old class (drop-off)</td>
<td>7:30 &amp; 12:30 (drop-off)</td>
<td>Parent (and/or family members) &amp; teachers</td>
<td>Non-participant observations</td>
<td>15 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>and pick-up</td>
<td>loop in front of the school</td>
<td>12:00 &amp; 2:45 (pick-up)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(pick-up)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Robinson School</td>
<td>Determined by the</td>
<td>Parent interviewee</td>
<td>Participant observations</td>
<td>8 sessions of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>observations</td>
<td>conference room (parent</td>
<td>participant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>chosen)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Center</td>
<td>Parent Center, community</td>
<td>School day, &amp; special</td>
<td>Parents, children &amp; school personnel</td>
<td>Participant observations</td>
<td>60 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
<td>event, and after hours</td>
<td>after hours (i.e. Cinco de</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>events</td>
<td>Mayo)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First day</td>
<td>3 year old classroom</td>
<td>7:30-12:00 p.m. &amp;</td>
<td>Parents, students &amp; teachers</td>
<td>Non-participant observations</td>
<td>7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:30-2:45 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General school</td>
<td>Throughout Robinson School</td>
<td>During the school day &amp;</td>
<td>Parents, students, families, &amp; school personnel</td>
<td>Non-participant &amp; participant observations</td>
<td>80 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>after hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Researcher Value Orientations for Consideration

There is some debate regarding how to handle researcher values in qualitative research when you are a part of the context. Some researchers lay all of their value orientations out for the critical gaze of others to establish whether findings were affected by these orientations. Others find this to be a quantitative mentality. I am of the same persuasion as Phil Carspecken (1996) on this issue. While I am a value-driven being who seeks, even needs, to conduct research that would help those who are marginalized within education, my biases and value orientation do not determine the facts, which emerge in a study. While the critical methodologies employed analyzed validity claims and brought forth values and facts, these elements were interlinked but not presented as merged. Carspecken (1996) elaborates saying,
Critical epistemology does not guarantee the finding of “facts” that match absolutely what one may want to find. So research value orientations should not determine research findings. Orientations provide the reasons why people conduct their studies. They therefore have a lot to do with the choices one must make when beginning a research project: what to study and to what end. They also determine how findings will be used—what to publish and what to leave out, who to share the knowledge with and in what way. The value orientation of the researcher does not “construct” the object of study: the same “object” can be examined for a large variety of reasons, under a large variety of motivations, and yield the same findings…[yet] The essential features of critical research methodology are epistemological and do not depend on the value orientation of criticalists. (p. 6)

I concede my orientations affected how I chose the study at hand, the data collection method, and the selections of data shared. The values and facts within the excerpts chosen, however, were not fused together as fact, but merely elements found within the text of the parent interviews and school-produced literature. I acknowledge I am of white, middle class background and have participated to great extents with the education institution as a whole (as researcher, teacher and a student), the methodology used produced findings that any readers could themselves differentiate participants’ validity claims. (This was emphasized further within the analysis as all analytical comments were also noted to distinguish my unique perspective from the data.) The nature of critical ethnography and CDA requires the researcher to operate at a level of professionalism that does not dictate the finding that emerged.

Furthermore, my role as an educator and student lends significantly to my findings as an “insider” of the educational institution as a whole. Wolcott (1987) said,

…the disadvantages of being an insider, totally familiar with and at home in schools, may be more than compensated for by the understanding a perceptive insider can bring; the same argument is proffered by persons who hole memberships in other groups and wish to study their own people, on the grounds that insiders best understand the total complexity of a system. (p. 52)
In sum, the researcher is human, like all quantitative and qualitative researchers, and comes to the table with value orientations. A methodology was employed that would require critical reflection on those value orientations and create a professional assessment which carefully notes these orientations and separates them from the my findings.

Summary

Given the need for further parent/school partnership theory development, an analytical methodology that illuminates power structures was employed for this study. Critical ethnography partnered with critical discourse analysis was utilized to provide the data needed toward such an end. Utilizing these qualitative assessment methods, as are set forth here, may help develop theory surrounding parent/school partnerships. Findings potentially serve as a methodology for use by educators fostering greater local collaboration between the school and parent. The following chapter presents the findings from the study, and presents a classification structure of parent participation that emerged from the data.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Literature regarding the importance of parent participation along with consideration of collaboration and exploration of the nature of relationships between European-American, middle class school habitus and the other within an educational context served as a guiding template for research design used in data collection of this study.

Initial review of the data revealed two distinct types of parent participation: collaborative and cooperative. A return to the literature revealed these parent participation categories were evident often in other study contexts (Delgado-Gaitán & Trueba, 1991; Duranti & Ochs, 1996; Galindo, 1997; Marschall, 2006; Menard & Warick, 2007; and Valdés, 1996), which also revealed a dissociative category of non-participation not apparent in initial analysis of the study data. Upon further examination, however, this category was also present at the Robinson School, but obscured by the type of participation required of parents for student enrollment at this school.

After identification of the above-mentioned categories was established in the study site data and the literature, the interviews and the observations were then used to determine the varying levels of parent participation and contribution in the discourse surrounding parental role at the Robinson School. After a brief review of critical terms needed for utilization of the emergent structure, a discussion of these resulting categories and supportive literature will follow.

Some terms are used interchangeably from this point forward in the discussion of findings which need to be reviewed in light of the nature such terms play in the use of the emergent structure. Habermas’ describes open discourse as equal access into the development of
consensus surrounding shared meanings (or validity claims) by any person. Equality (or equally shared power) is a prerequisite for Habermas’ ideal speech act (or open discourse). From this point forward discussion surrounding equal access and/or contribution to consensus are used interchangeably with use of “open discourse”. Conversely the absence of equal access to open discourse is described in terms of unbalance power residing with groups or individuals. With this in mind, discussion of the emergent structure (Coe’s Levels of Parent Participation in Consensus or CLPPC) will follow.

**Collaborators, Cooperators & Disassociators**

The validity claims parents accept or challenge, according to Habermas' Pragmatic Theory of Meaning, provided a structure to assess power relation and the level(s) of participation a player has contributed to the discourse and/or if open discourse towards reaching consensus was accessible to all participants. The patterns found in levels of participation engagement presented between the parents and school in this study can be analyzed through discourse exchanges which bring to light the parent participation falling into three different capacities: as a collaborator, a cooperator or a disassociater. See figure 5.

The literature and the findings of this study reveal parents participating at multiple levels of consensus. No evidence was found to support the use of the CLPPC structure to identify parents as a singular type of participant. Parents were found in the literature and here to fall in multiple categories dependent on the situation at hand.
Figure 4. Coe's levels of parent participant in consensus (CLPPC).

Collaboration

A collaborator is one who is involved in establishing validity and therefore consensus in a context. These individuals are free to challenge or affirm validity claims. Open discourse with other players is present and the balance of power between participants is maintained. Duranti and Ochs (1996) found collaboration between a teacher and families of her class who decidedly drew on each other’s knowledge and were able to construct relevant literacy methods for the children they shared. In this example, the teacher and parents collaborate together toward a consensus that drew on the all participants’ individual funds of knowledge and reasoning. According to the literature, this kind of collaboration between the parents and teacher increases the students’ potential toward attaining their ZPD (Cole, 1985).
Cooperators

As seen in figure 5, a cooperator is either categorized as an uninformed participant or an informed unengaged participant. Neither category of cooperator challenges the validity claims being made in a context. According to Habermas the absence of challenge affirms such claims to those making the claims. Despite their participation these individuals do not contribute to the development of consensus.

Uninformed participant. The uninformed participant is one who does not have the knowledge (or access to the validated forms of knowledge of the context) to challenge the validity claims being made. For example, if a parent does not know terminology used during a meeting they would be unable to challenge validity claims made and consequently, be unable to contribute the consensus without help in addressing the unknown content. Menard and Warick (2007) document a mother who participated through school volunteering, but her lack of English fluency prevented her from participating or add to the consensus regarding some forms of volunteering (i.e. reading to children in the classroom setting). The mother chose to clean the bathroom walls with other monolingual Spanish parents in order to contribute to the children’s learning environment. While this mother was a participant, she did not have the English fluency (or validated language) to challenge the validity claims of valuable forms of volunteering within the classroom.

Informed, unengaged participation. The informed unengaged participation also falls into the cooperation category. These participants either lack the desire to challenge the validity claims and/or are unable to challenge the validity claims towards consensus (due to imposed limitations or unknown ability of challengability of the claims). Parents for example may not know they can attend or speak up in decision-making meetings. Galindo (1997) found informed
unengaged participation from parents who were denied access to challenge the claims.

Described within the study are Latino parents who tried to challenge the parent participation discourse in Orange County (California) at a public hearing where the decision to phase out the bilingual program had occurred. The parents felt this loss would limit participation ability of Spanish monolingual parents. One such parent stated, “If the bilingual program is gone… the opportunity for parents like me to be a real part of the teaching program will be lost…” (p. 122). The parents tried to utilize their ability to challenge to the validity of the discourse, but in his decision the judge did not reference the 800 challenges to the present discourse, keeping it the same. The parents in this study desired to be engaged in consensus, but were denied the opportunity.

Cooperative participants do not or cannot contribute to consensus, but they still choose to cooperate with the consensus reached by others through their continued participation. Open discourse for this category of participant is not present because of unequal power distributions created by the participant themselves or other players in the system.

Disassociation

The disassociater is one who disassociates with the discourse of an environment through withdrawing their participation. What results is a lack of contribution as chosen by the participant but for varying reasons. These individuals fall into three categories: uninformed non-participants, informed unengaged non-participants and informed decidedly unengaged non-participants. Elaboration of each of these levels of disassociation follows.

Uninformed non-participation. Like their cooperator counterpart, these participants do not have the resources to challenge the validity claims being made, but the lack of knowledge leads to a withholding of participation in the discourse environment as opposed to the
cooperator. Valdés (1996) found uninformed non-participants in a study of Latino parents. The parents in this case had profound respect for education, yet the clash between the family values of reciprocity and the school’s individualistic values brought about many communication issues that left parents in the dark about participating. The parents uninformed status led the school to believe they were uninterested in their children’s education and no attempt to develop consensus with the parents occurred.

Similarly, Delgado-Gaitán and Trueba (1991) found parents unable to translate verbal support into everyday practice. These parents also expressed strong beliefs regarding education yet they “…did not always know how to operationalize those values” (p. 84). Both studies shed light on school-centered conceptions of what it means to participate, to which parents did not have access. The validity claims of the school were in power and were not accessible by parents who may desire to challenge/contribute to viable solutions for parent participation and attainment of the students’ ZPD.

Other uninformed non-participants were found in studies where parents held a separate responsibilities mentality (Epstein, 2001). Their lack of information was of no concern because they felt responsibility for the academic development of their children rested with the school. The reasoning held by the parents resulted in a lack of participation in consensus development that also appeared within the informed, unengaged non-participation category.

**Informed, unengaged, non-participation.** The informed unengaged non-participant is similar to the informed engaged cooperator in their reasoning but with different outcomes. The informed unengaged non-participants remove themselves from the environment due to their: 1) inability due to those in power (Marschall, 2006) or perceived inability to contribute, or 2) due to the fact that they do not desire to participate. Again, parents who believe the school and parents
should have different responsibility (and do not have a shared responsibility perspective) may be informed yet do not desire to be a participant or contribute to the consensus (Tinkler, 2002). Chavkin and Gonzalez (1995) found that Latino parents believed their role to be focused on providing students with values, good behavior and nurturing support, but schools were expected to facilitate student learning.

Some studies have found that because Latinos hold teachers in high respect, they often view asking questions which could be deemed critical as disrespectful, and therefore do not enter into participation, much less potential consensus development (Trumbull et al., 2001). Others have been found to feel intimidated by teachers (Hyslop, 2000) and therefore withhold participation. Marschall (2006) found that Latino parent participation increased significantly with representation on local school counsels, as did teacher attention to cultural differences and school efforts to include this parent population. These findings also suggest that limited access by members of their culture to such power positions previously kept them from involvement.

*Informed, unengaged, decisive non-participation.* The informed unengaged decisive non-participant, however, believes they do not have the ability to contribute to consensus development or access to challenge the validity claims, and therefore decidedly challenge it through non-participation. Menard and Warick (2007) found two mothers resistant and decisive non-participants in the English only focus of the district they were within. Each mother found ways to work on developing their children’s knowledge of Spanish and English skills at home stating that the upkeep of their home language was important, despite the district’s push.

Consideration regarding contributions to consensus, or lack thereof, and therefore issues of power establish the three categories above (collaboration, cooperation and disassociation) and subsequent subcategories. When trying to identify the location of a participation form within the
CLPPC structure one must ask questions like: 1) Does the participant know they have the power to contribute to the consensus; 2) Is the participant allowed into the formation of consensus; 3) Does the participant want to contribute to the consensus; 4) Does the participant have the knowledge base to be apart of consensus development; and 5) Is the power in forming consensus equally distributed? Such questions require not only the utilization of discourse analysis, but additionally considerations regarding power distribution within a context.

The collaboration or open discourse between parents and a school is dependent on the decided facilitation of such. Collaboration requires the openness of school institutions to diverse perspectives towards the establishment of consensus. As each school environment serves a unique population of students, those who want to facilitate collaboration must work to include the diverse partners in strategy/consensus development for their unique student body. When considerations for the unique population are made no pre-packaged program can be utilized. An authentic consensus must be reached towards the greatest attainment of the student body’s ZPD. Such demands require consideration of the other, their capital contributions and elements of the educational settings that might hinder joint collaborative efforts.

Participation Levels at the Robinson School

Elaboration of deeper role analysis of parents of early childhood students within the school discourse will reveal the levels of participation that are present. In keeping with the Levels of Parent Participation structure (figure 5) that emerged I will address contexts of collaboration initially and proceed throughout this structure, ending with instances of informed, decisively unengaged non-participation. Throughout this analytical journey, descriptive sections are included first to familiarize the reader with the context that supported the findings of participation levels as identified in parent interviews and school-produced literature, followed by
TODA analysis and supportive observations. Specifically, quotes from parent interviews or school-produced literature (cited as “text”) are included and followed by my interpretations section (cited as “interpretation”) that utilizes TODA.

Collaboration

Given the focus in the Robinson School literature on partnership with parents, I will discuss the different ways collaboration has developed at the Robinson School. What follows is specific information regarding these instances discussed in the following order: the Parent Center (including Cinco de Mayo preparations, the Family Garden, and parent led parent workshops), the Family Guidance Coordinator, and the school-produced parent newsletter. This discussion is based on ethographic field notes and parent interviews.

The Parent Center

Examples of collaboration at the Robinson School were predominantly observed in and through the parent center and projects that developed out of the parent center. Transcript analysis and observations indicated collaboration was present and readily available to parents who desired to be a part of consensus development. Interestingly, the collaboration in this context was observed occurring predominantly between parents.

One of the on-site school researchers verbally described the parent center as a component that many members of the administrative/research team had desired for years. She further explained her belief that resistance by a former administrator, in addition to a lack of physical space for a parent center, prevented earlier development. Recent changes that cleared the way for development of the center were addition of new personnel and transition of the sixth grade class into middle school.
The 2007-2008 school year marked the beginning of the parent center. The Robinson School had provided the space and many resources (i.e. computers, parenting literature, portfolio materials). The initial efforts made by the school were met with seemingly little interest, consequently the school family guidance coordinator described the real beginning as halfway through the school year.

The mid-year change occurred after extended efforts by the school to survey the parents regarding what they would like to see in the center. Informal coffee sessions were held and varying questionnaires were disseminated toward this end. The parents indicated preferred times for access to the parent center and suggested varying ways for parents who desired to participate. The school in this example facilitated joint consensus development (collaboration) between school and parent.

The family guidance coordinator, a person and position that will be elaborated on later in this section, indicated that parents slowly began to volunteer their expertise and services. As the initial parents stepped out, others came forward offering to lead parent classes like aerobics, nutrition, car maintenance, sewing, and hair styling. The school also began providing classes parents expressed desire to see offered in English and computer literacy. Over time three classroom teachers made themselves available for session topics such as chess, computer literacy and the most recent addition, a parent reading circle.

With these new opportunities came the development of the parent monthly newsletter to inform parents about offerings made available on the school grounds. The family guidance coordinator facilitates the newsletter. The newsletter will be discussed in greater detail when the school-produced literature is analyzed at the end of this section.
The parent center was also made available for parent-initiated gatherings scheduled through the family guidance coordinator. One such occurrence was a baby shower hosted for the aerobics instructor/fellow parent. As it was relayed in an interview, the whole process developed in the parent center where the invitation was made and printed, ideas discussed, and finally the shower itself was held there.

Along the same lines parents often brought food to the parent center to share with other participants when working on projects for the school (i.e. sewing new chair back covers and costume creation for upcoming student performances, such as Cinco de Mayo and also other preparations). The work would stop and those present would eat together. Even as an outsider, I was often strongly encouraged to partake in the provisions with the others. Those who participated within the parent center were invited to share in the meal and therefore, became a part of the parent center community. My acceptance into the parent community was solidified the day of the Cinco de Mayo parade when I was invited to be a part of the parent section by the parents.

Time spent in the three-year-old classroom (which lay just past the parent center) and the parent center itself allowed for frequent observation of the space. Observations indicate that when there was a reason to be in the parent center (i.e. project, parent class, prearranged gatherings), participants were comfortable using the space.

A different atmosphere was observed when administrators and teachers were present with parents in the parent center context. Actions became stiff and stifled. One exception was the school family guidance coordinator, who popped in whenever there was a project in progress in the parent center. Her primary role at the Robinson School was to assume the responsibility of facilitating the parent/school partnership at many levels. This support was witnessed occurring
through parent center activities, the parent newsletter, three-year-old home visits, facilitation of portfolios and vision statements, and in aiding parents of 5<sup>th</sup> graders transition their students into a new school. She had an open door policy; if she was in the office, she was accessible to anyone who needed her help or just wanted to visit. The family guidance coordinator placed herself as a liaison of parent, school and community activity as it related to the Robinson School.

The coordinator became the person parents sought out if questions or needs arose. As a parent of two students at the school, she is also a local community member, Latina and fluent Spanish and English speaker as the situation required. Her commonality with many of the parents served to legitimize the parents' presence on the school campus. This obviously contributed to the comfort level of parents with her, in the center itself and in parent led initiatives. One such parent led initiative that flourished under her facilitation was the Cinco de Mayo Parade.

Cinco de Mayo parade and preparations. The Cinco de Mayo preparation became a big source of voluntary parent participation at the school as opposed to required participation components. One parent had a vision for the school to make a big presence in the parade and utilized the open discourse environment of the parent center. The effort grew quickly in the parent body. Time spent gluing tissue paper, constructing floats and making colorful flowers could be seen each day in fast and furious preparation for the event. One of the parents described how collaborative effort made her feel saying,

Text: *I feel great works as part of a team and getting everyone’s ideas and big one whole thing that’s uhh,… I was talking to my mom and I told her about this parade and that we won first uhh… I said, ‘Mom, I feel great. I feel like a different person’, because before if I don’t come here I just stay at home doing*
like errands, making calls, going to the bank, paying bills, office stuff. Helping my husband with his uhh… with his business or cleaning the house, watching t.v., I mean and I’m not that kinda person. *I’m the kinda person that like to be involved [laughing].”*

(*Italics type indicates my emphasis points for discussion within analytical comments.*)

- **Interpretation:** The participant quoted above was not an involved parent at the school the previous year. But she felt the Cinco de Mayo parade could be something special the parents of the school could contribute to the community as a representation of the Robinson School (and therefore the parents). The project was extensive and fully supported by the school with monetary and personnel resources. She became a contributor through open discourse in the parent center and the encouragement of the family guidance coordinator, legitimizing her funds of knowledge as an organizer and creative contributor. Her use of the word teamwork and description of the culmination of ideas from all the participants underscores the collaborative nature she found during this project and in the discourse of the parent center.

Parents spoke with each other during the effort non-stop and laughter was commonplace in the parent center. On many occasions breakfast, brought by one of the parents, would be shared before the effort for the day commenced. A general atmosphere of relaxation and easiness, despite the rush to complete the floats on time, was how one parent described the joint effort,

**Text:** I learned a lot about how to do good trying, it was amazing that a lot of things that I didn’t know. I was having fun, making the flowers, talking to
parents. I was, I feel like I was relaxing you know… *I would relax, you talk, you learn* and then *I mean you learn a lot from the parents*.

- **Interpretation:** This parent discusses the environment of the parent center during the Cinco de Mayo preparations. The interactions are fluid and relaxed as they work toward their common goal. Throughout her interview she spoke about the personal gratification gleaned by learning from and helping other parents through the parent center. While her interview also indicated learning from the school, she only expressed her equal contributions in relation to other parents. She does not see her contributions as necessary for the school but expressed gratitude for knowledge imparted to her by school personnel. Elucidated is the one-sided nature of the knowledge exchange.

The interactions of school personnel and families during the parade preparations were limited and formal. On occasion the principals would pop into the parent center to smile and nod at the work as if to give their approval. This served to legitimize the parental presence on campus, to monitor the parents and check on the progress of the float preparation.

The family guidance coordinator would stop in to see how the preparations were going as her other school responsibilities permitted. Parents approached the family guidance coordinator regarding material needed for the work. Other than these occurrences, I did not notice much interaction between the school personnel and parents toward the Cinco de Mayo effort. This observation highlighted the first of many instances where the Robinson School provided resource and autonomy (or freedom) in place of true collaboration. Instead of working in tandem with the parents toward mutual consensus, parents were left to develop the consensus among each other.
The school in essence became *informed, unengaged non-participants* in the discourse of the parent center.

The parents were the source of the parade idea and carried out the observed components of the construction and vision development for the floats. While, the school provided many of the materials requested for the beautification of the floats (including a Robinson School banner requested by the parents), the parents produced hardware components and trailers for float construction. The trailers and trucks to pull the trailers were acquired by the parents and the metamorphosis of trailer to float happened before my eyes.

The effort won the Robinson school parents a first place trophy for best in show for the parade. The school community (school personnel, parents and students) appeared very pleased with the results. Pictures from the day and the trophy that was awarded, were displayed in the parent center. The school also gave recognition by hosting a luncheon to honor and celebrate the parents’ effort. Local Mexican food was served buffet style in the parent center.

The coordinator was present the whole celebration, talking with parents and smiling. Parents and other school personnel formally and sparsely intermingled at the luncheon. Polite nods and smiles were the extent of these interactions, like the exchanges of acquaintances. The style of communication differed considerably from the parents’ interactions with each other which were warm and familiar. This difference was evidenced at both the luncheon and during the parade preparations. The difference in communication styles between the parents and the school was obvious. The parents' demeanor was informal in contrast to professionally oriented and focused school personnel. The dissonance in communication styles hindered collaboration between the parent and the school.
The Family Garden. Another context of collaborative participation that stemmed from the parent center was the family garden. This idea was presented by the school and took a little time to capture interest of the parents; however, when interest did develop, the parents took charge and collaborated together to facilitate the project.

I was party to a conversation surrounding the family garden in which the family guidance coordinator indicated that a portion of garden space was set-aside for the families use if they chose. After awhile when nothing had been done with the designated area, one of the administrators called the coordinator regarding hiring landscapers to come and fill the tilled area. The coordinator, however, indicated that some of the parents had just spoken to her about getting the family garden started, therefore they left it alone until the parents were ready to start the project. Illuminated in this scenario, again, was the school’s willingness to give the parents autonomy (independence) and resources for the family garden. If parents failed to follow through with the project, the school had the option to withdraw the resources. It could not be concluded whether the parents made the connection between this provision its potential removal. If this connection is made, could concern arise regarding other areas of parental consensus access?

The garden, was in the playground/field area in the back of the school was a large circular plot of land which local eagle scouts had prepared. Families who wanted a section to cultivate were welcomed and given the freedom to develop it the way they desired. One father became the point person who parents sought if they had questions or needed help. On many occasions parents expected him to operate in an authoritarian role, but he continually redirected them to make personal contributions. His wife explained one situation that highlighted his emphasis as a facilitator,
a parent came in and was waiting for my husband to tell her, like to tell her what to do.

And he was like no this is the garden, this is not my garden this is the parents’
garden. So don’t wait for me, don’t think that I’m the leader. There’s no leader.

There’s no leaders here, everyone, this is the parent garden, the family garden. You
pick your place, this is what we decided so that everyone could have a or the parents that
wanted to be part of the family garden could come pick their slot, their space. You know
do whatever they, they want, or plant whatever they wanted to plant.

• Interpretation: The parent who approached the interview participant’s husband
seemed to be ready to cooperate with the pre-existing authority structures;
however, this gentleman emphasized each participant having something unique to
contribute toward the greater whole. To this end he took himself out of the
authority role establishing an egalitarian dialogue between willing participants who
helped each other and learned from one another. Collaboration was fostered by this
father.

All parents who helped facilitate the family garden seemed very sensitive and encouraged
other parents to do what they wanted with their family’s plot. Yet at the same time, other
observations and portions of transcripts indicate that if parents needed someone’s expertise, that
help was also freely given. For example one parent said:

Text: Talking about the garden, you can have questions there, your opinions,

things to help the garden grow better or how can we help other parents if

they don’t know about the flowers.

And in another excerpt,

Text: So you know I was helping and I learned… sometimes they say you put the
medicine [aspirin in the ground] and they say ‘you know, I didn’t know about that’… I learned a lot of things, it is very exciting. It is.

Collaboration between the parents working in the garden was evident. While the school provided the space and autonomy for the parents, they were not part of the collaborative effort. Separate spheres of participation for parent and school are highlighted in both parent center activity and the Cinco de Mayo preparation. This observation led to the question: could a separate responsibilities mentality of school personnel and parents be in operation at the Robinson School?

*Parent-led workshops.* The parent workshops were another source of collaboration between the parents. Several parents stepped up to lead parent workshops due in part to the encouragement of the family guidance coordinator. This encouragement validated the parents funds of knowledge on the school campus and fostered positive relationships between parents and the family guidance coordinator.

The classes occurred on the campus in the parent center itself and in the cafeteria when the children were not using it for lunch. Parents offered workshops ranging from hair styling to car maintenance. The sessions were all held during the day, a matter that will be bracketed and returned to when different forms of disassociation (as present at the Robinson School) are discussed.

Parents took the same approach as the lead for the family garden. Despite their extended knowledge base in their specialty, the leading parents were observed eliciting the shared contributions of their fellow parents. One mother stated in her interview,

Text: “I volunteer to lead, I don’t say teach, to lead a walking aerobics type
class… and it’s really exciting for me because it’s motivated me to go ahead and get my certification as a personal trainer… and they [parents] want to be there, they want to come… And they are helping me with my Spanish. And you know I talk to them in English and so it’s, it’s great… I went out to Vegas… and they met on their own…

- Interpretation: The wording used by the parent in this quote removes her from the authority role and places her in a facilitator role among the other parents. While the language barrier could have provided another obstacle to collaboration, here it became a way group members contributed to the group. Participating parents felt comfortable taking the lead when this parent facilitator was out of town because she had facilitated a collaborative effort the parents embraced.

The data suggests the presence of an egalitarian dialogue. Observations and transcripts revealed parents recognized that everyone brought something to the table creating a collaborative effort. They each worked to create a space where participants felt safe to bring their contributions. The parents fostered collaboration.

*Parents and the Family Guidance Coordinator*

The school collaborated with the parents through provision of the services of the family guidance coordinator as documented earlier in this section. Her efforts to encourage parents to bring their special skill sets to the table of parent sessions or act as the liaison between the school and parents to facilitate the Cinco de Mayo float and family garden, created an environment of collaboration. The following excerpt shows the coordinator as someone the parents felt comfortable approaching.

Text: I think we always go back to her [the family guidance coordinator] with any questions or any doubts or any concerns, we go to her and [the receptionist],

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but umm I noticed that they [the school] gave the parents a lot of freedom to decide, to plan and but yah yeah it’s [the family guidance coordinator] we go back to [giggling].

• Interpretation: Observations indicated that the family guidance coordinator was the main catalyst behind the opportunities for parents to decide and plan. The school always seemed willing to extend this freedom as evidenced by the variety of projects accomplished during the school year, but also, the coordinator paved the way. It is interesting to note that while the family guidance coordinator was in the midst of these efforts, the school at large was absent. This is another example of autonomy and resources without collaboration.

The family guidance coordinator was the go to person for every parent I spoke with during interviews and in passing conversations. At times teachers were named, along with the school receptionist, but in regard to parent participation components, she was the one parents turned to for support and guidance. The family guidance coordinator’s full time job description was to facilitate the school/parent partnership. I observed her operating collaboratively with parents through the parent center, and also facilitating cooperation with academic initiatives of the Robinson School.

Interactions between the family guidance coordinator and parents were both personal (inquiring about family and friends) and professional dependent on what her school role called for. If she was being approached as a school administrator with policy questions she took on the professional role, other interactions were more personal in nature, but she allowed the approaching parent to set the tone.
The family guidance coordinator saw herself as a partner with the school and the parents. She was not only a staff member, but also a parent. The coordinator was from the local Hispanic community, a local graduate and bilingual.

As stated earlier, she also writes the monthly parent newsletter and her collaborative frame of mind is evidenced in the textual analysis of that publication. In fact, of all the school-produced literature, the newsletter was the only one that consistently contained collaborative language. The following examples are typical collaborative type statements within the parent newsletter:

Text:  
*We* have about 2 months left to pull everything together. *We* have begun the project of stuffing flowers for one of the floats. There are examples to follow in the Parent Center. *We* will continue to meet every Thursday morning in order to continue our work and begin new projects, *but feel free to drop in at any time to work on the current projects left in the parent center*

and,

Text:  
*Mrs. ***** [parent]* and her family are moving on to a wonderful opportunity and *we* will miss them. *She has taught us a lot* about our health and keeping fit. *Through her support and advice this class will continue with all class members contributing to the leading of the class.*

- Interpretation: Notice the writing style in both of these samples that incorporates a first person perspective. First in the on-going Cinco de Mayo preparations she has placed herself as a participator with the parents. In the second quote the first person perspective shows that she also learned a lot from parent leader.

And finally,
Thank you Mrs. **** [parent]! A special thanks, again, to Mrs. *** for her translation and assistance with this newsletter.

- Interpretation: While the family guidance coordinator was fluent in both Spanish and English, on several occasions she makes sure her written Spanish was accurately translated. Here she incorporates the writing skills of a fellow parent to ensure the Spanish version of the newsletter communicates clearly.

These writing sources illuminate the family guidance coordinator’s work to facilitate a collaborative environment in the parent center. She encouraged parents to bring their capital to the parent center table for all to learn from and collaborate with. My findings indicate her efforts and modeling helped set the egalitarian dialog found between the parents and coordinator in the parent center.

With this in mind, the school personnel were participating in the collaborative effort but primarily through this coordinator. The provision of a staff position like a family guidance coordinator is another resource the Robinson School made available to insure parent collaboration. Emphasized again is the willingness of the school to provide resource and autonomy to the parents.

While resource and autonomy were readily given to parents through parent center activities, the school provided different components for academically focused activities. The Robinson School continued to provide resources, but in place of the autonomy was training via direct instructions and/or mentorship in how to facilitate academics. With this shift found in the school-produced literature, came a parallel shift in the family guidance coordinator’s role.

Discussion of cooperative findings surrounded the academic components of parent participation.
Cooperation

Cooperation has been defined here as the participation of parents without their engagement in the development of consensus regarding their role at the Robinson School (see figure 5). Both informed, unengaged (participant with necessary knowledge for consensus contributions who is not given access, perceives they do not have access or do not desire to challenge validity claims for varying reasons) and uninformed participation (participant unable to challenge the validity claims due to lack of knowledge or validated forms of knowledge) within cooperation were found at the Robinson School. What follows is specific information regarding instances of cooperation found at the Robinson School in the following order: the home visits (including discussion of the home kits, portfolio, and vision statement), the first day participation, and ‘drop off’/‘pick up’ conversation. Following this school-produced literature forms that defined parents in terms of cooperators will be discussed.

Samples of both informed, unengaged participation and uninformed participation were present in provided home kits and home visits, the family portfolio, the vision statement, first day of school, and pick up and drop off routine. First, discussion surrounding interview and observations will be elaborated on in the required parent participation activities listed above, these will be followed by discussion of school-produced literature for parents where cooperative definitions of parental role were illuminated. Addressing the instances of cooperation in the observations and interview, before the literature will highlight the current presence of cooperation defining parent role in school-produced.

Home Kits and Visits

The home kits are a component of the curriculum used for the three-year-old class. They are boxes that are taken to the children’s homes once a month and include items like games, puzzles,
activities and books. Each home kit is centered on a theme. Some examples of themes include: numbers, colors, ocean animals, transportation, and letters. There is a total of 25 kits and each family interacted with 8 kits during the course of the year. Kits included a mixture of puzzles, games, crafts, CDs (or audio tapes) and books relating to the topic of the kit.

The family guidance coordinator takes these kits to each child’s home once a month. It is strongly suggested that both the child and a guardian are present for these visits. On occasion I observed visits with only the guardian, but this was the preferred exception, as the school desired the parent to see activities modeled with their child. During a home visit the family guidance coordinator explained the kit contents and focus subject. Walking through every item in the box she demonstrated [for the parent] how each component was to be used, discussed developmentally why it was important for the child, then gave suggestions for extensions at home (other ways the parents themselves might choose to address the topic and/or developmental skills). For example in one session I observed the family guidance coordinator describing ways to extend the boxed number lesson giving extension ideas for car rides or identifying around the house opportunities to count to five.

The initial home visit encompasses more than kit instruction, developmental information and extension ideas, however. This visit also initiates the parents as to the purpose for take home kits, and also identifies school perspective of parents as their child’s primary educator. One way the school facilitated parent cooperation was by providing them kits with pertinent information for effective utilization.

The other component of the first home visit was a home inventory assessment. In this assessment parents were asked to identify skills students exhibit at home, along with their access to educational enhancement toys (i.e. puzzles, colorful toys, instruments). A modified HOME
(Home Observation and Measurement of the Environment) inventory was used for this assessment piece. During the initial home visit the family guidance coordinator went down a list of questions in the HOME inventory. While some parents elaborated on the answers, most simply answered yes or no to the samples below:

“Child has toys which teach colors, size, and shapes”

“Child has real or toy musical instruments”

“Family buys and reads a daily newspaper”

“Can your child point out the shape of things around the house, and know most of the basic shapes?”

The family guidance coordinator then went through the initial kit. The coordinator was bilingual and flowed seamlessly with the linguistic need for each context. The kits also contained instructions in both Spanish and English to meet the need of all participating parents.

• Interpretation: Parents were very respectful toward the family guidance coordinator during these home visits as exhibited by their hospitality and attention upon our arrival. Every session I observed the coordinator made a lot of eye contact with the parents and smiled continuously. She would explain some aspect of the kit (or portfolio, visions statement, school purposes for required components, etc.) with a smile and begin nodding. The nodding seemed to be how the coordinator would ask the parents if they understood what she had just explained, and most parents observed would similarly nod. I was unsure whether parents truly understood her explanations or if they were just responding in a cooperative fashion due to her friendliness or her school-given authority status.
During interviews with parents the topic of home kits arose. Both interviews and home visit observations revealed the parents’ home kit participation as cooperative with the school. Both informed, unengaged participation and uninformed participation levels of cooperation were found. Discussion of samples and excerpts from the interviews will be elaborated on, beginning with informed, unengaged participation.

_Informed, unengaged home kit participation._ In the quote that follows, a parent discussed a mind set change she had to embrace in order to use the home kits the way the school has endorsed. The school encouraged students to try things like cutting and gluing and was not concerned with the mess such an endeavor with a three year old can produce.

Text: And you know like they’re umm, _they are cutting paper they’re making a mess_, but but their their developing motor skills you know. _Instead of looking at the mess_, _no look they’re going to have pretty handwriting_ [laughing].

- Interpretation: The participant quoted above was an early childhood elementary teacher at a school within a mile of the Robinson School. She understood developmentally what the children were doing, but apparent in this quote, and throughout her interview, is her desire for neatness and order. The school prescribed ways of allowing the children freedom and her own ethos seem to be something she battles in order to let what she feels is the more important of the two sides win the war.

- Another interesting element is the former teacher’s status as a receptive (cooperative) parent. This underscores her probable perception of her former role (as the knowledgeable authority) and furthermore the role of parents of her former students as cooperators with that knowledgeable authority.
Another mother developed her knowledge base allowing for *informed, unengaged participation* and further advocated for the school ethos surrounding home kits to other family and friends even though she was not given access to the development of consensus surrounding take home kits. She discussed her personal learning process saying,

Text: *I learned from the school that it is good to have in my house [supplies]... but you know some of my friends they don't even have that... sometimes [friends say], 'oh, my gosh, you keep all of those things here?'... I have constructions paper there, the scissors, you have the glue, and it is easier for me to have everything in there.*

- Interpretation: The school has taught this parent particular things that are good to keep around for developing three-year-olds. In this context the mother describes the deficiency in others' homes that do not have such supplies on hand. Later she dismissed cost being a reason, citing the dollar store as her source for all she kept on hand.

The mother quoted here repeatedly expressed gratitude during her interview regarding both parents (at the school) and the school itself as instructors. She became an advocate for the elements learned ranging from home pedagogy advocated by the school. She looked for opportunities to pass on learned elements to other parents (both with children in the Robinson school and others without), and to her own children. The level at which she embraced the academic participation suggested by the school filtered into every aspect of her family's life. She would pack bags for her youngest to work on academic and other developmental work when they went to her cleaning job. Her car seat pockets were filled with books, crayons, scissors and activity books for her children’s use during car rides. At times these learning opportunities conflicted with her peers social norms as seen in the following statements,
Right now, you know, I don’t mind if my house doesn’t look neat, you know the way I want… because everyone has to be neat and I said you know what, I’m just going to make a room there with scissors, paper, glue, everything that they need. I mean, and he [husband] says, “Is that how you want it?” I wish I could have it more fancy with shelves and everything but you know I noticed it doesn’t really matter to them [children]. They have a space,…

• Interpretation: At the beginning of the statement the parent doesn’t mind the mess (even though it isn’t the way she wants it) brought on by the constructive chaos, she chooses to break with the norm even after her husband broaches the subject. She returns again, however, to her desire for neatness or order discussing elements she would like to add to the room to make it more “fancy”. She ends her internal tug-of-war, focusing on the children. Does healthy child development in the home have to conflict with neatness and order?

The space she discusses above is her converted dining room, which was turned into a school-like area where her children could cut, glue, color, and read (among many other school-oriented activities she learned from the school). The walls of this room were decorated with teacher posters and signs, and the floor covered with large colorful rubber puzzle pieces. She discussed her dismissal of having a house that was more visually appealing in favor of her children being totally supported educationally. This point was further emphasized by the accumulation of books, which could be found in baskets in every room of the house including the bathroom. She learned about the importance of a literature rich environment from the school and had taken the knowledge to extents, to which even the school family guidance coordinator was impressed.
Upon going to this parent’s house for the initial home visit, the family guidance coordinator told me that while we were “introducing” the kit idea to this parent, she believed this parent could teach others, including her. The parent had been a participant in the three-year old program with two other children; therefore, the visit was merely a matter of policy and fostering good relations. With knowledge the mother gleaned, she was then capable, according to the family guidance coordinator, of contributing to the consensus.

- Interpretation: No mechanisms were in place for this mother to contribute to the consensus, even though the family guidance coordinator recognized the contributions this parent could make. Structures were not in place to access parental knowledge and parents like this one saw themselves as cooperators with the more informed school authorities. Parents seem to start with a deficit mentality. Freire’s banking metaphor can be seen with these parents who see themselves solely as recipients to be deposited in by the knowledgeable school authorities.

Questions arise regarding if local neatness and order ethos of the community is being discouraged/dismissed in favor of school ethos that focuses on constructive chaos where the child is placed in charge of the learning, which should happen everywhere. Similarly, other parents discussed learning from the school that a responsibility type ethos, which many before hand were trying to impart to their children, conflicted with “letting the children be children”. Does neatness, order and responsibility as conveyed in this local community truly conflict with development, or just school-centered conceptions of development? Could the dissonance between the school ethos and local ethos (surrounding valuable avenues for child development) dismiss local ethos and diverse funds of knowledge? What new types of development
opportunities might be achieved through parent/school collaborative efforts, which would draw on both perspectives to form a new consensus surrounding effective development?

*Uninformed (participation) with home kits.* The participant in the following quote places herself and her husband as cooperators and submitted to the more knowledgeable authorities of the school. The family guidance coordinator had been on a home visit to their house, when the participant elaborated on their receptivity to her authority saying,

Text: She [family guidance coordinator] talked to my husband and *explain him about the situation needed to be done and everything.* And he said she did really good and explains to him what needed to be for **** [student] to, *she told him that Frieda needed a little more in the numbers.* She needs to concentrate more on the numbers, because *for them I guess easier to find out what **** [student] need to work more on.*

- Interpretation: Clearly present is the mother and father’s complete confidence in the assessments made by the school. With this confidence comes willing compliance with suggested tactics for improvement. This parent expressed throughout her interview a separate responsibilities mentality for all involved. Her daughter was to learn, both her and her husband did their part by supporting the school, following whatever instructions were given with or without understanding for the reasoning behind the suggestions. The school was responsible for the education process. The school was seen as the holder of necessary (and validated) knowledge about effective child development and they do not. The parents’ overwhelming validation of the school conception of effective educational practices devalued their own knowledge and potential contribution.
Observing the home sessions, often parents seemed to be in the same *uninformed* participation frame of mind. These parents sat receiving instruction quietly, nodding and smiling. This was noticed more in the monolingual Spanish homes, but occurred in bilingual homes also. The family guidance coordinator would make eye contact, smile and give instructions while the parent nodded and seemed to be focused on intent concentrations regarding the information being relayed. The parents observed appeared to be both receivers and followers of instruction provided from the school authority.

One mother discussed her initial encounters with the family guidance coordinator and all she learned from these interactions. Specifically she cited the importance of having many reading materials around the house for herself and her children and the necessity of her children seeing her as an avid reader motivating them to become avid readers.

Text:  

```text
[the family guidance coordinator] told me, “do you have books to read, because if [your daughter] sees you reading a magazine, she sees you interested in reading she’s gonna want to read too, more.” … so [I] went to the store and buy some books for me in Spanish because I wasn’t used to reading… you know [the family guidance coordinator] was really right and thank you to her…
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- Interpretation: The parent’s role as recipient of the school’s suggested strategies and reasoning is illuminated in this interview excerpt. Prior to this encounter she did not have the knowledge base to contribute to the school discourse surrounding the importance of modeling in parent participation. Home visit observations confirm the presence of similar unknowledgeable participation with the home kits by many of the parents.
In both the *informed, unengaged* and *uninformed* home kit discussions parents accepted the validity claims made in the school take home kits regarding effective child developmental tactics. The *uninformed* participants considered themselves lacking informed contribution, and *informed, unengaged* participants dismissed their ethos in order to embrace those held by the Robinson School. The acceptance of the school as the ultimate authority of best developmental practices, dismissed the contributions the parents could bring to the table. Did parents view the school as the authority in education that should be respected (cultural ethos)? Could this have overridden other cultural norms of neatness and order placing parents as cooperators by default?

*The Family Portfolio*

The family portfolio was another participation component that housed *knowledgeable, unengaged* and *unknowledgeable* cooperation. The family portfolio is a parent participation component that is introduced in the three-year-old class. While beginning in the 3’s, it is a component of the curriculum that the school encourages for continuance throughout a student’s academic career.

The family guidance coordinator also discusses the family portfolio with the parents at the second home visit. Parents are told that the portfolio is a place to store samples of the children’s work. The content included is to focus on work produced by the children with their parents outside of school. During each portfolio explanation I observed, the family guidance coordinator focused on the reasons why the school includes this component in its early childhood program. Following the school-produced information sheet on the portfolio, she would read and expand its purpose as meant to:

1. Help parents reflect on the activities they participate in with their children;
2. Help the parent recognize the “importance and power” of their role as parent (emphasizing the parent as primary educator of the child);

3. Encourage reading, writing, conversation and creative expression in the home; and finally, to

4. Build the child’s self-esteem.

• Interpretation: The primary purposes listed here make validity claims regarding the importance of school-type activities in the home as defined by the pre-established categories to be included in the portfolio (language and communication, reading and writing, math, development of the body, and work done at school).

Reflection by parents in this case could serve to marginalize capital different from the school-validated categories of child development. It is unclear how marginalization of social and cultural capital of the “other” would positively impact a child’s self-esteem.

Secondary reasons the family guidance coordinator shared was the use of the portfolio as
1) a means of communication between the teachers and parents about at home school efforts; 2) an aid to help other parents complete their portfolios; and 3) a memory book for the child.

• Interpretation: Two of the secondary reasons are also focused on the school-validated activities reinforcement of the teacher and reinforcement of the parent who embraces these claims on other parents. The last is the only stated purpose that does not hinge on school defined/validated activities. As discussed later, this is the purpose parents were largely found to embrace.

After explanation, the family guidance coordinator produced a three ring binder for the parent’s use and provided a sample portfolio made by a previous parent. Addressing the school
suggested sections in the sample portfolio (language and communication, reading and writing, math, development of the body, and work done at school), she would elaborate on different items families included in the past. These ranged from student produced pieces, to parent journal entries and photos taken of the student doing something. Each component selected was explained as an example of something the family felt would contribute information regarding the student’s development (i.e. picture taken examining a leaf in the park).

During these encounters parents would nod and flip the pages, seemingly studying the sample portfolio. Some parents asked questions, others stared intently. I wondered to what extent the purpose of this curricular component was understood by parents new to the program and otherwise.

In interviews and observations I encountered both uninformed and informed unengaged participation within the portfolio component. Some of the parents understood the desired role the school wanted them to play in the development of the family portfolio. An example is indicated by this participant in our interview,

Text: I pretty much gathered some things that he did at school along with some of the things he did at home… Like drawings, umm paintings, when he says like a certain phrase or certain thing I write it down and date it so that, like it catches my eye… I’m not trying to like overload the portfolio with unnecessary things, cause sometimes he comes home with the same thing like his name or little drawings and I’m like whatever catches my attention I’ll put it in there and save it for him.

• Interpretation: This parent understands the reflective role she is asked to play, looking for elements that catch her eye. Her emphasis is not on a full portfolio for
her son, but quality components. While she hints at her purpose for collecting the materials as different from the primary school purposes, (to save it for him) she understands what is being asked of her and cooperates. The different purpose does not hinder her ability to participate; in fact it aligns with a secondary purpose the school gives for collecting the materials. This secondary purpose (memory book) emerged as a primary reason many parents embraced this participation component. While some parents participated in the requirement, they did not have the knowledge regarding the purpose of the samples they selected, and therefore, could not challenge validity claims of school-centered behavior in the home.

Text: I mean they provided a lot of things for us to start working on my daughter’s journal, and the portfolio and then we put it together… And then we work together, my husband, my daughter and I that night, we got the portfolio together. We started with four pages, guess what, whenever I come here whatever she draws she will take me the copies to the house and I will put it in her portfolio.

• Interpretation: The same interviewee also relayed her own reflection on her daughter’s portfolio, was described as “just nothing” or empty. The participant’s focus on quantity instead of elements that represented her daughter’s development and her dependence on the school as the imparter and assessor of valid knowledge, indicated her lack of understanding regarding the reasoning behind the pieces selected for the portfolio. The work the school does with her daughter is what she includes in the family portfolio. The rest of the participant’s interview indicates that this is one of many areas where she did not understand the role being asked of her.
The major contributions to the portfolio in the above example were from work completed at school, despite the academic emphasis on home produced materials. The goal of having a full three ring binder was noticed among other parents also. *Uninformed* parents seemed to assign similar roles: the student produces the work, the parent accumulates the work, and the teacher assesses the work. Reference was not made by this participant regarding the student’s development, and therefore, the school purpose for the components was unrealized.

The school hosted two portfolio party days, which had two sessions each. One session occurred during the day and another in the evening to accommodate the schedule of working parents who wanted to participate. Observations during one portfolio party indicated similarly that many of the parents did not understand the purpose of the portfolio, or had chosen their own importance for it.

The day session that was attended had fourteen parent participants along with supporting family members representing children from the 3-year old’s class to kindergarten. The portfolio party was an opportunity for parents to come, work together, get feedback and access the schools resources. Tables were covered with scrap booking supplies of all kinds. Parents were welcomed, cut limited directions were presented. Parent then began working on their child’s portfolio.

At the main table and walking around the room conversations were heard that indicated the parents placed great importance on the thickness and presentation of the portfolio. Parents complimented each other these characteristics, while others discussed reasons their portfolios were not as thick.

Exhibited in this portfolio behavior is a separate roles mentality that is in contrast to the school portfolio purposes, apparently not realized or known to the parents. The parents looking to fill the portfolios contributed *uninformed* participation *due to* a separate roles mentality. The
separate roles mentality was at dissonance with the shared responsibility the school that was meant to produce unified contribution of school-centered activity for the children in the home and school.

One family observed during a portfolio party seemed to be embracing the instructions and school purpose of the portfolio provided support for informed unengaged participation in the portfolio component. Present were the mother, grandpa, grandma, aunt and the student. The three-year-old was actually included in the portfolio work that day unlike most of the other portfolios being worked on. The family asked the three-year-old questions as they created new components and decorated the portfolio. The mother here cooperated with the school’s perspective, but did not have access to contribute to the suggested components of the portfolio or challenge the predominance of school-type activities as the necessary ones for student development.

While some of the participating parents, like the mother described above, seemed to understand the reason the portfolio was in use, most seemed to be uninformed about the role the school was asking them to play within this parent participation component. Even those who demonstrated informed unengaged cooperation were found largely, like many uninformed participants, pursuing the creation of a memory book, a secondary purpose stated by the school. The thickness and beautification seemed of greater importance to many parents rather than the academic and partnership connections the school has in place for the participation component.

Academic emphasis (the values of the school) of the portfolio took the parents’ out of the consensus; however, the family-centeredness of a memory book was given prominence over the academic agenda by the parents. Interesting questions arise if the memory book becomes one of the primary purposes. Would this create an environment of consensus where additional and more
meaningful sections draw on parental cultural knowledge and values of participating parents?
Perhaps the school should revisit their primary statements of purpose to encompass a broader more inclusive purpose that would facilitate the collaboration of parents as opposed to their informed and uninformed cooperation. The refocus could create a participation space more parents would not only understand but also desire to contribute from their funds of knowledge.

The next parent participation sample of cooperation is found within the family portfolios. The vision statement illuminated informed, unengaged and uninformed participation levels. Elaboration on these emergent categories will be discussed next along with description and school purpose of the required component.

*The Vision Statement*

The vision statement was introduced at the same session as the family portfolio. This component asked parents to write the dreams and goals they held for their child in areas of importance for the family. The family guidance coordinator gave examples for vision areas (included statements surrounding family, academic, religious and cultural goals), but carefully mentioned that other areas might be more meaningful to them. Specifically these are the ones that the school desired parents would share. The placement of the vision statement was established as the first component of the family portfolio, and the family guidance coordinator asked parents to complete it as their “homework” due during the next home visit.

The school identified two reasons they believed the vision statement component was an important piece of participation. They state that parent-produced goals for children will help parents make more effective decisions (through the use of these goals) and usage of such goals will increase the potential for final goal attainment. The school then encouraged parents to, Text: Learn as much as you can to help your child stay on path.
• Interpretation: Implied in this statement are the ideas that parents have to put themselves in the role of facilitator and learner in order for the child to fulfill these goals. This suggests that parents do not have the needed knowledge to make the best decisions (for goal attainment) and should learn as much as they can (from the school or other knowledgeable authorities) in order to gain the needed insight. Furthermore, if the parents do not have the knowledge, then it is also implied that goals should be beyond what the parents have achieved.

While the data analyzed included many of the interview participants’ vision statement for their student, each sample was completed in accordance with the format provided by the school. The school-created vision statement form given to the parents held five blank sections and all but one mother completed exactly five statements. Neither the family guidance coordinator nor the vision statement information sheet specified completing a certain number of statements. This could be interpreted as another way parents were contributing unquestioning cooperation with perceived standards set in place by the school.

While a few of the parents had the completed vision statement sheet by the following home visit, many more did not. Reasons given by parents for this ranged from busy schedules, forgetting, to statements that the work was simply lost. The family guidance coordinator assured each parent who did not have the vision statement completed that day, that it could be submitted later. They could bring it to school when they dropped their child off, or she would collect it on the next visit. Rounding up these vision statements took most of the year, but eventually the school acquired a copy of every three-year-old’s vision statement. The follow up and accountability for this component is of interest.
The family guidance coordinator was very understanding about each situation and provided other opportunities for parents to submit the vision statements to her, but it was apparent that she would continue to ask for them. It was unclear whether the delays were due to attempts at non-participation because in the end everyone submitted their child’s vision statement, and therefore became cooperative participants. All samples analyzed demonstrated parents’ knowledge of what the school was asking of them, stating goals for their child, and making the participation informed cooperation.

What is less certain is if parents internalized the school’s previous suggestion regarding the necessity of learning all they can (from more knowledgeable authorities) in order to help their child achieve the goals. Is it possible that this caused parents to doubt their own ability to form goals of value? Did this create a marginalization of parents’ knowledge base and personal achievements? The delayed cooperation may have in fact been in effort to disassociate with the participation form being asked, either decisively due to potential implications surrounding lack of capital or due to their own perceived inability to contribute to the consensus of important goals for their children. While these possibilities cannot be confirmed without question, the portfolio and home kit analysis highlight the latter reason as most probable. Further discussion with the parents should be pursued to establish if disassociation is present within this participation form.

What is apparent from the analysis is that no opportunities were available for parents to contribute or dispute any of the validity claims surrounding the purpose or execution of this participation component. Furthermore, though the vision statement was a space for parents to voice their values and priorities for their children; the directions and beliefs, as stated by the school, likely marginalized/silenced participants’ potential contributions. It seems that this
component is rich with potential collaboration opportunities between school and parent. The vision statement could be a way to include the parents’ priorities and values in the curriculum.

Neither the teachers of the 3’s nor the family guidance coordinator indicated that they read the vision statements produced by the parents. If the parents were truly stating the goals they had for their children, would these parent-voiced pursuits find an outlet in the school day? This observed disconnect raises questions regarding the influence of voice for change. Is the larger educational institution interested in considering the priorities of parents for their children? Also, even if space is given for parents to voice their ideas/beliefs/values and parents utilize the opportunity, is that synonymous with being heard and affecting change?

*The First Day*

Another required element of participation by the parents of three-year-olds was attendance on the first day of school with their child. This component served three purposes as relayed by teachers. They are summarized below:

1. To ease the transition for the students from home to school,
2. To familiarize parents with the student’s school routine, and
3. To build a connection for students and parents regarding the partnership between the parent and the school.

- Interpretation: This component highlights elements of the school ethos, which equated parent presence at the school with parental concern for academics/buy in. The school implies here that the students make similar connections between parental presence and care.

Most of the parents observed on the first day seemed uncomfortable in both the a.m. and p.m. three-year-old classes, particularly during the first half of their “day” in the class. First a
meal (breakfast or lunch) was served in a small area that housed two tables and twelve chairs where the children sat. No seating for the adults was available. Parents aided their child by opening their silver ware packets, drink cartons and helping them to acquire napkins, but other than that parents stood quietly around the perimeter. After the meal, parents helped students find their names on the rug and then either sat with them or found a place around the perimeter again. A story was then read and discussed with the children.

Next children and parents were sent to centers. A third of the parents worked together with their student, interacting in a way often encouraged by the school as educationally stimulating (i.e. asking their students questions prompting thought). These participants demonstrated informed unengaged participation as they were acting in a fashion encouraged by the school without their own personal input into why, how or if this was a “valuable” way to interact. The majority of the parents stood awkwardly around looking at their child, staring around the room, messing with their phone and/or making conversation with another parent in their proximity. While these parents were participating with their attendance during the day, they appeared to be uninformed about the validated ways to participate.

Recess went much the same way, but following recess, there was a family projects seemingly designed to incorporate parents and facilitate much more parent/child interaction. All of the parents interacted during this segment. The time began with instruction for the parents to follow and suggestions as to how they might help their child with the project. Suggestions included allowing the children to try their hand at gluing and cutting despite the fact that it might take some time. Some parents just worked as facilitators allowing their children to make the decisions and do most of the work with their encouragement. Other parents seemed to have an idea in their head that their child needed to reach. The results were some perfect little people
with yarn hair in just the right places and faces drawn by parents. Other projects were hardly recognizable as a person aside from the gingerbread man shape.

- Interpretation: Is there a “right” way to do this art project in the eyes of some parents? Reoccurring ideas surrounding neatness/order seemed to be surfacing in a different way. If this was the case could parents be viewing this opportunity as a time to mentor/teach their child by example regarding the right way to use supplies in an effective and presentable manner. If this is an instruction strategy parents are trying to embrace, does the trial and error technique advocated by the school marginalize diverse instruction methods?

The last portion of the day was spent back on the rug with the children sitting at their place. Many parents took their former positions around the perimeter.

- Interpretation: Parents were not given direct instructions, as was the case with the family project. What resulted was a return to low levels of interaction. These low levels of interaction could have indicated that they did not “know” the validated behavior this situation called for. Also, it could possibly indicate separate responsibilities mentality held by the participants. If this is the case, parents view their role in education as supportive, while the school is made responsible for the facilitation of educational experiences.

There was not enough information in these observations alone to develop whether the cooperating parents on the periphery were informed, unengaged participation, uninformed participation, or even potentially demonstrating some form of protest disassociation within the cooperation they were giving. (Further discussion with considerations of the drop off/pick up of students, in the next section, will contribute to the analysis)
Despite the level of participation, it was clear from both classes observed that many of the parents did not feel comfortable being in the classroom, specifically the many parents who position themselves around the periphery. It is unclear as to whether the discomfort was from different perceptions of parent role or lack of understanding regarding what they were to be contributing. What is clear: no feedback from the parents was pursued by the school, nor was there any other mechanism for parents to challenge the school perception of parent presence equates to parental concern about student development.

While the first day observations did not in themselves confirm or deny a separate responsibilities mentality (or a mentality that the parent role need not interact with school personnel roles) held by parents, additional observations help solidify this as the probable reasoning of many parents who are on the periphery. One supporting observation noted was related to the schools open door policy for parents to join the class again for any length of time that they wished. In spite of this invitation, none of the observed parents took the opportunity to participate in the school day of the three’s at any point in the year outside of the first two days.

*Pick-up & Drop Off Conversations*

More information was gleaned through conversations during student pick-up, and they were very telling regarding the parents’ role perceptions. ‘Drop off” conversations between teachers and parents were, by and large, logistical in nature. Discussions revolved around who would be picking students up, early pick up, snack provisions and the like. Parents stuck around long enough to make sure food, drink, napkins and utensils were available and then often left.

Pick up conversations, however, were comprised of small talk (32%), logistical information (26%), questions regarding student behavior (28%) and the majority of parents choosing not to talk (40%). Small talk included salutations to questions regarding how the
teachers were doing that day. Logistical information often concerned who would be picking up or dropping students off to upcoming appointments that would interfere with the school day. Only one parent inquiry regarding the development of the child was observed during these interaction times.

These findings seem to indicate that parents saw themselves as *cooperators* with the Robinson School and that the school knows what is educationally best for their student. Patterns in the data indicate that the *uninformed* participants held a separate responsibilities mentality, and saw their role as facilitators of cooperative behavior and also handlers of logistics.

The above interview excerpts and observations of home visits, portfolio interaction, vision statements, first day and pick-up/drop-off conversation illuminate an interesting local cultural norm. The norm placed the parent in the position of supporter of education, submitted to the more knowledgeable educational authorities. From the start these parent were cooperators.

*Coproduction in School-Produced Literature*

Interestingly, the TODA analysis of the school-produced literature for parents also revealed two levels of cooperation. Mentorship style language and directive voice emerged in documents to the parents. Both were geared to instruct or inform parents with seemingly different desired outcomes, but both facilitated *cooperative participation*.

*Mentorship voice*. The mentorship voice, as opposed to directive language, focused on mentoring the parents in developmental principles in the school-produced literature. This language went beyond directions or informing to training parents in the reasoning behind the instruction. For example the 3-year-old take home kit entitled, “What Lives in the Ocean” contained this mentorship language surrounding one of the enclosed games:

**Text:** This game is a great activity to develop hand coordination…
• Interpretation: Parents are instructed here that hand coordination is important and additionally the types of activities the school believes help develop this coordination. Through this statement parents can find other similar activities outside of this take home kit to develop hand coordination. The mentorship voice here teaches school-centered ideas of important development and encourages the embrace of these developmental activities outside the school home kit in other contexts.

Another example is found in the “Chicka Chicka ABC” instructions where parents are encouraged to teach their children how to hold a writing utensil correctly. Parents are forewarned that this is a difficult task that will need continued work.

Text: *Don’t worry if this task is difficult for your child; it takes a lot of practice!*

• Interpretation: The school addresses parents’ desire for their children to operate proficiently at school provided activities here saying “don’t worry”. The school’s provision of activities thus far asks for compliance with the school-defined conceptions of good development. Parents trying to fit within this compliance could have placed unneeded pressure on their students for compliance. The school is mentoring parents on the developmental ability of 3 year olds and therefore what it perceives as appropriate expectations.

The “I Can Count” kit instructions holds yet another example of mentorship voice when it addresses one-to-one number/object correspondence in student development:

Text: How high can your child count? Up to 5? Up to 10? Can your child show one-to-one correspondence while counting? *(That is saying just one number as you touch each object.)*
• Interpretation: The elaboration on what correspondence counting is establishes this as a skill that children need to attain. Parents can take this information from this context into another one with their new knowledge.

While each of these samples varies between physical and mental development it is meant to inform the parents developmentally and include them in ways that can be extended beyond the take home kit they are working with. In this way the school exhibited mentorship voice.

Examples of mentorship voice in the school literature for early childhood parents were found more often in documents purposed to inform parents about developmental facts, school purposes and school beliefs (i.e. the portfolio instructions). The combining of facts to inform the mentorship voice is exhibited in this excerpt from a new parent information sheet (for parents of entering 3 year olds),

Text: The American Pediatric Association has determined that children who are 3 years of age must have at least 12 hours of sleep each 24 hour day to be able to grow and function at an optimal level. If your child is staying up until 9:00 or 10:00 PM each night and sleeping until 9:00 or 10:00 AM the next morning, you will probably want to request the afternoon school session for your child.

Samples of mentorship language were also commonly found with statements of purpose. The following sample was extracted from the “What to Expect From Your Home Visits” informational sheet,

Text: If a book has too many words, another option is to talk about the pictures and illustrations… Ask questions like, “What do you see?” and “What do you think will happen next?” This helps children learn to make predictions.
Sample questions provide strategies for overcoming wordy books. The reason the school doesn’t discourage the use of such books is because it “helps children learn to make predictions”.

Another correlation found in the literature for the Robinson School parents was between statements of school belief and mentorship voice.

It is extremely important to read to your child everyday (in English or Spanish)… Other ways to ‘read’ to your child include: telling stories about your own childhood and your family, saying or singing songs or rhymes, and making up stories together.

While much literature could support the importance of reading to children, the statement is conveyed here as a belief and is combined with alternative forms reading can take.

The correlations of school mentorship voice, when included with statements of information, belief and purpose, are very interesting. While the informational statements could be backed by a source or proven by a study, they often were not. This again points to the cooperative role the school sees the parents playing. Cooperative participation does not require the validation of fact, since there is not invitation into the development of consensus. In essences it is an expected cooperation without question.

Also, other statements were based in the Robinson school values. The interwoven use of these type statements with mentorship language gives the perception that they are, or should be, universally adopted. In essence, creating normative validity claims without parental access to challenge such claims. Further, such pairing could be a source of governmentality, or the schools effort to produce parent participants best suited to fulfill its policies and embrace its beliefs surrounding valuable methods for facilitating child development.

School-produced literature regarding required parent participation areas that combined mentorship voice with the above elements (information, belief, and purpose) were found to
correlate with the manifest cooperative participation that one might expect if governmentality was present. For instance, the family portfolio document used mentorship voice and statements of belief to instill the importance of this parent participation. The interviews and observations indicated that parents, by and large, were cooperating in the areas where the school used intermingled statements of belief, purpose and information along with mentorship voice.

**Directive voice.** The school-produced literature for early childhood parents held much directive voice, with proportionally more within the home kit instructions than in other sources. Directive voice was identified as those statements that were procedurally oriented with no indicated reason for the directions issued. Directive voice used was not in place to help parents transfer developmental knowledge into other areas for later use, just to give directions in that situation, directions to be cooperated with. One example is within the “I See Colors” instruction page:

Text: Find out which color names your child knows. Especially work on red, blue, yellow, green, purple, brown, black and white.

- Interpretation: Why do parents need to be acquainted with the colors their children know? Why the focus on these particular colors? If parents were provided more information, would their efforts result in a higher level of aid for their children? The claim made by the school in the direct language present is that parents do not need to know the reasoning behind these questions. Parents are to operate in a cooperative capacity; the school is the knowledgeable educator who knows what is best for the child.
Another example of directive voice is found within the instructions for the “Wheels” take home kit. The directions in this example extend beyond the step-by-step of most directive samples into expected responses of the child:

Text: Use the Same/Different game sheet. In the first 2 boxes put 2 airplanes (or 2 cars, 2 trains). Ask your child “Are these the same?” Your child should reply, “Yes they are the same.” In the bottom two boxes put 1 airplane and 1 car (or any two objects that are different). Ask your child “Are these the same?” Your child should reply, “No, they are different.”

• Interpretation: This format does not lead parents to think of other ways to help their children learn about item similarity and difference outside of this kit. Why should the child's response be “yes” or “no” in the different situations above? Could parents potentially miss opportunities to discuss the similarities of a truck compared to a plane (i.e. they both have wheels)? Should there be an expansion of questions to explore?

In the above example, the directive language does not provide transferability outside of the school definitions of same and different. The primary presence of directive voice in home kits parent participation negates the idea of parent as the primary collaborative educator. The directive language defined the parent role as cooperative in the school literature. If the school does not provide reasoning behind its instructions, does that encourage (and even reproduce) uninformed participation. The interview and observation analysis discussed earlier revealed some parents defining themselves as uninformed participants. The larger question is how much effect does the school produced literature have on the parents’ view of their role.
While the written language of the home kit instructions was largely directive, the family guidance coordinator’s language was mentorship oriented. As she presented the components of the kit, she often discussed the developmental purpose behind the activities and modeled potential extensions outside of the kit parents might utilize. Her contributions helped parents become informed therefore increasing the transferability to potential learning situations outside the kits as discussed by many participants.

Some of the same governmentality issues are present in the family guidance coordinator’s person-to-person use of mentorship voice with the parents. Statements often tied value to school-centered conceptions of purpose, belief and ties to educational research. Whether parents fell within the informed, unengaged or uninformed participation categories the discourse in place at the school places the parent as a cooperator despite the references to the parent as partner (or collaborator) in the education of their child.

The Robinson School literature did not hold any examples of the school using language that promotes disassociation from the parent participation. A few examples, however, did emerge from the interviews and observations. The next section addresses the occurrences of disassociation within the parent participation discourse.

Disassociation

Disassociation has been defined here as the non-participation of parents who do not have access into development of consensus regarding their role at the Robinson School (see figure 5). Three categories emerged from the data in this category of participation uninformed non-participation (non-participants unable to challenge the validity claims due to lack of knowledge or validated forms of knowledge), informed, unengaged non-participant (non-participants with necessary knowledge for consensus contributions but who are not given access, perceives they
do not have access or do not desire to challenge validity claims for varying reasons), and *decisive non-participation* (participants who do not desire or are unable to challenge the validity claims due to preexisting power structures or perceived inability and therefore challenge it with non-participation) within disassociation were found at the Robinson School. The occurrences of disassociation at the Robinson School were found associated with the parent center, home visits and the required cafeteria volunteer days. Discuss of these findings follows.

*The Parent Center*

*Uninformed non-participation.* The parent center was a source of rich collaboration for some parents. However communication issues emerged leaving some parents uninformed non-participants. One participant, who knew very little about the parent center, was identified as such making comments like,

Text: I think I’ve heard of *the* meeting [referring to the portfolio party] and we didn’t make it to, for that there… I just *know of the meeting that they had to work on the portfolio in the center but that’s the only thing.*

- Interpretation: The participant’s response indicates that she did not hear about “the” meeting when the parent center was in use by parents almost continually at the time of her interview for the Cinco de Mayo project. The only communication form in use regarding the parent center was the parent newsletter, a white board sign outside the center and word of mouth. The newsletter could be found in the parent center and on tables in the foyer.

The parent here was *uninformed* regarding the daily opportunities and materials available to her at the parent center. Included in these missed resources were some of the only opportunities to collaborate with other parents and staff and to contribute to the development of
consensus. The comment suggests potential problems with communication on either the part of the parent or school.

*Informed, unengaged non-participation.* Examples of informed, unengaged non-participation were also found in the parent center due primarily to parent work schedules.

Text: It’s hard to be taking time off from work because I am already taking time off to serve breakfast and you know when its parent conference, I have to come. And I have to take off work as well, umm. I just feel if they can make a program for parents who cannot attend during the daytime maybe once a month. Even if it is just once every three months,… I am pretty sure they would get a good response.

- Interpretation: Taking time off of work is already a stressor to this parent in the required forms of parent participation. Yet she still desires to be a part of the collaborative effort in the parent center. No opportunities are made for parents with workday schedules for such involvement. The parents phrasing (Even if…) indicates her belief that it is the least the school could do to give parents with day jobs the chance to participate of their own accord. This excerpt provides evidence that the school’s requirements are taxing for working parents and yet the only context for parent involvement of their own volition is also during the day. While after hours opportunities were provided for the portfolio parties, and school musical programs (also events parents could choose whether or not to participate in), all of the collaboratively based involvement was during the day. Is school personnel willing to give to the school in addition to their workday for collaboration opportunities the way parent are asked to for required involvement?
Since the findings indicate collaboration between parents is predominantly found in the parent center opportunities, parents with work hours during the day are forced into informed, unengaged non-participation within this context. Another mother was kept from voluntary participation with the family garden due to work obligations saying, Text: Now my husband, I told them that whenever they need some gardening, my husband will volunteer to do the gardening...like I told him I wish I could go ahead and do it but, but he doesn’t mind...I’m always so impressed with the parents and everything that they are willing to contribute. But you have to be going to contribute.”

• Interpretation: This mother expresses her desire and felt obligation to give additional forms of participation, yet her work schedule keeps her from this contribution and her husband becomes the family representative. Her interview is strewn with the importance of total educational support by the parents citing her parents’ lacking support for her education. The limited time frame for participation seems to hinder her from being the partner she desires to be.

Home Visits

Text: I’m not usually at the home visits with her [the family guidance coordinator], her father is... because its during the day when I am at, I’m usually at work... and he leaves work to go to do the home visit.

Informed, unengaged non-participation within home visits. Here the parent had a knowledge base regarding how the home visit process went and why the school employed the process which her child and husband participated in, however she also was unable to participate
due to her work schedule. Another participant indicated her work obligations kept her from participating in the home visits.

Text: … but when I don’t come home until four or five… the evening shift [working with daughter], it’s mine.

- Interpretation: This participant’s husband was the one who took time off during the day to meet with the family guidance coordinator. The mother’s job kept her from being at the home visits. She relayed in her interview that husband and sons aided the three-year-old with the home kit due to time restraints.

When parents who are not able to participate due to obligations (like work), in this large component of the three-year-old curriculum, their potential as partners in education is sharply decreased.

*The Cafeteria Work*

The only required participation, which was not tied to directly to academics, was cafeteria service. A parent with one child is required to serve 12 meals. For each additional child in attendance another meal service is added. Meal service includes preparation of (catered) food, the dissemination, then clean up after the meals. Breakfast (7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.) and lunch (10:30 – 1:00 p.m.) are meal times at the school and therefore the timeframe parents have to choose from for the completion of this required component.

The two main reasons for the parents’ meal service participation are indicated in the student handbook. The parents’ service in the cafeteria:

- Gives the children an opportunity to see their family as an essential part of the school community.
• Saves money for field trips and hands-on learning experiences that would otherwise have to be used for additional cafeteria staff.

Interviews indicated most parents willingly gave this mandatory volunteer time, citing positive student response to seeing parents working at the school. Some parents indicated that their children continually asked when they were going to “make” lunch again. The parent orientation to the reasoning behind the cafeteria volunteer time is also emphasized verbally to parents before admission. One of the participants summarizes this portion of the meeting saying,

Text: …they told us every parent had to volunteer, but they didn’t say it like you have to, they just said that parents help, and when, well, that they require us a certain amount of days and they told us why. It’s we want the children to see that parents helping out at school and [it] makes them feel good.

• Interpretation: The participant protects the school image, as caring and considerate leaders, through the use of politeness to cushion the required volunteer time in the cafeteria. This indicates that the participant thinks others might see the school in a negative light due to this requirement, and potentially, her previous disagreement with the component before making a connection between parents presence and students knowledge that their parents care. Emphasized is the school ethos of parent presence equating to parental care for the child and the implied characteristics of what good parents do to make their child feel good/supported. These ideas, based in governmentality, are used in this context to help parents similarly connect their presence/cafeteria work with care for the child.

Informed, unengaged non-participant in the cafeteria. All but two of the interview participants became cooperative participants in the cafeteria component. One of these
disassociating interviewees expressed frustration with her volunteer time given her daughter, in
the 3’s, ate lunch in the classroom served by the teachers saying,

Text: …when they first explained, my understanding of it [the cafeteria

participation], I was like, wow, we really have to work in the cafeteria?

We have to work in the cafeteria? But I thought that at the same time I would be serving

my daughter. You see she’s not there. She’s in a whole different room...

The reasoning for parent participation in the cafeteria (student identification of parent on
campus equating to parental concern) is not applicable for parents of three-year-olds since the
three’s eat within their own classroom and never have the opportunity to see and make the
connections the school desires students to realize about the parents being an important part of the
community. The participant also expresses disbelief surrounding required participation in the
cafeteria challenging (in the interview) the validity of cafeteria work being an “important part of
the community”.

The participant’s husband and her father served the twelve required meals due to her
work schedule. She was an informed, unengaged non-participant due to her inability to
participate in either the work or in contributing to the consensus surrounding notions of
important parental contributions.

It cannot be accurately concluded that this participant would have become a cooperative
participant like many other parents even if her work schedule had allowed for such participation.
Her repeated shock at the level of participation the school required of its parents throughout the
interview indicated that she believed it to be excessive; however, the cafeteria component was
the only portion she outright opposed saying, “The only thing that I just really disagree with is
the cafeteria part”. This emphasis leads one to believe that had the opportunity been provided
for her to participate that she would have chosen *decidedly* to withhold her participation in opposition to it.

*Informed, decidedly unengaged non-participant.* Another parent was dismissive of the required cafeteria work as an important form of parent participation.

Text:  *I haven’t really done a lot of volunteering, they don’t, this year I missed my volunteer time for the lunch…* I haven’t really volunteered like I would want to. I was just talking to [the art teacher] about art, because I am really into art. *I would like to come do some volunteer work here with the kids in the art room.* And she’s like, well I’ll ask the principal and I’ll get back with you… I, I want to *get more involved now and kinda let him (her son) see that I’m coming around little more.* Maybe he can get a little more excited about school, but umm, I do want to do some volunteer work but *not necessarily in the cafeteria just other, you know other areas…* The art, like the art section. Like the ladies who were doing the Cinco de Mayo and the flowers, I would, like if I had known about that I would have been here.

- Interpretation: In the comment above, the parent confides that she had missed her required volunteer cafeteria days (of which there were 12). While she clearly aligns with the school regarding the importance of her son seeing her on the school campus she dismisses the cafeteria as a viable place for that important participation to happen. She looks to participate in ways that draw on her self-identified strengths. Unlike other parents, she pursues her ideas of participation with the art teacher. Disassociating from the type of volunteering prescribed (through her non-participation), we identify a desire to contribute to the building of consensus regarding how this participation occurs. Her sense of agency empowered her to
both disassociate with the required forms of volunteering and seek out the art teacher toward defining her own volunteer contributions.

One staff member described this parent as notoriously “unreliable” by those who have had to work with her, citing many instances where she did not follow through on required components for school enrollment. Yet when an interview was requested regarding her ideas of parent contributions, she was punctual and did not have to be reminded. Upon speaking with her again (over eight months later) she inquired about the study, re-emphasizing her interest in the findings. When observed on the school grounds she seemed focused on her son. She did not exhibit the same devotion to the school ideals many of the parents seemed to embrace. In some cases she participated and even agreed with components of the curriculum as cited in her interview (and observed participation). Yet, this mother had critical questions, which seemed to guide why, when and where she embraced the different aspects of the curriculum/ideology with her participation. The reaction of staff to this agency suggests that the parent participation discourse is not open to critical examination by the very parents asked to contribute the participation.

Summary

The findings from the parent interviews, ethnographic observations and the school-produced literature to parent (regarding participation) documented a variety of information regarding the Robinson School parent participation discourse. Analysis revealed a close correlation between the school-produced literature and the parental levels of participation.

Generally, collaborative levels of parent participation were found in the activities in the parent center. The academic components of participation asked of the school were not found to produce collaborative participation by parents. Cooperative parent participation was found in
these academic areas of participation. Dissociative participation was found occurring in the required cafeteria work and with work conflicts in other areas of the parent participation discourse.

When voice was used in the literature forms of collaboration were present. For example the newsletter, which held much collaborative language, focused on participation within the parent center where all of the collaboration was found. While the collaboration occurred primarily between the parents themselves and the family guidance coordinator, the school seemed to equate the provision of resources (i.e. materials, coordinator position, space) and autonomy (freedom) with school collaboration with the parents. By and large the school was absent from the forms of collaboration occurring within the parent body, and therefore, consensus development between school and parent was not observed. The school, in the realm of the parent center, were themselves largely informed, unengaged cooperators going with the parent consensus.

Mentorship voice and directive voice in the school-produced literature yielded two cooperative levels of participation: informed, unengaged participation and uninformed participation (dependent on the participants’ knowledge base). Involvement at the cooperation levels developed out of required academic forms of participation including: the home visits/kits, portfolios, and vision statements.

Specifically, the portfolio and vision statement literature revealed underlying forms of governmentality present in the school literature through intermingling of the mentorship voice with statements of information (objective validity claims), school purpose (normative validity claims), and belief (subjective validity claims). Parent interviews and observation notes showed parents had taken on the school purposes and beliefs as their own which could indicate effect of
such governmentality (meant to provide cooperation on the part of those being governed).

Consideration should be given regarding the impact of intermingling of normative and subjective claims with mentorship language.

Directive voice, mainly found in the instructions for the home kits, did not hold much mentorship voice, as these were instructive to specific situations. Activities were not presented in ways that would facilitate transfer into other environments or activities. This component may have provided a good avenue for mentorship language devoid of governmentality.

While no school-produced literature sought to encourage dissociative non-participation, the governmentality in place did place parents in an awkward position pitting the school-centered conceptions of good parent participation for student support against parents’ funds of knowledge. Not all of the parents were found to cooperate with the school definitions of good support as seen with the (required) volunteer cafeteria work. Interestingly, when one parent critically reflected and chose another path she was deemed a troublemaker. The reaction of school to her disassociation (and pursuit of a new definition of parental support which encompassed her funds of knowledge) indicate that the parent participation discourse at the school is not open to the parents when it comes to the required components the school had set. The implications for these findings will be discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The Robinson School is, in so many ways, a unique context for a study on parent involvement. As both an educator and research, I have worked with many schools in this urban area and to my knowledge this particular community school does more to support the families in the school than any other. The support and resources the Robinson School pours out to facilitate partnership with their parents and local community is a testimony to their commitment to providing the best educational experience possible. With an on-site research team, and continual reflection on best practices, their personnel are continually striving to push the envelope. Even in allowing this independent research project, which entailed interviews with parents and observations of the school, parent center, and all parent participation forms, informs one about the desire the Robinson School has for feedback and growth in serving the community it is within. The following findings and implications are respectfully given in the light of their continual pursuit of relevant practices and effective education.

There is a growing body of literature regarding the positive effects of parent participation on student academic achievement (Rodriguez-Brown, 2001; Sanders & Herting, 2000; Epstein, 2001). The focus of this literature, however, is based on measures of achievement situated in European American, middle class values such as attendance, grades, attrition and testing scores (Auerbach, 2000; Lareau 1987, & Pariofsky, 2000). Marginalization of the other’s standards in favor of European American, middle class has also been discussed in the literature (Lareau, 1987; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Ream & Palardy, 2008; Valdez, Dowrick & Maynard, 2007).
Findings in the area of bilingual development indicated students given opportunity to embrace their primary and secondary languages in tandem out performed peers on typical standardized assessments due to increased neural capacity (de Jong, 2002). This points to the enlarged Zone of Proximal Development afforded students with who have access to a wider array of capital sources. It stands to reason when parents are given equal access to the development of school discourse broader measures of achievement are found and typical measures of achievement will be exceeded (Rodriguez-Brown, 2001). The findings point to importance of providing students access to a diverse and wide variety of capital that parents can help provide, enhancing increased academic achievement, and more importantly, an enlarged ZPD.

Less prominent in the body of research is an assessment structure that would assist in identification of closed discourse practices within local contexts, which affects the students and parent contributions. This study attempts to provide such information and a recommended structure regarding discourse analysis of parent participation.

*Emergent Levels of Parent Participation*

As elaborated in chapter four, critical findings within this study revealed different levels of participation. The body of literature also confirmed the presence of different levels of participation and further revealed differences in non-participation. This research discovered non-participation levels were not superficially obvious, but found in deeper analysis, that non-participation forms were present at the Robinson school despite parental participation required for student attendance.
Figure 5. Modified Coe's levels of parent participation in consensus development.

Figure 6 shows six different levels based on amount of potential for contribution to the parent participation discourse. Participants who did not comprehend necessary information to challenge the validity claims of parent participation resulted in both cooperative participation and dissociative non-participation. These levels occupied the two inner levels and were termed uninformed participation (cooperating with the present discourse) and uninformed non-participation (disassociating with the present discourse).

Two more levels emerged from this research; one contributing to participation and another that did not. Much like the uninformed categories these levels shared the same reasoning: 1) lacking desire to challenge the current consensus; 2) inability to challenge the current consensus; or 3) perceived inability to challenge the consensus. These reasons either lead to informed, unengaged participation or informed, unengaged non-participation.

The outer edges of the structure represented the greatest amounts of personal agency in relation to involvement in consensus development. One side of this structure represented collaborative participation and represented the ability to challenge
and therefore contributed to the consensus freely. The other extreme represented individual challenge to the consensus without the ability to freely contribute. The challenge lies in a players decided non-participation, which results in disassociation from the consensus.

Summary of Findings

Information this study sought to explore were centered around the following three questions:

1) What were the perceptions of a group of parents regarding their contributions at the school and at home toward student growth?

2) Did perceptions of a group of parents differ from the perceptions of the school, as found in the school literature, regarding parental contributions at the school and home? And finally,

3) Where were power relations found between the school and its parents?

A brief discussion of each question and the findings follow.

Parental Perceptions of Participation Role

Parent participation roles were defined as collaborative, cooperative and dissociative by the parents. They defined their collaborative role with other parents through parent center activities. These activities revolved around extra curricular events and projects such as Cinco de Mayo, the family garden and parent-led parent workshops. Parents treated each other as equals with equal access to the consensus development surrounding these different projects.

Parents also identified themselves as cooperators with the preset school agenda. This included academic components and mandatory cafeteria volunteering days. Most parents presented the cooperation role as their reasonable service. Observations and transcripts also revealed some Robinson School parents held pre-defined roles for the student, themselves and
the teachers that were cooperative in nature. In these cases the student’s role was to be a receptacle of education, the parents were to be supporters of education and the teachers were to be disseminators of education.

Some parents discussed their disassociation with school definitions of their parental role. For instance, those who had work conflicts were in provider roles that took preeminence over school participation. Others chose to decidedly disassociate with required cafeteria volunteer requirements due to their perceived lowliness of the role and the underutilized of their capital.

Alignment of Perceptions

The second research question relating to parent role sought to identify the level of overlap and dissonance between school and parent perceptions. Again, primary data analysis revealed both parent and school perception of parental role as cooperators were largely aligned. Textual analysis of school-produced literature defined parent role as supportive to the school academic agenda. Emerging in this analysis was the school mentorship language and/or given direct instruction in how to cooperate. The mentorship language that emerged often tied school beliefs and purposes to facts, to facilitate parent perspectives toward academic like-mindedness was found to increase the alignment in parent and school perspectives.

Informed, unengaged and uninformed cooperative participation findings did not solely emerge from the school-produced literature but were also based in local cultural norms. These norms established the student as producer, parent as supporter and school as imparter of academic knowledge. Despite the required academic participation from parents meant to produce a shared responsibilities mentality between the school and parent, the predefined cooperative role established by the literature and local norms allowed parents to continue to maintain a separate responsibilities mentality that predefined parents as supporters of educators (and at
times disassociators). In the end the two mentalities largely aligned under cooperative participation found at the school.

**Notable Instances of Dissonance**

Four specific areas of academic dissonance emerged between parents and the Robinson School despite overall agreement regarding the parents' cooperative role. The first was differing perceptions pertaining to creation of a supportive environment for student development. Many times during interviews, parents referenced an internal battle which primarily related to neatness as opposed to allowing freedom for student creativity. Parents sometimes struggled in order to provide the developmental environment in the home, which was advocated by the school. Consequently, while these particular parents were found to align with the school conception of a supportive home environment, their role as facilitators of order seemed to be marginalized.

The second academic area of dissonance recorded related to the purpose of the family portfolio. The school defined this participation component in terms of academic support, whereas parents utilized the participation form for family emphasis. Consequently the creation of a memory book became the paramount emphasis embraced by most of the parents. Difference in primary purpose did not effect whether or not parents participated (cooperation) but caused the academic supportive role the school desired from the parents to be largely unrealized due to parental focus on the family emphasis instead.

Another area of dissonance related to academic support. The Robinson School administration saw the parents’ school presence to facilitate student perceptions of parental academic concern. While most parents aligned with the perception of the school regarding this parent contribution, some dissonance was found. Specifically, this was observed during the
portfolio component. The academic purpose the school had regarding this participation method was turned into a memory book.

The last major area of dissonance found between parents and school emphasized notions of collaboration. The parents’ role in collaboration (as seen through the parent center) included any willing participant in the development of consensus. However, the school seemingly interchanged ideas of collaboration with the provision of independence and resources, which kept the school out of the consensus in the parent center. These different ideas of collaboration will be explored later in this chapter.

Power Relations Between the School and the Parent Body

The last question addressed in this study was designed to identify the power structures present at the Robinson School. This question, and subsequent data analysis, revealed instances of both shared power (collaboration) and unequal power (cooperation and disassociation). Instances of shared power were those contexts where the all the players had access to consensus contributions (collaboration) but contexts where one player was given more or all of the power, limited other players access to consensus contribution (cooperation and disassociation). Further discussion of the power distributions will occur within the implications section.

Implications

Implications for Collaboration

Parents saw themselves as collaborators with other parents through parent center activities (i.e. Cinco de Mayo, the family garden and parent-led parent workshops). The parents’ collaborative role in this context invited willing participants into consensus formation. Ideas were welcomed and considered with the philosophy that everyone had something of value to contribute. The consensus access in the parent center among parents was the closest example of
Habermas’ ideal speech act found in the school. What emerged was an egalitarian dialogue that invited participation from anyone desiring a place at the table. Perhaps the similarity of culture and parental role made the development of consensus an easier task between parents. The more commonalities individuals have the easier the development of consensus would become. One such commonality seemed to be the community mindedness of the parents who were observed and interviewed.

Dissonance between parent and school notions of collaboration arose in the parent center. The school acted in a hands-off fashion during parent center projects but provided physical materials, space and the personnel support of the family guidance coordinator. It seems the Robinson school interchanged ideas of collaboration with the provision of independence for the parents and resources, yet this largely Hispanic group emphasized the necessity of a community effort. The lack of consensus contribution reduced the school involvement to a cooperative level of participation. The provision of resources and independence are elements that could be withdrawn from parents, while contributions to consensus would validate the other’s input, create opportunity for collaboration and help school personnel become more aware of the diverse capital parents bring to the table.

For instance, community mindedness was a validity claim parents at the Robinson School seemed to share. This normative claim appeared to aid collaborative efforts (or the development of open discourse) more than commonly found school normative claims of independence. The validity claim begins with the idea the role of the group is very important toward goal attainment. The community focus could be viewed as social capital that could aid the Robinson School in the establishment of collaboration. Schools serving similar community-minded parent
populations should consider these findings when trying to develop open discourse with their parents.

While parents facilitated open access to consensus development, the family guidance coordinator helped set the tone for this open discourse by encouraging parental contribution of their distinct capital in person and in the parent newsletter. Perhaps she was able to facilitate collaboration at greater levels than other administrators and personnel due to her status as a fellow parent, Hispanic, community member, and Spanish speaker. This parent and member of the Robinson School personnel seemed to help legitimize both the presence of the parents place on the school grounds, and the value of their social and cultural contributions to the space.

These findings clearly suggest that school personnel from backgrounds similar to the parents have the potential to develop consensus. The family guidance coordinator and participating parents were found displaying mutual respect. In part this mutual respect was believed to be established through commonalities of cultural and social capital. These commonalities seemingly made for ease of interaction, legitimization of the parents’ place on campus, and further legitimized the utilization of their diverse capital for the improvement of the school. Inclusion of local community members can serve to encourage similar participation from parents that utilize capital forms, which may otherwise be dismissed by the parents themselves in educational contexts. The family guidance coordinator could be seen as a border crosser who validated both the claims of the school and the claims of the parents.

Additionally, the collaborative partnership between the coordinator and parents was aided by the relational purpose of her position set in place by the Robinson School. The desire of the school to facilitate a partnership with parents was evidenced by the fact that they provided the resources for this position to be in place. It seems the combination of her community
membership and her school-defined purpose served to encourage parents to increasingly function as part of the development of consensus.

Lisa Delpit (2006) speaks to the necessity of legitimizing the capital of the other. Without such measures the other may see their resources from a deficit mentality. Similarly, Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1978) illuminates the potential of cultural and social capital which warrants consideration by the educational discourse for purposes of student relevance. The Reggio Emilia approach, which implements sociocultural theory, looks to utilize the capital of the home to facilitate meaningful and relevant educational practices for its students.

What is missing in the sociocultural approach of Reggio Emilia, however, is a discussion surrounding the potential increase in a student’s Zone of Proximal Development when they are given access to individuals whose sociocultural habitus different from their own. Delpit (2006) advocates a sociocultural approach that invites both the school and the parent to the table for consensus development giving students access to both parent and school habitus for an enlarged ZPD. Bourdieu (1986) similarly discusses the increased potential of individuals with cumulative social capital forms that are effectively utilized. These findings point to the necessity of school and parent participation in the consensus to facilitate the greatest Zone of Proximal Development. It is believed, therefore, that collaborative participation on the part of the Robinson School with parents will legitimize the capital of the other and facilitate a stronger partnership utilizing a larger pool for student ZPD attainment.

Implications for Cooperation

A shift in the role of the family guidance coordinator, parent contributions to consensus and style of writing in school-produced literature were found when the participation forms were required components for student attendance. Parent center literature defined the parents as
collaborators, but when the school literature addressing required forms of parent participation were analyzed, parental access to the consensus was not present.

Parent interviews and observations identified them as cooperators with the preset school agenda that included academic components and cafeteria volunteering. Some parents operated at a basic compliance level while others embraced the ideas behind the academic agenda to an extensive degree. While parents participated in educational facilitation, it was still defined in terms of school-prescribed supportive roles. Parents were instructed on how to act in this capacity and they complied. Illuminated in this compliance are the beginning stages of Habermas’ pathology. According to this social theorist parents (or any individual) without access into the consensus may comply, but this lack leads to a corrosion of social connections, then to feelings of alienation and finally to demoralization. Given the desire of the Robinson School to facilitate partnerships with their parents the lack of consensus development needs to be addressed in these required participation components.

The school-produced literature regarding required participation forms caused both the role of the family guidance coordinator and the parents to change. The usage of direct instructions (without availability to input by parents) and what has been described here as mentorship language was used to underscore the supportive role of the parents and the facilitation of that role by the family guidance coordinator.

The interwoven use of objective, normative and subjective validity claims in the mentorship language was used in the school literature (for parents) to validate the current parent participation requirements. This language use fostered school defined participation as the best way and was perceived as the truth by some of the parents. Foucault (1991) discusses the effort to control the perceptions and therefore actions of others through ideas of “rightness” and/or
societal pressures. Such governmentality has been found to marginalize the parents’ own ideas surrounding positive support in favor of school-centered conceptions (Linn, 2000; and Pins & Wilson Toso, 2008). Specifically, this study found parents embracing school ideas while abandoning their own ideas about child development. For example, parents expressed the importance of neatness, as a developmental area they needed to abandon to accommodate school ideas that recommended letting the child be a child.

The danger, of course being that school-centered conceptions are often based on European-American, middle class values which eliminates the other from contribution to the discourse. Utilization of governmentality, perceives the ideas and ideals of one group as the best practices, which facilitates not only a deficit mentality about the contributions the other brings, but prevents the potential consensus contributions through convincing the others conceptions that are less than beneficial.

The problem lies beyond the necessity for policies and practices in a system. Lisa Delpit (2006) addressed the subliminal nature of the educational institution to imply one “right” way. Delpit advocated local educators to facilitate dialogues about standards that have been deemed “right” and subsequently, informed the other they were wrong. She discusses the choices governments, institutions or groups make to facilitate the best system for the present life world. Over time these policies, which once made life easier, become a set of values. These standards often become irrelevant. This is why Habermas (1984) emphasizes the importance of the continual contribution of players into the consensus. Such contributions help maintain the relevance of the system to facilitate the burden of continual consensus development by the lifeworld it is meant to ease. Underscored here is the necessity for access to consensus
development by all players, and continual use of critical questions regarding the relevance of current practices and procedures for the people being served.

**Implications for Parent Participation Practices**

The school-produced literature, as discussed before, defined parent role as supportive to the school academic agenda. The findings of both the informed, unengaged and uninformed cooperative participation did not solely emerge as a result of the school-produced literature, however. The cooperative forms of participation also found basis in parental cultural norms. These norms established 1) the school as imparter of academic knowledge, 2) the parent as supporter, and finally, 3) the student as producer. In essence the normative claims parents ascribed to created a deficit mentality, which marginalized their potential capital contributions to the discourse. Despite the required academic participation from parents, these validity claims supported a separate responsibilities mentality that also predefined parents as supporters.

These findings show how different Epstein’s (2001) OSI attainment and strategies are in relation to the Reggio Emilia approach. While the methods of participation and local cultural norms kept the focus on the school-centered conceptions, the student was the last one considered using Epstein’s strategies. The Reggio Emilia approach, however, allows the child to set the course, followed by the community/parents provision of feedback and finally, the instructor who takes his/her cue from these sources in the facilitation of learning.

It is unclear how much influence the school policies had on these participating parents and/or the community had on the school toward defining the parental role as cooperator. Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action (1987) and Fairclough’s TODA model (1992) provide theoretical support for the intertwined nature of the parent participation discourse of the
educational institutions and the discourse of the local community affecting each other; and therefore, both contributing to the cooperative perceptions parent participants held.

Ironically, the espoused shared responsibilities mentality of the school co-existed perfectly with a separate responsibilities mentality held by parents. This finding illuminates the possibility of both mentalities residing within the cooperative level of participation. Both school and parental perception of parent role kept parents out of consensus development regarding parental role in the required forms of participation. As found in this study, the overlap (the appearance of mutual consensus) at first glance seems to indicate that the parents and school shared common goals and were working collaboratively. But in this context, parental alignment with pre-existing school definitions/structures produced a similar surface appearance to that of collaborating partners without equal input in consensus surrounding parent participation methods and to what ends these methods would be employed. Collaboration exists between partners who can both be a part of the formation of consensus and making meaning. Without this characteristic, it is merely an ancillary partnership the parents are invited to be a part of without real affect on the system’s relevance to the students’ life world.

Despite current mainstream parent participation strategy use of collaborative terminology, deeper probing at the Robinson School indicated that such terminology is often improperly used. Collaborative wording, like that found in Epstein’s parent participation strategies, implies that the commonality (or overlap) of academic goals produces collaboration. Collaboration implies, however, that the different players (here the school and parent) have equal contributions into the consensus surrounding parent participation roles in helping student achievement. Collaboration is not the mutual focus of parents and school on white, middle class ideas of achievement as is the focus of models like Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence
and subsequent participation methods. Schools desiring to create environments of collaboration need to consider the typical focus of European American, middle class conceptions of “boxed” or “prepackaged” strategies for parent involvement. Such prepackaged methods do not take the local parental capital into consideration; it is up to local school community to establish relevant parent participation practices.

Role of the Local School

According to Lisa Delpit (2006), the swing from the discourse of power to an atmosphere that facilitates open discourse begins through school-initiated community address of three things: 1) imbalanced power structures that marginalize the capital of the other; 2) the affirmation of the capital of the other; and 3) the establishment of balanced contribution from everyone at the proverbial table. Other studies similarly indicate the importance of the balance of power between all participants at the table for mutual appreciation and the greatest potential for student overall achievement (Civil & Andrade, 2003; and Flecha, 2000).

First, where has the discourse of power denied access to the other in the development of consensus contributions? The larger educational discourse surrounding parent participation often focuses on white, middle class standards for achievement. This limiting definition of achievement lessens student potential ZPD and marginalizes standards of achievement outside of these norms. Schools need the means to critically assess current discursive practices to identify the varying levels of participation parents are contributing to the consensus. This initial assessment can also reveal barriers created by the school itself and the local cultures to parental contributions.

Next Delpit has advocated the educational community to affirm the capital the other brings to the table. Much like the family guidance coordinator in this study, personnel can
provide forms of encouragement to parents who encounter cultural norms that marginalize their
capital contributions to the educational discourse. Additionally, the presence of personnel who
are members of the local community and/or similar cultural backgrounds can serve to legitimize
the parents’ presence on campus and potential contributions of their capital.

Finally, Delpit says that both the school and parents have to be seated as equals in the
development of open discourse. The findings in the current study point to the following areas
that may help schools invite the other into the development of consensus and true partnerships
with parents. The following should be addressed:

1. The uninformed participants’ need for information, void of governmentality or
   subliminal attempts to mold their perceptions;

2. The informed, unengaged participant, non-participant, and decisively non-
   participants’ need the access to contribute to the consensus if they desire. Are
   structures in place for parents to contribute and challenge the validity claims of the
   school; and finally,

3. The informed, unengaged non-participants’ need for alternative schedules and
   communication methods to include the widest parental participation inclusion
   possible.

The school holds a heavy burden as the liaison between the local culture and larger
educational discourse and the location for resulting discursive practices. Both standardized
academic achievement pressures and disconnection from the local culture could stand in the way
of a school wanting to create an authentic learning environment that facilitates sociocultural
relevance and maximum student ZPD attainment through the partnership of school and parent.
The findings of this study contribute practical assessment with critical reflection in a way that will help local school officials in this effort.

Recommendations for Further Study

Extended study in the area of parent participation is needed to more effectively include parent populations that do not hold white, middle class capital norms. Further study in this area will make the local school more relevant and effective in facilitating open discourse toward maximized student ZPD. Also, continued exploration of the interactional nature of the educational institution discourse with local discourses (and their subsequent discursive practices) is needed. The following are recommendations for further study that emerged during the final analysis:

1. Similar descriptive studies patterned after the current study is recommended with different student/parent populations. For example, schools with predominately African American or Latino populations in other geographic areas might affirm the findings in the present study and offer different perspectives about consensus development between local school and parents.

2. Replication of the current study is additionally recommended in a school context that does not require parent participation. While parent participation might not be as frequent as at the Robinson School, the exploration in a public school could help the school systems tap into the added resources collaboration with diverse parents bring to the context.

3. Also recommended are studies that focus on the manifestations of Habermas’ Communicative Action, which reveal the interactional effect of both larger
educational discourse and local discourse on each other in areas beside parent participation. For example, discourse surrounding accountability measures.

4. A descriptive study would be useful that focused on individual Latino/a parents ideas of parental contributions.

5. Another suggested study could look closer at the conversations between the teachers and parents to find out how much open discourse is facilitated on a parent to teacher level.

Concluding Remarks

This study was very enlightening regarding, often, well-meaning schools and their ideas surrounding inclusion of the other. The practices at the Robinson School were instituted with good intentions, but a lack of critical reflection withheld the desired effect. This school, like so many others, answers to state and national standards, local funders and the community itself. They function as the middleman between two very different discourses. While this can be a heavy burden, this position also affords schools the unique possibilities to act as a round table for the two discourses to meet and achieve great things. However, it can only occur with: 1) great time and critical reflection regarding what these two discourses are implying and the ways they impact the discursive practices; 2) Exposure of unbalanced power relations between the discourses; and 3) the creation of a space that the two discourses can meet and reach joint consensus. I believe that the local school holds great potential for creating authentic consensus and relevant spaces that change with the life world of all of those involved.
APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER
January 25, 2008

Office of Research Services

Alice Coe
Department of Teacher Education and Administration
University of North Texas

Re: Human Subjects Application No. 08-017

Dear Ms. Coe:

As permitted by federal law and regulations governing the use of human subjects in research projects (45 CFR 46), the UNT Institutional Review Board has reviewed your proposed project titled “Parent Ideas and Perceptions about Educational Involvement at a Community School.” The risks inherent in this research are minimal, and the potential benefits to the subject outweigh those risks. The submitted protocol is hereby approved for the use of human subjects in this study. Federal Policy 45 CFR 46.109(e) stipulates that IRB approval is for one year only. January 25, 2008 to January 24, 2009.

Enclosed is the consent document with stamped IRB approval. Please copy and use this form only for your study subjects.

It is your responsibility according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to submit annual and terminal progress reports to the IRB for this project. Please mark your calendar accordingly. The IRB must also review this project prior to any modifications.

Please contact Shelia Bourns, Research Compliance Administrator, or Boyd Herndon, Director of Research Compliance, at extension 3940, if you wish to make changes or need additional information.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kenneth W. Sewell, Ph.D.
Chair
Institutional Review Board

KS: sb
CC: Dr. Ruth Silva
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
CONSENT FORMS

University of North Texas Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: Parent Role Contribution Perceptions at a Community School

Principal Investigator: Alice Coe, a graduate student in the University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Curriculum & Instruction.

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study which involves ten parents’ ideas about their role in their child’s education with respect to on-campus volunteering and other interactions at J. Erik Jonsson Community School. The purpose of the study is to try and understand your ideas about the educational contributions you to make.

Study Procedures: You will be asked to participate in a 30 to 45 minute recorded interview on the school grounds and at a time that is most convenient for you.

Foreseeable Risks: No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: We do not expect the project to benefit you directly, but the community school may benefit from further knowledge of the parent population. It is also expected that the researcher will add to studies which better equip educators/administrators in their development of applicable programs which include parent involvement.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: After you participate in the interview the researcher will remove anything which could identify you as a participant. Your consent forms will be stored in a locked office at the University of North Texas to which the researcher alone has access. All participants and the participating school will be given different names when results are reported.

Each recording will be kept on the researcher’s personal laptop and will be destroyed at the end of the study which is estimated to be March of 2008. The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Alice Coe at telephone number [redacted] or the
faculty advisor, Dr. Ruth Silva, UNT Department of Curriculum & Instruction, at telephone number (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

**Review for the Protection of Participants:** This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

**Research Participants’ Rights:** Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Alice Coe has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

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**Printed Name of Participant**

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**Signature of Participant**

**Date**

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**For the Principal Investigator:** I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the participant signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

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**Signature of Principal Investigator**

**Date**

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**APPROVED**

1/25/08

1/24/09
Interview Domains & Questions:

Domain One: Parent perception of their role at JEJ School
- When you come to volunteer tell me about your experience. (From coming in the door to when you leave.)
- Do you think your presence at the JEJ campus affects your children? If so, how?

Domain II: Parent Perception of Others’ Perceptions
- What do you think the children think about parent involvement at the school?
- What do they think about your contributions?
- Describe your interactions with staff members, teachers and/or administrators. How do they perceive you as a contributor?

Domain Three: Parent Perspective on their Educational Role
- Do you think your presence at the school is helpful for the students’ learning? Why or why not?
- What do you think makes a good learning environment for your child?
- What is a normal day after school like for your family?
- How would you instruct another parent to help their child study at home?
- Do you do anything specific to help your child when they are study at home?

Domain Four: Demographic Data
- What age range do you fall within:
  - 18-25
  - 26-30
  - 30-35
  - 35-40
  - 40-45
  - 45 or older
- How many children do you have enrolled at JEJ?
- Do you have any children who do not attend JEJ?
- What level of schooling did you complete:
  - Less than High School
- High School or GED equivalent
- Associates Degree or Technical College/Trade School
- Bachelor’s Degree
- Graduate Level Education
APPENDIX D

SCHOOL LETTER REGARDING RESEARCH PROCESS TO FAMILIES
Dear Families,

J. Erik Jonsson Community School was recently approached by two researchers from the University of North Texas, Alice Coe and Dr. Ruth Silva, about the potential for a project at our school. The purpose of the project is to learn more about parents’ perspectives of their role in their child’s education.

We believe that we can learn a great deal from this project about how our families support their children within our unique learning community. We look forward to collaborating with these researchers in an effort to add to the body of knowledge regarding parent involvement in education.

Ms. Coe may be contacting you soon to ask you if you would be willing to participate in this project. All that would be involved on your part is meeting with Ms. Coe for a 30-45 minute interview. We appreciate your willingness to help us discover more information about our learning community.

Sincerely,

[the principal]
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